

Module: Reading Comprehension

Grade: Freshman

Theme: Humorous satire

Instructor: Dr. Bacher

READING COMPREHENSION



Short Biography:

*George Mikes (pronounced **Mik-esh**) was a Hungarian-born British author best known for his humorous commentaries on various countries. Mikes graduated in Budapest in 1933 and started work as a journalist on Reggel ("Morning"), a Budapest newspaper. In 1946, he became a British Citizen. It is reported that being a Jew from Hungary was a factor in his decision. Mikes wrote in both Hungarian and English. How to be an Alien (1946) poked gentle fun at the English, which proved- as a book- a great success in post-war Britain. George Mikes died on 30 August 1987.*

Historical Context

How to be a hypocrite story took place during the Second World War. George Mikes was referring to the bombing of London by Nazi Germany with their new weapon: The V2. The latter was the first missile to be used in war. The V in V2 stands for the German word "Vergeltungswaffe" for retaliation weapon.

Text: Read the text, and then answer the questions thoroughly.

If you want to be really and truly British, you must become a hypocrite. Now: how to be a hypocrite? As some people say that an example explains things better than the best **theory**, let me try this way. I had a drink with an English friend of mine in a **pub**. We were sitting on the high chairs in front of the counter when a **flying bomb** exploded about a hundred yards away. I was truly and honestly frightened, and when a few seconds later I looked around, I could not see my friend anywhere. At last, I noticed that he was lying on the floor, flat as a **pancake**. When he realized that nothing particular had happened in the pub, he got up a little embarrassed, flicked the dust off his suit, and turned to me with a superior and **sarcastic** smile. "**Good Heavens!** Were you so frightened that you couldn't move?"

A. General Comprehension

(**Objective:** To skim for general information)

1. Who is George Mikes?

2. From which book is this passage taken?
3. Where and when did the story take place?
4. What happened all of a sudden?
5. Was the author afraid? Was his friend afraid as well?

B. Detailed Comprehensions

(*Objective*: To scan for specific information)

1. In what way can you be really and truly English?
2. What does the author mean by “hypocrite”?
3. Why does the author claim that?
4. Is it true that when someone is not honest they can be, thus, English?
5. How does the author prove that the English are hypocrites?

C. Inference Questions

(*Objective*: to infer hidden messages)

1. Do you think that George Mikes wrote *How to Be an Alien* to spite the English? How can you (dis)prove that?
2. Do you think that George Mikes’s English friend was really and truly hypocrite? In what way can you account for the friend’s attitude?
3. Is it fair to generalize that to be really and truly English you have got to be a hypocrite?

D. Discussion Questions

(*Objective*: to express one’s thoughts and arguments orally)

4. What would you do if you were in Mikes’s friend position when a flying bomb fell not far from where you were?
5. Is *fear* equivalent of *hypocrisy*? Give your arguments.

E. Dictionary Skills (Lexis): Read the definitions on the left and come up with the right words.

1. A person who affects virtues or qualities s/he does not have. _____

2. A flat cake made of thin batter and cooked on both sides. _____
3. Fine particles, a fine powder. _____
4. To be aware of . _____
5. A level surface (as a table or board) over which transactions are conducted or food is served or on which goods are displayed. _____

F. Dictionary Skills: *Check up the bold words (in the text) in your dictionaries.*

G. Paragraph Writing (individual, pair, or group assignment)

Stereotypes, which refer to derogatory characterization of individuals or groups of people, are most of time if at all unfair. Substantiate or refute in a 150-word text.



A V2 flying bomb (i.e., missile)