The purpose of this textbook is to take learners with no previous knowledge of Dutch to an advanced level of reading comprehension. The target readership includes students and researchers who have a strong interest and motivation to work with Dutch written sources, such as items in the Dutch and Flemish press, academic publications, or the reams of archival materials that exist both inside and outside the Netherlands.

The main part of the book (9–148) consists of six chapters that cover selected thematic areas: architecture and design, secularization and social issues, migration, water management, postcolonial Netherlands, and the Dutch Golden Age (seventeenth century). Each themed chapter is then based around three texts taken from newspapers, magazines, books, or Internet sources. These engaging excerpts provide insights on historical and contemporary issues, events, and personalities relating to the Netherlands (rather than Flanders). With the help of these passages and additional example sentences, numerous grammar points are highlighted and discussed in depth in each chapter. Further grammar and translation exercises supplement the learning, with particular attention being paid to similarities to and differences from English. A comprehensive answer key is found at the end of the book (199–242).

Six appendices follow the main text (vocabulary, irregular verbs, pronunciation, grammatical terms, numerals, and details on Dutch historical archives). The vocabulary list is not particularly exhaustive, and the pronunciation guide could be improved upon—the authors confusingly use slashes to represent graphemes rather than phonemes (e.g. ‘The Dutch /j/ [...] sounds like the English /y/ in words like yes and yard’), and they exclude from their survey the characteristically Dutch diphthong /œy/ (e.g. in huis ‘house’ and uit ‘out’). Sound files of the texts, which could easily be made available for download on the publisher’s website, would prove a more useful resource. The overview of Dutch archival materials is very useful, but researchers wanting to access original collections will need to acquire additional palaeographical skills not introduced in this book.

The structural analyses, reading strategies, and other insider tips in this book should allow students and researchers to get a handle on the workings of modern educated Dutch. However, the pace is fast, as advanced-level texts are introduced from the very first chapter. The authors readily acknowledge that those proficient in German will find progress easier (xi). The authors also claim that the book could be used for self-study, but this would be toilsome without at least a basic foundation in either Dutch or German.