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PODRĘCZNIK I MATERIAŁY UZUPEŁNIAJĄCE PODCZAS KIERUNKOWYCH ZAJĘĆ JĘZYKOWYCH NA UCZELNIACH WYŻSZYCH. PRZYKŁADOWY SCENARIUSZ ZAJĘĆ

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie metody prowadzenia kierunkowych zajęć językowych na uczelniach wyższych. Polega ona na wykorzystywaniu tematów z podręcznika do nauki ogólnego języka obcego jako punktu wyjścia do zajęć wprowadzających elementy terminologii fachowej oraz prezentujących treści tematycznie związane z kierunkiem studiów danej grupy językowej. Sugerowana metoda została zaprezentowana na przykładzie zadań z podręcznika do nauki języka angielskiego na poziomie zaawansowanym oraz materiałów przygotowanych i użytych przez autora podczas zajęć ze studentami Instytutu Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim.

1. Uwagi wstępne. Krótki opis metody

Jedną z cech charakteryzujących współczesne podręczniki do nauki języków obcych jest różnorodność poruszanych w nich tematów. Autorzy dbają o to, aby podręczniki były atrakcyjne i interesujące zarówno ze względu na dobór, jak i zakres poruszanych zagadnień. Obecne są w nich materiały dotyczące biznesu i sportu, biologii i geografii, gwiazd filmu czy muzyki oraz szeroko rozumianej kultury krajów anglojęzycznych. Teksty te coraz częściej pochodzą z autentycznych źródeł, co pozwala uczącemu się poszerzyć horyzonty i wzbogacić wiedzę z rozmaitych dziedzin. Co więcej, nie tylko artykuły, lecz również ćwiczenia doskonalące umiejętności językowe, np. rozumienie ze słuchu, często poruszają względnie aktualne, inspirujące czy też kontrowersyjne tematy. To bogactwo tematyczne, obok zróżnicowanych ćwiczeń leksykalnych, materiałów multimedialnych (filmy, piosenki) i stosunkowo niewielkiej liczby ćwiczeń gramatycznych, jest na pewno jednym z czynników, które zachęcają uczących się języka obcego do dyskusji i wymiany poglądów podczas zajęć. Jest ono także bardzo przydatne podczas zajęć, których główny cel to wprowadzenie elementów języka facho-

wego oraz treści związanych z kierunkiem studiów danej grupy. Różnorodność tematyczna podręczników do nauki języka ogólnego umożliwia bowiem prowadzącemu rozwinięcie tematu pojawiającego się w podręczniku w kierunku terminologii specyficznej dla przedmiotu studiów danej grupy studentów.

Z moich – już kilkunastoletnich – obserwacji wynika jednoznacznie, że uczący się języków obcych w szkołach wyższych są coraz mniej zainteresowani doskonaleniem poszczególnych strategii rozwiązywania różnych typów zadań egzaminacyjnych czy rozwiązywaniem przykładowych testów/egzaminów z lat poprzednich (np. FCE czy CAE), których celem jest tylko i wyłącznie wybranie prawidłowej odpowiedzi w danym ćwiczeniu. Wydaje mi się, że oczekiwania studentów są znacznie szersze i wykraczają poza kształcenie umiejętności porozumiewania się w typowych sytuacjach życiowych (co jest bardzo ważne!). Równie ważnym celem jest poznanie przynajmniej podstaw języka specjalistycznego, dyskusja na tematy związane z kierunkiem studiów czy wreszcie umiejętność przygotowania profesjonalnej prezentacji w języku obcym z użyciem fachowej terminologii. Z moich doświadczeń wynika również, że studentów nie interesuje zwykłe, pamięciowe uczenie się pojęć specjalistycznych w rodzaju *spływ piroklastyczny* czy *akcja uprzywilejowana*. Często pragną oni przeczytać coś więcej na dany temat i użyć fachowych terminów w dyskusji: studenci geografii czy geologii chcą rozmawiać – przynajmniej od czasu do czasu – o wulkanach, a studenci zarządzania o akcjach, obligacjach, giełdach itd.

Stosunkowo łatwo jest sprostać oczekiwaniom studentów, gdy istnieją (dobre) podręczniki do nauki języka specjalistycznego, np. języka prawniczego dla studentów prawa, medycznego dla studentów medycyny czy Business English dla studentów kierunków ekonomicznych. Problem pojawia się wtedy, kiedy takie podręczniki nie istnieją albo gdy wybór jest niewielki. W takiej sytuacji oczywiście można i należy – od czasu do czasu, np. jeden czy dwa razy w miesiącu – przygotować własne materiały uzupełniające z języka specjalistycznego, którego nie obejmują podręczniki do nauki ogólnego języka obcego. Pomocna może być także wspomniana wyżej różnorodność tematyczna, tzn. jeżeli w podręczniku używanym na zajęciach pojawia się temat przynajmniej pośrednio związany z kierunkiem studiów danej grupy, jest to idealny moment, aby ten temat rozwinąć, poszerzyć czy też przygotować własną lekcję. Najważniejsze cechy tej metody prowadzenia kierunkowych zajęć językowych to: spójność prezentowanych treści (materiały przygotowane przez prowadzącego są związane tematycznie z fragmentem podręcznika do nauki ogólnego języka obcego), wprowadzanie elementów języka specjalistycznego, wprowadzanie treści związanej – bezpośrednio lub pośrednio – z kierunkiem studiów danej grupy językowej, uatrakcyjnienie i zróżnicowanie zajęć językowych. Z mojego doświadczenia wynika, że jest to metoda efektywna, a takie lekcje – o ile są starannie przygotowane przez prowadzącego – są dla studentów bardzo motywujące.

Celem artykułu jest krótka prezentacja tej metody prowadzenia kierunkowych zajęć językowych na uczelniach wyższych na przykładzie zadań z podręcznika do

nauki języka angielskiego na poziomie zaawansowanym oraz materiałów przygotowanych i użytych przez autora podczas zajęć ze studentami na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim. Prezentację materiałów uzupełniono o przykładowy scenariusz lekcji oraz uwagi końcowe.

2. Krótka prezentacja i analiza materiałów

Zaprezentuję w skrócie tę metodę na przykładzie popularnego podręcznika do nauki języka angielskiego na poziomie zaawansowanym (C1) J. Bell, R. Gower i D. Hyde *Advanced Expert CAE New Edition* oraz dodatkowych materiałów, które wykorzystałem na zajęciach ze studentami z Instytutu Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim.

Punktem wyjścia są dwa ćwiczenia, które znajdują się w wymienionym wyżej podręczniku. Pierwsze z nich dotyczy zadania doskonalącego umiejętność pisania i jest związane z Uluru (Ayers Rock), które z jednej strony jest popularnym obiektem turystycznym w Australii, a z drugiej ciągle świętym miejscem dla jej rdzennych mieszkańców. Ćwiczenie zawiera kilka podstawowych informacji dotyczących tego niezwykłego miejsca, a zadaniem uczącego się jest wyrażenie opinii – w formie listu formalnego – na temat metod zarządzania Uluru przez plemię Anangu (Bell, Gower, Hyde 2008: 78). Drugie zadanie to test wielokrotnego wyboru, a krótki tekst traktuje o legendarnej Cathy Freeman, pierwszej przedstawicielce Aborygenów wybranej do lekkoatletycznej drużyny narodowej Australii, która – po zwycięskim biegu na 400 metrów podczas olimpiady w Sydney w 2000 roku – trzymała dwie flagi: Australii i tę symbolizującą jej rdzennych mieszkańców (Bell, Gower, Hyde 2008: 109). Książka dla nauczyciela zawiera ponadto krótkie, dodatkowe informacje na temat Uluru, Cathy Freeman czy Aborygenów. Pomimo że oba ćwiczenia znajdują się w różnych partiach podręcznika, połączenie ich jest jak najbardziej logiczne, a rozwinięcie tego tematu i przygotowanie zajęć dotyczących Australii, Uluru i Aborygenów może być inspirujące nie tylko dla studentów geografii czy kierunków pokrewnych, lecz również dla wszystkich osób zainteresowanych elementami kultury krajów angielskiego obszaru językowego.

Materiał prezentowany w niniejszym artykule przeznaczony jest na zajęcia 90-minutowe. Większość tekstów powinna być – ze względu na długość – przeczytana i przygotowana przez studentów przed zajęciami jako praca domowa. Pomimo że materiał jest adresowany do grup o zaawansowanym poziomie językowym (C1), może on być również wykorzystany (po wcześniejszym skróceniu) podczas zajęć ze studentami o niższym poziomie zaawansowania (B2), gdy w podręczniku pojawi się temat związany z Australią. Pierwsze trzy fragmenty zawierają słownictwo z dziedziny nauk geograficznych i pokrewnych (np. półwysep, pasmo górskie, twardzielec itp.). Pozostałe fragmenty odnoszą się do

kultury rdzennych mieszkańców Australii, ich historii i statusu społecznego. Nie dotyczą więc bezpośrednio kwestii geograficznych, ale są tematycznie powiązane z zadaniami ze wspomnianego wyżej podręcznika i dlatego stanowią logiczną całość.

3. Przykładowy scenariusz zajęć

3.1. Początek zajęć

Bill Bryson – znany amerykański pisarz i podróżnik – jest autorem wielu książek o tematyce podróżniczej, dotyczących języka angielskiego oraz kultury brytyjskiej i amerykańskiej (np. *Notes from a Small Island*, *Notes from a Big Country*, *The Mother Tongue*). W roku 2000 wydał on książkę o Australii pt. *In a Sunburned Country*, z której pochodzi większość prezentowanych materiałów. Należy pamiętać o tym, że właściwa część zajęć powinna zostać poprzedzona krótkim wstępem nauczyciela, przedstawiającym osobę i dorobek literacki Billa Brysona, lub lekturą krótkiej notatki biograficznej znajdującej się na początku prezentowanych materiałów (*introduction*).

Pierwszy fragment (*extract 1*) z rozdziału pierwszego – wraz z propozycją bardzo krótkich, przykładowych ćwiczeń – może z powodzeniem posłużyć na początku zajęć jako wprowadzenie do tematu. Również opisane wyżej ćwiczenie ze strony 109 z podręcznika pt. *Advanced Expert CAE New Edition* powinno być sprawdzone w początkowej fazie zajęć.

3.2. Główna część zajęć. Analiza materiałów i dyskusja

Następny fragment (*extract 2*) dotyczy Uluru – Bryson pisze, jak niezwykłe, ale i dziwne jest to miejsce. Wspomina też kilka faktów dotyczących Ayers Rock, pojęcie „czasu snu" (*the Dreamtime*) związanego z wierzeniami Aborygenów oraz wprowadza termin „twardzielca" (*bornhardt*) z dziedziny geologii.

Dwa następne fragmenty (*extracts 3, 4*) traktują o kulturze Aborygenów. W pierwszym, krótszym, Bryson koncentruje się na tym, jak Aborygeni i ich kultura – najstarsza istniejąca cywilizacja – byli przez wiele lat ignorowani i nazywa ich „niewidzialnymi ludźmi". Drugi, dłuższy fragment zawiera garść informacji o rdzennych mieszkańcach Australii, tragicznej sytuacji Aborygenów w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku oraz o wizycie autora w miejscowości Bingara. Owa wizyta uświadamia niemal całkowity brak wiedzy na temat Aborygenów wśród mieszkańców Australii. Obydwa fragmenty zawierają kilka ćwiczeń rozwijających sprawność mówienia.

Niestety od drugiej połowy XIX wieku aż do lat siedemdziesiątych XX wieku sytuacja Aborygenów nie była lepsza, gdyż w Australii obowiązywała polityka asymilacji propagowana przez kolejne rządy. Polegała ona na przymusowym odseparowaniu dzieci Aborygenów od swoich rodzin, kultury i języka, a powszech-

nie używaną nazwą na określenie tych dzieci – ukutą przez profesora Petera Reada w roku 1981– jest termin „skradzione pokolenia" (*Stolen Generations*)[1]. Dla przykładu, rodzina wspomnianej wcześniej Cathy Freeman również padła ofiarą tej polityki, o czym ona sama mówi w wielu wywiadach (Koch 2008). Chociaż w niektórych przypadkach ta przymusowa separacja dzieci rdzennych mieszkańców od swoich rodzin była rzeczywiście uzasadniona, wielu uważa, że ta polityka była ludobójstwem (Read 2006: 3). Następny fragment (*extract 5*) z książki Brysona mówi o „skradzionych pokoleniach".

Istnieje wiele materiałów źródłowych, które potwierdzają powyższe fakty – wspomnę tylko dwa raporty, które wydają się ważne w tym kontekście. Pierwszy z nich to raport pt. *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969* (1981) autorstwa wspomnianego wyżej Petera Reada, a drugi to publikacja pt. *Bringing Them Home – Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1997). Omawiając ten temat na zajęciach z języka angielskiego, można wykorzystać wiele interesujących fragmentów wspomnianych raportów (lub innych źródeł). Dla przykładu przytaczam tylko jeden fragment (*extract 6*) z pierwszego z nich, który może stanowić punkt wyjścia do dyskusji na temat motywów działania urzędników odpowiedzialnych za politykę wobec rodzin rdzennych mieszkańców Australii.

Trzynastego lutego roku 2008 premier Australii Kevin Rudd wygłosił w parlamencie przemówienie, w którym oficjalnie przeprosił za dyskryminację rdzennych mieszkańców Australii, w tym szczególnie za politykę wobec „skradzionych pokoleń". Czy takie przeprosiny premiera są wystarczające? Czy Aborygeni nie powinni domagać się odszkodowań od rządu Australii? To już – przykładowe – tematy do dyskusji ze studentami na zajęciach. Tekst przeprosin (*extract 7*) może – według mnie – stanowić interesujące zakończenie zajęć o Australii, Uluru i Aborygenach (przemowa premiera Kevina Rudda w wersji audio i wideo jest powszechnie dostępna w Internecie!).

3.3. Propozycja zadania domowego

Jako pracę domową można zaproponować napisanie listu formalnego i wyrażenie w nim opinii o Uluru i plemieniu Anangu zarządzającym tym świętym dla Aborygenów miejscem (ćwiczenie z cytowanego na wstępie podręcznika). Z mojego doświadczenia wynika, że student – po analizie materiału zaprezentowanego powyżej (lub jego części) – z przyjemnością podejmie to wyzwanie, ale nie będzie to zadanie łatwe, gdyż ma do dyspozycji… zbyt dużo informacji na ten temat, aby zmieścić się w limicie 180–220 słów.

[1] Termin „skradzione pokolenia" (*Stolen Generations*) dotyczy również dzieci mieszkańców wysp cieśniny Torresa (*Torres Strait Islander children*).

Wnioski

Sugerowana metoda prowadzenia kierunkowych zajęć językowych na uczelniach wyższych polega na wykorzystywaniu tematów z podręcznika do nauki ogólnego języka obcego jako punktu wyjścia do zajęć zawierających elementy terminologii specjalistycznej oraz prezentujących treści związane – bezpośrednio lub pośrednio – z przedmiotem studiów danej grupy językowej. Metoda została zaprezentowana przez autora na przykładzie zajęć o Australii, Uluru i kulturze Aborygenów dla grup kierunków geograficznych i pokrewnych na poziomie zaawansowanym (C1). Przedstawiony materiał został wybrany celowo, gdyż nie jest on materiałem naukowym przeznaczonym wyłącznie dla studentów geografii – może z powodzeniem zostać użyty (po wcześniejszym wprowadzeniu pewnych zmian) na zajęciach z innymi grupami zaawansowanymi, np. podczas ćwiczeń, w czasie których wprowadzane są elementy kulturowe dotyczące Australii. Takie lekcje można jednak również przygotować na podstawie materiałów bardziej naukowych. Zaprezentowane fragmenty z książki Brysona i innych źródeł to ponadto tylko propozycje – ten sam temat można przedstawić w zupełnie inny sposób, np. analizując na zajęciach fragment z filmu pt. *Polowanie na króliki* (*Rabbit-Proof Fence*), przedstawiający problem „skradzionych pokoleń". Można także znaleźć wiele innych interesujących tekstów i programów telewizyjnych na ten temat, np. w Internecie. Ćwiczenia przygotowane przez autora niniejszego artykułu, które znajdują się na końcu niektórych fragmentów, to także tylko przykłady – mogą być one bardziej rozbudowane, inaczej ukierunkowane i może ich być znacznie więcej.

We wspomnianym na wstępie podręczniku na poziomie zaawansowanym takich tematów związanych z szeroko pojętymi naukami geograficznymi jest znacznie więcej. Można je poszerzyć o bardziej specjalistyczne treści i fachową terminologię. Można np. przygotować zajęcia na temat turystyki, ochrony środowiska, Wyspy Wielkanocnej, Butanu, Orkadów itd. Nie oznacza to jednak, że podręcznik ten zawiera głównie tematy bezpośrednio bądź pośrednio związane z geografią. Na jego podstawie można np. przeprowadzić zajęcia o buddyzmie ze studentami religioznawstwa, o rozmowach kwalifikacyjnych o pracę i rekrutacji ze studentami kierunków ekonomicznych, wpływie rodziny na osobowość dziecka ze studentami psychologii czy o różnych rodzajach muzyki ze studentami muzykologii. Oczywiście autor tych słów zdaje sobie sprawę z faktu, że nie w każdym podręczniku do nauki języka obcego można znaleźć materiały tematycznie związane z każdym kierunkiem studiów.

Niezaprzeczalnie znalezienie inspirujących materiałów i przygotowanie ich (np. ćwiczeń wzbogacających słownictwo czy dyskusję) na takie zajęcia związane z kierunkiem studiów danej grupy studentów na pewno wymaga od prowadzącego wysiłku oraz czasu. Co więcej, jeżeli omawiany temat jest bardzo specjalistyczny, nauczyciel języka obcego musi poświęcić więcej czasu i dokładniej przygotować się do zajęć. Niemniej jednak takie materiały można wykorzystać wielokrotnie z różnymi grupami.

Materiały, których można użyć na takich zajęciach, muszą spełniać pewne kryteria. Przede wszystkim wskazane jest, aby materiały były zaczerpnięte z różnych źródeł – w prezentowanym przykładzie fragmenty pochodzą z książki podróżniczej, raportu dotyczącego „skradzionych pokoleń" oraz przemowy ważnego polityka (autor podczas tych zajęć wykorzystał także jeszcze jeden materiał wideo – krótki film dokumentalny o Aborygenach – nieprezentowany w niniejszym artykule ze względów praktycznych!). Można te zajęcia jeszcze bardziej uatrakcyjnić, wprowadzając pomoce doskonalące inne umiejętności językowe (np. rozumienie ze słuchu), ale trzeba pamiętać, że materiały muszą stanowić logiczną całość. Nie zmienia to faktu, że można także pracować na jednym czy dwóch dłuższych tekstach i zajęcia mogą być równie efektywne i interesujące. Ważne jest jednak, aby materiały na takie zajęcia były starannie dobrane pod względem merytorycznym, gdyż student będzie weryfikował swoją wiedzę na temat związany z kierunkiem studiów, przygotowując się na nie. Powinny ponadto – o ile jest to tylko możliwe – zawierać również treści, fakty i informacje nowe, nawet dla osoby studiującej dany kierunek. Trzeba być świadomym faktu, że filolog – nie będąc specjalistą w danej dziedzinie nauki – nie jest w stanie cały czas zaskakiwać studentów podczas zajęć z języka specjalistycznego (jest to znacznie łatwiejsze podczas nauki ogólnego języka obcego), ale kierunkowe zajęcia językowe powinny także zawierać „bardziej atrakcyjne elementy". W zaprezentowanym materiale takim elementem zaskoczenia byłoby np. wprowadzenie i wyjaśnienie pojęcia „skradzionych pokoleń" czy analiza fragmentu przemowy premiera Australii. Wreszcie, niestandardowe ujęcie czy też prezentacja tematu mogą być także atrakcyjne dla uczących się, stąd w prezentowanych materiałach mamy fragmenty o Australii zaczerpnięte z książki podróżniczej, a nie np. z ogólnie dostępnej Wikipedii.

Wydaje się także rzeczą wskazaną, aby przy długich materiałach pomóc studentom, zamieszczając np. krótki słowniczek (*glossary*) z tłumaczeniem najtrudniejszych słów/wyrażeń.

Reasumując, prowadzenie zajęć z elementami specjalistycznego języka obcego i prezentujących treści związane z kierunkiem studiów grupy nie jest rzeczą łatwą, gdyż zebranie materiałów oraz przygotowanie się prowadzącego na takie zajęcia są na pewno czasochłonne. Ten typ zajęć powinien jednak stanowić – według autora – istotną część kursu z języka obcego na uczelni wyższej. Proponowana metoda może być jedną z wielu, które można wykorzystać podczas takich zajęć.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Bill Bryson was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1951. A backpacking expedition in 1973 brought him to England where he met his wife and decided to settle. He wrote for the English newspapers *The Times* and *The Independent* for many years, writing travel articles to supplement his income. He lived with his family in North Yorkshire before moving back to the States in 1995, to Hanover, New Hampshire, with his wife and four children. In 2003 he and his family moved back to England, where they currently reside.

His books include: *The Lost Continent*, *Bill Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words*, *Neither Here nor There: Travels in Europe*, *Made in America*, *The Mother Tongue*, *Bill Bryson's African Diary*, *A Short History of Nearly Everything,* etc. Extracts 1–5 below come from Bryson's book about Australia called *In a Sunburned Country*.

II. Read Extract 1 below and do exercises a, b and c

EXTRACT 1

AND SO, BECAUSE WE KNOW so little about it, perhaps a few facts would be in order:

Australia is the world's sixth largest country and its largest island. It is the only island that is also a continent, and the only continent that is also a country. It was the first continent conquered from the sea, and the last. It is the only nation that began as a prison.

It is the home of the largest living thing on earth, the Great Barrier Reef, and of the largest **monolith**, Ayers Rock (or Uluru to use its now-official, more respectful Aboriginal name). It has more things that will kill you than anywhere else. Of the world's ten most poisonous snakes, all are Australian. Five of its creatures – the funnel web spider, box jellyfish, blue-ringed octopus, paralysis tick, and stonefish – are the most lethal of their type in the world. This is a country where even the fluffiest of caterpillars can lay you out with a toxic nip, where seashells will not just sting you but actually sometimes *go* for you. Pick up an innocuous cone shell from a Queensland beach, as innocent tourists are all too wont to do, and you will discover that the little fellow inside is not just astoundingly swift and testy but exceedingly venomous. If you are not stung or pronged to death in some unexpected manner, you may be fatally chomped by sharks or crocodiles, or carried helplessly out to sea by irresistible currents, or left to stagger to an unhappy death in the baking **outback**. It's a tough place.

And it is old. For 60 million years since the formation of the Great Dividing **Range**, the low but deeply fetching mountains that run down its eastern flank, Australia has been all but silent geologically. In consequence, things, once created, have tended just to lie there. So many of the oldest objects ever found on earth – the most ancient rocks and fossils, the earliest animal tracks and riverbeds, the first faint signs of life itself – have come from Australia.

At some undetermined point in the great immensity of its past – perhaps 45,000 years ago, perhaps 60,000, but certainly before there were modern humans in the Americas or Europe – it was quietly invaded by a deeply inscrutable people, the Aborigines, who have no clearly evident racial or linguistic kinship to their neighbors in the region, (…).

In short, there was no place in the world like it. There still isn't. Eighty percent of all that lives in Australia, plant and animal, exists nowhere else. More than this, it exists in an abundance that seems incompatible with the harshness of the environment. Australia is the driest, flattest, hottest, most **desiccated**, infertile, and climatically aggressive of all the inhabited continents. (Only Antarctica is more hostile to life.) This is a place so inert that even the soil is, technically speaking, **a fossil**. And yet it teems with life in numbers uncounted. For insects alone, scientists haven't the faintest idea whether the total number of species is 100,000 or more than twice that. As many as a third of those species remain entirely unknown to science. For spiders, the proportion rises to 80 percent.

I mention insects in particular because I have a story about a little bug called *Nothomyrmecia macrops* that I think illustrates perfectly, (…), what an exceptional country this is. (…)

In 1931 on the Cape Arid **peninsula** in Western Australia, some amateur naturalists were poking about in the scrubby wastes when they found an insect none had seen before. It looked

vaguely like an ant, but was an unusual pale yellow and had strange, staring, distinctly unsettling eyes. Some **specimens** were collected and these found their way to the desk of an expert at the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne, who identified the insect at once as *Nothomyrmecia.* The discovery caused great excitement because, as far as anyone knew, nothing like it had existed on earth for a hundred million years. *Nothomyrmecia* was a proto-ant, a living relic from a time when ants were evolving from wasps. In entomological terms, it was as extraordinary as if someone had found a herd of triceratops grazing on some distant grassy **plain**.

An expedition was organized at once, but despite the most scrupulous searching, no one could find the **Cape** Arid colony. Subsequent searches came up equally empty-handed. Almost half a century later, when word got out that a team of American scientists was planning to search for the ant, almost certainly with the kind of high-tech gadgetry that would make the Australians look amateurish and underorganized, government scientists in Canberra decided to make one final, preemptive effort to find the ants alive. So a party of them set off in convoy across the country.

On the second day out, while driving across the South Australia desert, one of their vehicles began to smoke and sputter, and they were forced to make an unscheduled overnight stop at a lonely pause in the highway called Poochera. During the evening one of the scientists, a man named Bob Taylor, stepped out for a breath of air and idly played his flashlight over the surrounding terrain. You may imagine his astonishment when he discovered, crawling over the trunk of a eucalyptus beside their campsite, a thriving colony of none other than *Nothomyrmecia.*

Now consider the probabilities. Taylor and his colleagues were eight hundred miles from their intended search site. In the almost 3 million square miles of emptiness that is Australia, one of the handful of people able to identify it had just found one of the rarest, most sought-after insects on earth – an insect seen alive just once, almost half a century earlier – and all because their van had broken down where it did. *Nothomyrmecia,* incidentally, has still never been found at its original site.

You take my point again, I'm sure. This is a country that is at once staggeringly empty and yet packed with stuff. Interesting stuff, ancient stuff, stuff not readily explained. Stuff yet to be found.

Trust me, this is an interesting place (Bryson 2001: 6–9).

a) Explain what the following words/expressions refer to:

– a prison
– Uluru
– poisonous snakes
– the Aborigines
– fossils
– *Nothomyrmecia macrops*

b) In your own words, explain in what sense the story about *Nothomyrmecia macrops* 'illustrates perfectly what an exceptional country Australia is' for Bill Bryson.

c) Explain the words in bold.

III. Read Extract 2 below and discuss the questions in exercise a

EXTRACT 2

The thing about Ayers Rock is that by the time you finally get there you are already a little sick of it. Even when you are a thousand miles from it, you can't go a day in Australia without seeing it four or five or six times – on postcards, on travel agents' posters, on the cover of souvenir picture books – and as you get nearer the rock the frequency of exposure increases. So you are aware, as you drive to the park entrance and pay the ambitiously pitched admission fee of A$15 a head and follow the approach road around, that you have driven thirteen hundred miles to look at a large, inert, loaf-shaped object that you have seen photographically portrayed a thousand times already. In consequence, your mood as you approach this famous monolith is restrained, unexpectant – pessimistic even. And then you see it, and you are instantly transfixed.

There, in the middle of a memorable and imposing emptiness, stands an eminence of exceptional nobility and grandeur, 1,150 feet high, a mile and a half long, five and a half miles around, less red than photographs have led you to expect but in every other way more arresting than you could ever have supposed. I have discussed this since with many other people, nearly all of whom agreed that they approached Uluru with a kind of fatigue, and were left agog in a way they could not adequately explain. It's not that Uluru is bigger than you had supposed or more perfectly formed or in any way different from the impression you had created in your mind, but the very opposite. It is exactly what you expected it to be. You *know* this rock. You know it in a way that has nothing to do with calendars and the covers of souvenir books. Your knowledge of this rock is grounded in something much more elemental.

In some odd way that you don't understand and can't begin to articulate you feel an acquaintance with it – a familiarity on an unfamiliar level. Somewhere in the deep sediment of your being some long-dormant fragment of primordial memory, some little severed tail of DNA, has twitched or stirred. It is a motion much too faint to be understood or interpreted, but somehow you feel certain that this large, brooding, hypnotic presence has an importance to you at the species level – perhaps even at a sort of tadpole level – and that in some way your visit here is more than happenstance.

I'm not saying that any of this is so. I'm just saying that this is how you feel. The other thought that strikes you – that struck me anyway – is that Uluru is not merely a very splendid and mighty monolith but also an extremely distinctive one. More than this, it is an extremely recognizable one – very possibly the most immediately recognizable natural object on earth. I'm suggesting nothing here, but I will say that if you were an intergalactic traveler who had broken down in our solar system, the obvious directions to rescuers would be: "Go to the third planet and fly around till you see the big red rock. You can't miss it." If ever on earth they dig up a 150,000-year-old rocket ship from the galaxy Zog, this is where it will be. I'm not saying I expect it to happen; not saying that at all. I'm just observing that if I were looking for an ancient starship this is where I would start digging.

Allan, I noted, seemed similarly affected. "It's weird, isn't it?" he said.

"What is?"

"I don't know. Just seeing it. I mean, it just feels weird."

I nodded. It does feel weird. Quite apart from that initial shock of indefinable recognition, there is also the fact that Uluru is, no matter how you approach it, totally arresting. You cannot stop looking at it; you don't want to stop looking at it. As you draw closer, it becomes even more interesting. It is more pitted than you had imagined, less regular in shape. There are more curves and divots and wavelike ribs, more irregularities of every type, than are evident from even a couple of hundred yards away. You realize that you could spend quite a lot of time – possibly a worryingly large amount of time; possibly a sell-your-house-and-move-here-to-live-

in-a-tent amount of time – just looking at the rock, gazing at it from many angles, never tiring of it. You can see yourself in a silvery ponytail, barefoot, and in something jangly and loose-fitting, hanging out with much younger visitors and telling them, "And the amazing thing is that every day it's different, you know what I am saying? It's never the same rock twice. That's right, my friend – you put your finger on it there. It's awesome. It's an awesome thing. Say, do you by any chance have any dope or some spare change?"

We stopped at several places to get out and have a look, including the spot where you can climb up it. It takes several hours and much exertion, which comfortably eliminated it from our consideration, and in any case the route was closed for the afternoon. So many people have collapsed and died on the rock that they close it to climbers when the weather is really warm, as it was this day. Even when it's not too hot, lots of people get in trouble from fooling around or taking wrong turns. Just the day before, a Canadian had had to be rescued after getting himself onto some ledge from which he could not get either up or down. Since 1985, ownership of the rock has been back in the hands of the local Aboriginal people, the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunyjatjara, and they deeply dislike visitors (whom they call *minga,* or ants) clambering all over it. Personally I don't blame them. It is a sacred site to them. I think it should be for everyone, frankly.

We stopped at the visitors' center for a cup of coffee and to look at the displays, which were all to do with interpretations of the Dreamtime – the Aborigines' traditional conception of how the earth was formed and operates. There was nothing instructive in a historical or geological sense, which was disappointing because I was curious to know what Uluru is doing there. How do you get the biggest rock in existence onto the middle of an empty plain? It turns out (I looked in a book later) that Uluru is what is known to geology as a bornhardt: a hunk of weather-resistant rock left standing when all else around it has worn away. Bornhardts are not that uncommon – the Devils Marbles are a collection of miniature bornhardts – but nowhere else on earth has one lump of rock been left in such dramatic and solitary splendor or assumed such a pleasing smooth symmetry. It is a hundred million years old. Go there, man.

Afterward we had one last drive around the rock before heading back to the lonely highway. We had been at the site for barely two hours, obviously not nearly enough, but I realized as I turned around in my seat to watch it shrinking into the background behind us that there never could be enough, and I felt moderately comforted by that thought.

Anyway, I'll be back. I have no doubt of that (Bryson 2001: 255–258).

a) Discuss.

1) How does Bill Bryson describe Uluru?
2) What does he say about the local Aborigines?
3) What is the Dreamtime?
4) What is a bornhardt?

IV. Read Extract 3 below and do exercises a, b and c

EXTRACT 3

ONE OF THE MOST MOMENTOUS EVENTS in human history took place at a time that will probably never be known, for reasons that can only be guessed at, by means that seem barely credible. I refer, of course, to the peopling of Australia.

Until fairly recently accounting for the presence of human beings in Australia was not such a problem. At the beginning of the century it was thought that Aborigines had been on the continent for no more than 400 years. As recently as the 1960s, the time frame was estimated to be perhaps 8,000 years. Then in 1969 **a geologist** named Jim Bowler from the Australian National University in Canberra was poking around on the shores of a long-dried lake bed called Mungo in a parched and lonely corner of western New South Wales when something caught his eye. It was the skeleton of a woman, obtruding slightly from a sandbank. The bones were collected and sent off for carbon dating. When the report came back, it showed that the woman had died 23,000 years ago, at a stroke almost tripling the known period of occupation in Australia. Since then, other finds have pushed the date back further. Today the evidence points to an arrival date of at least 45,000 years ago, but probably more like 60,000.

The first **occupants** of Australia could not have walked there because at no point in human times has Australia not been an island. They could not have arisen independently because Australia has no apelike creatures from which humans could have descended. The first arrivals could only have come by sea, presumably from Timor in the Indonesian **archipelago**, (…).

No one can possibly say. All that is certain is that Australia's **indigenous peoples** are there because their distant ancestors crossed at least sixty miles of fairly formidable sea tens of thousands of years before anyone else on earth dreamed of such an endeavor, and did it in sufficient numbers to begin to start the colonization of a continent.

By any measure this is a staggeringly momentous accomplishment. And how much note does it get? Well, ask yourself when was the last time you read anything about it. When was the last time in any context concerning human dispersal and the rise of civilizations that you saw even a passing mention of the role of Aborigines? They are the planet's invisible people.

A big part of the problem is that for most of us it is nearly impossible to grasp what an extraordinary span of time we are considering here. Assume for the sake of argument that the Aborigines arrived sixty thousand years ago (that is the figure used by Roger Lewin in *Principles of Evolution,* a standard text). On that scale, the total period of European occupation of Australia represents about 0.3 percent of the total. In other words, for the first 99.7 percent of its inhabited history Aborigines had Australia to themselves. They have been there an almost unimaginably long time. And here lies their other unappreciated achievement.

The arrival in Australia of the Aborigines is, of course, merely the start of the story. They also mastered the continent. They spread over it with amazing swiftness and developed strategies and patterns of behavior to exploit or accommodate every extreme of the landscape, from the wettest rain forests to the driest deserts. No people on earth have lived in more environments with greater success for longer. It is generally accepted that the Aborigines have the oldest continuously maintained culture in the world. It is thought by some – the respected prehistorian John Mulvaney, for instance, – that the Australian language family may be the world's oldest. Their art and stories and systems of beliefs are indubitably among the oldest on earth.

These are obviously important and singular achievements, too. They provide incontestable evidence that the early Aboriginal peoples spoke and cooperated and employed advanced technological and organizational skills at a time much earlier than anyone had ever supposed. And how much notice do these achievements get? Well, again, until recently, virtually none. I had this brought home to me with a certain unexpected forcefulness when, after leaving Alan

and Carmel and flying to Sydney, I went for an afternoon to the State Library of New South Wales. There while browsing for something else altogether I came across a 1972 edition of the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Archaeology.* Curious to see what it had to say about the findings at Lake Mungo three years earlier, I took it down to have a look. It didn't mention the Mungo findings. In fact, the book contained just one reference to Australia's Aborigines, a sentence that said:

"The Aborigines also evolved independently of the Old World, but they represent a very primitive technical and economic phase."

That was it – the entire discussion of Australia's indigenous culture by a scholarly volume of weight and authority, written in the last third of the twentieth century. When I say these are the world's invisible people, believe me these are the world's invisible people (Bryson 2001: 185–188).

a) Explain what the following names/titles/place refer to:

– Jim Bowler
– the Indonesian archipelago
– Roger Lewin's *Principles of Evolution*
– John Mulvaney
– the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Archaeology*

b) In your own words, explain what Bill Bryson means when he says that the Aborigines are 'the world's invisible people'.

c) Explain the words in bold.

V. Read Extract 4 below and answer the questions in exercise a

EXTRACT 4

FROM THE FIRST MOMENT OF CONTACT the natives were a source of the deepest wonder to the Europeans. When James Cook and his men sailed into Botany Bay they were astonished that most of the Aborigines they saw sitting on the shore or fishing in the shallows from frail bark canoes seemed hardly to notice them. They "scarce lifted their eyes from their employment," as Joseph Banks recorded. The creaking *Endeavour* was clearly the largest and most extraordinary structure that could ever have come before them, yet most of the natives merely glanced up and looked at it as if at a passing cloud and returned to their tasks.

They seemed not to perceive the world in the way of other people. No Aboriginal language, for instance, had any words for "yesterday" or "tomorrow" – extraordinary omissions in any culture. They had no chiefs or governing councils, wore no clothes, built no houses or other permanent structures, sowed no crops, herded no animals, made no pottery, possessed almost no sense of property. Yet they devoted disproportionate efforts to enterprises that no one even now can understand. All around the coast of Australia the early explorers found huge shell mounds, up to thirty feet high and covering at the base as much as half an acre. Often these were some distance inland and uphill. The Aborigines clearly had made some effort to convey the shells from the beach to the mounds – one midden was estimated to contain 33,000 cubic meters of shells – and they kept it up for an enormously long time: at least eight hundred years in one case. Why did they bother? No one knows. In almost every way it was as if they answered to some different laws.

A few Europeans – Watkin Tench and James Cook notably – viewed the Aborigines sympathetically. In the *Endeavour Journal* Cook wrote: "They may appear to some to be the most wretched people on earth, but in reality they are far happier than we Europeans. They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition: the earth and the sea of their own accord furnish them with all things necessary for life ... they seemed to set no value upon anything we gave them, nor would they ever part with anything of their own." Elsewhere, he added with a touch of poignancy: "All they seem'd to want was for us to be gone."

Unfortunately, few others were so enlightened. For most Europeans the Aborigines were simply something that was in the way – "one of the natural hazards," as the scientist and natural historian Tim Flannery has described it. It helped to regard them as essentially subhuman, a view that persisted well into the twentieth century. As recently as the early 1960s, as John Pilger notes, Queensland schools were using a textbook that likened Aborigines to "feral jungle creatures." When they weren't subhuman, they were simply inconsequential. In the same period a Professor Stephen Roberts produced a fat and scholarly tome entitled *A History of Australian Land Settlement,* which managed to survey the entire period of European occupation and displacement without mentioning the Aborigines once. Such was the marginalization of the native peoples that until 1967 the federal government did not even include them in national censuses – did not, in other words, count them as people.

Largely for these reasons no one knows how many Aborigines were in Australia when Britons first settled it. The best estimates suggest that, at the beginning of occupation the Aboriginal population was about 300,000, though possibly as high as a million. What is certain is that in the first century of settlement those numbers fell catastrophically. By the end of the nineteenth century the number of Aborigines was probably no more than 50,000 or 60,000. Most of this decline, it must be said, was inadvertent. Aborigines had almost no resistance to European diseases: smallpox, pleurisy, syphilis, even chicken pox and the milder forms of influenza often cut swaths through the native populations. But where Aborigines remained, they were sometimes treated in the most heartless and wanton manner.

In *Taming the Great South Land* William J. Lines details examples of the most appalling cruelty by settlers toward the natives – of Aborigines butchered for dog food; of an Aboriginal woman forced to watch her husband killed, then made to wear his decapitated head around her neck; of another chased up a tree and tormented from below with rifle shots. "Every time a bullet hit," Lines reports, "she pulled leaves off the tree and thrust them into her wounds, till at last she fell lifeless to the ground." What is perhaps most shocking is how casually so much of this was done, and at all levels of society. In an 1839 history of Tasmania, written by a visitor named Melville, the author relates how he went out one day with "a respectable young gentleman" to hunt kangaroos. As they rounded a bend, the young gentleman spied a form crouched in hiding behind a fallen tree. Stepping over to investigate and "finding it only to be a native," the appalled Melville wrote, the gentleman lifted the muzzle to the native's breast "and shot him dead on the spot."

Such behavior was virtually never treated as a crime – indeed was sometimes officially countenanced. In 1805 the acting judge advocate for New South Wales, the most senior judicial figure in the land, declared that Aborigines had not the discipline or mental capacity for courtroom proceedings; rather than plague the courts with their grievances, settlers were instructed to track down the offending natives and "inflict such punishment as they may merit" - as open an invitation to genocide as can be found in English law. Fifteen years later our old friend Lachlan Macquarie authorized soldiers in the Hawkesbury region to shoot any group of Aborigines greater than six in number, even if unarmed and entirely innocent of purpose, even if the number included women and children. Sometimes, under the pretense of compassion, Aborigines were offered food that had been dosed with poison. Pilger quotes a mid-nineteenth-century government report from Queensland: "The niggers [were given] ... something really startling to keep them quiet... the rations contained about as much strychnine as anything and not one of the mob escaped." By "mob" he meant about one hundred unarmed men, women, and children.

The wonder of all this is that the scale of native murders was not far greater. In the first century and a half of British occupation, the number of Aborigines intentionally killed by whites (including in self-defense, during pitched battles, and in other rather more justifiable circumstances) is thought to be about twenty thousand altogether – an unhappy total, to be sure, but much less than one-tenth the number of Aborigines who died from disease.

That isn't to say that violence wasn't casual or widespread. It was. And it was against this background, in June 1838, that a dozen men on horseback set off from the farm of one Henry Dangar, looking for the people who had stolen or driven off some of their livestock. At Myall Creek, they happened on an encampment of Aborigines who were known among the white settlers of the district as peaceable and inoffensive. Almost certainly they had nothing to do with the rustled cattle. Nonetheless their captors tied them together in a kind of great ball – twenty-eight men, women, and children – led them around the countryside for some hours in an indecisive manner, then abruptly and mercilessly slaughtered them with rifles and swords.

In the normal course of things, that would almost certainly have been that. But in 1838 the mood of the nation was changing. Australia was becoming an increasingly urbanized society, and city dwellers were beginning to express revulsion for the casual slaughter of innocent people. When a campaigning Sydney journalist named Edward Smith Hall got hold of the story and began to bray for blood and justice, Governor George Gipps ordered the perpetrators tracked down and brought to trial. When arrested, two of the accused protested, with evident sincerity, that they hadn't known killing Aborigines was illegal.

Despite clearly damning evidence at the subsequent trial, it took a jury just fifteen minutes to acquit the defendants. But Hall, Gipps, and the urban public were not lightly pacified and a second trial was ordered. This time seven of the men were found guilty and hanged. It was the first time that white people had been executed for the murder of Aborigines.

The Myall Creek hangings didn't end the slaughter of Aborigines so much as drive them underground. They went on sporadically for almost another century. The last was in 1928 near present-day Alice Springs when a white dingo hunter named Fred Brooks was murdered in uncertain circumstances and at least seventeen and perhaps as many as seventy Aborigines were chased down and killed by mounted constabulary in reprisal. (A judge in that case declared that the police had acted within the law.) But the Myall Creek case was undoubtedly a defining moment in Australian history. Though it gets at least a mention in almost all history books these days, I hadn't met anyone who had been there or even quite knew where it was, and it seemed apparent from the descriptions I had read that the authors had drawn exclusively from historical sources. I wanted to have a look.

It takes a little finding. From Macksville the next morning I drove sixty miles up the Pacific Highway to Grafton, then headed inland on a steep and lonely road up and through the Great Dividing Range. Four hours later, in hot and empty sheep country, I reached Delungra – a gas station and a couple of houses with long views over mostly treeless plains – and there I turned down a back road that followed a twisting, sometimes nearly washed-out course on its way to the small town of Bingara twenty-five miles to the south. A couple of miles short of Bingara, I came to a small rickety-looking bridge over a half-dry creek. A little sign announced it as Myall Creek. I pulled the car into the shade of a river gum and got out to have a look. There was no memorial, no historical plaque. Nothing at all to indicate that here, or at least somewhere in the immediate vicinity, was where one of the most infamous events in Australian history took place. To one side of the bridge was a forlorn rest area with a pair of broken picnic tables and a good deal of shattered bottles in the stubby grass around the edge. In the sunny middle distance, perhaps a mile away, stood a large farmhouse, surrounded by fields of unusually verdant crops. In the other direction, and much closer, an overgrown track led to a white building. I walked along it to see what it was. A sign announced it as the Myall Creek Memoriai Hall. It wasn't much of a monument to a terrible slaughter, but at least it was something. Then on a wall of the building I noticed a hand-painted sign and discovered that it had nothing to do with the slaughter; it was a memorial for the dead of two world wars.

I drove on the last couple of miles into Bingara (pop. 1,363), a hot and listless village with a dozing main street. It looked like a place that had once known prosperity, but most of the storefronts now were either empty or taken up, with government enterprises – a health clinic, an employment advice center, a tourist information office, police station, something called a Senior Citizens Rest Center. An old and improbably large movie house still announced itself as the Roxy, but clearly had been shut for years. In the tourist information center I was received by a pleasant-looking middle-aged woman who bobbed to her feet at the sight of a customer. I asked her if they had any information about the massacre, and she gave me a crestfallen look.

"I'm afraid I don't know much about that," she said.

"Really?" I said, surprised. The place was full of leaflets and books.

"Well, it was a long time ago. I believe the children study about it in school, but I'm afraid it's not something visitors ask about very often."

"How often? Just out of interest."

"Oh," she said, and clasped her chin as if that was a real poser. She turned to a colleague who was just emerging from a back room. "Mary, when was the last time someone asked about Myall Creek?"

"Oh," said the colleague, equally stumped. "I couldn't say – no, wait, there was a man who asked about it maybe two months ago. I remember now. He had a little goatee. (...) I can't remember the last time before that."

"Most visitors want to go fossicking," the first lady explained.

Fossicking is to hunt for precious minerals.

"What do they find?" I asked.

"Oh, lots – gold, diamonds, sapphires. This used to be a big mining area."

"But you have nothing at all on the massacre?"

"I'm afraid not." She seemed genuinely regretful. "I tell you who can help you is Paulette Smith at the *Advocate.*"

"That's the local paper," added the colleague.

"She knows all about the massacre. She did some kind of study on it for college."

"If anybody can help you, Paulette can."

I thanked them and went off to find the *Advocate.* Bingara was an oddly interesting little town. It was small and half dead and on a road to nowhere, yet it had not only a tourist office but also its own newspaper. At the *Advocate* office I was told that Paulette Smith had popped out and that I should try back in an hour. Slightly at a loss, I went into a cafe and ordered a sandwich and a coffee, and was mindlessly consuming both when a woman, red-haired, late-thirtyish, and looking faintly breathless, abruptly slid onto the seat facing me.

"I hear you're looking for me," she said.

I smiled. "News travels fast here."

She rolled her eyes ironically. "Small town."

Paulette Smith was rather intense but with a sudden, disarming smile that would flash at odd moments, like a broken sign, and then be lost at once in the greater intensity of what she was telling me.

"We didn't learn anything about the massacre when I was growing up," she said. "We knew it had happened – you know, that a long time ago some Aborigines were killed out by the creek and that some white people were hanged for it. But that was about it. We weren't taught about it in school. We didn't, you know, make school trips out there or anything." The smile came and went.

"Did people talk about it?"

"No. Never."

I asked her where exactly it had happened. "Nobody knows. Somewhere on Myall Creek Station." (Station in the context means a farm or ranch.) "It's all private property now, and they're not real friendly to trespassers. It's owned by a businessman from Sydney as a kind of hobby farm. He's not, you might say, too interested in the historical connection."

"So there's never been any kind of archaeological dig or anything? You don't get academics poking around?"

"No, there's not that kind of interest in it. Anyway, I don't think they'd know where to look. It's a big property."

"And there's no memorial of any kind?"

"Oh, no."

"Isn't that odd?"

"Not especially."

"But wouldn't you expect the government to put up something?*"*

She considered for a moment. "Well, you've got to understand there was nothing all that special about Myall Creek. Aborigines were slaughtered all over the place. Three months before the Myall massacre two hundred Aborigines were killed at Waterloo Creek, near Moree." Moree was sixty miles or so farther west. "Nobody was ever punished for that. They didn't even *try* to punish anybody for that."

"I didn't know that."

She nodded. "No reason why you should. Most people have never heard of it. All that was different about Myall Creek was that white people were punished for it. It didn't stop them killing Aborigines. It just made them more circumspect. You know, they didn't boast about it in the pub

afterwards." Another flickering smile. "It's kind of ironic when you think about it. Myall Creek's not famous for what happened to the blacks here, but for what happened to the whites. Anyway, you wouldn't be able to move in this country for memorials if you tried to acknowledge them all."

She stared dreamily for a moment at my notebook, then said abruptly, "I have to get back to work." She made an apologetic look. "I'm afraid I haven't been much help."

"No, you've been a great help," I said, then I thought of another question.

"Are there any Aborigines here now?"

"Oh, no. They're long gone from round here."

I paid for my lunch and returned to the car (Bryson 2001:188–195).

a) Answer the questions below.

1) What was the reaction of the Aborigines to the first Europeans?
2) According to Bill Bryson, how did the Aborigines perceive the world?
3) How were Aboriginal people described in the *Endevour Journal*?
4) Provide the examples of the marginalization of the Aborigines mentioned in paragraph 4.
5) What were the reasons why the number of the Aborigines fell so drastically in the 19th century?
6) Provide the examples of cruelty towards the Aborigines mentioned by Lines and Melville in paragraph 6.
7) What did the acting judge advocate declare in 1805?
8) According to the mid-nineteenth-century government report (paragraph 7), how were the 'mobs' of the Aborigines treated?
9) Explain what happened at Myall Creek in 1838?
10) What happened in the tourist information centre in Bingara?
11) What explanation concerning the Myall Creek did Paulette Smith give to Bill Bryson?

VI. Read Extract 5 below and answer the questions in exercise a

EXTRACT 5

AFTERWARD I CONTINUED INTO TOWN. I bought a newspaper and took it to an open-air café on Todd Street, a pedestrian mall. I read for a minute or two, but then found myself just watching the passing scene. It was quite busy with Saturday shoppers. The people on the street were overwhelmingly white Australians, but there were Aborigines about, too – not great numbers of them, but always there, on the edge of frame, unobtrusive, nearly always silent, peripheral. The white people never looked at the Aborigines, and the Aborigines never looked at the white people. The two races seemed to inhabit separate but parallel universes. I felt as if I was the only person who could see both groups at once. It was very strange.

A very high proportion of the Aborigines looked beaten up. Many had puffy faces, as if they had wandered into a hornet's nest, and an almost absurdly high number sported bandages on shins, elbows, foreheads, or knees. A label at the Strehlow exhibition, which I had seen the day before, had been at pains to stress that the most ruined Aborigines were those one saw in towns. The idea, I guess, was to inform visitors like me that one shouldn't judge all Aborigines by these mild wrecks seen shuffling through the streets. Nonetheless, it struck me as an odd and paternalistic thing to say, in that it seemed to imply that Aborigines had two choices in their lives: to stay on the missions and prosper, or come into town and fall into penury and dereliction.

It made me think of a line I had seen penned by a famous outback character named Daisy Bates, who came to Australia from Ireland in 1884 and for years lived among and studied the indigenous peoples of Western Australia. In *The Passing of the Aborigines*, published in 1938, she wrote: "The Australian native can withstand all the reverses of nature, fiendish droughts and sweeping floods, horrors of thirst and enforced starvation – but he cannot withstand civilization." In 1938 that may have qualified as sympathetic and enlightened comment, but it was disheartening to see it presented in modified form at an Aboriginal research center in 1999.

You don't have to be a genius to work out that Aborigines are Australia's greatest social failing. For virtually every indicator of prosperity and well-being – hospitalization rates, suicide rates, childhood mortality, imprisonment, employment, you name it – the figures for Aborigines range from twice as bad to up to twenty times worse than for the general population. According to John Pilger, Australia is the only developed nation that ranks high for incidence of trachoma – a viral disease that often leads to blindness – and it is almost exclusively an Aboriginal malady. Overall, the life expectancy of the average indigenous Australian is twenty years – *twenty years* – less than that of the average white Australian.

In Cairns, quite by chance, I had been told about a lawyer named Jim Brooks, who has worked for years for and with Aborigines, and I had managed to meet him for a cup of coffee in town just before Allan and I had flown on to Darwin. A calm, easygoing, immediately likable man with just a hint of the earnestness that must have led him to devote his working life to fighting for the disaffiliated rather than piling up money in private practice, he runs the Native Title Rights Office in Cairns, which helps native peoples with land issues, and was one of the members of a human rights commission set up in the mid-1990s to investigate an unfortunate experiment in social engineering popularly known as the Stolen Generations.

This was an attempt by government to lift Aboriginal children out of poverty and disadvantage by physically distancing them from their families and communities. No one knows the actual numbers, but between 1910 and 1970 between one-tenth and one-third of Aboriginal children were taken from their parents and sent to foster homes or state training centers. The idea – thought quite advanced at the time – was to prepare them for a more rewarding life in the white world. What was most amazing about this was the legal mechanism that enabled it to be

done. Until the 1960s in most Australian states, Aboriginal parents did not have legal custody of their own children. The state did. The state could take children from their homes at any time, on any basis it deemed appropriate, without apology or explanation.

"They did everything they could to eliminate contact between the parents and children," Jim Brooks told me when we met. "We found one woman whose five children were sent to five different states. She had no way of keeping in touch with them, no way of knowing where they were, whether they were sick or well or happy or anything. Have you got kids?"

"Four," I said.

"Well, imagine if a government van turned up at your house one day and some inspector came to the door and told you they were taking your children. I mean seriously imagine how you would feel if you had to stand by and watch your children taken from your arms and put into a van. Imagine watching the van driving off down the road, with your kids crying for you, looking at you out the back window, and knowing that you will probably never see them again."

"Stop," I said with an uneasy stab at jocularity.

He smiled sympathetically at my discomfort. "And there is not a thing you can do about it. Nobody you can turn to. No court that will take your side. And this went on for decades."

"Why did they do it in such a heartless way?"

"They didn't see it as heartless. They thought they were doing a good thing." He passed me a précis of the rights commission's report, which he had brought for me, and showed me a quotation from early in the century by a traveling inspector named James Isdell, who wrote of the dispossessed parents: "No matter how frantic [their] momentary grief might be at the time, they soon forget their offspring."

"They sincerely believed that indigenous peoples were somehow immune to normal human emotions," Brooks said. He shrugged at the hopelessness of such thinking. "Very often the children were told that their parents were dead; sometimes that the parents no longer wanted them. That was their way of helping them cope. Well, you can imagine the consequences. There was a lot of grief, related alcoholism, stratospheric levels of suicide, all that kind of stuff."

"What became of the kids?"

"The kids, meanwhile, were kept in care until they were sixteen or seventeen and then turned out into the community. They had a choice of staying in the cities and trying to cope with the inevitable prejudices or returning to their traditional communities and resuming a way of life that they could barely remember with people they no longer really know. The conditions for dysfunction and dislocation were bred into the system. You don't get rid of that overnight. You know, some people will tell you that the removal of children only affected a small proportion of indigenous families. That is wrong – there was scarcely a family in the land that wasn't affected at some profound and immediate level – but even more tragically it misses the point. Taking children away destroyed a whole continuity of relationships. Just because you stop that practice doesn't mean that all that damage is going to be magically undone and everything will be fine."

"So what can you do for them?" I asked.

"Help to give them a voice," he said. "That's all I can do." He shrugged, a little helplessly, and smiled.

I asked him if there was still much prejudice in Australia and he nodded. "Huge amounts," he said. "Really quite huge amounts, I'm afraid."

Over the past twenty years, successive governments have done quite a lot – or quite a lot compared with what was done before. They have restored large tracts of land to Aboriginal communities. They have returned Uluru to Aboriginal stewardship. They have spent more money on schools and clinics. They have introduced the usual initiatives for encouraging community projects and helping small businesses get started. None of this has made any difference at all to the statistics. Some have actually gotten worse. At the end of the twentieth

century an Aboriginal Australian was still eighteen times more likely to die from an infectious disease than a white Australian, and seventeen times more likely to be hospitalized as a result of violence. An Aboriginal baby remained two to four times more likely to die at birth depending on cause.

Above all, what is perhaps oddest to the outsider is that Aborigines just aren't there. You don't see them performing on television; you don't find them assisting you in shops. Only two Aborigines have ever served in Parliament; none has held a cabinet post. Indigenous peoples constitute only about 1.5 percent of the Australian population and they live disproportionately in rural areas, so you wouldn't expect to see them in vast numbers anyway, but you would expect to see them sometimes – working in a bank, delivering mail, writing parking tickets, fixing a telephone line, participating in some productive capacity in the normal workaday world. I never have; not once. Clearly some connection is not being made.

As I sat now on the Todd Street Mall with my coffee and watched the mixed crowds – happy white shoppers with Saturday smiles and a spring in their step, shadowy Aborigines with their curious bandages and slow, swaying, knocked-about gait – I realized that I didn't have the faintest idea what the solution to all this was, what was required to spread the fruits of general Australian prosperity to those who seemed so signally unable to find their way to it. If I were contracted by the Commonwealth of Australia to advise on Aboriginal issues all I could write would be: "Do more. Try harder. Start now."

So without an original or helpful thought in my head, I just sat for some minutes and watched these poor disconnected people shuffle past. Then I did what most white Australians do. I read my newspaper and drank my coffee and didn't see them anymore (Bryson 2001: 269–273).

a) Answer the questions below:

1. How does Bryson describe white Australians and Aboriginal people in the first paragraph?
2. What did Daisy Bates write about Aboriginal people in *The Passing of the Aborigines*?
3. Explain why the "Aborigines are Australia's greatest social failing".
4. Explain the term 'Stolen Generations'.
5. What do we learn about the situation of the Aborigines in the last two decades of the 20th century?

VII. Read Extract 6 below and discuss the question in exercise a

In 1981 Professor Peter Read published a paper called *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969.* The article is about 'what happened to those Aboriginal children in New South Wales who were taken away from their parents, either living on government reserves and stations, by government legislation, and put in the care of the whites. It is the story of the attempt to 'breed out' the Aboriginal race. It is the story of attempted genocide' (Read 2006: 3).

EXTRACT 6

Why did they do it?

The whites tried to justify their actions in various ways. First that there were inspectors, officials and regulations to protect the children from abuse. Yet Margaret Tucker, in her book *If Everybody Cared*, wrote that she was too frightened to complain about her employer to the Homefinder, and so she stayed in the employ of a cruel and brutal sadist. Probably that was a common enough story. Bad regulations must be challenged, otherwise safeguards in the legal system are worthless. Thus the depriving of rations to parents who did not send their children to school was surely illegal, but no-one challenged the regulations and the practice continued. Good regulations too must be enforced, or they are worthless. (…)

Another justification was that the children were in dire need, deserted by their parents and family, or committed to the homes by their own parents. I have already discussed the Board's lack of effort to find relatives willing to look after the children. And we can only guess at the pressure applied by welfare officers when they wrote on the file, 'I have been trying to persuade Mr and Mrs ..... to commit their children to the care of the Board'. What threats, what inducements were offered, the children never knew.

Today as adults they feel only the hurt of 'my mother put us away'. Almost always there was more to the story than the official version. One family lost seven children to the Board all at once, and the reason was put down to the fact, that the parents had deserted their children. The story the mother told was this: she had gone on a holiday and left the children in the care of their grandmother. Food was short, and the grandmother applied for food relief, as the mother herself had done frequently. The welfare officer heard of the case, and the children were removed.

Another justification was that it was in the children's own interest to be taken. Two beds for six children, food kept in a suitcase, an unweeded garden were taken as signs that the parents were incompetent. In one case a relative offered to look after four committed children. A policeman (…) visited the home, and his report ran, 'Mrs ..... agreed that she did not have sufficient accommodation to look after the extra children'. Comment is scarcely necessary on the status of the woman's agreement.

When we consider the question of parental desertions more generally, it seems that the practice is so painful that only extraordinary circumstances can lead people to do it: enforced residence on a station run like a concentration camp, and alcoholism caused by poverty and hopelessness would be two such factors.

Last of all is the excuse, 'we didn't know'. But there was adequate opportunity to know. In the Second Reading Debate on the 1916 Amendment, which gave the Board almost unlimited powers to remove Aboriginal children, one Member of Parliament spoke out against it. He denounced the suggested scheme as slavery. There would be mean officials, he predicted, cringing, crawling, merciless, grasping, cruel officials, not humanitarian but who just obeyed the letter of the law, in league with the local squatters who just wanted cheap labour. Girls who

were taken would be exposed to more vice than if they had stayed in the camps. Improve the children if you can, he said, but you will not improve a child by taking it away from its parents. (…) Yet the Amendment was carried by 28 votes to three. Ignorance is no defence. The whites were so convinced of the rightness of their own way of life that they excluded all the others. So deep was the idea of the worthlessness of Aboriginal society in New South Wales that hardly anybody, from the highest level of administration to the lowest, got past the old irrelevancies that they respected or were friendly with certain Aborigines. (…)

Most of the officials did not arrive at the starting point, that is, the recognition of the existence of New South Wales Aboriginal culture, let alone take the second step, which was to acknowledge its validity. The blacks whose families remained intact have known all along what the Board was trying to do, and why. For generations Aborigines have suffered. Perhaps in time the whites will suffer in the knowledge of what they have done. But they cannot expect forgiveness (Read 2006: 27–28).

a) Discuss with a partner.

1. Discuss how the white Australians tried to justify their policy (e.g. allegations of neglect, ignorance, etc).

VIII. Read Extract 7 and discuss the questions in exercise a

On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to Indigenous Australians, especially for the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. This formal apology was widely applauded among both Indigenous Australians and the non-indigenous general public.

EXTRACT 7

Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia. (BBC News 2008)

a) Discuss with a partner

1. Do you think that the apology made to Indigenous Australians, the wording of which was consulted with Aboriginal leaders, was the right decision?
2. The text of the apology doesn't make any reference to compensation to the members of the Stolen Generations. Do you think that they should claim compensation?

Glossary:

Extract 1

a jellyfish – meduza, an octopus – ośmiornica, a tick – kleszcz, lethal – śmiertelny, a caterpillar – gąsienica, seashell – muszelka, innocuous – nieszkodliwy, venomous – jadowity, immensity – ogrom, kinship – pokrewieństwo, a specimen – próbka, evolve from – pochodzić z, to graze – paść się

Extract 2

fatigue – wyczerpanie, awesome – budzący lęk/podziw, a ledge – występ skalny/półka skalna

Extract 3

parched – wyschnięty, to be descended (from) – wywodzić się, dispersal – rozproszenie, come across – natknąć się przypadkiem

Extract 4

shallows – mielizna, a mound – kopiec, feral – zdziczały, a census – spis ludności, inadvertantly – nieumyślnie, genocide – ludobójstwo, compassion – współczucie, encampment – obozowisko, slaughter – dokonać rzezi, acquit – uniewinnić, reprisal – odwet, verdant – pełen zieleni/bujny, a memorial – pomnik

Extract 5

a malady – dolegliwość, withstand – wytrzymywać/stawiać opór

Extract 6

an amendment – poprawka (np. do konstytucji), a squatter – osadnik

Extract 7

successive – kolejny, inflict – zadawać (ból)

TEACHER'S NOTES

EXTRACT 1

a)

– a prison – Australia is the only nation that started as a prison;
– Uluru – (also called Ayers Rock) the biggest monolith;
– poisonous snakes – of the world's ten most poisonous snakes, all are Australian;
– the Aborigines – they arrived in Australia 45,000 or even 60,000 years ago; they have no clearly evident racial or linguistic kinship to other nations in the region;
– fossils – there are a lot of fossils in Australia;
– *Nothomyrmecia macrops* – one of the rarest insects on earth found in completely different places in Australia during expeditions.

b)

Bryson's story about *Nothomyrmecia macrops* 'illustrates perfectly what an exceptional country Australia is' because this is a place where you can find interesting and old things unexpectedly.

EXTRACT 2

1) For Bryson Uluru is not only a splendid monolith, it is also one of the most recognizable objects on earth; when you are in Australia you can see it everywhere; Bryson uses a number of adjectives, e.g. arresting, awesome, mighty, etc.
2) The local Aborigines have been the owners of Uluru since 1985; they dislike visitors and call them *minga* (ants); Uluru is a sacred place to them.
3) The Dreamtime is an Aboriginal story about the beginning of the world.
4) A bornhardt is an isolated rock resistant to erosion that rises from a surrounding plain.

EXTRACT 3

a)

– Jim Bowler – a geologist from the Australian National University in Canberra; he found the skeleton of a woman on the shores of a long-dried lake bed called Mungo in western New South Wales; the woman had died 23,000 years ago, which almost tripled the known period of occupation in Australia; other finds have pushed the date back further and today the evidence points to an arrival date of at least 45,000 years ago, but probably more like 60,000.
– the Indonesian archipelago – the first occupants of Australia could only have come by sea, presumably from Timor in the Indonesian archipelago.
– Roger Lewin's *Principles of Evolution* – according to Roger Lewin's *Principles of Evolution*, the Aborigines arrived in Australia sixty thousand years ago.
– John Mulvaney – a respected prehistorian who thinks that the Australian language family may be the world's oldest.
– the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Archaeology* – published in 1972; it contained only one reference to the Aborigines: "The Aborigines also evolved independently of the Old World, but they represent a very primitive technical and economic phase."

b)

For Bill Bryson the Aborigines are 'the world's invisible people'. On the one hand, they are believed to be the oldest continuously maintained culture in the world but, on the other hand, they are frequently ignored by white Australians, even by scientists.

EXTRACT 4

a)

1) The Aborigines seemed hardly to notice the first Europeans.
2) According to Bill Bryson, the Aborigines perceived the world differently, e.g. no Aboriginal language had any words for "yesterday" or "tomorrow", they had no chiefs or governing councils, wore no clothes, built no houses or other permanent structures, sowed no crops, herded no animals, made no pottery, possessed almost no sense of property, created huge shell mounds but no one knows why.
3) In the *Endevour Journal* Aboriginal people were described as much happier than European people.
4) For example, the Aborigines were compared to feral jungle creatures in a school textbook; until 1967 the federal government did not include them in national censuses – did not count them as people.
5) A lot of Aborigines died of different illnesses, e.g. smallpox, pleurisy or influenza, or were killed by white people.
6) In *Taming the Great South Land* William J. Lines details examples of cruelty by settlers towards the Aborigines – they were butchered for dog food, Aboriginal women were forced to watch their husbands killed, etc. In an 1839 history of Tasmania, written by Melville, the author relates how he went out one day with "a respectable young gentleman" to hunt kangaroos. As they rounded a bend, the young gentleman spied a form crouched in hiding behind a fallen tree. Stepping over to investigate and "finding it only to be a native," Melville wrote, the gentleman lifted the muzzle to the native's breast "and shot him dead on the spot."
7) In 1805 the judge advocate for New South Wales declared that the Aborigines did not have the discipline or mental capacity for courtroom proceedings. Settlers were instructed to track down the offending natives and "inflict such punishment as they may merit".
8) According to the mid-nineteenth-century government report, the 'mobs' of the Aborigines were given poisonous food. Mobs were small groups of unarmed Aboriginal men, women and children.
9) In June 1838, a dozen men on horseback set off from the farm of Henry Dangar, looking for the people who had stolen some of their livestock. At Myall Creek, they came across an encampment of the Aborigines. Almost certainly they had nothing to do with the rustled cattle. Twenty-eight men, women, and children were killed.
   In 1838 Australia was becoming an increasingly urbanized society, and city dwellers were beginning to express revulsion for the casual slaughter of innocent people. During the first trial it took a jury just fifteen minutes to acquit the defendants. But a second trial was ordered. This time seven of the men were found guilty and hanged. It was the first time that white people had been executed for the murder of the Aborigines.
10) The women working in the tourist information centre in Bingara knew almost nothing about the massacre at Myall Creek.
11) Paulette Smith told Bryson that she hadn't been taught about the massacre at school and that nobody knew where it had taken place. The place is a private property now and there is no monument there. Myall Creek's not famous for what happened to the blacks there, but for what happened to the whites.

EXTRACT 5

a)

1. Bryson noticed that the white people never looked at the Aborigines, and the Aborigines never looked at the white people. The two races seemed to inhabit separate but parallel universes. It was very strange. A very high proportion of the Aborigines looked beaten up. Many had puffy faces and a high number of them sported bandages on shins, elbows, foreheads, or knees. It struck Bryson that the Aborigines had two choices in their lives: to stay on the missions and prosper, or come into town and fall into penury and dereliction.
2. Daisy Bates came to Australia from Ireland in 1884 and for years lived among and studied the indigenous peoples of Western Australia. In *The Passing of the Aborigines*, published in 1938, she wrote: "The Australian native can withstand all the reverses of nature, fiendish droughts and sweeping floods, horrors of thirst and enforced starvation – but he cannot withstand civilization."
3. The Aborigines are Australia's greatest social failing because for virtually every indicator of prosperity and well-being – hospitalization rates, suicide rates, childhood mortality, imprisonment, employment – the figures for the Aborigines range from twice as bad to up to twenty times worse than for the general population. According to John Pilger, Australia is the only developed nation that ranks high for incidence of trachoma – a viral disease that often leads to blindness – and it is almost exclusively an Aboriginal malady. Moreover, the life expectancy of the average indigenous Australian is twenty years less than that of the average white Australian.
4. The term 'Stolen Generations' refers to those Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their parents mainly because of their Aboriginality. It was an official policy of successive governments that lasted from the 1900s to the 1970s.
5. Over the past twenty years, successive governments have done quite a lot compared with what was done before. They have restored large tracts of land to Aboriginal communities. They have returned Uluru to Aboriginal stewardship. They have spent more money on schools and clinics. They have introduced the usual initiatives for encouraging community projects and helping small businesses get started. However, none of this has made any difference at all to the statistics. Some have actually gotten worse. At the end of the twentieth century an Aboriginal Australian was still eighteen times more likely to die from an infectious disease than a white Australian, and seventeen times more likely to be hospitalized as a result of violence. An Aboriginal baby remained two to four times more likely to die at birth depending on cause. Also, you don't see them performing on television; you don't find them assisting you in shops. Only two Aborigines have ever served in Parliament; none has held a cabinet post. Indigenous peoples constitute only about 1.5 percent of the Australian population and they live disproportionately in rural areas.

EXTRACT 6

a)

1. Students' own answers (e.g. allegations of neglect, ignorance, etc).

EXTRACT 7

a)

1. Students' own answers.
2. Students' own answers.