

BOOK REVIEW

Title: Gateway to Success in English

Author: Rev. Fr. Dr. Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere

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Reviewer: Rev. Fr. Gabriel Arihi

This simple, but comprehensive English will surely help most students and teachers of English in both Secondary Schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is down to earth in its approach and details. It is a “resource material.” Our students have to learn like babies if they are to grow to adulthood.

Without the basic knowledge of English grammar, it is unrealistic to even expect our students to attempt questions on Essay Writing, Summary and Comprehension, as well as on Lexis and Structure. A teacher who succeeds in going through this package with his or her students will, irrespective of the level of English previously acquired, notice some progress in the way the students write and speak the language in our local environment.

Language is a means of communication and the importance of English language in the world today cannot be over-emphasized. Gateway to success in English is a scholarly English textbook written by Rev. Fr. Dr. Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere. It is a grassroots textbook produced to help students especially those who sit for WASC, NECO, GCE, NCE, JAMB and NABTEB examinations

Summaries of Gateway to English Language, divided into nine chapters surely gives at a glance the undisputable contribution the author has made in the improvement of English in our schools today. In the grassroots treatment of various topics, the author as well unveils the richness of the language by including some of the old and forgotten areas of English language which the present generations of students seem to ignore.

Chapter One: This is an introduction, meant to “warm up” the students. Emphasis is on “building up the vocabulary.” There is need to learn new words and expressions.

Chapter Two: Parts of Speech: Students must know these classes of words referred to as parts of speech and their simple definitions and applications. They must be able to identify them and as well know their functions as they appear in sentences.

Chapter Three: Synonyms and Antonyms: This chapter is meant to “excite” students as many new words have been introduced; namely words that mean almost the same and words and opposites. Synonyms are words that have almost the same meaning. For good writing it is always good to have knowledge of

many other words that can best stand in the places of the ones we are familiar with. (See “Thesaurus.”)

No one, including the owners of the language can claim to be a ‘master’ of the language. There is need to continue to increase your “Word Power.” Enhance your efficiency in use of words. Avoid stumbling as you address your pupils, students, audience, congregation, and any large and small groups of people listening to you. Before you is an extensive collection of words, arranged in order. If you are courageous and take pains in going through them you will definitely learn new words, spell better, write and speak better English.

You are a university professor, a simple classroom teacher, a pastor, a politician, a retired civil servant or a student; you will find this collection of words that mean almost the same useful. Place this book on your reading or writing table, next to your bed. You can never grow tired reading from it, mastering the words.

Mastery of Antonyms – Words and Opposites – not only helps writers and speakers to clearly express themselves well. It is another way of increasing our “Word Power.” There is need to learn new words – no matter their complexity or simplicity. You also learn their correct spelling.

Chapter Four: Figures of Speech: This serves also as introduction to continuous writing. Most students regularly use these figures of speech in essay writing. Others appear in Summary and Comprehension exercises. **Chapter Five: Introduction to Continuous writing:** This chapter treats important “technicalities” involved in written English. Often referred to as “Mechanical Accuracy,” the following are very important in writing - punctuation marks, capitalization, margins, spellings etc, it is obvious that students who neglect these “protocols” lose marks in examinations. Correct application of the punctuation marks is another area of interest for serious teachers of English in Nigerian schools. Students write a lot of long stuff without caring about the functions of the punctuation marks. Some believe that there is no difference between a comma and a full stop. Colon, semi-colon could be used anywhere. Some don’t know why essays or letters should be written in paragraphs!

Chapter Six: Letter & Essay Writing: Formal and Informal – Official and Unofficial letters - are treated in details. Some samples of letters and essays written by students are meant to excite fellow students to begin writing, and to write well.

Chapter Seven: Comprehension and Summary: This often-neglected part of English is treated. Exercises are necessary for students to master the art of making good summaries of familiar and unfamiliar passages.

Chapter Eight - Exciting topic – “Computer for Beginners” will surely help young learners in this all important “Computer Science”.

Chapter Nine: Objective Tests: Many samples of objective tests presented here are meant to help students attempt these familiar, but often-difficult questions. The author has therefore provided answers to the objective questions for easy revision. Students are however encouraged to work through the exercises before checking the answers. Even where correct answers are got, there is still need to find out the meanings of the incorrect words and expressions. The need to try all the exercises cannot be overemphasized. “Practice,” they say, “makes perfect”.

It is as result of popular demand for Gateway to Success in English Language, first published in 2003, by both teachers and students that led the author to go in for a revised edition. As Igbo People put it “Good product does not need much advertisement”. He had no option than to try again to satisfy his numerous friends and readers.

The struggle against failure in English is an ongoing war to which Father Ndiokwere has contributed in no small measure through his book “Gateway to Success”. When the going gets tough for you in English take “Gateway” and read. Father Ndiokwere has a package for all in a scholarly and intelligible language. I recommend this book to all.

As I was reliably informed the author is preparing another package “Oral English for Secondary School Students”. Perhaps that was why he did not treat this important part of English in the “Gateway”. Both teachers of English and students should watch out for Dr. Ndiokwere’s “Oral English for Secondary Schools. You will have no regrets.