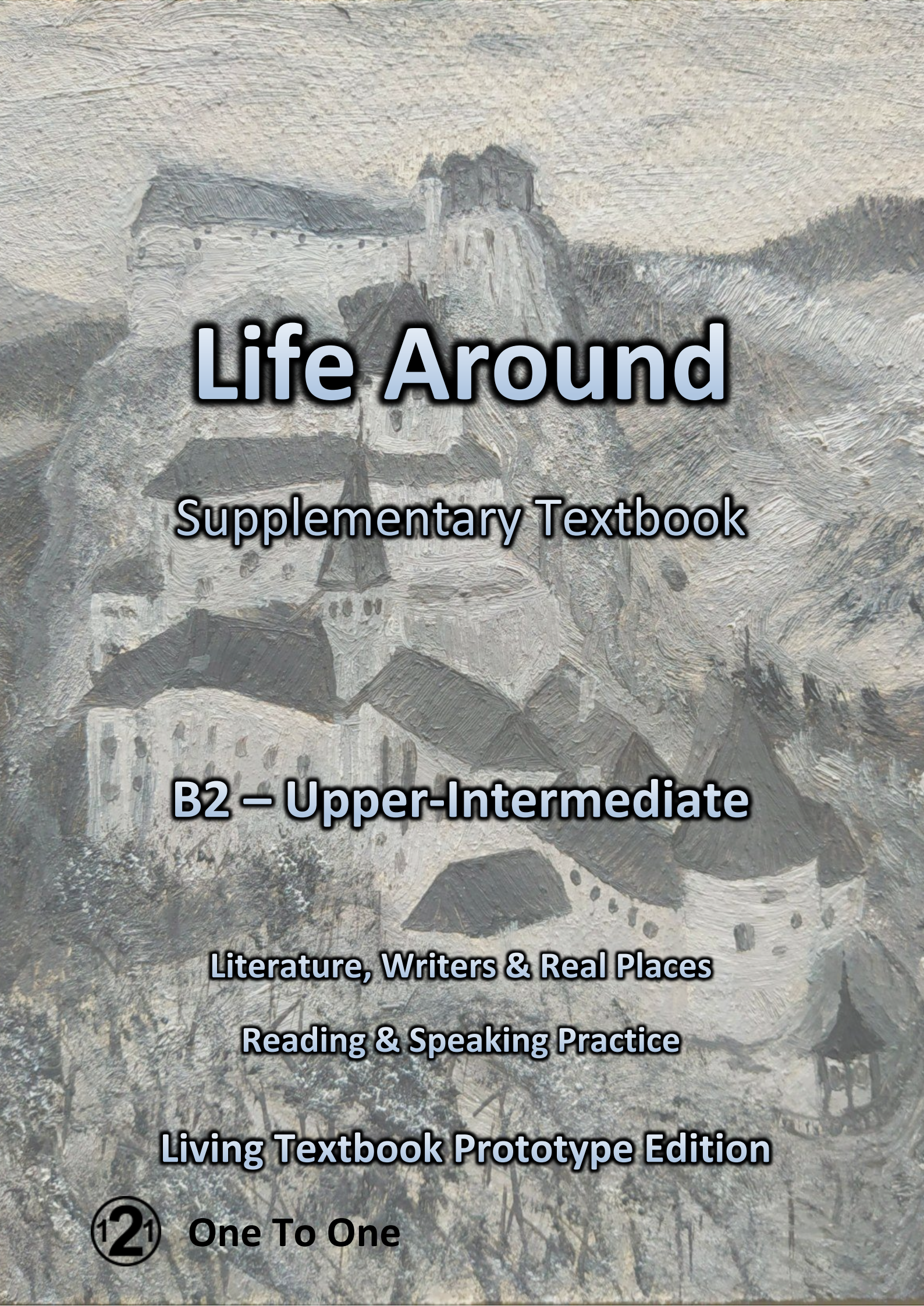


Life Around

Supplementary Textbook

B2 – Upper-Intermediate

Literature, Writers & Real Places

Reading & Speaking Practice

Living Textbook Prototype Edition

One To One

LIFE AROUND

Literature, Writers & Real Places — Supplementary Textbook

CEFR Level B2 (Upper-Intermediate) • School English Series • British English

Aligned with the Slovak State Educational Programme for Secondary & Grammar Schools
Designed for Students, Teachers & Curious Readers Exploring Literature

LIVING TEXTBOOK PROTOTYPE EDITION

ABOUT THIS TEXTBOOK

Life Around is a supplementary **British English textbook** at the **B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)**, created in accordance with the **Slovak State Educational Programme** for English as a foreign language. While primarily tailored for upper-intermediate secondary and grammar school students and their teachers, it is equally accessible to international learners and general readers who wish to deepen their knowledge of literature and the real places connected with writers—primarily in **Slovakia**.

The core objective of ***Life Around*** is to support regular school curricula and complement standard B2 coursebooks. Through authentic literary portraits, regional cultural heritage, and thought-provoking speaking tasks, the textbook systematically develops reading comprehension, critical thinking, vocabulary, grammar in context, and mediation skills.

Unlike conventional linear textbooks, every unit in ***Life Around*** is completely self-contained. Each unit presents a concise, engaging reading text on one page, followed by open-ended discussion, vocabulary, and grammar questions on the next, alongside dedicated **My Notes** spaces where learners can prepare their speaking arguments or track language areas to improve. Teachers, students, and independent readers can freely select any unit at any stage of the academic year.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ľubomír Balogač, B.A. is an English language tutor, with tutoring experience since 1996. Having lived in London for five years, where he learned English and immersed himself in English among native speakers, he brings authentic British English into his work. He previously worked as a consultant for Cambridge University Press, promoting their ELT publications, and actively works as a distributor of language textbooks to schools across Slovakia. Alongside one-to-one tutoring, he has practical classroom experience delivering engaging guest lessons to large classes across primary, secondary, and grammar schools. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from The Open University (UK)—with studies in English Language and Literature—an MA TESOL Graduate Certificate (LCC International University, Lithuania), focusing on language pedagogy and materials design, as well as the Cambridge C1 Advanced and Cambridge C2 Proficiency certificates. ***Life Around*** is his debut living textbook project, combining his insider knowledge of ELT publishing and real-world classroom experience with literature and regional culture.

PUBLICATION DETAILS & COPYRIGHT NOTICE

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NOTICE — YOUR COMMENTS ARE WELCOME!

This textbook is a working prototype of ***Life Around***, designed as a 'living textbook' that grows and improves over time through real classroom experience and reader feedback. Before the final edition is published, the structure, texts, and tasks will be refined. Suggestions, comments, and ideas for future units from teachers, students, and general readers are warmly welcomed at **121@121.sk** or **www.121.sk.**

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Planned Thematic Units

Unit	Title & Literary Focus	Real Places Featured	Language & Skills
Unit 1 (p. 5 - 6)	**The World of Timrava**	Banská Bystrica, Polichno, Ábelová, Martin, Lučenec	Past Perfect, used to / would, 2nd Conditional, Personality Adj.

HOW TO USE THIS TEXTBOOK

1. Two-Page Independent Structure: Each unit is a concise reading text on one page and 10 open-ended questions on the other. Units can be studied in any order to match your school syllabus or personal interest.

2. Preparation for Speaking: On the second page of each unit, both parts develop fluency, critical thinking, vocabulary collocations, and grammar in context—Part 1 (Core Communication) covers the essential core questions, while Part 2 (Additional Thinking) offers optional extension tasks.

3. Active Learning with 'My Notes': Dedicated note boxes on every unit page encourage learners to record new British English expressions, plan structured speaking points (reasons + examples), and track personal language goals.

4. For Self-Study & Cultural Travellers: Readers outside the classroom can use the texts as a literary companion when visiting historic towns and villages, especially across Slovakia.

SHAPING THE NEXT CHAPTERS — INVITATION FOR TEACHERS & STUDENTS

Because ***Life Around*** is a living textbook prototype, your voice directly influences future units. Which writers, literary landmarks, or cultural themes should appear in the upcoming chapters?

For Teachers

- Share how Unit 1 worked in your B2 lessons or conversation seminars.
- Suggest Slovak or Central European authors that match your curriculum.
- Recommend specific B2 grammar or speaking topics to include.

For Students & Readers

- Tell us which discussion questions sparked the best debate.
- Propose an inspiring town, castle, or writer from your region.
- Use the space below to note your ideas before sharing them with us.

MY UNIT WISH LIST (Writer, Place, or Topic Idea): _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Send your feedback or ideas to: 121@121.sk | www.121.sk

Long before her name became famous in Slovak literature, Božena Slančíková-Timrava (1867–1951) began writing stories and observing the world around her. She grew up in a modest clergyman's family, surrounded by central Slovakia's scenic valleys and forested hills, where books were treasured and strict household duties filled every day. This quick-witted author never married, yet her honest tales of human nature still surprise modern readers with their timeless humour and emotional depth. She took inspiration from the people right around her and portrayed everyday life with a sharp eye for human weaknesses. In fact, her characters were so realistic that local people often recognised themselves in her stories and felt offended.

Through her pages, ordinary rooms and village yards come alive with unforgettable figures. One of them is Iľa—nicknamed "the queen" by her relatives—from the famous short story *Ťapákovci*. She refuses to accept the old-fashioned habits of the household. Having broader experience of the world beyond her village, Iľa is a practical, determined, and somewhat bossy young wife. Because she values cleanliness, order, and progress, she pushes her reluctant husband to build their own house away from his crowded, passive family. This clash of wills keeps readers eager to see who will finally win.



Banská Bystrica, where Timrava studied

Božena's own life unfolded across contrasting places that shaped her voice as a writer. In the 1880s, she briefly left the quiet countryside where she had been living to study for a year in the bustling town of Banská Bystrica. However, she disliked busy urban life and soon returned south to Polichno, a peaceful village where the site of the old rectory recalls her former home. Nearby, a forest trail leads to Timrava's Spring. According to local tradition, she used to visit this tranquil spot and later chose its name as her pen name. For decades, she would observe both village neighbours and town society during stays in places like Martin. After her father's death, she moved to Ábelová, where she worked in a nursery school to support herself for a long time before spending her final years in Lučenec. Her life clearly shows the industrious, single-minded dedication that eventually earned her national recognition.

MY NOTES — Vocabulary, Grammar & Language Focus

Write down new words, useful collocations, or grammar structures you want to remember and improve:

Part 1: Core Communication

1. Privacy: Timrava's neighbours felt offended because her characters were so realistic. How would people in your town react if you wrote an honest story about them today, and why?

2. Pushing for Progress: In Ťapákovci, Iľa is practical and somewhat bossy because she wants progress. What personal qualities or strategies are most effective when someone wants to change old-fashioned habits in a family, and why?

3. Grammar in Action: Timrava took inspiration from the everyday behaviour of the people around her. If you wrote a realistic story about your school or town today, which modern habits or social situations would you focus on, and why?

4. Clash of Wills: In *Ťapákovci*, Iľa pushes her reluctant husband to build their own house away from his passive relatives. How can two people in a relationship or family find a fair compromise when they want completely different lifestyles? Give an example.

5. Timeless Stories: Timrava's tales still surprise modern readers with their humour and depth. What makes a story stay relevant and entertaining even a hundred years after it was written? Explain your view.

MY NOTES — Part 1 Speaking Preparation (Questions 1–5)

Jot down key ideas, examples, and phrases you want to use in your answers:

Part 2: Additional Thinking

6. Village vs. City: Božena missed rural life when she studied in Banská Bystrica. Why might a quiet village be better for creative thinking than a busy city?

7. Work and Art: Timrava held a modest day job to support herself while writing about adult life in her free time. How can an ordinary job help a writer understand real people, and why is that experience valuable?

8. Behind a Pen Name: Božena chose her pen name after a forest spring. What are the main advantages of using a pen name or an online alias instead of your real name today?

9. Grammar & Collocations: Timrava used to visit the spring and would observe people before she earned national recognition. What used to be different in your childhood routine, and what daily habits would you repeat?

10. Literary Parallels: Timrava never married, lived in the countryside, and wrote about human weaknesses with sharp humour. Which famous nineteenth-century British female author lived a similar life and wrote in a similar style, and what specific features do their lives and works share?

MY NOTES — Part 2 Speaking Preparation & Self-Improvement (Questions 6–10)

Prepare your thoughts for Questions 6–10 or note grammar/vocabulary points to practise:

REFERENCE APPENDIX

1. ARTWORK & ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

- **Front Cover:** *Oravský Castle*, oil painting © Ľubomír Balogač
- **Back Cover:** *Moon on the Sea*, oil painting © Ľubomír Balogač
- **Unit 1 (p. 5):** *Banská Bystrica, Dolná Street*, oil painting © Ľubomír Balogač



Literature, Writers & Real Places—Brought to Life!

Life Around is a fresh, supplementary **B2 British English textbook** aligned with the **Slovak State Educational Programme**. Designed for upper-intermediate students, teachers, and curious readers, it explores literature and real places, **especially across Slovakia** and the Central European region, while building practical reading and speaking confidence.

- **Literature & Cultural Heritage:** Engaging images of iconic writers, memorable characters, and the real towns and villages that inspired them.
- **Reading & Speaking:** Open-ended tasks developing reading, critical thinking, speaking, vocabulary collocations, and mediation skills.
- **Clear Two-Page Unit Design:** Each independent unit features a concise reading text on one page and structured discussion tasks on the next.
- **Dedicated My Notes Spaces:** Built-in writing blocks helping learners prepare speaking arguments and track personal language goals.

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Resources & Wish List: Drop by our website to download accompanying material, or sign up for our newsletter.
Your Comments Are Welcome: Because *Life Around* is a living textbook that grows over time, feedback from teachers, students, and readers is warmly welcomed. If you have suggestions, classroom impressions, or ideas for future units—or if you would like to invite the author to join one of your English lessons as a guest tutor—please get in touch:

Contact: Email: 121@121.sk | Web: www.121.sk | Phone: +421 903 954 615

| A1 | A2 | B1 | **B2 (Upper-Intermediate)** | C1 | C2 |

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