



## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GENERAL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL AT THE ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

English language becomes the language of utility and comfort so progress of modern life is depending on the use of English language. This paper reports on a study that investigated on the prescribed English textbooks which is used to teach English at the senior secondary schools, AMU. The purpose of this study was to determine the overall pedagogical value and suitability of the prescribed textbook towards students' needs. The properties of a good textbook are discussed. Detailed analysis focused specifically on the textbook analysis corresponding to the students language needs. The findings declare that the prescribed textbooks are not completely improving learners' need of language at the end of learning course It is expected that syllabus designers, administrators, and teachers effectively match textbooks with the needs of the learners to obtain objectives of the learning program.

Key words: Textbooks, Senior Secondary, Students' Need, Analysis.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The textbook is an almost universal element of teaching. Millions copies of textbooks are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in countries... No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994). The aim is to make learners become more confident, fluent, and proficient in their everyday use of English language in different situations and also to enable them transfer the skills learnt into their various fields. Designers are designed textbook for usage of particular groups of learners in a particular context. The important points in the selection of any course book are identifying the aims and objectives of the teaching program and analyzing the learning teaching

situation in which teachers use the materials (Harmer, 1991; Cunningsworth, 1995; Roberts, 1996). Each context has a different set of learners, materials, teachers and setting where these elements together have to operate. So in selection of good and appropriate textbook it is very important to design textbooks which meet students need of language.

Marc, V and Kees van Rees (2009) analyze the content of textbooks as well as teachers' usage of them. Results show author representation in textbooks increasingly resembles students' reading preferences at the expense of selections made by literary experts. According to Ansary and Babaii (2002) in Mohammadi, M (2014) as teachers, many of us have had the responsibility of evaluating textbooks. Often, we have not been

confident about what to base our judgments on, how to qualify our decisions, and how to report the results of our assessment. It seems that to date textbook selection has made in haste and with a lack of systematically applied criteria. Selection of reliable and appropriate textbooks should be based on the students' need and this is an administrator and teachers' responsibility.

### **2. The Concepts of ELT materials:**

English Language Teaching (ELT) materials are the key factors in many language programs. ELT materials are divided into two different forms: printed such as textbooks and non-printed such as computer-based materials. Tomlinson (1998) defines language learning materials as anything which teachers or learners are used to facilitate learning language. For him language learning materials can be DVD, videos, grammar book, workbooks, photocopied exercises, and so on. As reported by him (1998) "materials can be instructional in that they can inform learner about the language; they can be experiential as they can offer experience of the use of language; they may be elicitive in that they can provoke language learner into using language; and they may be exploratory when they provide opportunities for learners that lead to discoveries about the language". Materials chosen should be able to arouse the required level of interest among learners to motivate them and they must help the learners to feel at ease rather than test them.

Allwright (1990) contends that materials should teach students to learn, that there should be resource books for ideas and activities for instruction and learning. Therefore, his view is against constructing materials for teachers to use. He believes that textbooks are so inflexible to use directly as instructional materials. He asserts that an instructional material ties the teacher and may mislead him or become a hindrance rather than a help. But according to O'Neill (1990), materials may be suitable for students' needs, even if they are not designed especially for them, that textbooks make it possible for students to review and prepare their lessons. So these textbooks are efficient in terms of time and money, and that textbooks can and should allow for adaptation and improvisation. Hence, his

view confirms the importance of instructional textbooks and the flexibility they should have.

### **3. The Role of Textbooks in the ELT Classroom**

Textbook is the important part of the teaching course and it must be accessible to a variety of students, regardless of their learning goals, as well as being adaptable to the diversity of teachers and teaching methods. In spite of all major technological breakthroughs, the textbook continues to be the major source of knowledge for the ordinary students. Many teachers perceive textbooks, especially course books, as a route map of any ELT program, laying bare its shape, structure, and destination, with progress, and even teacher quality is assessed by learners in terms of sequential, unit-by-unit coverage (Leslie E. Sheldon, 1988). It can function as a core resource, as a source of supplemental material, as an inspiration for classroom activities, or even as the curriculum itself. Cunningsworth (1995) opines that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presenting materials by the teachers, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus that reflects pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence.

A syllabus states the learning objectives of a learner in the class, and the textbook attempts to achieve these through its content. A syllabus and textbook give direction to a teacher on what to teach. Thus textbooks are the important aspects of the curriculum.

As to the role of textbooks in the classroom, Allwright (1981) believes that course books hold a limited role, restricting students to merely "captive learners." Instead he advocates a "whole-person involvement," in which students, through learner training, actively participate in the management of their learning, in such a way that course book-led teaching would find impossible. Textbooks should be comprehensive and cover most or all of what is necessary and also correspond closely with the aims of the teaching program and needs of the learners. As well, the purpose of prescribing textbooks in an English class is to enhance language learning of the students by providing authentic

reading material. Grant Commission (1978) declares that there are two main types of textbooks:

#### I. Traditional textbooks

Traditional textbook is a type of book that ask the students to learn the language as a system and after that they should be able to use the language. On the one hand, this type of textbook is a great help for teachers because they are teacher-centered and they are easy to use. But on the other, there may be a problem at the end of the student's studies when they can manage grammar but cannot communicate. They rather focus on reading and writing activities and are very common at schools. Speaking and listening skills are mostly discard in the traditional textbooks. These books are relaying on accuracy in language while fluency in language is not important. Traditional textbooks focus on form and structure of language.

#### II. Communicative textbooks

In comparison with traditional textbooks, communicative textbooks emphasize the communicative functions of language, not only the forms, skills in using language, focuses on pupils' interests, encourage work in groups and furthermore emphasize fluency, not only accuracy. Simply, this type of textbooks prepares learners to use their language knowledge in real life. According to Richards and Rodgers (2006), textbooks should design in such a way that their tables of contents suggest a gradual development of language forms and functions, going from basic to the complex.

According to Richards (2005) there are three main types of language practices found in most English instructional materials such as:

**A. Mechanical practice** refers to controlled activities that involve repetition and substitution drills. They are design to practices the use of particular grammatical items. In many textbooks, this practice demands sentence completion (usually with grammar activities in isolation), but lacks authentic language negotiation.

**B. Meaningful practice** refers to activities in which language is controlled and "students are required to make meaningful choices when carrying out practice".

**C. Communicative practice** embodies those activities in which language "is not totally

predictable." Language production at this level is more spontaneous and authentic, because meaning negotiation takes place "within a real communicative context" and "exchange of real information".

All three are expected to be included in the methodological sequence of the various units that constitute English textbook, mainly because students need to go through a process of controlled-practice, by first working on easy-guided mechanical activities, before eventually reaching a degree of free language practice that embraces communicative interaction (Gómez-Rodríguez 2010).

#### 4. Steps in the Selection of ELT Textbooks

Garinger, D (2002) argues that with a little additional consideration and attention, the selection process can be enhanced and the outcomes be improved for learners who will use the texts. He also suggests some steps in selecting effective textbooks for ETL learners:

- **Matching the Textbook to the Program and the Course:** Prior to selecting a textbook, educators should thoroughly examine the program curriculum. If the goals and curriculum of the program are clear and well defined, the parallels with certain textbooks may become obvious.
- **Reviewing the Skills Presented in the Textbook:** Improving learners' language skills is frequently the main purpose of ESL programs. However, which skills are taught and how they are taught differs from course to course and program to program. Therefore, the effectiveness of each textbook in helping learners acquire the necessary skills must be considered.
- **Reviewing Exercises and Activities in the Textbook:** When evaluating the quality of exercises or activities, four key questions should be answered:
  1. Do the exercises and activities in the textbook contribute to learners' language acquisition? Many exercises included in textbooks are convenient for teachers but do not necessarily contribute to students' language development.

2. Are the exercises balanced in their format, containing both controlled and free practice?
  3. Are the exercises varied and challenging? Keeping students motivated and interested as they work through a textbook is much easier if the students see something new in each chapter.
  4. Are the exercises progressive as the students move through the textbook?
- **Weighing Practical Concerns:** These issues, which include availability and cost, are often the deciding factor in textbook selection, and they must be acknowledged.

There is essential need for teacher to provide materials and knowledge of how to differentiate mainstream curricula for English Language Learners (ELLs). Despite the increased number of valuable ESL textbooks, it is important to be sure that each area will have some particular needs. Several approaches to textbook selection have been proposed, but unless the key shareholders are involved and understand the particular needs of their constituency, an inappropriate choice may be the result.

#### 5. Problems with using the Materials

Many applied linguists question the content of mainstream materials in ELT world. Rinvolucri (1999) bitterly opposed to the content of EFL course books where the EFL world stays away from the dark side of the life with no mention of death, poverty or war. He pronounces that EFL course materials are just as the soft, fudgy, sub journalistic and women's delightful world. Crawford (1978) declares that the use of commercially produced textbooks and instructional materials detach the learner from responsibility and opportunity to be creative and active in the language process. Crookes (2010) suggested that the practicality of critical L2 pedagogy would be improved by more accessibility and variety of "fully worked out sample materials" (p. 9). Such materials could help teachers to familiarize with problems of using ELT materials in the classrooms.

#### 6. English Textbooks Exercises

Appropriate exercises and activities promote meaningful communication through the language. Textbook exercises and activities develop the use of the language in meaningful situations and communicative functions. They employ various types of educational aids and learning resources that help learners to understand the material effectively as well as encourage active class interaction. Basically, exercises and activities should provide for the development of learners language skills.

According to Arnold (1999), the design of exercises in the modern EFL context should show more concern with the needs and abilities of human beings, the exercises may be more "humanistic", the humanistic exercises should have the following characteristics: i) Emphasis on personal experience and group experience, ii) Teachers' genuine intervention in learning, ii) students trying to express meanings which they cannot express, iii) Special protection of learners' curiosity, iv) Teachers are genuinely interested in students' replies and, v) Encouraging students to bring themselves physically to class. Although, some of the exercises may succeed in helping students to pass the exams but fail to develop their abilities to use language in real life. In addition, all exercise and activity types are employed in textbooks are of great significance to learners' communicative competence development (Wei,W.2011).

#### 7. Central Board of Secondary Education Board Syllabus

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) board is one of the biggest educational organizations in India and prepares the syllabus for students from lower nursery group to grade 12, for schools affiliated with it. The Syllabus of CBSE is set by National Council of Educational Research and Training. Central Board of Secondary Education syllabus adopts the hierarchical curriculum, where students learn topics built on what was learn the year before last. The syllabus for CBSE board for the yearly based exams conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education is experienced through the Classroom discussions in government as well as in private schools. The intensive CBSE board syllabus mainly consists of objective type questions and problems. This strategy of teaching prepares

students for national level competitive exams. It is an autonomous body which is responsible for conducting class 12th exams across India. CBSE board provides finest and education which further excels the career of student.

According to Meena,A(2013) the basic objectives of core courses at this stages based on CBSE board of study are:

- To listen to and comprehend live as well as recorded oral presentations on a variety of topics.
- To develop greater confidence and proficiency in the use of language skills necessary for social and academic purposes.
- To build communicative competence in various registers of English.
- To promote advanced language skills with an aim to develop the skills of reasoning, drawing inferences, etc. through meaningful activities.
- To translate texts from Mother Tongue(s) into English and vice versa.

At the end of the course learners will be able to do the following:

- Read and comprehend extended texts (prescribed and non-prescribed) in the following genres: fiction, science fiction, drama, poetry, biography, autobiography, travel and sports literature, etc.
- Text-based writing (i.e., writing in response to questions or tasks based on prescribed or unseen texts)
- Understand and respond to lectures, speeches, etc.
- Write formal/informal letters and applications for different purposes.

#### **8.Objective of the Study**

- To study and find out the accuracy of the text book.
- To study the appropriateness of textbook to the students need of language.

#### **9.Materials and method**

One of the best ways to analyze the textbooks is through a qualitative method. The method allows the developer to gain a deep understanding of the construct under investigation. The materials to be evaluated in this study included the two core course English language textbooks

currently taught at the senior secondary schools at the Aligarh Muslim University. These textbooks are analyzed based on the communicative aspects of textbook.

#### **10.Procedure**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the prescribed English language textbooks in use at the Senior Secondary Schools.

#### **11.Critical Analysis of the Senior Secondary Textbooks at AMU**

Textbook analysis is necessary to arrive at better understanding of the rationale of the book as well as the needs of learners. The ultimate aim of this textbooks are to develop skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking and to extend vocabulary to enable a student to enjoy and foreordain fiction, poetry and drama. The syllabi under this study used for specifying the materials for Senior Secondary Schools at Aligarh Muslim University. The syllabus recommended by Aligarh Muslim University for class XI and XII is taken from C.B.S.E. (Central Board of Secondary Education) which is one of the national boards. These textbooks are designed to be used as materials for ELT purpose and they include different cultural aspects, historical, geographical, literary, political, religious, social, man- woman relationship, habits, customs and tradition.

There are two core English textbooks which are prescribed for Senior Secondary students: Hornbille for class XI and Flamingo (core book) for class XII which both based on the development of reading comprehension and writing skill besides speaking skill. These textbooks advocate that the children's life at school should be linked to their outside life and motivate students to be away from traditional system of education. In addition, it attempts to improve students' language skills and develop student-centered system of education. The textbooks suggest that teachers should understand students proficiency level of language and based on that given space, time and freedom to them generate new ideas and suggestion out of the information which is passed on to them by adults. Moreover, these textbooks aim to help students to strengthen their communicative skill in English to use it effectively in their daily life.

Additionally, the syllabus designer have aim to make reading enjoyable and motivate students to generate new ideas among the students. Syllabus designers believe that reading comprehension exercises are mostly helpful to increase the pleasure and effectiveness of reading.

The analysis of the prescribed textbooks of class XI (Hornbil):

#### **I: Hornbile**

The existing textbook is divided into two parts. First part includes eight units which have only one prose (comprehension text) and one poem except unit two, five and seven. Second part consists of writing improvement texts. Themes of the syllabus designer are to cover contemporary issues as well as emotional and creative aspects of human life. Aims of teaching pros are: to understand the passage and perceive its meaning, to improve pronunciation, to increase knowledge of vocabulary and develop students' ability to express the ideas of the passage orally or in written form. The texts are literary based and some of these texts are descriptive in nature. Each unit followed by short glossary of difficult words that students infer their meaning from the context. There are many unfamiliar words and very specific concepts.

The poetry section of the book aims at developing students' speech habits. It is related to universal sentiments and appeal to contemporary sensibility. The rhythm of poetry motivates and helps students to acquire natural speech rhythm. This will be useful to improve their pronunciation. The purpose of poetry is to teach idiomatic expressions while in present textbook it is taught for the sake of providing enjoyment not for purpose of mastering students in language skills. The materials provided for self study through many exercises given at the end of almost each unit such as word and usage, talking about the text, and thinking about the language. These exercises have value in improving students' vocabulary, speaking skills and involving students in the learning process. The second part of the present book is writing based units which aim at improving students' writing skill and enable them to write various types of letters and find out the main ideas of text. Many exercises are introduced which

are focused on writing skills such as note- making, summarizing, and abstracting.

The following analysis is of a lesson of Hornbile textbook (see Appendix A):

❖ *We're Not Afraid to Die...*

*If We can All Be Together* (Gordon Cook and Alan East)

At the beginning, unit is started with the glossary of some important expressions so that students infer their meaning from the context. The purpose of this section is to familiarize the students with the new vocabulary in the text. This is a lengthy short story and cannot be taught in one section. It has no support and illustrative materials like color pictures and map which could help in making the lesson more attractive and appealing.

Activities are reading comprehension based. They draw upon the students' multilingual experiences and capacities. Comprehension is addressed at two levels: one of the texts itself and the other of how text relates to the learners' experiences. Grammar rules are introduced inductively. Activities focus on improving students' thinking ability. The textbook also engages activities for identifying words and understanding their meanings and grammatical functions. Reading and speaking are the strong points of the present lesson. Listening activities are not covered and improving the listening skill is integrated with the reading of the text. As for speaking practice, students are supposed to discuss the theme either with a partner or in the group, write down any comment to the unit, and make their list of finding and understanding from the text. In terms of vocabulary improvement there also some activities which ask students to find similar words from their own language. As far as writing is concerned, there is not any activity on writing in this unit.

The analysis of the prescribed textbook of class XII (Flamingo):

#### **III: Flamingo**

This textbook is divided into two sections: prose and poetry. The prose section includes eight prose (comprehension) texts. It contains three short stories, two non-fiction pieces, and autobiographies. The poetry section has six poems. The textbook aims to link learners' life at school to the outside world of

school. The texts are literary and some of these texts are descriptive in nature. Therefore, selection of prose from different parts of the world seeks to exposes learners to a wide variety of genres, themes and texts. Syllabus designers consider the interest of learners while making them aware of the socio-political issues that they will face in the outside world.

Units begin by a brief biography of the author and are followed by the short glossary of difficult words so that students infer their meaning from the context. Nevertheless, there are some other words or expressions which are not in the glossary and learners must find their meaning from the context. Each units contains some text question "think as you read" to check learners' comprehension ability while reading the text and hence, motivating and engaging learners better.

The text focuses on the reading comprehension and to certain on writing skill. In comprehension section they want to be sure that learners understand the lesson, and the intention and experience of writer. "Things to do" section aims to enable learners to find out the facts and problems of the outside world. These exercises help in improving students' vocabulary, speaking skills and involving students in the learning process. Almost all skills are included in this text book. This textbook provides opportunities for students to use English while reading, writing, and speaking. There is, however, no exercise on developing the listening skill.

The following analysis is of a lesson of Vista textbook (see Appendix B):

❖ *Deep Water* ( William Douglas)

It is a story of disadvantages and overcoming of fear. The purpose of the writer of this short story is to teach learners that the effort and confidence can help to overcome fear. This short story is very helpful for students to take steps and effort in overcoming their fear.

The unit is started with the brief biography of the author and glossary of some important expressions so that students infer their meaning from the context. The purpose of this section is to familiarize the students with the new vocabulary in the text. However, this is not implemented in this

unit because the number of new words in the texts is more than the number of words in the glossary. But the simple language of story helps learners understand the author's concept. It is not a lengthy story and there is no illustrative materials like color pictures which could help in making the lesson more attractive and appealing.

Activities are based on language skills (reading, writing and speaking) except listening skill. Listening activities are not covered and improving the listening skill is integrated with the reading of the text. They draw upon the students' multilingual experiences and capacities. Comprehension is addressed at two levels: one of the texts itself by in text activities and the other how the text relates to the learners' experiences at the end of the unit. Grammar rules are introduced inductively. Activities focus on improving students' thinking and imaginative abilities. As for speaking practice, students are supposed to discuss the theme either with a partner or in the group, they can write down any comment on the unit. In terms of vocabulary improvement there are no activities. As far as writing is concerned, there are activities on writing in this unit such as writing about their own experiencing fear and how they overcame it.

**Finding:** These textbooks aim to enable students to express idea of prose passage orally, to develop listening and reading comprehension by reading and post-reading activities, and to improve imaginative power of students. All the units contain various types of exercises with the remarkable emphasis on reading comprehension and writing skill. As well, appropriate visual materials available can be defined as the facilities that can be employed by teachers and learners to enhance language learning in classrooms. They may range from simple hand-made realia, charts and pictures, to electronic and digital materials. The main problem to these textbooks is that little emphasis was placed on speaking and listening skills. In addition, teaching of pronunciation is missing in these textbooks and also there is no practice of functional use of language.

**Conclusion**

Textbooks will not address all the needs of every English language learners. There will always be a need for teacher created materials and knowledge

of how different instructional materials are used in the ELT classroom. This study aimed at reviewing qualitatively textbooks on the clarity and inclusiveness. As mentioned before the main focuses of texts are on reading so the learners' main use of English language will be limited to reading texts and passages hence their knowledge of English will be limited to other instances of language used in catalogues, manuals or magazines. It has worth to integrate all language skill exercise to obtain better results. Due to lengthy passages often a great proportion of class time was spent on reading. Taking into account the significant role of textbook in teaching and learning process therefore it is very important to select an appropriate textbook based on students' language proficiency. In order to be ensured that careful selection is made so ELT textbooks can effectively facilitate the attainment of teaching objectives.

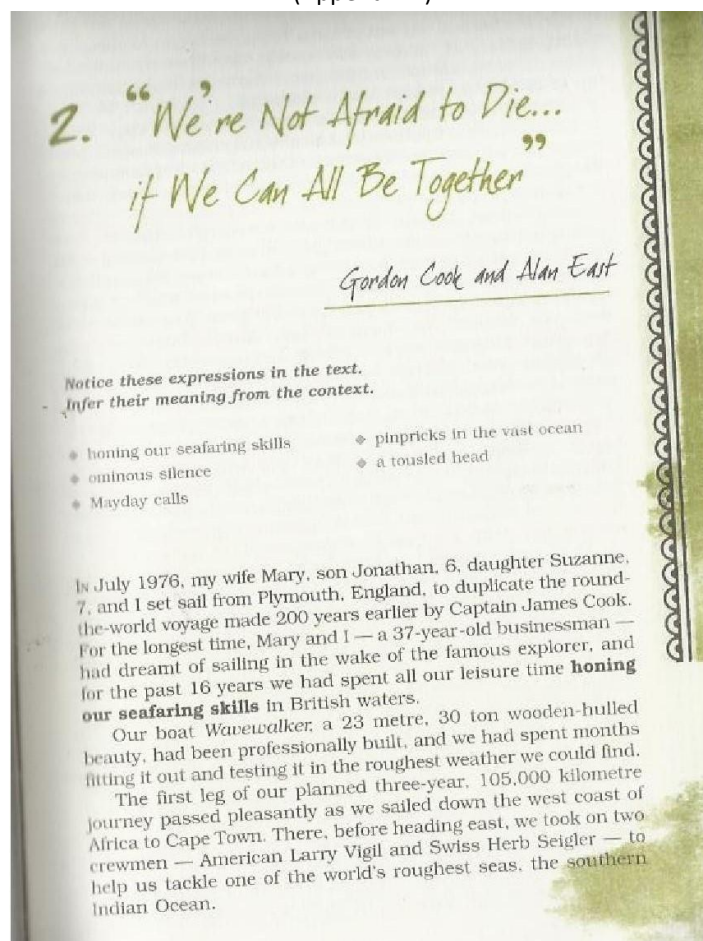
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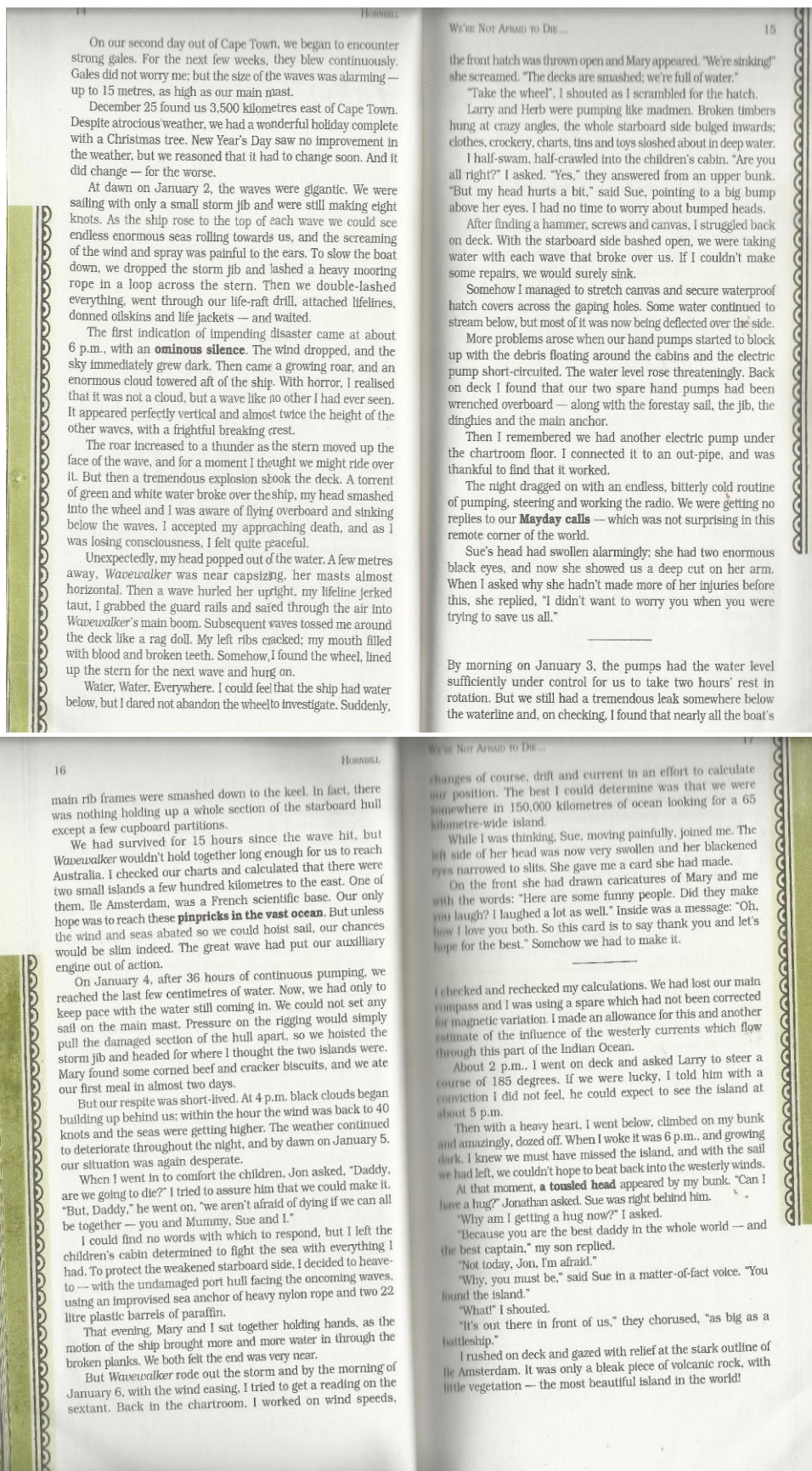
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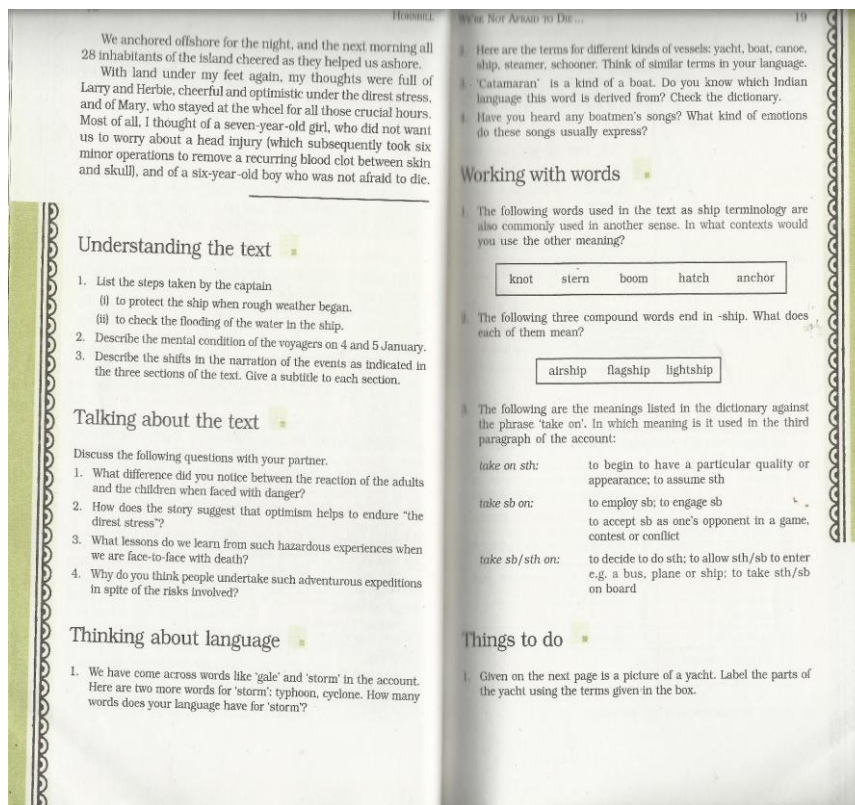


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(Appendix A)







(Appendix B)

