

October 4th

Dear Everybody,

How would you feel if you had just received 13 letters from people you are to think about a lot over 10 weeks? Some people leave ample margins down the sides of their letters while others fill the whole space, right and left. Some people have strong, flowing handwriting while others make their letters small and tight.

Some of the letters are from folk I already know, like Isabel who talks to me about common acquaintances from the summer. Your command of the language, Isabel, has improved by leaps and bounds. You must have studied quite hard in Spain in the intervening period.

I fully agree with you, Tom, that Italians brim with life. They manage to be cheerful even when everything is dreadful! I am delighted that you and Kate had a good time there, despite the overflowing dirty water in Venice!!

Sarah, I get the feeling that your English has got a lot fuller and more idiomatic and easy than it was back in the Spring. FCE, though, is a relatively hard exam and you will need to push yourself quite hard if you intend to pass the exam.

I enjoyed your fantasy letter, Victoria. It was so good of you to take me under your wing when I was standing there lost in central Brussels!

Did you folk know that Frank's ambition is to become an international lawyer? Why have you chosen this profession with all its aggression and arguing? When I think of all the money lawyers make in England from encouraging divorcing couples to fight even harder than they would otherwise over the children, property,.....

It was nice of you, Kate, to be so open and honest about your first impressions. I'll try hard not to be too strict and stubborn! Stubbornness is one of my characteristics and in some situations it can be useful.

Today has been an important day for me. My wife, Sarah, had her fifty first birthday and our 5½ year old son was quite excited about it. What are birthdays without small kids around? I shopped and cooked veal in Marsala (a sweet wine).

I am currently reading a rather good book about a guy who lost his sight at the age of 40. The book is not about how he coped physically in the aftermath of the disaster. It is about how, three years after going blind, he began to lose his internal visual power.

What are you reading at the moment, in English, in your mother tongue or in another language?

Good night, Maria