

## A. Learning Intentions

### a) \_\_\_\_\_ to learn more English vocabulary

If learning vocabulary is your primary intent in using the text, the glossary at the back of the book will be useful. The one disadvantage of learning English vocabulary from a textbook is that pronunciation can be challenging. Unlike many languages which are phonetic in the relationship between sound and spelling, English words come from many different linguistic backgrounds and are not always pronounced as they appear to be from their spellings. You can learn the meanings of words but you will need to find other sources to check your pronunciation of some words (e.g., online audio, music, TV, and radio, or better yet, talking to people who speak English).

There will be at least one vocabulary exercise for each chapter in the Supplementary Exercises found on this website and these will supplement the vocabulary exercises in each chapter.

To truly say that you have learned a new word is to be able to

- » understand the meaning of a phrase or sentence in which it is used
- » recognize the meaning in other contexts
- » pronounce it and spell it
- » use that word correctly in new phrases and sentences as needed to communicate your ideas

The last of these is the most challenging and the most important, and comes with practice. The more often you see a word used in English, the easier it is to understand its precise meaning. The more often you try using a new word and see whether or not others understand you when you do, the more you learn the exact boundaries of that word. Practice makes perfect! If you don't try, you won't learn. But be prepared to laugh at yourself a lot! Do that, and make everyone laugh, and you will learn.

### b) \_\_\_\_\_ to get general information about the country and its people

If this is your primary intent in reading *Gateway to Canada*, just get comfortable, read, and enjoy! Some words are defined but there may be others you do not know. You can check the glossary in the back of the book to see if the words are defined elsewhere in the book, you can use a dictionary, or you can look up the definition online. In general, I'd recommend looking up only those words that prevent you from understanding the basic meaning of what you are reading. I also have a rule of thumb when I am learning another language: If I notice a new

word three times, then I presume I need to learn that word even if I have been able to understand the contexts of previous sightings of the word. I look it up and write down the definition. Then I make an effort to use that new word whenever I can so that it can be integrated into my existing vocabulary. (Reading requires passive knowledge of words; speaking effectively requires an active knowledge of the words. Our passive vocabularies are always bigger than our active ones.)

**c) \_\_\_\_\_ to prepare myself to form relationships with Canadian-born people**

When I was teaching French as a second language, I would frequently have at least one person in every class who was there because they had married into a French-speaking family and needed to be able to understand and talk with relatives. Sometimes, they had a friend whose first language was French and they wanted to be able to converse somewhat in French as well as English. Many more wanted to travel in French-speaking areas and get to know people when they were travelling. I think this is one of the best reasons to learn another language. When we make an effort to speak to others in their language, even if they can speak ours, we are showing respect and interest in who they are and most people are very appreciative of that gesture, even if we speak their language poorly.

If this is your primary reason for wanting to read the text, consider it cultural capital. The more you know about Canada and can talk about that knowledge, the more you have to discuss with the Canadians you meet or know. *Gateway to Canada* gives you common ground for discussion. You can ask Canadians all kinds of questions based on what you have read. For example, suppose you have read the chapter on Atlantic Canada. You can ask people if they have ever travelled there or if they know people who come from there. People will eagerly share with you their stories about things that are of interest to them. And many people will also feel free to ask you questions about where you come from. Voila! You find yourself getting to know one another.

**d) \_\_\_\_\_ to prepare myself to study in Canada**

If this is your intent, *Gateway to Canada* provides you with not only a good knowledge base of the different regions of Canada, but also a lot of cultural capital to give you insights into what Canadians value, what they do for recreation, and how the country works.

It is important to be prepared for the culture shock that comes with a move to a new country. The more cultural capital that you have before you come to Canada, the more prepared you will be to cope with the transition.

Many non-native-English speakers will also face a language shock when they begin their studies in an English university or college. Often learners who have studied English in another country are more proficient in reading and writing than in listening and speaking. You may benefit from extra practice with aural content and developing confidence in asking questions about what you do not understand. With a study partner, take turns reading segments from *Gateway to Canada* aloud and taking notes. Be sure to ask questions if you need clarification.

**e) \_\_\_\_\_ to decide which parts of Canada I want to visit or study in**

Six of the 13 chapters of the text describe in some detail what each region is like, what the major cities are, and what attractions stand out in each area. Reading each of these chapters will give you a good overview and will possibly be helpful in determining which places you'd like to research further. Universities and technical schools all have their own websites with a great deal of information about programs, how to register, and what kind of requirements and support there are for international students.

**f) \_\_\_\_\_ to improve my English reading and writing skills**

The easiest way to do this is to take classes taught by an experienced teacher who knows the language well and can guide you from where you are to where you want to go in terms of fluency. If, however, that is not an option, then you can use this text to further your reading and writing skills on your own.

There are many skills involved in becoming a proficient reader in any language. If you are interested in knowing what these are, I'd suggest looking at the NALD (National Adult Literacy Database) website. It breaks down the act of reading into all the skill sets required and may help you to identify specifically what you want to work on.

In general, I presume you want to increase your vocabulary, both passive and active (see item *a* in this section). If you also want to become more conscious of how English speakers use grammar to express themselves, look carefully at the construction of sentences in this text and try making parallel structures of your own. Many ESL texts are written in simplified English to make them more easily readable to language learners. This text is not. It is written in the same kind of English one would find in a newspaper, magazine, or novel designed for the average Canadian with grade 10 to 12 education. In other words, you will find a great variety of structures and complexity of grammar.

Another exercise many readers find helpful is to read a paragraph or group of paragraphs, then close the book and write a summary of what they have read. If you try this, when you are finished, compare it to the original. Did you capture

the main ideas? Did you express them in a way that is clear to the person reading the summary? If you showed it to a friend, would they understand it and would they think it expressed what was in the original? The more you practise using a language, the easier it should become, but, if possible, it is best to do that with someone who knows more than you do about the language.

**g) \_\_\_\_\_ to improve all my English skills**

It would be nice if this text came in an audio form so that you could hear the words pronounced by a native speaker. However, as that is not the case at this time, I would suggest finding a partner to work with as you learn. You can follow the suggestions for *f* in this section, but the only way to improve your listening and speaking is to hear the language and practise speaking it. You can read sections of the text and then ask your partner questions about it. You can make up stories imagining that you are visiting the different places in the text. What do you see? What do you do there? Whom do you meet? What kinds of adventures do you have? The more fun you have using English to imagine things, the easier the language will become for you.

**h) \_\_\_\_\_ to decide whether I would like to live in Canada**

Perhaps you are one of those adventurous souls who wants to leave the country they are in now and try living in another country. Or perhaps the economic situation in your current country makes it very difficult for you to earn a living there. In any case, if you are considering Canada as a potential home for yourself, this text is an excellent introduction to its history, geography, climate, political system, economy, and culture.

**i) \_\_\_\_\_ other (please name): \_\_\_\_\_**

If I have missed an important reason why someone would buy this book and read it, I'd like to know. Email the publisher and they will forward your reason to me. Thanks.

## **B. Current Skills in English**

This section is provided to give you a moment to consider where your English skills are at this time and where you would like them to be. As you may have noticed, they are listed in order of proficiency from least to most. If you checked off *f* and are correct in your self-assessment, then the text is most useful to you as cultural capital, namely information about the country that will support you in conversing with Canadians about their country. If you checked off any of the others, then there is a great variety of ways

you can use the text to support your learning of English as well as your learning about Canada.

### C. Current Study Skills

**a) \_\_\_\_ I need a teacher to teach me.**

Learning in a class taught by a teacher is the typical way a lot of us have learned many things in our lives. If you feel you can't learn without a teacher, I would be surprised; in fact, I think we are always learning. Canadians believe in lifelong learning and that does not include attending classes alone. It also includes reading, discussing, participating in events where we learn new skills, observing, listening, and appreciating the opportunities each day brings to learn new things and meet new people. If you checked this item, maybe it's time to try something different just for fun.

**b) \_\_\_\_ I learn best in a small group where we help one another.**

In many countries, including Canada, there are programs in which a group gets together to learn. Sometimes the group is led by one learner who is a little more advanced than the others in the group. The advantage of this kind of learning is that everyone in the group is a learner and understands the challenges of what that means. The disadvantage is that sometimes you will have questions without answers, but in this day of computers in almost every home and purse, the answers are there if you just ask the right questions. It's also fun to learn in a group.

**c) \_\_\_\_ I learn best with one partner whose English is the same as or better than mine.**

As with group learning, there is a built-in discipline to working together with a partner. You agree upon a time and place and in that period, you do the work you have set for yourselves to do. For some people, it is difficult to learn alone because they are too easily distracted by other things and other people. As with a small group, you can share your knowledge with your partner. He or she might know the answers to some of your questions and you might know the answers to some of his or hers.

**d) \_\_\_\_ I learn well working on my own but need lots of practice exercise.**

You'll be happy to know that the textbook contains vocabulary, comprehension, and discussion questions after every section. This website also contains supplementary exercises to accompany each chapter of the textbook.

**e) \_\_\_\_ I learn well in all modes and just want to read this book for enjoyment, learning whatever I learn.**

Hurrah for you! I wish you happy reading and happy journeying into new experiences.