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English Unlimited

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REVIEW: ENGLISH UNLIMITED

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Tilbury, A., Hendra, L. A., Rea, D., & Clementson, T. (2011). *English Unlimited (Upper Intermediate)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

English Unlimited is a new offering by Cambridge University Press which is intended for upper intermediate adult language learners. It seeks to be very practical, authentic, international, and flexible.

The teaching content of the course of study presented is organized around the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF). What this means for teachers is that the book has clearly defined goals for what objectives the students should be able to achieve in their use of the English language. In sum, the text explicitly focuses on building the skills needed for students to study and use English in real life situations.

In terms of authenticity, the text seeks to address the question of “do they really say that?” by basing the grammar and vocabulary choices on the CIC – Cambridge International Corpus. The CIC is a body of English works, spoken and written, which is meant to be representative of how English is used worldwide. The vocabulary and grammar choices presented in *English*

Unlimited are based on their frequency of use in the CIC. This guarantees that the structures and vocabulary presented are indeed widely used and understood.

The text seeks to move away from the prevalent Anglo – American centered approach to English language learning by including characters, facts, and readings from diverse locations throughout the world, e.g. China, South Korea, and Egypt. Furthermore, the audio recordings feature both native and non-native speakers as well as both scripted and unscripted dialogues. This is an excellent feature as English is the world's second language and non-native speakers will soon outnumber native ones. The recordings should therefore prepare learners to understand a wide variety of accents and enable them to interact with other English speakers no matter where they are from. The inclusion of both scripted and unscripted dialogues exposes students to the “natural” sound of the language and help them better differentiate between formal and informal vocabulary.

Lastly, it seems that *English Unlimited* seeks to be flexible in accommodating the needs of learners. Toward that end, the text is full of boxes and activities highlighting grammar, vocabulary, points of cross cultural awareness, world facts, speaking tips, pronunciation help and more. It also features self-assessment activities for learners and comes with a rigorous set of assessments for use by teachers as well.

English Unlimited is a high quality text meant for skilled intermediate who want to push toward the advanced level. It succeeds in presenting English as a living language shaped by all speakers – native and non-native alike. It stands head and shoulders above its peers by consciously acknowledging that most students of English are likely to use English in communicating with other non-native speakers as well as native speakers. This helps learners understand that the ability to communicate in English is a key skill which is best used in

conjunction with their other interests.

However, the text is so full of information that it may be intimidating, both to students and teachers alike. This wealth of information means even the teacher will be confronted with new vocabulary and that the text lacks depth of practice (though that is somewhat remedied by the availability of the student workbook). The key to using this book is to focus on the chapter goals and not to worry too much about the content in each chapter, at least initially. A successful strategy would be to design pre-teaching activities according to the chapter goals, which would contain vocabulary more familiar to your students and allow them to build the vocabulary needed to complete the activities in the text. Such a strategy would also provide the depth of practice necessary to mastery of the language.

Overall, *English Unlimited* is a great text for highly skilled intermediate learners. It will challenge you to expand your vocabulary and your horizons and enable your students to engage the global community of English speakers.

The Author

John Viano is currently a freelance English language educator. He has spent almost a decade teaching English in various locales in the USA, Thailand, and China. He was a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand from 2006-08 working to implement student-centered teaching based education reform.