

МЕТОД РЕЧЕВОЙ ПЛАЗМЫ

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**АНГЛИЙСКИЙ
ЯЗЫК**

РАССКАЗЫ



САМОДОСТАТОЧНЫЙ УРОВЕНЬ



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Александр Павленко

**АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК.
Рассказы. Уровень B2+**

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Настоящее пособие завершает серию учебников, в основе которых лежит метод Речевой плазмы (the Speech Plasma Method). Если целью первых книг было научить говорить на английском языке, используя минимум лексических и грамматических средств, то данное пособие направлено на обучение уверенной, спонтанной речи во всей ее сложности и разнообразии. Учебник состоит из двадцати рассказов-историй из реальной жизни носителей английского языка, записанных с их слов, в результате бесед с ними в непринужденной, доверительной обстановке. Каждый рассказ сопровождается микротекстами-тренингами, которые, по методу Речевой плазмы, активизируют и совершенствуют свободную речь обучаемого.

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Александр Павленко

Английский язык. Рассказы. Уровень В2+

A Trip to Crete

Last year my wife and I spent our holidays in Crete, the southernmost island in Greece, and we made lots of little excursions there into the countryside. On one occasion, we wanted to visit the south side of the island, where there are some ruins from the Roman times and from a former monastery. We went there by bus, travelling along tiny little windy roads. It was quite frightening to watch how the bus driver was manoeuvring the vehicle around all of the twisty curves in the road, quite breathtaking. At every curve we were scared that the bus would crash, and the bus driver had to signal with his horn at each turning as it was impossible to see if any traffic was coming from the other direction and there wasn't enough space on the road for two vehicles to pass side by side.

When we arrived at the nearest bus stop to the ruins, we could see them in the distance, and we could see that there were only two ways to get there – on foot, or by boat, if we had one, which we didn't. So, we started walking in that direction, along a dried up river bed. From the map it seemed that the distance we had to walk was about three kilometres, but it must have been longer, as it took us about three hours of difficult climbing and scrambling over rocks to get there.

At one point on the way we reached the top of a hill, from which we had an amazing view of the ruins. There we met a boy from France, who we shared friendly gestures with, but couldn't really speak with as we didn't speak a foreign language. We climbed down from there together, into the grounds of the ruins. There was a fence blocking our path, but it was quite small and easy to climb over.

In the grounds of the ruins were some very twisty, gnarled old olive trees, and at the entrance we found a beautiful mosaic from the Roman times, leading to many little paths. The monastery was very small. Each of the monks' cells were just tiny little box-like rooms, two by three metres in size. The whole place had a beautiful, ancient atmosphere.

By the time we got there we were very tired after so much walking and weren't looking forward to the long trek back to the bus stop. We weren't even sure that we would get there in time for the last bus. Fortunately, we met a fisherman on the beach, who was there fishing for octopuses. He was kind enough to take us back to the road by boat, which only took about ten or fifteen minutes, and the walk to the bus stop from where he dropped us off was very short. We were well in time to catch the bus. We were very happy, if a little exhausted, after a nice, interesting trip.

A Trip to Crete

1. Where did they spend their holidays last year?
2. What did they do while on holiday?
3. Why did they want to visit the south part of the island?
4. How did they get there?
5. Why did they find their trip frightening?
6. What were they afraid of?
7. Why did the driver have to signal with his horn at turnings?
8. How could they get to the ruins from the bus stop?
9. How long did it take them to get there?
10. Where did they meet a boy from France?
11. What was the trouble communicating with him?
12. What did they have to get over when they got to the ruins?

13. What did they find at the entrance of the ruins?
14. What size were the monks' cells?
15. What did they think of the place?
16. Why weren't they eager to walk back to the bus stop?
17. What could happen if they had walked to the bus stop?
18. Who did they meet?
19. What was the fisherman doing there?
20. What was the favour he did them?
21. How long did the boat trip take?
22. Did the fisherman drop them off at the bus stop?
23. How did they reach the bus stop then?
24. Did they catch the last bus?
25. How did they feel at the end of the day?

A Trip to Crete

Training 1

They went there by bus, travelling along tiny little windy roads. It was quite frightening to watch how the bus driver was manoeuvring the vehicle around all of the twisty curves in the road, quite breathtaking. At every curve they were scared that the bus would crash, and the bus driver had to signal with his horn at each turning as it was impossible to see if any traffic was coming from the other direction.

Training 2

There were only two ways to get to the ruins – on foot, or by boat. So, they started walking in that direction, along a dried-up riverbed. From the map it seemed that the distance they had to walk was about three kilometres, but it must have been longer, as it took them about three hours of difficult climbing and scrambling over rocks to get there.

Training 3

At one point on the way they reached the top of a hill, from which they had an amazing view of the ruins. There they met a boy from France, who they shared friendly gestures with, but couldn't really speak with as they didn't speak a foreign language. They climbed down from there together, into the grounds of the ruins. There was a fence blocking their path, but it was quite small and easy to climb over.

Training 4

In the grounds of the ruins were some very twisty, gnarled old olive trees, and at the entrance they found a beautiful mosaic from the Roman times, leading to many little paths. The monastery was very small. Each of the monks' cells were just tiny little box-like rooms, two by three metres in size. The whole place had a beautiful, ancient atmosphere.

Training 5

Fortunately, they met a fisherman on the beach, who was there fishing for octopuses. He was kind enough to take them back to the road by boat, which only took about ten or fifteen minutes, and the walk to the bus stop from where he dropped them off was very short. They were well in time to catch the bus. They were very happy, if a little exhausted, after a nice, interesting trip.

Pub Music in Edinburgh

I first became involved in playing Irish music many years ago when I first visited Ireland and was greatly inspired after attending some great folk festivals there. The first one I went to was in County Sligo, in Ballisadare. There were so many great groups playing there – DeDanaan, The Bothy Band, Clannad, all the best-known Irish musicians of that time. There were thousands of tents and thousands of people everywhere, and there was a really great atmosphere. The whole thing lasted for three days, and I had a really nice time.

What struck me most was the power of the sound of the fiddle, such a fantastic instrument. I took up the fiddle when I was a small child but dropped it when I came to the age of about thirteen. But after seeing those folk play in Ireland, well, I had to pick it up again. I brought some sheet music back from Ireland, and when I got back home to Dorchester, joined a local folk music club and tried a few tunes. First, we played the tunes very slowly. You wouldn't recognize them because they were so slow, but gradually I learnt a few of them by heart.

Then I moved to Edinburgh, because my wife, Sophie, is a scientist, and she got a grant to go and work at the University of Edinburgh. She was looking for a place to work where she could work well and expand her knowledge, and at the same time somewhere where I would feel happy. We considered Ireland and Scotland, and eventually decided upon Scotland. I found some work there too. I am also a scientist, a biologist, specializing in mosses. There are so many mosses in Scotland, and I knew people up there who were also involved in studying mosses, so I found myself working for the peat land section of the Scottish Heritage Trust. At home I'd just finished a big study on heavy metal deposition, which can be gauged by analyzing mosses, and I had some good opportunities to talk with other experts about my results, as well as to collect mosses.

My time in Edinburgh was one of the finest times of my life, because I enjoyed my work, and there was great music in the evenings. I went out three times a week to folk music sessions, which took place in a few of the local pubs, and met some really great musicians there, some lovely people. We'd go in and sit down in the pub at the beginning of the evening, have a drink, and would be chatting away when someone would get out their instrument and start playing. Then others that knew the tune they were playing would join in. Some people would play regularly in each pub, and there were always people passing through. The first session I went to I discovered by luck. I just went into the pub and saw that there were people playing, and once you're in one session it's easy to find out from the musicians the times and places of others. I really was a bad fiddle player at the time, but I tried to play a bit and listened a lot, and people were very kind to me and took me to lots of sessions. I'm not a great player at the moment, but I think I've improved a bit since then! I took a portable tape recorder with me and recorded, session by session, many tunes, and tried to learn some of them when I had some spare time. I learned a lot from listening and watching how others played – and there were some really talented players in Edinburgh at that time, like John Martin, for example. You can't imagine how good some of the playing was. There were also people playing the mandolin and the flute, Irish pipes and guitars.

A lot of people from Northern Ireland, particularly from Donegal, used to come to the Edinburgh sessions, and they were a strong influence. There are some pubs where people play Irish music there, and some where people play Scottish music. There were always more people playing in the Irish sessions, maybe because Scottish music is usually played by a solo instrument, maybe with a guitar accompaniment, whereas in Irish music you often find five or six fiddles playing together, which is, I think, more exciting. Also, in the Scottish sessions, you'd very rarely hear any songs, which were more common in the Irish ones.

I wouldn't have liked to live in Edinburgh forever, but I had a really fantastic time there and I was sad to leave. The time there was too short, even for our kids. The kids went to school there, and for our son it was the first time he'd been to school. They both picked up a strong Scottish accent!

Pub Music in Edinburgh

1. When did Greg first become involved in playing Irish music?
2. What was the first festival he visited like?
3. What struck him most at the festival?
4. When did he take up fiddle?
5. Why did he have to learn playing it again?
6. How did he pick up the fiddle back home?
7. Why did they move to Edinburgh?
8. What did Greg and his wife do?
9. What about Greg's work in Scotland?
10. Why did he enjoy living in Edinburgh?
11. How often did he go to folk music sessions?
12. Where did they take place?
13. What did they do at the sessions?
14. How did he happen to discover those sessions?
15. How did he turn into a regular session player?
16. What kind of fiddle player was Greg at the time?
17. Has he improved since then?
18. What did he do to improve?
19. What other instruments did some of the musicians play?
20. Did they only play Scottish music in the pubs in Edinburgh?
21. How did it happen that there were Irish sessions in Edinburgh?
22. Why were there more people playing in the Irish sessions?
23. Were songs typical for Scottish sessions?
24. How did he feel when he had to leave Edinburgh?
25. Why was that time prominent for their children, too?

Pub Music in Edinburgh

Training 1

Greg first became involved in playing Irish music many years ago when he first visited Ireland. He was greatly inspired after attending some great folk festivals there. The first one he went to was in County Sligo. There were so many great groups playing there. There were thousands of tents and people everywhere, and there was a really great atmosphere.

Training 2

Greg took up the fiddle when he was a small child but dropped it when he came to the age of about thirteen. But after seeing those folk play in Ireland, Greg had to pick it up again. He brought some sheet music back from Ireland, and when he got back home, joined a local folk music club and tried a few tunes. First, they played the tunes very slowly. But gradually Greg learnt a few of them by heart.

Training 3

He moved to Edinburgh, because his wife got a grant to work at the University of Edinburgh. She was looking for a place to work where she could expand her knowledge, and at the same time somewhere where Greg would feel happy. They eventually decided upon Scotland. Greg found some work there too. He is a biologist, specialising in mosses. And he had some good opportunities to talk with other experts, as well as to collect mosses.

Training 4

While they were living in Edinburgh Greg went out three times a week to folk music sessions. They'd go in, sit down in the pub, and have a drink, and someone would get out their instrument and start playing. Then others would join in. Greg really was a bad fiddle player at the time, but he learned a lot from listening and watching how others played.

Training 5

A lot of people from Northern Ireland used to come to the Edinburgh sessions, and they were a strong influence. There are some pubs where people play Irish music, and some where people play Scottish music. There were always more people playing in the Irish sessions, maybe because in Irish music you often find five or six fiddles playing together or because songs were more common in the Irish sessions.

Balalaikas in Syria

My friend Alexander, who is Russian, told me an interesting story about a trip he made to Damascus, in Syria, a few years ago. He was working in a city in the heart of Siberia as an interpreter for a dancing group, composed of boys and girls aged between about fourteen and seventeen. They were a very professional dancing group, as they'd all started dancing at about the age of six, and had been training intensively since then, every day, learning many different types of dances, so it was very impressive to see them. It was a real pleasure for my friend to work with them, and to see them dance so often. Every time he looked at them, he couldn't help admiring them, as they danced so magnificently, better than many adult dancing groups that he'd seen.

Anyway, they travelled to Damascus in July or August, in the middle of summer, so it was rather hot in Siberia at that time, about twenty-nine degrees Celsius, so everybody was sweating. He said to them before they left, "Don't forget where we are going, we're going to Damascus, very close to the desert, and it's going to be something like forty-seven or even fifty degrees."

When they arrived at the airport, however, and got out of the plane, they didn't believe that they were in a desert region, as they all felt a little bit chilly! When it was announced at the airport that it was just eighteen degrees, they couldn't believe their ears.

The next day, however, the heat wave came, and it was blistering hot. The temperature reached forty-seven degrees, and so during the day it was almost impossible for my friend and his group to go out into the street without staying in the shade. They could walk along covered walkways, or stay under the canvas awnings of cafes, but it was absolutely unbearable to be in the open.

My friend said that during the daytime in the summer there it is just like a dead city, with nearly empty streets with only very few people walking here and there and no other signs of life. But when the sun goes down, at about nine o'clock in the evening, life there really begins. All of the people come out into the streets, the cafes and restaurants open, and the social life starts. They go to parties, visit each other, buy, and sell things, go to the cinemas – everything starts at nine in the evening and carries on until about two or three in the morning. For my friend it was like an upside-down world, as in Siberia everything closes at about nine, life finishes and everybody goes to bed.

Another thing that surprised Alex was that whereas in Russia it's very unusual for children to go out with their parents to restaurants and to places in the evening, in Damascus it's normal. The children may be three or four years old; you will be sitting and drinking and talking, and the children either sit down next to their parents or, more usually, run around between the tables and play. This was so unusual for my friend to experience, especially as Russia had been so restricted because of the Iron Curtain and he'd never had the opportunity to travel abroad before.

Their dancing tour was a great success. They were in several cities – Damascus, Aleppo and two or three more, and in each place that they danced the audiences went wild. They applauded and called for encores again and again and again. They were accompanied by a small group of musicians playing Russian instruments, balalaikas, and this was very unusual for the local people who were mostly Arabs, as their music was absolutely different, so they were altogether amused, amazed and thoroughly entertained.

They were especially successful in Aleppo, as thirty thousand Armenians live there. Armenia was a republic of the Soviet Union, and when they learnt that a group from Russia were playing, and also that they played music by Khachaturian, the famous Armenian composer, they flocked to the performance. They were fantastically well-received. The audience applauded and encored them many times and were very enthusiastic, maybe because they liked this music so much and felt a deep connection with it.

They stayed in a beautiful five-star hotel, with luxurious facilities, swimming pools, huge four-course meals, top-class service, and things like this, and that was such a surprise for my friend, who

had never been out of Russia before in his life. It was an absolutely fantastic experience for him, one of the greatest experiences of his life.

Balalaikas in Syria

1. Where did Alexander travel?
2. What was he doing then?
3. How did those teenagers become professionals so early?
4. When did they travel to Damascus?
5. What was the weather like in Siberia when they left?
6. What did Alexander warn his group about?
7. What surprised them when they arrived at the airport?
8. What was the temperature like the next day?
9. How could they get around in the city during the day?
10. What was Damascus like during the daytime?
11. When does life really begin?
12. What do the locals do in the evening?
13. Is such a vivid night life typical for Siberia?
14. What was another thing that surprised Alexander?
15. Had he travelled a lot before this trip?
16. How did the audience meet the group?
17. What was unusual for the local public in terms of music?
18. Where were they especially successful?
19. What could be the reason for that?
20. Whose music did they play among others?
21. How did the audience receive them in Aleppo?
22. Where did they stay?
23. What facilities were there at those hotels?
24. Why was it such a great surprise for Alexander?
25. What did he think of that trip?

Balalaikas in Syria

Training 1

My Russian friend Alexander made a trip to Syria some years ago. He was working in a city in the heart of Siberia as an interpreter for a dancing group, composed of boys and girls. They were a very professional dancing group, as they'd all started dancing at about the age of six and had been training intensively since then. Every time he looked at them, he couldn't help admiring them, as they danced better than many adult dancing groups that he'd seen.

Training 2

They travelled to Damascus in the middle of summer. When they arrived at the airport, however, it was announced that it was just eighteen degrees, so they couldn't believe their ears. The next day, however, the heat wave came, and it was blistering hot. The temperature reached forty-seven degrees, and so during the day it was absolutely unbearable to be in the open.

Training 3

During the daytime in the summer Damascus is just like a dead city, with nearly empty streets with only very few people and no other signs of life. But when the sun goes down life there really begins. All of the people come out into the streets, the restaurants open, they go to parties, visit each other, buy and sell things, go to the cinemas – everything starts at nine in the evening and carries on until about two or three in the morning.

Training 4

Their dancing tour was a great success. They were in several cities, and in each place that they danced the audiences went wild. They applauded and called for encores again and again. They were accompanied by a small group of musicians playing Russian instruments, balalaikas, and this was very unusual for the local people, as their music was absolutely different, so they were altogether amused, amazed and thoroughly entertained.

Training 5

They stayed in a beautiful five-star hotel, with luxurious facilities, swimming pools, huge four-course meals, top-class service and things like this, it was an absolutely fantastic experience. This was so unusual for my friend, especially as Russia had been so restricted because of the Iron Curtain and he'd never had the opportunity to travel abroad before.

Lost and Found

I'll tell you about the time I spent living in Norway. I had a girlfriend when I was there named Helga, and we used to go away sometimes to her family house, which was two thousand metres up in the mountains, and a very good base for skiing. We used to go up the mountains with a rucksack and skis on our backs, spend the day skiing, and then come back down and sit by the fire, and then Helga's Dad would beat me at chess: he'd just trap my king and I'd lose...

I was in Norway because I was working as an archaeologist, specializing in mediaeval archaeology, in the town of Trondheim, which is nowadays not that large, but was the capital of Norway in the Middle Ages, when Norway had a large empire, which included the Shetland and Orkney Isles, Ireland for a while, Iceland and Greenland. So, it was a very rich town, and we dug it up, and there was a lot left from those times. We were not sure why there was a lot left, but a lot of old pots, and old leather and wooden articles survived. We found loads, especially things like forks and spoons, everyday objects.

We found a lot of rune-sticks, which was very exciting. What we were digging up was generally bits of wood, chips and chunks, and some of these lumps of wood had runes on them. Runes are a kind of writing which was used in Viking and mediaeval Norway. They are often thought to have been magical symbols, and in fact they may have also functioned in this way, but primarily they were used for simple writing, as they didn't have paper but had tons of wood. The symbols are made up of straight lines, because if you have a knife and a piece of wood, this is the easiest way to make letters. Obviously, you couldn't write books, or long texts, but it was a good system of conveying messages.

The content was often quite mundane, things like "Thorsson made me" or the alphabet, which is called the "Futhark" as the first letters were F-U-T-H-A-R-K. There was one strange one with something about Jerusalem written on it, which we couldn't work out. Some of them were just wrong, I mean what was written on them was gibberish, just letters that didn't really mean anything. These were all found in the rubbish, you see, and we think that there may have been people learning there, in kind of runic schools, where people had to write the alphabet twenty times and things like that.

We had buckets of water, and when we found something, a little piece of wood or something like that, we washed it and took a close look to see if there was anything there. Any runes we found were written down, and as it wasn't in modern Norwegian – the runes were written in mediaeval Norwegian- someone had to get a book out, first of all to find out what letters the runes represented and then to find out what the text meant.

We found a lot of objects that we couldn't identify. We found a very nice thing one day. Sonja, a Swedish woman who had been digging in the corner, suddenly said, "Whooah, look at this", and carried this thing towards me. From a distance it looked just like a little piece of wood, but when it was about a yard away, I could see that it was a little king from a chess set. It was really, really exciting. To find the king was nice, not a pawn or a bishop, for example. We were really lucky that it came out in a lump, and we didn't scrape his head off, as we were cutting sections of earth to examine one section at a time, and Sonja had spotted his head sticking up out of the ground. I think somebody had cut off his nose by mistake, but the rest of him was intact. The find more than made up for my losing my own king so many times!

Lost and Found

1. Where did this story take place?
2. Where did Thomas and his girlfriend use to go sometimes?
3. What did they use to do there?
4. Who would usually win at chess in the evening?
5. What was he doing in Norway?

6. What did Trondheim use to be?
7. Why was it a good place for digging?
8. What did they find there?
9. What finds were especially exciting?
10. What are runes?
11. What were runes used for?
12. Why did the Vikings prefer wood to paper?
13. What are the runic symbols like?
14. What could be the reason for that?
15. What about the content of their finds?
16. How did they explain that some of the texts did not mean anything?
17. What did they need buckets of water for?
18. What language were runes written in?
19. How did they manage to find out what they meant?
20. Who found the most interesting find?
21. What did it look like from a distance?
22. What did it turn out to be?
23. What was lucky about this find?
24. Was it absolutely intact?
25. What did Thomas feel about this find?

Lost and Found

Training 1

Thomas spent some time living in Norway. He and his girlfriend Helga used to go away sometimes to her family house, which was two thousand metres up in the mountains. They used to go up the mountains with a rucksack and skis on their backs, spend the day skiing, and then come back down, sit by the fire, and then Helga's Dad would beat Thomas at chess: he'd just trap his king and Thomas would lose.

Training 2

He was in Norway because he was working as an archaeologist in Trondheim. It was the capital of Norway in the Middle Ages, when Norway had a large empire, which included the Shetland and Orkney Isles, Ireland, Iceland and Greenland. So, it was a very rich town. They dug it up, and there were a lot of old pots, and old leather and wooden articles left from those times.

Training 3

They found a lot of rune-sticks. Runes are a kind of writing which was used in Viking and mediaeval Norway. They are often thought to have been magical symbols, but primarily they were used for simple writing, as they didn't have paper but had tons of wood. The symbols are made up of straight lines. Obviously, you couldn't write books, but it was a good system of conveying messages.

Training 4

The content was often quite mundane or just the alphabet. Some of them were just wrong and gibberish, just letters that didn't really mean anything. These were all found in the rubbish, and they thought that there may have been people learning there, in kind of runic schools, where people had to write the alphabet twenty times and things like that.

Training 5

They found a very nice thing one day. It was a little king from a chess set. It was really, really exciting to find the king, not a pawn or a bishop, for example. They were really lucky that it came out in a lump, and they didn't scrape his head off. Somebody had cut off his nose by mistake, but the rest of him was intact. The find more than made up for Tomas's losing his own king so many times!

Holidays in Scotland

When I was a teenager, my pals and I went off camping in Arran, which is an island off the west coast of Scotland. We arrived by ferry at Brodick and went off looking for a place to camp. We found a very nice place along the sea front to put up our tents, which was a peninsula, next to a golf course. We pitched our tents there, and spent some time beachcombing and playing football, if I remember well, and then when it got dark, we decided to go to the local town for a drink. We decided to take a short cut across the golf course, and it was completely black, and none of us had a torch. We set off anyway, across this completely dark golf course, which we didn't know had some burns – ditches with little streams at the bottom – running across it. So we were marching along merrily towards the pub, when splish!, splash!, splosh!, we found ourselves knee-deep in water after falling into one of the streams. We dragged ourselves out and continued onwards to the pub.

The pub was nothing special, but we had a few drinks there, and when we finally got back, taking the road instead of returning across the golf course, we couldn't find the tents, or even the peninsula on which we'd camped. "What's going on? What's happened? Where are our tents?" we asked ourselves. It turned out that the area where we'd set up the tents wasn't really a peninsula at all, but that when the tide came in it became an island. So, the tide had come in and cut us off from our tents. For the second time that evening we got wet feet, as to reach our tents we had to roll up our trousers, take off our shoes and socks and wade across to them.

At the time I was living in Elgin in the district of Moray, which is quite a nice area in the East of Scotland. It's famous for not having any thunderstorms. It has the fewest thunderstorms of anywhere in Britain, and is also well known for its whisky, as it is in the heart of the whisky distilling area, and has much fertile land for growing barley, and nearby there are hills where there is peat and fresh spring water, which you need to make whisky. So, all of the famous whiskies come from there, like Glenfiddich and Glengrant, for example. There's a shop there where many of them are bottled, called Gordon Simpson's or something like that, and this shop sells about five hundred types of whisky, all from local producers. They have really special whiskies there, some thirty years old. In this shop we found a bottle which was produced at a distillery which I used to live next door to, called the Longmorne distillery, and even though we lived right next to this distillery we had never sampled its produce, so we bought a bottle. It was awful. It tasted like paint-stripper!

Another time I went camping was on the Isle of Iona. We camped in the north-west corner, I think. Iona is a very special island, which is historically important because Saint Columba lived there and founded a monastery there – he was the man who brought Christianity, in the form of the Celtic church, to Scotland, from Ireland. The story goes that he left on a very small boat from Ireland and stopped on another island further south and wanted to settle there but discovered that from this island they could still see Ireland, so they moved on to Iona, from which they couldn't see Ireland, so they wouldn't feel homesick.

It's a very beautiful island, with the monastery, a very nice mediaeval church, and beautiful, very ancient rocks, which, due to the movement of the geographical strata, consist of lovely, pretty, marble-type old rocks. There is a very special, unique, magical atmosphere there. The water surrounding the coast is very clear and blue, and there are some wonderful clean beaches there, with little rock-pools dotted about with little fish, crabs, and starfish in them, and lots of seaweed and driftwood scattered along the shore.

The weather is amazing, as it changes every fifteen or twenty minutes, so it can be pouring down with rain one minute, and then bright and sunny the next.

Anyway, we camped in the north-west corner where there is a farmer who lets you camp on his land, which is basically a strip of grass next to the beach. It's a lovely sandy beach with lots of driftwood, so we made a fire there and sat around it cooking soup in an old pot that he lent us and

baking potatoes in the fire, drank a bottle of whisky, walked up and down collecting nicely shaped pieces of driftwood and watched the sun set on the horizon.

Holidays in Scotland

1. Where did Joey and his pals go off camping?
2. What was special about the place where they put up their tents?
3. How did they spend the day?
4. What were their plans for the evening?
5. Why did they decide to go across the golf course?
6. What did the course have?
7. What happened when they were marching across it?
8. Did they reach the pub after all?
9. Which way did they get back?
10. What did they see when they got back?
11. What did the area turn out to be?
12. What did they have to do to reach the tents?
13. What was that district famous for?
14. Why is the region so perfect for distilling whisky?
15. What did they buy in a specialised whisky shop?
16. What was it like?
17. What was another place he went camping in Scotland?
18. Why is the Isle of Iona so historically prominent?
19. Why did Saint Columba settle on it?
20. What can you find on the Isle of Iona?
21. What about the sea surrounding it?
22. What is really amazing about the weather there?
23. Where did they camp?
24. What was that part of beach like?
25. What did they do there?

Holidays in Scotland

Training 1

Joey and his pals went off camping in an island off the west coast of Scotland. They arrived by ferry. Then they found a nice place along the seafront, which was a peninsula. When it got dark, they went to a pub. They took a short cut across the golf course, which had some little streams. So, they were marching along, when they fell into one of the streams. They dragged themselves out and continued onwards to the pub.

Training 2

When they finally got back, they couldn't find the tents, or even the peninsula on which they'd camped. It turned out that the area where they'd set up the tents wasn't really a peninsula at all, and when the tide came in it became an island. So, the tide had cut them off from their tents. For the second time that evening they got wet feet, as they had to roll up their trousers, take off their shoes and socks and wade across to the tents.

Training 3

At the time he was living in Elgin in the district of Moray, which is in the heart of the whisky distilling area. It has much fertile land for growing barley, and nearby there are hills where there is peat and fresh spring water, which you need to make whisky. So all of the famous whiskies come from there, like Glenfiddich and Glengrant, for example.

Training 4

Another time Joey went camping was on the Isle of Iona. Saint Columba, who brought Christianity to Scotland, founded a monastery there. It's a very beautiful island, with the monastery, a very nice mediaeval church, and very ancient rocks. And there are some wonderful clean beaches there, with little rock-pools dotted about with little fish, crabs, and starfish in them.

Training 5

They camped in the north-west corner where there is a farmer who lets you camp on a strip of grass next to the beach. It's a lovely sandy beach with lots of driftwood, so they made a fire there and sat around it cooking soup in an old pot that the farmer lent them and baking potatoes in the fire, drank a bottle of whisky, walked up and down collecting nicely shaped pieces of driftwood and watched the sun set on the horizon.

Fantasy Games

My first contact with fantasy role-playing games was in school. I immediately got deeply involved in them and started to buy books and materials for playing them. I started off by playing around a table, with one person acting as a storyteller, and the others playing characters in the story. They are really in the story, in that they can change the outcome of the story by their actions, which they explain to the storyteller, who in turn tells them what happens, as well as describing to them what they can see and experience in the game's world. So, all the players interact within the story, with each other and other characters in the story who the storyteller describes. Usually, the players act the part of the "good guys", but not always. All the players need is a piece of paper with a description of their character on it, how strong he or she is, how intelligent, how wise, how fast at running, and things like that.

A year later, I heard about the existence of similar games which are played outside, in the woods, in old castles, and in other similarly atmospheric places. No papers are used, but instead the participants play the part of their characters, wearing costumes and carrying pieces of equipment and weapons – not real ones! – that they might need. You stay in your role for a period of time, anything between a few hours and a few days, and for all of that time you act out your character. It's like living in another age or another world.

The type of characters you can play depends on the setting and the story, but generally, within that, it's nice to be a character with a different personality and different attributes to those you have in real life. You might be a knight, a thief, a magician, an elf, even a monster, in a typical fantasy world. Or if the scenario is a children's story, you might play one of the characters from Alice in Wonderland. We use many themes, such as space, stories from Tolkien's world, or various periods in history.

Last year we used as a setting a very nice castle in Wales, and the story was from the Renaissance times in Italy, so we all had to learn a bit about that period of history in order to prepare for the game. Some people played members of the military or politicians from that time, and we set up the same situation as was at a particular historical date, but, of course, the outcome was not fixed. We just played out history from that point on, but the ending, the conclusion, was completely different to how things happened in real life. I remember I played an Arabian Doctor of Medicine, with a nice historical costume which was borrowed from a theatre. Most of the game was played by talking – there wasn't so much fighting in that game. I think there was only one fighting person, who played a warrior from Switzerland. Most people played aristocrats, Dukes or royalty, or politicians. The storyteller of that game brought a little magic into the story, to spice it up a bit, and make it more dramatic. So, we had a seance in the game – it was actually quite fashionable to have seances in those times. That game was great fun, and it was really interesting to try to make every aspect of the game as authentic as possible, including what we ate and the way we talked.

In some games I played the part of the storyteller, often in conjunction with one or two others. So, we made up the story, decided on the setting and the plot. We would introduce the story to some players, who helped us to make the setting, playing monsters or characters with a fixed role according to the storyline, whereas the other players wouldn't know the story, and had to find out what was happening, by interacting with the other characters.

In one adventure we created, the characters were all magicians and sorcerers, and their objective was to build up a tower, a tower of power. The setting was an imaginary country with a kind of Arabian atmosphere, and the participants were all dressed in Arabian costumes, with loose clothes, masks, turbans, and things like that.

Many of our stories are set in different countries of one fantasy world, which is a conglomerate of many different environments. So, we have one country which is like Germany in the Middle Ages, a country like Iceland, some hot, desert countries, and things like that. This story was involved with

making the building and fighting against dark powers who wanted to destroy the tower. When I write adventures, I like to put a moral into the story, and this time it was that the source of the magic is a dark source. Not all the magicians recognized this at first, and went on building and gaining power, but in the end, they had to recognize that their power was only a part of a dark power, to recognize that to make magic of this kind is too dangerous and uncontrollable. One sorcerer knew that the source of the magic wasn't good, and that there was a dark power underneath the tower which would wake up when there was too much magic in it, but the others didn't believe him, and went on regardless, because they were too lost in the money and politics which was motivating their magic, so they couldn't stop it. After about two days, the dark power became more visible, so we sent people playing monsters and evil creatures creeping around, and in the end the story didn't end well, because the power beneath the tower awoke, and all of the characters had to try to escape, and some died. In such a story it is possible for your character to die. Some people's characters learnt from the events that were taking place around them, but it wasn't like learning from a book, they just started to feel the moral. When you're playing a character, you really become him or her, and you feel the consequences of your actions. It's your adventure.

Fantasy Games

1. When did Nick get involved in fantasy games?
2. What did he start buying?
3. What can characters do in a fantasy game around a table?
4. What does the storyteller do there?
5. What do players need to act their characters?
6. When did Nick hear of the outside games?
7. Where are they played?
8. What do participants need to act their characters?
9. How long can such a game last?
10. What is it like playing such a game?
11. What kind of characters can you play in a typical fantasy world?
12. What kind of themes do they use?
13. What did they use as a setting last year?
14. What was the story like?
15. What did the participants have to do to prepare for the game?
16. Who did they play?
17. What was different from the historical situation?
18. Who did Nick play?
19. What did the storyteller bring into the story?
20. Why was that game such great fun?
21. What did Nick have to do when he played the storyteller?
22. What was one adventure he created about?
23. What was the setting for that story?
24. What was the moral of that adventure?
25. What is the difference between learning from a book and learning from a fantasy game?

Fantasy Games

Training 1

Nick's first contact with fantasy role-playing games was in school. He immediately got deeply involved in them. He started off by playing around a table, with one person acting as a storyteller, and the others playing characters in the story. They can change the outcome of the story by their actions. So, all the players interact within the story.

Training 2

Then Nick heard about similar games which are played in some atmospheric places. The participants play the part of their characters, wearing costumes and carrying pieces of equipment and weapons that they might need. You stay in your role for a period of time, and for all of that time you act out your character. It's like living in another age or another world.

Training 3

The type of characters depends on the setting and the story. You might be a knight, a thief, a magician, an elf, a monster, or a character from Alice in Wonderland. They use many themes, such as space, stories from Tolkien's world, or various periods in history. When you're playing a character, you really become him or her, and you feel the consequences of your actions.

Training 4

Last year they used a castle in Wales as a setting, and the story was from the Renaissance times. Some people played members of the military or politicians from that time, and they set up the historical situation, but the outcome was not fixed. The storyteller of that game brought a little magic into the story, to spice it up a bit. It was really interesting to try to make every aspect of the game as authentic as possible, including what they ate and the way they talked.

Training 5

When Nick writes adventures, he likes to put a moral into the story. Once the characters were all magicians and their objective was to build up a tower of power. And the moral was that the source of the magic is a dark source. In the end the story didn't end well because the dark power awoke, and some characters died. You could learn from those events, but it wasn't like learning from a book, they just started to feel the moral.

Ramblin' Oer Them There Faerie Hills

I recall a time in my teenage years when I was walking in the mountains, the eastern edge of which roll down into the east coast of Ireland to a place called Newcastle, in County Down. I wasn't walking to get somewhere, I was just walking for the sake of walking through the mountains for four days, because I enjoyed being alone. There were many very magical places, and they all had strange and beautiful names, the cliffs and mountains and rocks. It was a very beautiful place. After four days of just walking in the hills, I felt very clear headed, very cleansed, and when I returned to the so-called "civilized" world it didn't seem so civilized any more, but very dark and dirty instead.

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