

EPISODE 92
LEVEL B2

READING COMPREHENSION



SPECIAL OCCASIONS:

Midway between Father's Day (June 16th) and Halloween (October 31st) is the worst of times for American publishers of greeting cards. Despite their success in filling the calendar with "occasions" (Mother-in-law's day is October 27th), people send fewer cards than at any other time of the year. Hallmark Cards, the leader with 44% share of the market worth almost \$5 billion a year, is trying to change that by **reviving** (=to come or bring something back to life, health, existence, or use) an old habit.

Just as an **illiterate** (= people who can't read or write) people in some countries still pay **scribes** (a person employed before printing was invented to make copies of documents) to write letters for them, Hallmark is trying to persuade today's too-busy-to-write Americans to let them express their **sentiments** (=a thought, opinion, or idea based on a feeling about a situation, or a way of thinking about something) for them. That is how private company, based in Kansas City with 15000 employees, is getting people to send cards even on days when there is no "occasion". This latest marketing idea is designed to **boost** (= increase) sales in a market that threatens to stop growing for the first time since 1945.

Some industry insiders trace the birth of Hallmark's so-called "non-occasion" cards to a death-of-a-pet card the firm's 700-strong creative staff produced in 1984. Examples of non-occasion cards include a new line of adult-to-child cards, called To-Kids-With-Love. They are supposed to help children aged 7 to 14 **cope with** (= manage with) growing up. Such

cards would include “would a hug help?”, “Divorce won’t change a thing between us”, “Sorry I made you feel bad”, or “You are perfectly wonderful”. Hallmark is so encouraged by the success of these cards that it has produced a series of 520 non-occasion cards with adults. Some **seek** (=to try to find or get something, especially something that is not a physical object) to deepen friendships or simply keep in touch. Others, address almost every imaginable **calamity** (= a serious accident or bad event causing damage or suffering) , from job losses to mental illnesses.

Non-occasion cards now **account for** (=to form the total of something) more than 10% of the 7.3 billion greeting cards sold in America every day.



EXERCISE 1

Decide which of these statements are true or false:

1. Americans send fewer cards in summer.
2. Hallmark would prefer people to write each other letters, rather than send cards.
3. The market for cards has grown continuously from 1945 till now.
4. There are cards for people who to send a friend whose dog has died.
5. There are cards to help a woman to make a date with a man.
6. There are cards to send people who have suffered any personal disaster you can imagine.

ENGLISH IN USE



LOOKING AND SEEING:

EXERCISE 2

Fill in the gaps below with suitable forms of the verbs listed

GAZE LOOK NOTICE RECOGNISE OBSERVE SEE STARE WATCH

1. It’s amusing to the behaviour of people while they think nobody can see them.
2. We the boys playing football.
3. He at her admiringly.
4. I waved at you, but you didn’tme.
5. I didn’t You in your new glasses.
6. Don’t you know it’s rude to at people?

7. I usually TV in Fridays.
8. Have you been to that new film yet?
9. I'll what I can do to help you.
10. This exercise difficult.
11. Do you what I mean?
12. He tried to get to his seat without being

Remember that PREFIXES in English can be used with words to alter their meaning. The most common ones are: re-, pre-, post-, over-, under-...

EXERCISE 3

Use the words given to form a word that fits in the space, words are already in a good order:

Estimate build exam confident staff pay value eat weight write sleep

1. We were late because wehow long the bus would take.
2. Many buildings had to beafter the earthquake.
3. Most candidates suffer from nerves, but some are
4. I queued for ages at the checkout – the supermarket really is.....
5. Most employees feel that they are and
6. People who often become.....
7. I the letter because the first draft was full of mistakes.
8. He arrived late for work because he.....

IDIOM CLOSE-UP



EXERCISE 4

BEAR STH IN MIND = REMEMBER STH IMPORTANT

RAINED OFF = TO BEPOSTPONED BECAUSE OF THE RAIN

BREAK THE BANK = TO COST A LOT OF MONEY

ROLL UP = TO ARRIVE LATE , OFTEN UNEXPECTEDLY

Rewrite the sentences using the correct form of the word in capitals. Keep the meaning the same:

1. I organized a party which was really costly. BANK =
2. There are fears that the conference would be postponed because of the weather. OFF =
3. You should remember about your mother's birthday on Monday. MIND =
4. Yesterday I didn't expect any guests, however a few arrived unexpectedly . UP =

PHRASAL VERBS CLOSE-UP



Many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning:



EXERCISE 5

Replace the words with a phrasal verb with **LOOK** and **SEE** using the words in brackets:

1. Their aunt cared for (look) them after their mother's death.
2. They said goodbye to me (see) at the airport.
3. Be careful..... (out)! There's a car coming!
4. Most of the pupils respect (up to) their teacher.
5. Leave it to me. I'll take care of (to) all arrangements.
6. The police are investigating (into) a case of shoplifting.
7. He said he was innocent but they didn't believe(through) his story.
8. If you don't know the meaning, find (up) the word in a dictionary.

NEWS



"Last year should have been one nonstop celebration for Hallmark Cards and its marketing chief Lisa Macpherson. The Kansas City, Mo.-based **purveyor** of greeting cards and other products turned 100, and Macpherson, after about nine years at the company, had recently been promoted to the top marketing job. But for Hallmark, a company that has helped generations of consumers mark happy occasion after happy occasion, and for Macpherson, a marketer who had worked her entire career to reach the pole marketing position of a major brand, there would be little cause to party.

Hallmark's **revenue**, like that of so many other companies, began to decline in the past three years. In 2007, Hallmark generated \$4.4 billion; by 2009, that number fell to \$4 billion. The company cut more than 1,000 jobs. In a statement at the time, president and CEO Donald Hall, Jr. described 2009 as one of the most challenging years in the brand's history.

Hallmark's leadership, it was clear, had to rethink the way it did business. In October 2009, it **tapped** Macpherson to lead a 250-employee marketing department, also appointing a president of retail, a senior executive of customer development for mass channel partners and a digital chief. The company, Macpherson says, also expanded its product line to "meet a broader spectrum of needs" and widen its focus beyond just the holidays to include "the little moments that **occur** every day."

Purveyor = a business that provides goods or services

Revenue = income, profits

Tapped = to get or make use of something

Occur = happen

KEY TO EXERCISES

Ex. 1

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. F
6. T

Ex. 2

1. It's amusing to**observe**..... the behaviour of people while they think nobody can see them.
2. We**watched/ saw/ noticed**..... the boys playing football.
3. He**gazed / looked / stared**..... at her admiringly.
4. I waved at you, but you didn't**notice / recognise / see**.....me.
5. I didn't**recognise**..... You in your new glasses.
6. Don't you know it's rude to**stare**..... at people?
7. I usually**watch**..... TV in Fridays.
8. Have you been to**see**..... that new film yet?
9. I'll**see**..... what I can do to help you.
10. This exercise**looks**..... difficult.

11. Do you**see**..... what I mean?
12. He tried to get to his seat without being**noticed / seen / recognised**.....

Ex. 3

1. We were late because we**underestimated**.....how long the bus would take.
2. Many buildings had to be**rebuilt**.....after the earthquake.
3. Most candidates suffer from**pre-exam**..... nerves, but some are**over-confident**.....
4. I queued for ages at the checkout – the supermarket really is.....**under-staffed**.....
5. Most employees feel that they are**underpaid**..... and**undervalued**.....
6. People who**overeate**..... often become.....**overweight**.....
7. I**rewrote**..... the letter because the first draft was full of mistakes.
8. He arrived late for work because he.....**overslept**.....

Ex. 4

1. I organized a party which broke the bank.
2. There are fears that the conference would be rained off.
3. You should bear in mind your mother's birthday.
4. Yesterday I didn't expect any guests, however a few rolled up.

Ex. 5

1. Their aunt cared for**looked after**..... (look) them after their mother's death.
2. They said goodbye to me**see me off**..... (see)at the airport.
3. Be careful.....**look out**..... (out)! There's a car coming!
4. Most of the pupils respect**look up to**..... (up to) their teacher.
5. Leave it to me. I'll take care of**see to**..... (to) all arrangements.
6. The police are investigating**looking into**..... (into) a case of shoplifting.
7. He said he was innocent but they didn't believe**saw through**(through) his story.
8. If you don't know the meaning, find**look up**..... (up) the word in a dictionary.