Chapter 4
Chapter 4

Higher Secondary Textbooks in General English

4.1 The syllabus

4.2 The textbook for the detailed study

4.3 The rapid readers

4.4 Grammar and composition and allied materials

4.5 Testing and examination

Conclusion

117
Chapter 4

Higher Secondary Textbooks in General English

In this chapter the syllabus, the textbooks and allied teaching materials prescribed for the present higher secondary course are taken for analysis and evaluation keeping in view the needs and ability of students discussed in Chapter 3. We will analyse mainly the following five aspects: vocabulary, grammar, thought content, cultural points and interest value. Some other aspects like designing of the syllabus, the teaching objectives and the editing and printing errors will also be analysed.

4.1 The syllabus

Syllabus is a crucial document in any teaching programme which guides the process and persons involved in teaching, learning and evaluation. Association of Indian Universities in its Monograph on Syllabus Analysis and Restructuring elaborates on the essential qualities of a good syllabus in the following words:
In the whole process of teaching, learning and evaluation, those who are involved namely teachers, students, examiners and administrators are guided by a document called syllabus. ... A syllabus in fact should be able to specify in clear terms the objectives to be achieved by pursuing a particular course of study, the contents of the courses and ways to go about teaching the contents to achieve those prescribed objectives. It should convey to the teacher exactly what it conveys to the students, to the paper setter, the examiner, and any outside person who happens to look at it. There should be no ambiguity in instructions. For the purposes of integration, meaningfulness and validity of Teaching/Learning/Evaluation, it should have not only the clarity but also content specificity. ... In order to make it dynamic, in the preparation of a syllabus a lot of scientific, psychological and educational thinking must go. It is desirable to include not only things said above but also:

i) objectives and scope of the course;

ii) content outline in terms of units and
topics and proper sequencing of content; iii) suggestions for teaching/learning methods and activities; iv) suggestions on evaluation techniques and tools to be used, and, v) essential books and supplementary reading lists. (9-13)

Taking the above views into consideration along with those of Ghosh, Sastri and Das (42-43), we think that a syllabus for the higher secondary students should state in clear and unambiguous terms a list of objectives; a list of teaching points arranged under different units and in the ascending order of difficulty; a list of activities to engage students in; suggestions on teaching methods and evaluation techniques for the teacher, the question paper setter and the examiner; the division of marks for different units and papers; a list of prescribed textbooks and allied teaching materials; and a list of books for supplementary reading for students and reference books for the teacher. The teaching objectives should also be justified taking into account students' needs and ability and social requirements.

The present syllabus effective from 1989-90 academic session is reproduced in Appendix 3(A).
W.F. Mackey in his book *Language Teaching Analysis* (1965) poses four questions in relation to four aspects of the syllabus in a Second Language teaching course which have to be answered when analysing a syllabus. They are: (1) What does it include? (Content); (2) How specific is it? (Specification); (3) Why does it include what it does? (Justification); and (4) How attainable is it by the majority of learners for whom it is intended? (Attainability). It is found that the present higher secondary syllabus in General English does not specify the objectives of the course. It does not give details of the teaching points to be covered. It does not suggest activities to engage the students in to cause effective learning to take place. Neither does it suggest any teaching methods to follow. The syllabus also does not give details of the scheme of examination mentioning the type of questions to be asked to test the achievement of students. Moreover, the syllabus does not mention anything of the previous course in English as a Second Language which the higher secondary students had already studied in order to relate to and build upon it. There is a marked difference between the classroom situation in the secondary stage and that in the higher secondary stage. Whereas in the former the number of students does not normally exceed one hundred in a
class, in the latter the number is generally around two hundred and in some cases even three hundred. In the secondary stage there are generally adequate number of teachers to teach English but in the higher secondary stage their number is not appropriately proportionate to the number of students. This point is very important to keep in mind when suggesting classroom teaching methods. But the syllabus neither spells out the teaching methods nor does it speak anything of large classes and how to teach effectively in them with the manpower available. So the syllabus is not very specific about different aspects of teaching English as a Second Language at this stage.

In the absence of any clearly defined objectives there is no means of finding out their justification. So it may only be assumed that the syllabus framers have intended students to achieve a general proficiency in English. As the teaching objectives have not been mentioned it also cannot be affirmed that they can be attained.

4.2 The textbook for the detailed study

One textbook in English has been prescribed for the detailed study. It is Select Readings in English which
is a compilation of prose and poetry. The contents of the book are divided into two sections — prose and poetry. Besides them one more section is meant for the students of vocational stream which we are not taking into consideration because our field of research is limited to the three general streams of arts, science and commerce. There are eleven pieces of prose and eleven poems in the textbook. They are:

**Prose section**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Julius Caesar</td>
<td>William Shakespeare Retold by G.B. Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>William Shakespeare Retold by Charles and Mary Lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The Last Lesson</td>
<td>Alphonse Daudet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Life and Learning</td>
<td>George Bernard Shaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The Harm That Good Men Do</td>
<td>Bertrand Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 A Scene from Abraham Lincoln</td>
<td>John Drinkwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 On Saying 'Please'</td>
<td>A.G.Gardiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 The Verger</td>
<td>W.S.Maugham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 How Science has Changed Our Lives</td>
<td>C.E.M. Joad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 The Test</td>
<td>M.K.Gandhi</td>
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</table>
From our discussion in the earlier section it is clear that the syllabus does not explicitly state anything about aims and objectives of the course. However, in the Preface to the above textbook the aim of
the course is spelt out as the "adequate development of language ability of students to handle the English language confidently in speech and writing in diverse situations." The objectives of the course are described as "developing students' communicative competence" and "to make students see how the vocabulary and structures operate in the language" (particularly, through the annotations and exercises given in the prose section). Further, it is stated that the poems in the textbook are "expected to draw student's attention to the needs of literature." When analysing and evaluating this textbook we will relate the above aims and objectives to the needs and ability of Assamese students discussed in Chapter 3 and will examine how they are fulfilled by the passages included. Although all the prose pieces and poems have not been prescribed for the present higher secondary course we will take all of them for analysis thinking that those left out now may be included in the course in future. We will discuss the subject under the following headings: (1) Vocabulary, (2) Grammatical structures, (3) Thought content, (4) Cultural points, (5) Interest value, (6) Notes and glossary, (7) Exercises, (8) Mistakes in the textbook, and (9) Printing and get-up.
4.2.1 Vocabulary

Taking into consideration the needs as well as the ability of students and the difficulties faced by them as discussed in Chapter 3, we will examine the vocabulary used in the prescribed textbook to find whether it is suitable or difficult for the students' learning purpose. We accept the vocabulary of 2700 headwords prepared by Bertha Hensman (which includes almost all the 2000 words from Michael West's General Service List) and recommended for secondary school students in the Nagpur report (*The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools: Report of All India Seminar of Lecturers of Secondary Training Colleges; held at the University Training College; Nagpur, from December 5 to 20, 1957*) as suitable for writing and selecting textbooks for the students. When analysing the prose passages and poems we will first list the words which fall outside the Nagpur list of vocabulary, and then discuss them with regard to their frequency, range, coverage, usefulness, difficulty and overall value.

The passages "Julius Caesar" and "The Merchant of Venice" contain each more than fifty words and a number of expressions which fall outside the recommended vocabulary and are very difficult for the students. A few of them are listed below:
tribunes, abashed, portend, augurers, spouting, dabbled, pulpit, extenuated, fagots, expostulate, fret, testament, mantle, legions, sheathe, usurer, covetous, reproach, besought, cur, tarry, sagacity, expedient, plaudits, wrest, endeavour, apparel, arduous, merchandise.

W.F. Mackey in his book *Language Teaching Analysis* says, "Since the items occurring the most frequently are those which the learner is most likely to meet they are the ones which are selected for teaching" (177). But all the words listed above do not occur frequently in the reading materials which the students are likely to face or use in their future life. Moreover, G.B. Harrison, and Charles and Mary Lamb have kept several words of Shakespeare intact with their meanings originally intended by the author. But in the present day English those words do not carry the same meanings. So as far as the quality of frequency is concerned the above words and expressions are not suitable for the higher secondary students. Therefore, they should be edited and replaced with current and simpler words.

"The number of samples or texts in which an item is found is its range. A word that is found everywhere is more important than one that can be found in one particular text or situation only" (Mackey 182). The
range of the words like *portend*, *spout*, *dabble*, *legions*,
*augurers*, *usurer*, *covetous* and *merchandise* is very
limited. So they are not suitable for the students.

"The coverage or covering capacity of an item is
the number of things one can say with it. ... If there
are two or more possible forms, the one which covers the
greatest number of uses is preferable" (Mackey 184).
But the words like *coronet*, *loath*, *rabble*, *whelped*,
*pulpit*, *expostulate*, *sagacity*, *apparel* and *endeavour* to
name only a few, do not have a wide covering capacity.
It is better if these words are edited and replaced with
simpler words having a wide covering capacity.

A number of words and expressions are now used with
changed meanings. For example, Shakespeare uses 'suck
living blood' (meaning: derive vitality), 'there is
tears' (meaning: there are tears), 'provisions'
(meaning: food materials),'did nothing doubt' (meaning:
did not doubt), 'I must away' (meaning: I must leave
immediately), 'civil doctor' (meaning: lawyer), etc.
which are not used in the same sense in today's English.
So they are not useful to the students. The students learn
English to meet their needs for which the knowledge of current
English is required, not Shakespearean English.
Therefore, the editors of the textbook should edit the
above expressions and write them in current and simple English.

There are also a number of words in the two passages which are very difficult for the higher secondary students, for example: extenuated, expostulate, wrangle, triumph, expedient, plaudits, wrest and arduous. The passages will be better suited for the students if such words are edited and replaced with simpler words.

Taking into account all aspects of vocabulary used in "Julius Caesar" and "The Merchant of Venice" we consider them unsuitable for the students.

One more aspect of the two passages is worth commenting on. One passage runs into as many as twenty-seven pages and the other into fourteen. So they are not suitable for the higher secondary students. Considering their ability and entry behaviour a prescribed passage should not exceed five pages. Otherwise, it may frighten the learners.

We have also identified a number of difficult and very difficult words in four other passages — 28 in "The Harm That Good Men Do", 34 in "On Saying 'Please'", 39 in "The Verger" and 27 in "Bertrand Russell". The density of difficult words in these passages is
approximately 1:83, 1:54, 1:65 and 1:49 respectively.
It is necessary that the passages should contain several
new words in an increasing order to provide sufficient
intellectual challenge to learners but considering their
entry behaviour and ability the number and density of
difficult words in the above four passages make them
unsuitable for the higher secondary course.

There are a number of difficult words in the rest
of the prose passages too except "A Scene from Abraham
Lincoln." Of course, many of them have been explained
in the Notes but there still remain many words which
hinder the students' understanding of the passages. We
find that all these passages will be better suited for
the students if a number of words such as stupendous,
ignoramus, castigate, assiduous, peccadilloes,
laceration, insolent, uncouth, panegyric, magpies,
calaminated, parasol, epistemology, pari passu and
oligarchy are edited and replaced with simpler words.
The editors should see that the words which have
functional value to Assamese students are used in the
editing of the passages so that the passages will not
only be suitable for the students but also useful to
them.

Regarding the teaching of poetry Forrester makes
the following observation:
Poetry, as most syllabuses say, should be taught for enjoyment, for the sake of rhythm, sound, word-pictures and, of course, the ideas. The question is how much of this can we get across to students with limited vocabularies and an uncertain grasp of the structures of the language, especially when what grasp they have is liable to be upset by the inversions in word order allowed to poets. (96)

However, we consider the learning of English incomplete without studying poetry. The words and their organization in poems can be used to teach how poets create word-pictures and give shape to their imagination. We support the inclusion of poetry in the higher secondary course to help develop the faculty of imagination in students and to teach them imaginative use of the English language. But taking into consideration the ability of the students the poems prescribed for them should not contain a lot of difficult words. The ideas dealt in the poems should be simple too.

Further, Forrester says, "The general idea of the poem as a whole is more important than details such as vocabulary and literary allusions" (96). But if the
vocabulary in a poem is beyond the comprehension of the students it will obstruct the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of poetry. Although there are a number of words in all the poems which fall outside the recommended vocabulary listed in the Nagpur report the general idea can be grasped with a little effort. However, "The Highwayman" and "The Bridge of Sighs" contain a large number of difficult words. (We have identified 51 and 33 in them respectively.) These words may come on the way of appreciating the poems as a whole. Therefore, as far as vocabulary is concerned we consider these two poems unsuitable for the higher secondary students. But the rest nine poems are not unsuitable as they contain less number of difficult words.

4.2.2 Grammatical structures

A total of three hundred thirty seven (337) teaching points on grammatical structures are recommended in the Study Group Report (The Study of English in India, 1967, Appendix Two (B)) to be covered in a general English course for higher secondary students. (This number of structures includes the structures taught in the earlier classes.) After taking into consideration the needs and ability of students
discussed in Chapter 3. We propose to analyse the prose passages in the textbook to find whether there are sentences in them which use grammatical structures beyond the recommended patterns making them too difficult for the students. We will conduct our discussion mainly touching the following points: (1) sentences with several clauses and complicated in thought, (2) sentences with difficult patterns or forms, and (3) usefulness of such sentences in communicative functions and in day-to-day life situations.

Some of the lengthy sentences with difficult sentence patterns or grammatical structures found in "Julius Caesar" and "The Merchant of Venice" are listed below:

1. Last night at supper you suddenly arose and walked about, and when I asked you what was the matter you stared at me; and when I insisted, you gave me no answer but waved your hand for me to leave; which I did, thinking that it was perhaps some whim. (10)

2. Through this his beloved Brutus stabbed, and, as he plucked his dagger away, see how Caesar's blood followed, as though rushing out of doors to know if it were Brutus who had so unkindly knocked; for Brutus, as you know, was like Caesar's good angel. (19)
Cassius, whose rage was kindled sooner than Brutus's and sooner allayed, was now beginning to yield and cried out in passion, "Come, Antony, and young Octavius, revenge yourselves on Cassius, for Cassius is weary of the world, hated by one he loves, braved by his brother, checked like a slave, all his faults observed, set down in a notebook, learned by heart." (24)

One day Bassanio came to Antonio and told him that he wished to repair his fortune by a wealthy marriage with a lady whom he dearly loved, whose father, that was lately dead, had left her sole heiress to a large estate; and that in her father's lifetime he used to visit at her house, when he thought he had observed this lady had sometimes from her eyes sent speechless messages, that seemed to say he would be no unwelcome suitor; but not having money to furnish himself with an appearance befitting the lover of so rich an heiress, he besought Antonio to add to the many favours he had shown him, by lending him three thousand ducats. (38-39)

Bassanio confessed to Portia that he had no fortune, and that his high birth and noble ancestry was all that he could boast of; she, who loved him
for his worthy qualities and had riches enough not
to regard wealth in a husband, answered with a
graceful modesty, that she would wish herself a
thousand times more fair, and ten thousand times
more rich, to be more worthy of him, and then the
accomplished Portia prettily dispraised hereself,
and said she was an unlessoned girl, unschooled,
unpractised, yet not so old but that she could
learn, and that she would commit her gentle spirit
to be directed and governed by him in all things
and she said, "...", presenting a ring to Bassanio.
(41)

6 When Portia parted with her husband, she spoke
cheeringly to him and bade him bring his dear
friend along with him when he returned; yet she
feared it would go hard with Antonio, and when she
was left alone, she began to think and consider
within herself, if she could by any means be
instrumental in saving the life of her dear
Bassanio's friend; and notwithstanding when she
wished to honour her Bassanio, she had said to him
with such a meek and wife-like grace, that she
would submit in all things to be governed by his
superior wisdom, yet being now called forth into
action by the peril of her honoured husband's
friend, she did nothing doubt her own powers and by the sole guidance of her own true and perfect judgement, at once resolved to go herself to Venice, and speak in Antonio's defence. (43)

7 The importance of the arduous task Portia had engaged in gave this tender lady courage, and she boldly proceeded in the duty she had undertaken to perform: and first of all she addressed herself to Shylock and allowing that he had a right by the Venetian law to have the forfeit expressed in the bond, she spoke so sweetly of the noble quality of mercy, as would have softened any heart but the unfeeling Shylock's saying that it dropped as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath; and how mercy was double blessing, it blessed him that gave, and him that received it, and how it became monarchs better than their crowns, being an attribute of God Himself; and that earthly power came nearest to God's, in proportion as mercy tempered justice; and she bid Shylock remember that as we all pray for mercy, that same prayer should teach us to show mercy. (44)

8 Now as it was utterly impossible for Shylock to cut off the pound of flesh without shedding some of Antonio's blood, this wise discovery of Portia's,
that it was flesh and not blood that was named in the bond, saved the life of Antonio; and all, admiring the wonderful sagacity of the young counsellor, who had so happily thought of this expedient, plaudits resounded from every part of the senate house; and Gratiano exclaimed, in the words which Shylock had used, "O wise and upright judge! mark, Jew, a Daniel is come to judgment!" (46)

9 For some time ... Brutus would respond. (2)
10 Yet you and ... as a king. (4)
11 Till then, think ... likely to follow. (4)
12 So Cassius determined ... at Caesar's ambitions. (7)
13 If Brutus will ... with true faith. (13)
14 If they hated ... here by Caesar. (13-14)
15 "Only, be patient," ... done this deed." (14)
16 "Would you rather," ... all free men?" (15)
17 The question of ... he suffered death. (16)
18 On Brutus's wing ... to help them. (26)
19 Shylock being a ... generous merchant Antonio. (38)
20 Whenever Antinio met ... secretly meditated revenge. (38)
21 He was greatly ... apt to do. (38)
22 Antonio had no ... of those ships. (39)
23 Signor Antonio, on ... was a cur. (39)
24 If you will ... exact the penalty. (39)
25 This seemingly kind ... that Shylock pleased. (40)
26 Bassanio was sadly ... out by proclamation. (48)
27 Portia, when she ... than by day." (49)

All these twenty-seven sentences are very long and contain a number of clauses. For example, sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 contain 10, 8, 12, 13, 11, 16, 16 and 9 co-ordinate and subordinate clauses respectively. So the presentation of thoughts and ideas gets complicated making it difficult for the students to comprehend even when they are explained by the teacher. The length of the sentences exceed the memory span of the students who find it hard to get a clear picture of the sentence patterns. Moreover, such sentences do not help in developing communicative skills in students. Such sentences are never used in day-to-day life situations. So they are not useful for the learning purposes of the students. We, therefore, find the two passages, "Julius Caesar" and "The Merchant of Venice" unsuitable for the students.

Some of the lengthy sentences with difficult sentence patterns found in the rest of nine prose passages in the textbook are listed below followed by discussion on them.
"The Last Lesson"

1. Not till then ... and prize days. (62)
2. Then, from one ... to their prison. (64)

"Life and Learning"

1. That is a ... who did it. (72)
2. To me a ... for school classics. (76)
3. As to mathematics ... literary men do. (76)

"The Harm That Good Men Do"

1. Apart from his ... with subversive ideas. (82)
2. When, therefore, any ... his political career. (86)
3. If he had ... Bulgaria, and Russia. (86)
4. The superstitious character ... not recognize him. (87)
5. But a man ... to public objects. (88)

"A Scene from Abraham Lincoln"

There are no lengthy and difficult sentences in this passage.

"On Saying 'Please'"

1. The law does ... down my back. (110)
2. It is probable ... a legal redress. (111)
3. Probably the man ... "answered her back". (111)
4. If Wordsworth could ... and kindly feeling. (114)
"The Verger"

1 It was a ... his surpliced arm. (122)
2 Starting as a ... a retired ambassador. (123)
3 I've lived a ... I'd want to. (125)
4 He did not ... accepting a situation. (126)
5 His wife said ... what was Caesar's. (127)

"How Science has Changed Our Lives"

1 But this use ... all other civilizations. (141)
2 As a result ... the same country. (143)
3 Then I shall ... do not know. (143)
4 And economic bonds ... Universal Postal Union. (144)

"The Test"

1 But Mr. Escombe ... escort us home. (155)
2 You had a ... not have happened. (158)

"Bertrand Russell"

1 He is not ... concentration of wealth. (166)
2 It worries Russell ... rise in population. (166)

There are less number of long and involved sentences in each of the above eight prose passages except "A Scene from Abraham Lincoln" in which there are no such sentences. So we do not consider the passages
unsuitable for the students as far as sentence structures are concerned. However, it is true that a number of students do find even these passages difficult for them as evident from their views discussed in Chapter 3. But if other aspects of these passages like thought content, cultural points, and interest value are found to be suitable for the students a few long involved sentences will not pose any great obstacle to comprehension. Most of the sentence patterns in these nine prose passages may be used to teach communicative functions in day-to-day life situations and some of them with a little modification.

Discussion on thought content, cultural points and interest value of all the prose passages and poems will be made in the following subsections.

4.2.3 Thought content

Even when the vocabulary and grammatical structures in a passage are well within the comprehension of the students and the thought content or the subject matter is not, then it also becomes difficult for the students. Moreover, if the mode of presentation of thoughts, which may be called the style of the author, is indirect, ironical or satirical in a passage, it may also become
difficult for the students. At the higher secondary stage students may be able to understand the hidden intention of the writer in an ironical piece of writing in their mother tongue but not in English. It is because they have not yet acquired sufficient insight into the subtle nuances of this language. Keeping this point in mind we propose to analyse the thought contents of both prose and poetry pieces in the textbook to find whether they are suitable or not for the students.

The story of "Julius Caesar" may not seem to be difficult for the students but in many places the speeches of Cassius and Antony are full of indirectness, insinuations and irony. So students cannot understand them easily and cannot arrive at the true meaning of the speakers' intentions. George Bernard Shaw's "Life and Learning" which "seems to have been written for school 'Speech Day'" (77) is a piece of cynicism. In the passage Shaw seems not to have any respect for the knowledge of classroom teachers and, more particularly, the examiners. He recommends students to take the help of a 'crammer' in order to excel in examinations. Such a lesson will have negative impact on the students because the students will take Shaw's advice literally. But Shaw may have only a section of school teachers and examiners in mind whom he has referred to in this
write-up. Moreover, in today's educational set up teachers and examiners are very less likely to act as they are described to be acting in the passage. Therefore, this prose piece should not be included in the higher secondary course.

Bertrand Russell's "The Harm That Good Men Do" is an ironic piece and is beyond the comprehension of students. One more passage, "Bertrand Russell" by Hem Barua is a brief critical appraisal of Bertrand Russell's philosophy. The higher secondary students find it very difficult to grasp philosophical ideas in English. Moreover, they do not study English in order to read philosophical writings as it is evident from the discussions made in Chapter 3. In the report of an academic workshop held under the aegis of the University Grants Commission at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Regional Centre, Shillong in 1990 the following comments are given:

The essays like 'Bertrand Russell' by Hem Barua are not only uninteresting but also difficult for the students of +2 stage. As Hem Barua's essay is a critical appraisal of Bertrand Russell's life and works, it is above the intellectual standard of the students of this stage.
So this essay should be excluded from the higher secondary course.

"The Verger" by W.S. Maugham is a short story in which a character, Albert Edward Foreman is an illiterate man. The author has appropriately used grammatically wrong and colloquial words and sentences which he has put into the mouth of Foreman. Here are some of Foreman's words:

"Don't 'e know I want my tea?"

"He said it didn't make no difference."

"It's not as if I was a bettin' man."

Here non-standard English is used with clipped forms and ungrammatical structures. But the students will not understand the real intention of the writer. They are likely to think these sentences to be grammatically correct and may use them in their own writings. So, the story will have been suitable for the students if the words of Foreman are edited and retold in correct English.

The rest of the prose passages are not unsuitable for the higher secondary students as far as thought content is concerned.

Students at the higher secondary stage find it difficult to appreciate poems in English. In other
words, enjoying the poetic experience is beyond the intellectual standard of the students. They can only grasp some general aspects of poems. Although the themes of all the eleven poems in the textbook are not difficult or complex, the way of presentation of thoughts in some of the poems makes them difficult for the students. G.G. Byron's "On the Castle of Chillon", John Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's 'Homer'" and Wilfred Owen's "Futility" are the three poems which may be put into this category. Take the following examples:

'To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom' (181),

'Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold' (183),

'Or like stout Cortez — when with eagle eyes He stared at the Pacific' (183)

and

'O what made fatuous sunbeams toil' (203).

The subject matter of other eight poems can be comprehended by the students.

4.2.4 Cultural points

A language reflects the culture of a community. So learning a language goes with learning something about
the culture of the country of its origin. According to H.G. Widdowson, in order to achieve communicative competence the learner has not only to know rules of grammar but also the rules of use in particular social situations (qtd. in Munby 17-18). And "A speaker's competence includes knowing how to recognise and how to use sentences to perform what he calls rhetorical acts — e.g. defining, classifying, promising, warning, etc." (qtd. in Munby 17). On communicative competence Robert L. Cooper says, "To communicate effectively, a speaker must know not only how to produce any and all grammatical utterances of a language, but also how to use them appropriately. The speaker must know what to say, with whom, and when, and where" (qtd. in Munby 17-18). Further, Widdowson makes an important point that for learners outside the European cultural tradition such rules of use need to be carefully taught.

As the aim of the textbook under analysis is to develop students' communicative competence we have to see how the passages can be used to achieve this end. Along with Widdowson's and Cooper's views we have to take into account Alan Cunningsworth's who says that in a country like India where English as a Second Language is used for communication between groups of people who each have their own language, course materials or textbooks should be
... very firmly rooted in the culture and traditions of the country. ... English can be presented realistically and naturally in its role as a second language in use for a variety of purposes within the learners' own country. This state of affairs has the advantage that the learners can see the direct relevance of English to their daily lives and their future prospects, with all that — this entails in terms of positive motivation. (62-63)

The European cultural background is used by the writers in the lessons like "Julius Caesar", "The Merchant of Venice" and "The Verger." But these passages are not sufficiently suitable to be used to teach "What to say, with whom, and when, and where" (qtd. in Munby 17-18). "On Saying 'Please'" is on social manners. Although in Assamese society terms like 'please' and 'thank you' are not used frequently in social exchanges and conversations, the students can be taught how such terms are very essential in the European society. The teacher may adapt this lesson and frame some supplementary teaching materials to teach the students about social manners of the English people. However, we think that the three prose passages, "Julius Caesar", "The Merchant of Venice" and "The
Verger" should be replaced with some other more suitable pieces of writing in which the Indian cultural background may have been used to be of more relevance to the students. Except these three the rest of the passages are not difficult for the students from the cultural point of view.

In the poetry section we do not find any of the eleven poems posing any difficulty to the students from the cultural point of view.

4.2.5 Interest value

The subject matter of the passages should be of intrinsic interest to the learners considering their linguistic needs, intellectual level, age and social environment. Alan Cunningsworth says:

A very important consideration is the content, or subject matter, of a course. ... If we are to get away from the claustrophobic situation of using language for its own sake, we need to see that the materials which we adopt make use of language in order to convey information, express opinions, etc. which are of genuine intrinsic interest to the learners. If through a reading passage the learners not
only get exposure to English but also become interested in the subject matter, their motivation will be increased and they will see more purpose in learning the language. In this way the whole learning process will be enriched. (57)

G.B. Shaw's: "Life and Learning," Bertrand Russell's "The Harm That Good Men Do" and Hem Barua's "Bertrand Russell" are not likely to be of intrinsic interest to the students because they are difficult. Their style is not direct or simple too. Moreover, the students cannot relate the subject matter of the last two passages to their experience. Although the other eight passages will be of some interest to the students, they do not create any intrinsic interest. At the higher secondary stage students are adolescents or teenagers. They are naturally interested in writings on sports, travels, current affairs, quizzes, wild life, general science, TV programmes, movie, music, entertaining stories, and wit and humour. This fact is clear from our investigation done in Chapter 3. Only "The Last Lesson", "A Scene from Abraham Lincoln", "How Science has Changed Our Lives" and "The Test" may be sufficiently interesting to the students because their style is simple and lively, and the subject matter
appealing to the young minds. Further, no passage in
the textbook has sports, travels, current affairs,
quizzes, wild life, TV programmes, movie, music, or wit
and humour as its theme. Some passages could also have
been written showing how English as a Second Language
would be useful to students in their future life, thus
motivating them positively to learn the language well.

Considering the level of cognitive maturity of the
students at the higher secondary stage and keeping in
view the difference in the understanding of poetry in
their mother tongue and that in English, the prescribed
poems should have been on such themes to be of interest
to the students. The students at this stage,
adolescents and teenagers as they are, are very likely
to be interested in joys of life, wit and humour, comic
writings, nature's beauty, acts of bravery, adventure,
problems of teenagers, view of the wider world they grow
into, and the like. So the poems for them should have
been on the above themes. Only four out of the eleven
poems can be said to be on such themes. They are
William Blake's "A Robin Redbreast in a Cage", William
Wordsworth's "To the Skylark", Alfred Tennyson's "The
Charge of the Light Brigade", and Robert Browning's
"Home Thoughts from Abroad." William Cowper's "The
Solitude of Alexander Selkirk" is on the loneliness of
the protagonist in a deserted island; Alfred Noyes's "The Highwayman" is a love tragedy; Robert Southey's "The Scholar" is on the theme of scholastic pursuits by studying books. Some may argue (Kundu 33-34) that such poems as these four reflect old-age bias and are selected from the point of view of aged people (perhaps, due to editors' own middle age) who are preoccupied with thoughts of death and life after death, not from the point of view of young boys and girls who are students at the higher secondary stage. They may think the themes of these poems to be unsuitable for the students because "they (the students) have not yet tasted what life is" (Kundu 33-34). But we think that solitude and death are an inseparable part of life. So, even the students at the higher secondary stage do not find such poems uninteresting. Moreover, the students are made to think of solitude and death by exercising their faculty of imagination. In studying these poems they find an opportunity to use English for imaginative purposes. Thomas Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs" is on the death of a 'fallen woman' who committed suicide by drowning herself. The poet urges people to be sympathetic to the dead woman. But we consider the ideas of suicide, adultery and prostitution which are to be explained to the students during the course of teaching this poem.
unsuitable for teenage boys and girls. Therefore, this poem should be excluded from the higher secondary course.

From our earlier discussion we have found Byron's "On the Castle of Chillon", Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's 'Homer'" and Owen's "Futility" difficult for the higher secondary students owing to their reflective nature and the way of presentation of the subject matter. As these poems are difficult the students find them as if they are hard nuts to crack and therefore, uninteresting. So we consider them unsuitable for the students.

Whether it is a prose passage or a poem it should be sufficiently interesting so that the students can be drawn towards learning English well. On the other hand, if a piece is not on a theme which interests the students learning may not take place or, at least, it will be very difficult to take place. The students might very well say, in the words of the Zimbabwean novelist Tsitsi Dangaremba, "I'd try to look for myself in the books I read, but I didn't find me" (qtd. in the Editorial of English Teaching Forum July 1995).

4.2.6 Notes and glossary

Each prose or poetry passage in the textbook is followed
by notes and glossary. First there is a brief introduction to the author and his works. There is also a brief note on the subject matter of the passage. Explanation of cultural and difficult points along with the meaning of difficult words and phrases are given too. All these are helpful to students as well as the teacher. Difficult words and phrases are explained in simple English. If there are archaic words in the text there is a direction in the Notes to students not to use them in their writing. In "The Merchant of Venice" there are several words which are not used in modern English in the same sense as they were used by Shakespeare. So, while the meaning of the words are given in modern English there is also a direction to students not to use them in their own writing in a similar sense.

The teacher can make use of the notes and glossary. He should also give illustrative sentences to students for each difficult word so that the meaning of the words is driven home. When there is a note on any cultural point the teacher should elaborate it further comparing it with similar cultural points in the Indian context, if possible.

There is also a section which gives explanations on sentence patterns found in the passages, and on grammar
and usage. This section is useful to both the students and the teacher. In the exercises that follow there is no extensive practice on the sentence patterns, grammar and usage. Practice exercises should be designed and incorporated into the existing Exercises. In any case, if they are designed by the teacher they can be used in the classroom for the immediate benefit of the students.

4.2.7 Exercises

We may broadly divide exercises into three types: practice exercises, testing exercises and exercises on composition. Practice exercises are on sentence patterns, and grammar and usage which are meant for consolidating learning of correct forms. Forrester says:

Although there is always some element of testing in an exercise the main purpose should be to provide sufficient practice of the correct form. ... Each exercise should deal with one main point. ... The mistakes show where the students still have difficulty and need further help and practice. This is the element of testing. (63)
There are practice exercises in the textbook but they are not sufficient. There should be more exercises in the textbook for practising and consolidating the learning of correct sentence patterns, grammatical forms and usage.

On designing tests or the testing exercises Forrester further says:

A test has a wider range of items, which are graded in difficulty. It should differentiate clearly between the very good, good, average, weak and very weak students and should also reveal the points of difficulty in the subject. (63)

But in the textbook except the element of testing ingrained in practice exercises there are no exclusive testing exercises on sentence patterns, grammatical forms and usage. However, there is a section in the existing Exercises which contains questions on the subject matter of the passage requiring short answers. From the students' answers to these questions it may be tested whether they have learnt correct sentence patterns, grammatical forms and usage but the testing is not likely to be clear. Further, this exercise requiring short answers to questions is not graded in
ascending order of difficulty to suit every type of students from very weak to very good as discussed by Forrester.

However, there are different types of exercises on grammatical structures and vocabulary which have validity and reliability to a great extent and are very useful to the students. There are sentence interpretation (multiple-choice) type exercises, for example:

D. Exercises:

1. In the following sentences one word is italicised. From the given alternatives choose the one, which in that context, is nearest in meaning to the italicised word.

a) Having searched my pockets in vain for stray coppers, I found I was utterly penniless.

A. a kind of metal
B. policemen
C. a vessel made of metal
D. small coins. (117)

Such type of exercises help students in vocabulary building.

There are also the following completion (multiple-choice) type of exercises, for example:
3. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences by using a word or words from the box given below:

that, where, who, how, which, whose, whom, why.

a) The man _____ you met yesterday, is a teacher.

________________________

g) Do you know _____ to make a cake? (119)

Students learn the use of relative pronouns by working out such exercises.

There are also the following completion (supply type) exercises:

6. Fill in each blank with an appropriate preposition and write out the sentences.

i) Ajoy was not accustomed _____ driving.

________________________

vi) It all turned _____ a sad affair. (149)

Use of appropriate prepositions can be taught through such exercises.
Here is another example of completion (supply type) exercises:

7. Choose the appropriate word from the two given in brackets and write out the sentences.
   i) Some fishes (breathe/breed) air.

.................................

vii) He now works less (hard/hardly) than he used to. (149)

Teaching of the use of appropriate word in a context can be done through such exercises.

There are also the following conversion (supply type) exercises, for example:

4. Put the verbs in brackets into the correct tense and rewrite the passages.

a) I started for school very late that morning and _____ (be) in

.................................

moment I _____ (think) of running away.

b) I _____ (walk) down the street

.................................

He _____ (hold) his tie in his hand too. (70)
Such exercises help in teaching the correct form of verbs in contexts.

Each prose passage in the textbook is followed by the above types of exercises. Although it is not possible on the part of the classroom teacher to help all the students (nearly 250 in a class) work out these exercises and check their answers, he may give some general guidance to them on how to work out these exercises. The students who can afford to have their answers checked by private tutors will be greatly benefited and will develop skills in English. These exercises are useful to the students in mastering grammatical structures and in developing skills in English.

Now let us analyse the comprehension and composition exercises on the subject matter of the prose passages. Following the footsteps of Harris (59) we consider the fact that the reading comprehension and composition exercises should aim at developing the following abilities in the higher secondary students:

1. Identifying the writer's purpose and central idea
2. Understanding the subordinate ideas which support the thesis
3 Drawing correct conclusions and valid inferences from what is given

4 Recognizing the author's attitude toward the subject and the reader; understanding the tone of the writing

5 Identifying the methods and stylistic devices by which the author conveys his ideas.

The following are some of the comprehension and composition exercises given in the textbook:

Answer the following questions:

1. (a) What is a verger?
   (b) Write the full name of the verger.
   (c) Name the church where he worked.

2. (a) How did the verger use his gowns?
   (b) What did he do with his old gowns and why did he do it?

3. "All this 'ustle," said Albert Edward. "But give 'im time, he'll learn."
   (a) To whom did Mr Foreman say this?
   (b) Describe the situation in which this was said.
   (c) Explain the meaning of Mr Foreman's words. (134-135)

And
1. Why does Shaw think that he has 'not grown up yet'?  

2. What, according to Shaw, will his listeners discover when they leave school?  

3. Why does the author say that the hardest part of schooling is the early part?  

4. Why does Shaw refer to a child's early achievements as a 'stupendous feat of sheer learning'? (81)  

Most of the questions in the exercises quoted above are wh-questions which seek to test only the students' knowledge and information on the subject matter of the prose passages.

But it is more important that exercises should stress on skills of language like how to identify and organize main points of the passage, how to identify the structure of an argument and how an argument is supported through illustration and reason. It is also necessary that the question should aim at enabling the students to recognize the writer's attitude toward the subject and the reader. Some questions must be asked on the tone of the writing and on the methods and stylistic devices by which the author conveys his ideas.

4.2.8 Mistakes in the textbook  

Mistakes in a textbook, particularly, in an English
language teaching course do a lot of harm to the learners because whatever is printed in the textbooks is accepted as correct by the learners. Even average teachers hesitate to make necessary corrections in the textbook as they think the textbook writers to be infallible or, at least, far more knowledgeable than they are. So mistakes in spelling and grammatical forms, and inappropriate and unacceptable expressions found in the textbook are learnt by the students which are hard to be eliminated in future. Thus they have a damaging effect on the learning environment and the learner. The cost of a single error in a textbook has been calculated in monetary terms by Michael West in his book, *Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances* (75-79) to be £30,000 per annum in Britain in the year 1960.

Now let us look at the mistakes in the textbook under evaluation. There are a large number of mistakes of different types in this textbook. There are spelling mistakes and mistakes in grammatical forms. There are also inappropriate and unacceptable expressions and sentence constructions. The mistakes are listed below along with their possible correct forms followed by discussion on them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Mistakes</th>
<th>Possible correct forms/Our comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>... the two-years</td>
<td>... the two-year Higher Higher Secondary Secondary Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>iii</td>
<td>bund</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>vii</td>
<td>Alphonso Daudet</td>
<td>Alphonse Daudet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>viii</td>
<td>How a Submarine Work</td>
<td>How a Submarine Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>William Shakespear</td>
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<td>Julius Caesar was</td>
<td>Julius Caesar was the dictator of Rome.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>... was like Caesar's</td>
<td>... was like Caesar's good anger good angel</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Brutuss</td>
<td>Brutus's</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>suck living blood:</td>
<td>suck living blood: derive vitality</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>occured</td>
<td>occurred</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>sooth sayer</td>
<td>soothsayer</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>What did the two friends, Brutus and Cassius, quarrel?</td>
<td>What did the two friends, Brutus and Cassius, quarrel for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Possible correct forms/</td>
<td>Our comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>... from her eyes sent speeches</td>
<td>... from her eyes sent speechless messages, ...</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>... that he had no future, ...</td>
<td>... that he had no fortune,...</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>&quot;... how I have loved you. !&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;... how I have loved you!&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>In this story also the writer has retained ...</td>
<td>In this story also the writers have retained ... (Charles and Mary Lamb are two writers who have jointly written this prose passage.)</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>(Use of but as a predisposition meaning &quot;except&quot;)</td>
<td>Use of but as a preposition meaning &quot;except&quot;)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 20   | 54  | (... a possibility or a hypothetical situation. ...) | (... a possibility or a hypothetical situation. ...)
<p>| 21   | 57  | (... words/phrases are printed italics.) | (... words/phrases are printed in italics.) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Mistakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 59</td>
<td>Man becomes almost like. Good when he judges people with forgiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 59</td>
<td>... cutting off Antonio's flesh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 66</td>
<td>cranky; eccentric, whimsical</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 66</td>
<td>reproach : scold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 67</td>
<td>Gerunds either (i) function as nouns standing alone or (ii) operate as verbs in non-finite noun clauses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 67</td>
<td>Participles either (1) function as verbal objectives, or (2) operate as verbs in non-finite clauses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Page</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page No.</td>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>32 70</td>
<td>... late that morning ... late that morning and ___(b) ... and ___(be) ...</td>
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<td>33 70</td>
<td>... of running aways. ... of running away.</td>
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<tr>
<td>34 77</td>
<td>... his plays (Man and Superman, Pygmalion, Arms and the Man, etc.) (Titles of books should be written in italics when printed and underlined when written in hand.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>36 78</td>
<td>... one of Britain's greatest admirals.</td>
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<td>36 79</td>
<td>... author of the <em>Iliad</em> and the <em>Odyssey</em>. (Titles of books should be written in italics when printed and underlined when written in hand.)</td>
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<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
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<td>83</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 38     | 87       | ... certain kinds of conduct produce emotions of horror. quite regardless of the question whether they have bad effects or not. | ...
| 39     | 88, 89, 91 | Russel | Russell |
| 40     | 93       | Use of a reflexive pronoun as object | Use of a reflexive pronoun as object ...
<p>| 41     | 96       | Is it possible to use either that or which in both sentences? If not, why? | Is it possible to use either that or which in both sentences? If not, why? |
| 42     | 96       | He may we X and prevent Y from Z. | He may be X and prevent Y from Z. |
| 43     | 97       | What is a bad man's ideas about thinking? | What are a bad man's ideas about thinking? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Mistakes Possible correct forms/ Our comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Some of the words and phrases in the text have been put within question marks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Mary Stuart (1921) (It is the title of a play. So it should have been printed in italics.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>... used to soothe or comfort a child ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>... expressing intention on likelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>He sent (word/words) that ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>... assistant ... (We do not think this is the word used in the original. The word must be assailant.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>... a kick on the shins ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>... he was so nice about it ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>... if he had related the gentleman ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>... the Tube system of railways ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>&quot;Thou hast made him ...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>chesterfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>The underlined clause ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>One of the chief things is to save money ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>Is the offer still open?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>What is the author's</td>
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<td>incident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>embarassing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>refactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>gilt-edge securities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Reflexive pronouns are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>used as objects of a</td>
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<td>object are the same</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>person: I cut myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>... the discreet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ways ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>to have a ginger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in every pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>Mohan's mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>(b) Write the full name of the verger.</td>
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<td>69</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>St Petar's</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 70     | 150      | (iii) How can an elephant walk so noiselessly? | (iii) How can an elephant walk so noiselessly? Ans.: An elephant can walk so noiselessly because the — of its foot is very soft. Or, Because the — of its foot is very soft, an elephant can walk so noiselessly. (If an English sentence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Mistakes</th>
<th>Possible correct forms/Our comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>begins with the word 'because' it must have two clauses.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>drainage</td>
<td>drainage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>What is the bad effect of machines that the author hints at in paragraph 20?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>constabl's uniform</td>
<td>constable's uniform</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>calummiated</td>
<td>caluminated</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>as a weapons of destructions</td>
<td>as a weapon of destructions</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>Russel</td>
<td>Russell</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>gardner</td>
<td>gardener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>How does wars of the past differ from those of today?</td>
<td>How do wars of the past differ from those of today?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
<td>Mistakes</td>
<td>Possible correct forms/Our comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>cheered</td>
<td>cheered/cheer'd</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>affliction</td>
<td>affliction</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>The Lucy Poems,'</td>
<td>'The Lucy Poems.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>Childe Harold</td>
<td>Childe Harold</td>
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<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>revishing beauty</td>
<td>ravishing beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>&quot;One kiss, ... the way.'</td>
<td>&quot;One kiss, ... ... the way.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>sniggering</td>
<td>sniggering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>How could King George's men know ...</td>
<td>How could King George's men know ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>whispering</td>
<td>whispering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>How careless of her to knock over the flowers:</td>
<td>How careless of her to knock over the flowers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>Why does the speaker ask the person to be moved into the sun?</td>
<td>Why does the speaker ask the person to be moved into the sun?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of so many mistakes listed above many seem to be due to careless printing and proof-reading. Use of wrong punctuation marks, omission of punctuation marks and spelling mistakes are the three main types of printing errors found in the textbook. However, some mistakes appear to be genuine errors of the editors. Mistakes in an English textbook cause irreparable damage to the learning environment and the learner. The students learn incorrect grammatical forms, wrong spellings and use of wrong punctuation marks. The mistakes also cause confusion in the teaching process as what is taught as correct by the classroom teacher may clash with the mistakes printed in the textbook. If we make a calculation of the cost of these errors in monetary terms the way Michael West had done, it may be around £300,000 per annum even in a state like Assam. Therefore, the sooner these errors are removed the better, nay, it is still better if an error-free textbook is prescribed for the students.

4.2.9 Printing and get-up

The printing of the textbook is not clear and distinct. At many places t, i, r, and some other letters when printed in italics are either broken or indistinct.
There are also a large number of errors which may be attributed to careless proof-reading. The cover page of the book is not attractive. There are no pictures or illustrations in the textbook to break the monotony of reading. Moreover, the quality of the paper used for printing the textbook is not good. Only two varieties of typeface — plain (capital and small) and italicised (capital and small) letters are used in the textbook. Several other varieties with different sizes of typeface should have been used in printing the textbook.

4.2.10 Overall evaluation and suggestions for improvement

A textbook for the detailed study is used for teaching vocabulary, sentence patterns, grammatical forms and usage, reading comprehension, writing skills, composition on the subject matter, and appreciation. The present textbook can be used for all these purposes but the deficiencies and errors in the textbook should be removed first.

As far as the difficulty level of vocabulary and sentence patterns is concerned the textbook seems to have been prepared keeping the supposed terminal behaviour of the high school-leavers in mind. But it can safely be said that what the students have been
taught is no indication of what they have learnt. Even the percentage of marks they have secured in English in the high school leaving certificate examination cannot be a measuring rod because examiners are instructed to be liberal in awarding marks. Further, examinees are awarded grace marks by the Secondary Education Board of Assam to increase the percentage of successful candidates. This type of examination system makes it difficult to ascertain the real linguistic ability of the students who join the higher secondary course.

Poems should be simple and enjoyable. They should be about joys of life rather than about death or death wish. There should be passages with wit and humour. Both prose pieces and poems should contain motivating themes and elements for learning English.

Practice and testing exercises should be so designed as to discourage the use of cheap bazar notes by the students. They should make the students depend more on the textbook and the classroom teaching. Questions in the testing exercises should be so designed as to test communicative competence of the students.

Classroom activities suitable for large classes should be suggested to the teacher to handle the passages effectively.
4.3 The rapid readers

There are no objectives stated in the syllabus for including rapid readers in the higher secondary course. But, however, we may refer to the objectives of rapid readers stated in the syllabus in English (Second Language) for the high school students. It is stated:

The teaching of Rapid Readers should, however, be different from the teaching of the text prescribed for intensive reading. The text for intensive reading is meant for teaching the fundamentals of the language, while the Rapid Reader is meant for application of this knowledge in natural situations and for expanding the reading vocabulary i.e. passive vocabulary of the pupils."

Further, it is stated that "the Rapid Readers are primarily for reading comprehension and for developing the pupil's ability to read books in English on his own" and "the chief aim in teaching the rapid reader should be to equip pupils for their own independent reading."

And

To realize this aim, therefore, the Rapid Readers prescribed should be sufficiently
There are two rapid readers prescribed for the students:

1. **David Copperfield**
   by Charles Dickens, retold by Michael West, and published by Orient Longman;

2. **Around the World in Eighty Days**
   by Jules Verne, retold by L. Henniker-Major and published by Oxford University Press.

Although the students are required to study any one of the above two textbooks, we will analyse and evaluate both of them one by one.

**David Copperfield** is a novel by Charles Dickens which has been simplified by Michael West and brought within the vocabulary of 1800 headwords. It has a social theme with an abiding human interest. The main character, David Copperfield, narrates the events in his life from his birth to his marriage and a little after. The story is interesting to the higher secondary students. As the original text of the novel has been simplified and brought within the vocabulary of 1800 headwords it is not difficult for the students. Whenever there is a word outside the 1800 vocabulary...
it is explained in a footnote or in a picture where it first appears. The sentence patterns and other grammatical structures are within the comprehension of the higher secondary students. The thoughts in the book and the way of their presentation are not difficult for them too.

There is only one aspect of the book which is a little unfamiliar to the Assamese students. It is the names of persons and places in the book which are English. However, with a little effort both by the classroom teacher and the students themselves the unfamiliarity will disappear and the story will look transparent.

At the end of the book exercises are given on each chapter. They are helpful to the students in discussing the book by themselves. They are also helpful to the teacher in handling the text and conducting discussions on the book in the classroom. Guidance on pronunciation of the names of characters is also given in the book. It is helpful to the students and the teacher as well.

The printing and the get-up of the book are sufficiently attractive for the students of the higher secondary stage. Several illustrations add to the attractiveness of the book.
So, after taking into consideration all the aspects of the book we find it quite suitable for the higher secondary course. The objectives of a rapid reader mentioned in the beginning of this section can be met with the use of this book effectively.

_Around the Word in Eighty Days_ is a novel by Jules Verne retold by L. Henniker-Major in simplified language and brought within the vocabulary of 2800 headwords. It is an adventure-cum-fictional travelogue through different countries of the world. However, the novelist uses a scientific truth to bring about the climax. The truth is: if one travels eastward round the globe he will gain time of twenty four hours and if he travels westward he will lose this amount of time.

The vocabulary of 2800 headwords is little higher than the 2700 headwords of the Nagpur vocabulary list. So a number of words used in this book may pose difficulty for the students. They should have been explained in the notes appended to the book. But there is no notes section in this book. Moreover, Jean Forrester, out of his thirty years of teaching experience in India, says, "Various probes have shown that the average size of the vocabulary of the college entrant is between 1,200 and 1,500 about 50 per cent of what is laid down" (4-5). Some difficult words outside the 2800
vocabulary, however, have been explained in the footnotes and in the pictures given in the book. Nonetheless, the 2800-word vocabulary used in the book makes it difficult for the higher secondary students. The sentence patterns and other grammatical structures used in the book may not pose much difficulty for the students. But there are several sentences which need further simplification.

Although the story is interesting to the students with almost one-third of it set in India and one of the main characters an Indian, the book lacks in notes and glossary. Some points need further explanation for the students too. For example the term "Indians" used in Chapter 8 in the book refers to the "Red Indians" of America not the inhabitants of our country. There is also no guidance on the pronunciation of difficult words. If these things are incorporated into the book its suitability for the higher secondary course will increase.

The printing and get-up of the book are sufficiently attractive for the target students.

However, after taking into account different aspects of this book we consider it difficult for the students and less suitable than David Copperfield. All
the objectives of a rapid reader cannot be fulfilled with the use of this book. It is because the book is not "sufficiently simple" which the students can read by themselves and enjoy.

4.4 Grammar and composition and allied materials

The teacher may use any English grammar to teach grammatical items in the classroom but the framers of syllabus have prescribed an Anglo-Assamese English grammar for the use of students as well as the teacher. It is A New Approach to English Grammar and Composition written by T.C.Baruah, A.Lais and S. Dowerah and published by LBS Publication, Guwahati, 1989.

Now we will make a general analysis of the different aspects of this book. Explanation of grammatical rules has been done in Assamese, the mother tongue of the students. Scholars and experts in ELT generally do not consider the use of mother tongue in teaching English good because as Forrester says:

A word in one language is rarely the equivalent of its translation into another. The mother-tongue word has connotations and emotional overtones which may not rightly belong to the English word. A different set
of cultural values associated with the mother-tongue word may be imported into the passage and this may ultimately lead to misunderstanding rather than clarification. 

... The more abstract the word the greater the difficulty. Translation is a highly sophisticated skill requiring a sensitive knowledge of both languages and the subject matter involved. *It is not* a good teaching device. (56)

So this book on grammar and composition which uses Assamese to explain rules and instructions should not be prescribed for the students. As a short term goal the use of mother tongue in teaching English grammar, or here, the use of the above-mentioned prescribed Anglo-Assamese English grammar may be of some advantage but in the long run the disadvantages will outweigh the advantages. The students will always compare the rules of English grammar with those of their mother tongue which will cause confusion because the two languages and their grammatical rules are different.

Besides this aspect there are other aspects of the book which make it unsuitable for its use in the classroom. There are a large number of mistakes in spelling of words and in the use of punctuation marks.
The printing is bad. At many places letters are not clear and distinct. Proof-reading has not been done efficiently. In the composition part, say in "Letter writing", literal translation of Assamese words, expressions and sentences is done. A language is closely connected with the culture of the people who speak it. So a letter in English must be written in the English style. A literal translation from Assamese to English makes the letter look artificial. For example, beginning a letter with a sentence like "I hope you are well" (328) is not in the English style. It is a typical Assamese greeting. But in English it may mean that the person written to was suffering from some illness earlier. Further, in English, one does not sign his or her name prefixing it with Mr or Miss as is done in the book (329).

Moreover, as Forrester says, "The essential thing about teaching grammar is not the explanation of the rule but the practice of the correct form" (63). But the prescribed book on grammar does not contain enough exercises for practising grammatical forms.

Considering the above discussed deficiencies in the book, we consider it unsuitable for its use in the class.
There is no teacher's handbook to guide the teacher in handling the textbooks or conduct classroom activities. Unlike high school teachers the teachers of the higher secondary course are not given any training to teach their subjects. In any case, the teacher of English must prepare his own lesson plan by arranging the prescribed topics in the ascending order of difficulty. He must prepare hand-outs on difficult grammatical items and composition works and distribute them among students in the class. He must encourage the students to engage themselves in different learning activities. It is necessary for the teacher to enhance the quality of his teaching by taking the help of dictionaries, encyclopaedia, literary companions, different grammars, history books and other reference books.

4.5 Testing and examination

Passing examination is also one of the motivational factors which determines the learning of English. Therefore, question papers should be so designed as to effect this. That is to say, the skills of the English language must be developed in students when they prepare for the examinations.
The higher secondary students in Assam appear at two final examinations, one at the end of the first year and the other at the end of the second year of the course. Full marks in English for both the examinations are 100 each.

Regarding the role of examinations in our education system Chand, Kundu, Purohit and Patnaik make the following observation:

In an examination-oriented education system in which division or rank is more important than learning, one can easily appreciate the importance of examinations. People associated with examination can greatly influence the teachers, the methods the teachers adopt and the learners prepare for this process. In other words, the entire system of education is under the control of such persons. It is common knowledge that items are taught and learnt depending on whether they are likely to be set in the examinations or not. The type of questions set also controls and influences the classroom methodology. (xviii)

Wilga Rivers also says that "teachers tend to teach and students tend to study in the way in which a test is
framed" (310). Further, she says, "Tests should be conceived as teaching devices. ... They should serve a two-fold instructional purpose, acting as a guide to the student and a guide to the teacher" (289).

From the above views of the ELT experts it is clear that the test papers, that is, the question papers set in the final examinations greatly influence and control the teaching and learning of English as a Second Language. Therefore, it is necessary that the question papers be so designed as to effect proper learning of the language.

Now let us examine whether the present final examination question papers are suitably designed to achieve the desired objectives.

Harris elaborates on the qualities of tests in the following words:

All good tests possess three qualities: validity, reliability, and practicality. That is to say, any test that we use must be appropriate in terms of our objectives, dependable in the evidence it provides, and applicable to our particular situation. (13)

At the higher secondary level the teaching of grammatical structures are mostly meant for
reinforcement and consolidation of those learnt at earlier stages. So the tests on grammatical structures should try to find whether the students have mastered the correct grammatical structures like use of articles, tenses, conversion of sentences from active to passive, conversion of degrees of comparison, use of relative pronouns and adverbs, etc. For reliability of the test the multiple choice type items are suitable with only one correct answer and two or three distracters. But the present tests on grammatical structures are not constructed as multiple-choice items. There are tests on correcting wrong sentences which involve use of articles, tenses, relative pronouns, etc. There are tests on converting given sentences from one form to another like from affirmative to negative, one degree of comparison to another, active to passive, simple to complex or compound, etc. There are also conversion-supply type of tests which involve use of correct forms of verbs given in brackets. There are fill-in-the-blanks type of tests to test correct use of prepositions. Although preparation of multiple-choice items takes more time on the part of the question paper setter, we consider this form the best one to test grammatical structures. However, barring a few test types which we discuss below other test types used in
the present question papers have validity, reliability and practicality to a large extent. But we suggest that every year questions should be changed and a great number of variety included in the question paper so as to prevent students from following bazar notes.

In the First Year Final Examination of 1995 the following sentence is asked for correction:

"I did not know that you will come." The correct answer may be one of the three — (i) "I did not know that you would come." (ii) "I do not know that you will come." (iii) "I know that you will come." Some examiners may not accept the latter two as correct. But can we consider them as wrong answers? Now let us look at the following question in the same question paper:

"Can I use your telephone?"

(give a very brief reply to this question)

The answer may be either "Yes, you can" or "No, you can't." But some examiners may award marks only to any one answer. Thus such test questions lack scorer reliability (Harris 15). Therefore, such questions (correct the following types) should be avoided.

There are questions on composition like framing sentences with given phrases and idioms, pairs of words,
writing letters, precis and essay, and changing the form of narration in given passages. We consider these test questions suitable.

Now we will analyse the test questions on the prescribed prose passages and poems. Raymond Mackay says:

At the end of +2 stage, students should be able to identify the main points of a discursive text, identify the structure of an argument and how an argument is supported through illustration and reason, and also to identify the writer's attitude to the subject matter he or she is writing about. (Reported in Assam Tribune 23 November 1995)

He is of the view that question papers should be so designed as to test communicative skills. But the following questions set in the final examinations (1995) do not aim at testing the communicative skills of the students. Rather they aim at testing knowledge and information based on the texts:

'Foreman, will you come into the vestry for a minute? I have something to say to you.'

(a) Who said this?
(b) Who was Foreman?
(c) What is a 'vestry'?
(d) What did the speaker tell Foreman and what was the latter's reaction?

And

'Touch her not scornfully;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly.'

(a) Where do these lines occur?
(b) Who is the woman?
(c) What was her offence?
(d) Why does the poet exhort us to forgive her?

Language is largely a matter of skills. When the question papers are designed to test students' knowledge about the information contained in the textbooks, the testing ceases to contribute to the process of language learning because language skills do not get developed properly in the learners by this process. The above type of questions are of recall types. They aim at testing how far students are able to recall facts and information given in the texts prescribed. But they do not make students draw inferences, judge the mode of the writer and make predictions. Such questions test what is unimportant and neglect what is important in language
learning. Therefore, we consider the design of present question papers unsuitable for the purpose of testing communicative language skills and that the tests do not contribute to the proper learning of English.

Examination answer scripts of students are a source from which it can be found whether the students have learnt how to write English correctly and to express themselves in the language properly. Achieving competence in written English is one of the chief needs of the students. As large classes and limited number of working days prohibit the teacher from conducting exercises and correcting them in the classroom, the examination answer scripts of students provide evidences of the areas where the students need help. They may be one or some or all of the following areas — grammar, usage, composition, comprehension or application. So, the analysis of students' examination answer scripts is necessary for getting the required feedback and insight into the students' ability and their level of achievement in English. The analysis may also make it clear how much remedial work is needed and how it should be carried on. The analysis and the data received from the analysis can provide the basis for designing a remedial course. Therefore, we think that analysis of students' examination answer scripts in English by the
teacher must be made a part and parcel of the higher secondary course.

From our experience and observation we know that more than 95 per cent of students do not know how to write answers in the examination perfectly well. By going through the answer scripts of students we have found that they make several types of errors. Their grammatical errors relate to wrong use of tenses and prepositions, subject-verb concord, redundant use of 'to', omission of 'the' or its wrong use, etc. They also use wrong format or approach in answering questions with disregard to the instructions given in the questions. Moreover, it is interesting to note a particular type of spelling errors made by the students in Assam. Some specimens are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Correct words</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ofr</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brith</td>
<td>birth</td>
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<tr>
<td>brid</td>
<td>bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worng</td>
<td>wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dide</td>
<td>died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pome</td>
<td>poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drak</td>
<td>dark</td>
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<tr>
<td>dose</td>
<td>does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>besied</td>
<td>beside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belwo</td>
<td>below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We suggest that a thorough and exhaustive research should be conducted on the answer scripts of the students and a remedial course be designed to do away with all the errors. The students should also be given proper guidance on how to write answers in the examination in a correct manner.

Conclusion

From the discussions made in this chapter we come to the following conclusions and recommend remedial measures.

The syllabus has several defects. The aims and objectives of the course, the details of teaching points to be covered and the methods of teaching and testing to be followed have not been stated clearly in the syllabus. The syllabus also does not mention a teacher's handbook.

These defects should be remedied first. The syllabus should elaborately mention the aims and objectives of the course, the details of teaching points to be covered and the methods of teaching and testing keeping in mind large classes and the actual ability of students. A teacher's handbook should also be suggested for the guidance of teachers. A syllabus should be very elaborate because, if required, the teacher may omit a
point but it is much more difficult to make good what is not there (Cunningsworth 20).

The textbook can only be improved if all the mistakes are corrected. We also suggest that the unsuitable passages should be replaced with the ones which will be appropriate and suitable for the age, interest and linguistic ability of the students of the higher secondary stage. Passages selected should be on joys of life, wit and humour, sports, current affairs, acts of bravery, nature's beauty, wild life, adventure, programmes of entertainment like movie and music, problems of teenagers, view of the wider world they grow into and the advantages of having proficiency in English in practical life.

The paper used for printing the textbook should be of good quality, the printing should be clear and distinct, more varieties of typeface should be used and the get-up of the book should be attractive.

Out of the two rapid readers, *David Copperfield* and *Around the World in Eighty Days*, the first one is suitable as a textbook for the higher secondary students in Assam. But the second one is not because we consider it difficult for the students.

The prescribed or recommended book on grammar
should not be bilingual. It should be only in English. The book should contain a large number of exercises to provide scope for practising grammatical forms and usage. A separate book on composition works like precis, summary and substance writing, letter and application writing, amplifying ideas, etc. should be prescribed with sufficient examples and exercises for practice.

The designing of the final examination question papers is found to be unsatisfactory because the questions aim at testing the students' knowledge and information more than their competence in communicative skills of the language. So tests fail to be useful teaching devices. Therefore, we suggest that the final examination question papers should be so designed as to test the achievement of students in language skills.
Particulars of the copies of the textbooks taken for evaluation


