

21世纪

大学英语阅读教程 (第2册)

A Reading Course of
21st Century College English (2)

黄怡俐 王华军 主编

河南大学出版社

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前 言

《21 世纪大学英语阅读教程》是根据教育部 1999 年颁发的《大学英语教学大纲(修订本)》编写的一套试验性大学英语教材。该教学大纲指出:“大学英语教学的目的是:培养学生具有较强的阅读能力和一定的听、说、写、译能力,使他们能用英语交流信息。大学英语教学应帮助学生打下扎实的语言基础,掌握良好的语言学习方法,提高文化素养,以适应社会发展和经济建设的需要。”

本教材的编写努力体现上述之教学目的,其主要特点如下:

一、吸收现代外语教学理论的先进成果,采用“以学生为中心的主题教学模式”,每单元围绕一个主题,通过对该主题各个方面的材料进行大量的阅读训练和听、说、写、译训练,旨在培养学生具有扎实的语言基础和综合的语言应用能力。

二、重视语言共核的教学。所用语言素材都力图使学生掌握各语域共用的积极词汇、语法结构和功能意念,旨在培养学生具有扎实的语言基础。同一主题的语言素材相互关联,词汇相对集中,复现率高,成立语义场,便于学生记忆。所选文章均有词汇表,按课文中出现的先后列出,四、六级词汇和八级词汇左上方分别标注“4、6、8”。词汇注释以英汉注释为主,少数单词则只注中文。

三、在语言技能培养上,遵循准确性与流利性兼顾的原则。每单元选取的材料,语言规范,难易有别,既便于进行各种语言技能的训练,又利于基础不同的学生学习,旨在培养起点不同的学生都能准确而流利地掌握各种语言技能。

四、重视文化素质的培养和中西文化对比。全书选用的主题各异,涉及学生关心的政治、经济、文化、科技、社会热点等,题材广泛,文体多样,知识性强,利于激发学生的学习兴趣。每单元选用的文章涵盖中外人士的不同观点,使学生在语言学习的同时,能用英语看中国,谈世界,具有较高的中西文化素养。

五、体现新教学大纲精神。词汇、阅读均符合新大纲的各项规定及量化指标,特别体现新大纲“较强的阅读能力和一定的听、说、写、译能力”的两层次技能要求。

六、练习形式多样,兼顾 CET 考试要求。本书的练习采用旨在培养学生的语言运用能力的形式,词汇和结构一般采用主观练习的形式,保证重点词汇和结构的训练;同时兼顾大学英语四、六级考试的题型。如:选择题、简短回答问题、完形填空、英译汉、写作等。

本书为第二册,供第二学年使用,共有 10 个单元,每个单元由 2 部分组成,其基本安排如下:

- 第 1 部分 精读(Part One Intensive Reading)
- 第 2 部分 强化阅读(Part Two Enrichment Reading)
- ◇ 补充阅读(Section One Additional Reading)有 2 篇文章(Passage One, Two)

◇ 快速阅读(Section Two Fast Reading)有2篇文章(Passage One, Two)

◇ 测试阅读(Section Three Test Reading)有2篇文章(Passage One, Two)

精读为本册的基本阅读材料,旨在培养学生准确的理解能力、篇章结构分析能力及对词汇、语法等语言知识的掌握和运用能力,促进语言产出性能力——说、写的提高。

强化阅读为本册的课外阅读材料,旨在培养学生获取大量的语言输入,养成良好的阅读习惯和对英语的敏感性,提高阅读速度和质量。补充阅读都有1篇与主题相关的中国方面的文章,旨在培养学生具有一定的中西文化素养,能用英语进行双向交流。快速阅读文章的生词约占文章总词数的4%,旨在培养学生阅读的流畅性。补充阅读和快速阅读都为课外必读文章。测试阅读旨在兼顾起点不同的学生的课外阅读,对起点低的学生可不作要求,中等水平的学生可任选其中一篇,起点高的学生要全部阅读。

书后所附总词汇表以英语字母顺序排列。

教学改革,贵在探索与实践。本教材的编写还存在不足之处,但也试图为外语教学改革探索一条途径,希望外语界的各位同仁给予积极的建议、批评和指正。

本册教材由黄怡俐、王华军担任主编,并负责全书策划和定稿工作,杨佩聪、韦薇任副主编。参加本册编写工作的有:何庆华(第1单元),杨佩聪(第2单元),韦薇(第3单元),刘建宏(第4单元),刘慧粉(第5单元),常小静(第6单元),杜小红(第7单元),刘艳晖(第8单元),张伟平(第9单元),黄怡俐(第10单元)。

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2002年3月

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Unit 1 Celebrities

Part One Intensive Reading

Mr Imagination

I. Pre-reading Tasks

1. Who does Mr Imagination refer to?
2. How long did he spend of his seventy-seven years on voyage?
3. What works do you know about his?

Back in the 1880's, a big red-bearded man came to call one day on the French Minister of Education. The receptionist looked at the card and his face lighted up. "Monsieur Verne," he said reverently, "pray be seated. With all the travelling you do, you must be tired."

Jules Verne should have been worn out. He had gone around the world 100 times or more—once in eighty days. He had voyaged 60000 miles under the sea, whizzed around the moon, hitchhiked on comets, explored the center of the earth, chatted with cannibals in Africa and Bushmen in Australia. There was very little of the world's geography that Jules Verne, the writer, had not visited.

Jules Verne, the man, was a stay-at-home. If he was tired, it was merely writer's cramp. For forty years he sat in a small room of the red brick tower of his home, in Amiens, turning out, year in, year out, one book every six months—more than 100 altogether. Verne himself had made visits around Europe and North Africa, and one six-week tour of New York State. And that was all. The world's most extraordinary tourist spent less than one of his seventy-seven years on voyage.

His books are crowded with hunting and fishing expeditions, but Jules went hunting only once. Then he raised his gun and —poof! —shot the red ribbon of the hat of a game warden. The only fish he ever caught was on a plate at the end of a fork.

Though he held a test tube in his hand, Jules Verne became a stimulus and inspiration to the scientist in laboratory. He had TV working before simple radio had been invented. There were in fact, few twentieth-century wonders that this man did not foresee: neon lights, air conditioning, skyscrapers, guided missiles, tanks, submarines, airplanes.

Beyond any doubt, Verne was the father of science-fiction; he was years ahead of H. G. Wells, Conan Doyle, and the other great visualizers of things to come.

Nor was he simply an entertainer. He wrote about the marvels of tomorrow with such precise, indisputable detail that he was taken seriously. Learned societies argued with him.

Mathematicians spent weeks checking his figures. When his book about going to the moon was published, 500 people volunteered for the next expedition. France's famous Marshall Lyautey once said that modern science was simply a process of working out in practising what Jules Verne had envisioned in words.

Verne, who lived to see many of his fancies come true, was matter-of-fact about it all. "What one man can imagine," he said, "another man can do."

Jules' father was a lawyer; his mother was descended from one of the great families of France. Their son was born on the island of Feydeau, near Nantes, in 1828. Napoleon had just died. Wellington was Prime Minister of England. The first railroad was only five years old. Steamers were crossing the Atlantic but they still carried sail to supplement their engines. From windows of his home the boy Jules could see the masts of sailing ships, watch fishermen's nets drying, smell hides and spices. At the age of eleven he was playing on the wharves with a childhood sweetheart who said she would like a string of red coral beads like those the sailors brought back from their voyages. Jules solemnly promised she would have one, and that same afternoon was on board a boat about to sail for India, signed on as a cabin boy. Fortunately for his later admirers, a friend of the family saw him go on board and told the family. His father fetched him home, spanked him, and put him to bed.

At eighteen Jules was in Paris to study law, but he was more interested in writing poetry and plays.

One evening, bored with a fashionable party which he was attending, he left abruptly and slid gaily down the banister. At the bottom he slid off and landed squarely on a stout gentleman about to ascend the stairs. Jules blurted out the first thing that came to his head. "Have you had your dinner, sir?" he asked.

The other replied that he had—he had dined wonderfully on an omelet made in the style of Nantes.

To this Verne retorted, "Bah, no one in Paris can make one!"

"Can you?" asked the stout fellow.

"Of course—I am from Nantes," said Jules.

"Very well, then, come to dinner next Wednesday and cook the omelet."

With that, he handed the young man his card and continued up the steps. It was Alexandre Dumas, author of *The Three Musketeers*. You could have knocked Jules over with a bread stick.

Knowing Dumas confirmed young Verne's desire to be an author. Jules, urged on by the older man, made up his mind he would do for geography what Dumas had done for history. He began spending his days reading and writing and forgot completely that he was in Paris to become a lawyer.

His father, impatient with the boy's neglect of his studies, cut his allowance. Jules obtained a small job in theatre, but the years that followed were lean ones. "I eat beefsteak that a few days ago was pulling a cart through the streets of Paris," he wrote to his mother. Once he ate

nothing but dried prunes for three days because he had spent his food money on a set of Shakespeare. He was ragged and cold. "My stockings," he told a friend, "are like a spider web in which a hippopotamus has been sleeping."

Though his father had deprived him of his allowance, Jules remained the devoted, loving son. He wrote regularly, even when he was a middle-aged man. He discussed his books, his projects, his dreams, and rarely took a step without first seeking parental advice.

Cocky, good-looking, and "irresistible" to the ladies, Jules promptly fell in love. Monsieur Verne recovered, however, from his disappointing love affair, and fell in love again, and this time married the girl—a handsome widow with two children.

With the help of the father, he became a stockbroker. His financial position improved, but he continued to live in an attic and to write.

His first book was *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. Fifteen publishers looked at it, sniffed and sent it back. In a rage, Jules flung it into the fire. His wife rescued it and made him promise he would try once more. So Jules tucked the slightly charred manuscript under his arm and went around to show it to Pierre Hetzel.

The publisher read the book through as the fidgeting young author waited. Hetzel said he would publish it if Jules would rewrite it in the form of a novel.

In two weeks Jules was back. *Five Weeks In a Balloon* became a best seller, and was translated into every civilized language. In 1862, at the age of thirty-four, its author was famous and a success.

His next book, *Voyage to the Centre of the Earth*, started his characters off down the crater of a volcano in Iceland. They went through a thousand adventures and finally came sliding out on a lava stream in Italy.

Perhaps the best known of Verne's book is *Around the World in 80 Days*. Serialized in *Le Temos*, of Paris, the progress of its hero aroused so much interest that New York and London correspondents sent cables daily to their newspapers reporting the imaginary Phileas Fogg's whereabouts.

In every country of Europe people made bets on whether Fogg would arrive in London in time to win his bet. Verne artfully kept this popular interest alive; his hero rescued an Indian widow from death, fell in love with her, and almost missed connections on her account; crossing the American plains he was attacked by Red Indians, and arrived in New York to see the ship that was to take him to England only a small speck on the horizon.

Every transatlantic steamship company offered Verne large sums of money if he would place Fogg aboard one of their ships. The author refused and had his hero charter a vessel. As the world held its breath, Fogg reached London with only minutes to spare, and won his bet.

In *20000 League Under the Sea*, Verne developed a submarine which was not only double-hulled and propelled by electricity but was able to manufacture electricity from the sea. Simon Lake, father of the modern submarine, credits Verne with giving him virtually a blueprint for his

invention.

Reading through Verne's books, one finds it hard to believe that they were written almost 100 years ago. The people of his fancy made diamonds synthetically, developed a convertible automobile-ship-helicopter-plane, and fired glass bullets containing an electricity spark instantly fatal.

The last years of Jules Verne were not happy ones. Intellectual circles sneered at him. He was not elected as a member of the French Academy. Gossip said there was no such man as Jules Verne. The Russians claimed him as a Slav, a Pole and former espionage agent who had taken to letters. Italian intellectuals said Jules Verne was the pen name of a group of French scientists and delegated a novelist to go to France to find the proof. The man examined the manuscripts, and departed wholly convinced. To his colleagues he wired: "There is no Jules Verne and company —there is only Jules."

Jules Verne died in 1905. The world attended his funeral, including all who had sneered and gossiped, the thirty members of the French Academy, the diplomatic corps, and special representatives of kings and presidents.

Of all the thousands of words of praise uttered at his death, Jules Verne would have liked best these two sentences from a Paris newspaper: "The old story teller is dead. It is like the passing of Santa Claus." (1680 words)

Time allowed: 28 min. Time taken: _____ min.

New Words and Expressions

⁸ **reverently** [ˈrevərəntli] *ad.* acting in a way of feeling or showing reverence or great respect 虔诚地, 恭敬地

⁶ **whiz** [wɪz] *v.* move very fast 高速移动

⁸ **hitchhike** [ˈhɪtʃhaɪk] *v.* travel by asking for rides from motorists along the way 搭便车

⁶ **comet** [ˈkɒmɪt] *n.* 彗星

⁸ **cannibal** [ˈkænɪbl] *n.* a person who eats human flesh 吃人肉的人

⁸ **Bushman** [ˈbuːzmən] *n.* 丛林野人

⁴ **stay-at-home** *n.* a person who prefers to remain quietly at home rather than go out 爱待在家里的人

⁸ **cramp** [kræmp] *n.* 抽筋; 痉挛

writer's cramp in the muscles of the hand 书写痉挛

⁶ **expedition** [ˌekspeɪˈdɪʃən] *n.* (the people,

vehicles, etc., going on) a (long) journey for a certain purpose (为特定目的而组织的) 旅行, 远征, 探险

game warden [ˈwɔːdn] *n.* (防止非法狩猎的) 动物保护人

⁶ **stimulus** [ˈstɪmjʊləs] *n.* sth that causes activity 刺激; 激励; 促进 (因素)

⁶ **neon** [ˈniːən] *n.* 氖

neon light 霓虹灯

⁶ **visualize** [ˈvɪʒʊəlaɪz] *v.* form a picture of (sth or someone) in the mind; imagine 设想; 想像

⁴ **matter-of-fact** *a.* concerned with facts, without imagination or feelings; practical 平淡的; 毫不夸张的

⁸ **mast** [mɑːst] *n.* 桅杆

⁸ **hide** [haɪd] *n.* an animal skin, esp. when

removed to be used for leather 兽皮

⁶**spice** [spaɪs] *n.* 香料

⁸**wharf** [wɜːf] *n.* 码头

⁸**bead** [biːd] *n.* 珠状物;有孔之小珠

⁴**solemnly** [ˈsɒləmli] *ad.* in a serious, without humour or lightness way; gravely 严肃地

⁸**spank** [spæŋk] *v.* strike with sth flat, such as the open hand, esp. on the buttocks as for punishment(用手)打屁股(父母惩罚孩子)

⁶**abruptly** [əbˈrʌptli] *ad.* suddenly and unexpectedly 突然地,(举止、言谈等)唐突地,鲁莽地

⁸**banister** [ˈbænɪstə] *n.* 楼梯扶手

⁸**musketeer** [ˌmʌskiˈtiə] *n.* 火枪手

⁴**confirm** [kənˈfɜːm] *v.* make sb more firm in a belief 确认;加强

⁴**allowance** [əˈlauəns] *n.* amount of money given regularly 津贴;零用钱

⁴**lean** [liːn] *a.* producing or having little value 贫乏的;收益少的

⁶**prune** [pruːn] *n.* dried plum 西梅脯;西梅干

spider web 蜘蛛网

⁸**hippopotamus** [ˌhɪpəˈpɒtəməs] *n.* 河马

⁶**tuck** [tʌk] *v.* put (esp. sth flat) into a convenient narrow space for protection, safety, etc. 塞,折

⁸**char** [tʃɑː] *v.* become black by burning 烧焦

⁸**fidget** [ˈfɪdʒɪt] *v.* move one's body around restlessly 坐立不安

⁸**lava** [ˈlɑːvə] *n.* melted rock issuing from a volcano 火山岩浆

⁸**speck** [spek] *n.* a small spot 一小点

⁴**charter** [ˈtʃɑːtə] *v.* hire for exclusive use 租;包(船、飞机等)

⁴**Slav** [slɑːv] *n.* 斯拉夫人

⁴**Pole** [pəʊl] *n.* 波兰人

⁸**espionage** [ˈespɪənɪʒ] *n.* practice of spying 间谍活动

take to begin as a practice, habit, etc. 开始从事,养成……的习惯

on someone's account out of consideration for someone's wishes 照顾某人的愿望

credit with give public approval or praise to someone because of sth they have done 为……而称赞,认可某人

II. First-reading Tasks

Read the passage attentively and quickly. Record the time you actually take. Then decide whether the following statements are true or false. Write "T" for true and "F" for false.

- _____ 1. Verne used to go fishing and hunting.
- _____ 2. Verne once worked in a laboratory.
- _____ 3. There were few twentieth-century wonders that Verne did not foresee.
- _____ 4. Verne's parents approved him of being a writer.
- _____ 5. When his first book was at last published, Verne became famous and a success at once.
- _____ 6. *20000 League Under the Sea* was perhaps the best known of Verne's books.

III. Post-reading Tasks

1. Understand the structure of the text. Work in pairs for the text structure and complete the outline with what you get from the passage.

1) Introduction (Para. 1—Para. 8)

It shows Mr Verne was more than a sci-fi novelist. He was _____ as well.

2) How did Verne take to sci-fi writing in his early years? (Para. 9—Para. 17)

A. As a child, _____

B. His father _____ to be a writer.

C. _____ confirmed him to be an author.

D. Even in hard days, Verne still _____

3) Verne's prime time (Para. 18—Para. 26)

A. _____ was his first book, which turned out to be a hit.

B. His other famous books include _____

4) Verne's last years (Para. 27—Para. 29)

Verne's genius was first _____ but soon _____ and he has and will be remembered and read throughout the world.

2. Read through the passage and choose the best answer to each of the following questions.

1) Where did Verne ever go to visit?

A. He had voyaged 10000 miles under the sea.

B. He had explored the center of the earth.

C. He had chatted with cannibals in Africa and Bushmen in Australia.

D. He had made visits around Europe and North Africa, and one six-week tour of New York State.

2) "Jules Verne should have been worn out." Why?

A. Verne had gone around the world 100 times or more.

B. He had just made a half-way round the world when he paid a visit to the French Minister of Education.

C. Verne had written many books about voyages.

D. Verne was tired of travelling.

3) The sentence "You could have knocked Jules over by a bread stick." means "_____."

A. Jules was knocked down by the stout man.

B. Jules was so weak that he could be knocked down easily.

C. Jules was very surprised.

D. Jules wanted a bread stick.

4) "Verne, who lived to see many of his fancies come true, was matter-of-fact about it all."

Here "matter-of-fact" means _____.

A. calm

B. really

C. proud

D. satisfied

- 5) Which is not Jules Verne's works?
- A. 20000 League Under the Sea B. Gulliver's Travels
C. Five Weeks in a Balloon D. Around the World in 80 days
- 6) Why did the Russians claim him as a Slav, a Pole and former espionage agent who had taken to letters?
- A. Because Verne was an Eastern European.
B. Because Verne once worked in the two countries.
C. Because Verne did work as a spy for a period of time.
D. Because Verne seemed to know much about military equipment and the like.

IV. Vocabulary and Structure

1. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate forms of the following words.

- 1) revere reverence reverent reverend
- A. Chinese people are _____ to Chou Enlai.
B. My wise and noble grandma is _____.
C. That is a nation of _____ simplicity and honesty.
D. Some tribes in Africa have _____ for the moon.
- 2) inspire inspiration inspired
- A. This article is _____ by the leader.
B. What _____ him to give such a brilliant performance?
C. Many poets and artists have drawn their _____ from nature.
- 3) descend descent descendant
- A. Charles is the _____ of Queen Elizabeth the Second.
B. According to the Bible, we are _____ from Adam.
C. The _____ of the mountain took two hours.
D. The Danes made numerous _____ upon the English coast during the tenth century.
E. You could never _____ to cheating.
- 4) neglect neglectful neglectfulness
- A. He has a tendency to _____.
B. The boys are _____ of their appearance.
C. He _____ to write and say 'Thank you.'
D. As a father he _____ his children.
- 5) art artful artificial artless
- A. All are disgusted with her _____ manners.
B. Drawing, sculpture, architecture, music and ballet are all of the category of the fine _____.
C. She is as _____ as a child.

D. She is _____. She can succeed in getting everything she wants.

6) credit credible creditable creditor

A. He left home on the Eve of Christmas to run away from his _____.

B. It hardly seems _____.

C. That conduct was _____ to him.

D. Until now I've always _____ you with more sense.

7) dispute disputable indisputable disputation

A. He is a _____ man.

B. Some people are always _____.

C. The workers' union is in _____.

D. With lasting efforts China's entry into the WTO is _____.

2. Fill in the blanks with the following words or phrases in their proper forms.

light up call on turn out crowd with supplement sign on abruptly blurt out knock down on someone's account allowance deprive of credit with take to

1) What would a student do if he were _____ his books.

2) He _____ his lean income by selling newspapers after work.

3) You could have been _____ by a feather.

4) My father _____ gardening after retirement.

5) The firm _____ fifty more workers last week.

6) That man _____ his secret in a rage.

7) The scholarship includes an _____ for books.

8) I now _____ the best man to make a speech.

9) Don't stay up late _____ my _____.

10) Her face _____ (with joy) when she saw him coming.

11) She is _____ having saved the company from bankruptcy.

12) The beach was _____ holidaymakers.

13) Our discussion was _____ curtailed.

14) This factory can _____ 100 cars a day.

3. Cloze Test.

I remember a film, I forget what it was called, in which four people were 1) _____ about the character and life-style of a woman who had been murdered. All of them had known her well, but to 2) _____ of them she presented a different 3) _____. The man who loved her saw her as amusing, intelligent and extravagant. The girl who had been at school with her said she was reserved, 4) _____ to make friends and 5) _____ to be mean. Her boss, for whom she worked as a secretary, 6) _____ her hard-working but dull, the 7) _____ person to inspire passion, 8) _____ alone murder. Her landlady said she was easy to 9) _____ on with, untidy and careless about money. "I always had to 10) _____

_____ her about rent," she said, "but I liked her. She was always cheerful and willing to lend a hand 11) _____ if anyone was in trouble." The interest of the film was not 12) _____ much in who committed the murder, but in 13) _____ it showed the way in which we all show different sides of ourselves to different people. For most of us, this is not a 14) _____ deceit but rather a chameleon-like reaction, (变色龙似的反应) a form of self-production in a world in which our sense of 15) _____ is constantly threatened.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1) A. asked | B. cross-examined | C. inquired | D. interrogated |
| 2) A. each | B. everyone | C. one | D. none |
| 3) A. eye | B. face | C. heart | D. mind |
| 4) A. easy | B. hard | C. quick | D. slow |
| 5) A. decided | B. hated | C. inclined | D. liked |
| 6) A. described | B. found | C. pictured | D. regarded |
| 7) A. first | B. last | C. right | D. very |
| 8) A. go | B. leave | C. let | D. speak |
| 9) A. get | B. talk | C. stay | D. work |
| 10) A. demand | B. inform | C. remind | D. tell |
| 11) A. assistance | B. guidance | C. hand | D. help |
| 12) A. as | B. so | C. that | D. too |
| 13) A. how | B. what | C. which | D. why |
| 14) A. conscious | B. malicious | C. mischievous | D. pretentious |
| 15) A. duty | B. humor | C. justice | D. security |
4. Fill in each of the blanks with a proper preposition or an adverb.
- 1) It's foolish to bet _____ horses.
 - 2) Old Mrs Green has been doing _____ me since my wife died.
 - 3) He went _____ many hardships.
 - 4) He urged _____ his pupils the importance of hard work.
 - 5) He cut _____ his son with a shilling.
 - 6) Year _____ year _____, Dickens, a famous American poet, stayed in her attic, writing her poems that were not published until her death.

V. Translation

1. Translate the following phrases into English.

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1) 毫无疑问 | 5) 对男孩忽略学习不耐烦 |
| 2) 脱口而出 | 6) 经常去教堂的人 |
| 3) 不再给儿子零花钱 | 7) 从事文学创作 |
| 4) 屏住呼吸 | 8) 勃然大怒 |

2. Translate the following sentences into English.

- 1) 他母亲是法国一个大家族的后裔。(descend from)

2) 知识界嘲笑他。(sneer at)

3) 现代潜水艇的始祖 Simon Lake 赞誉凡尔纳为他的发明实际上提供了一副蓝图。
(credit with)

4) 我不想你做那事。(have sb do sth)

5) 现今纸币不能兑换为黄金了。(convertible)

VI. Oral Work

Discuss the following questions in groups.

1. Are you an imaginative person? Can you visualize what the 22nd century will be like?
2. What kind of expedition can you conceive of then?

VII. Written Work

Write an article about a celebrity you are relatively familiar with. Please organize your composition well.

Part Two Enrichment Reading

Section One Additional Reading



Henry Ford

Although you may not own a car of your own, you have heard of Ford cars, one of the oldest make in car history and car industry. The text presents a detailed story about the father of Ford cars and the birth of the world-famous automobiles.

Henry Ford was born in 1863, on a farm near Detroit. He loved putting machines together as well as taking them apart. He was always dreaming of machines to make his work easier. He could make tools out of odd bits of metal.

Instead of working on the family farm, young Henry went off to Detroit and became an engineer-repairer. At the New Year's dance of 1885, Henry met Clara Jane Bryant, and fell in love with her. Henry built Clara Jane a house with his own hands. They were married and stayed together for fifty-nine years.

At this time, there were a few "horseless carriages" on the roads, but most of them were driven by electricity or steam. Herr Otto had invented an engine which ran on petrol. Thousands of people paid good money to see the model engine working away by itself. Henry saw it too. At once he imagined an engine like that on wheels, driving a car or bicycle.

He knew that he needed an electric spark to light the petrol and start the engine. But he did not know how to produce one. Henry was not the sort of man to let a thing like that stop him. He tried to work everything out for himself and he had to work at night since he had a full-time job with the Edison Electric Company in Detroit. The night before Christmas, 1893, Henry Ford was working in his shed. His first petrol engine was ready—he hoped—to run. Its cylinder was just an old piece of gas-pipe.

“Lend me a hand, dear,” he said to his wife. Clara was preparing for next day’s Christmas party, but she wiped her hands and accepted the tin of petrol which her husband handed her. Henry pushed the starting-wheel while Clara put the petrol in. Nothing happened.

“Try again,” said Henry. The engine coughed. Flames shot out of it. And it ran.

At last the great moment came. Clara watched as Henry knocked down part of the shed wall and drove off into the rainy night. It was two o’clock in the morning and Henry had been working for forty-eight hours. He drove his quadricycle, with more noise than speed, through the empty streets. It worked! Indeed, it ran well for several years. But Henry soon lost interest. Already he was planning a bigger and better car.

In 1898 his new car was finished. The motor was starting to attract attention and people were beginning to see that “horseless carriage” was not just a joke. Henry Ford accepted a job with the Automobile Company. But the company failed and he started motor racing.

Racing cars were just becoming popular, and there was money to be made—if you won. For Henry, it was not the money that attracted him, but the chance to test his cars—really test them—in difficult conditions.

There were new problems all the time, but Henry Ford found answers to them all. For example, he decided he wanted a plug in a porcelain jacket to send the spark through the cylinder of his engine. Who, in Detroit in 1900, could make that? Henry Ford found a helpful dentist, who was used to working with porcelain, making false teeth. The result was the spark-plug as we know it today.

Henry was determined to get his car ready for Detroit’s first motor race on 10 October, 1901. Everyone expected a driver called Alexander Winton to win the race, who had driven his automobile in France, as well as all over the USA. But Henry Ford’s lighter car was faster on the corners, and soon Winton was only a short distance ahead. Then Winton’s engine began to smoke badly, and Henry went out in front—and stayed there, winning the race.

In 1904 he went on to beat the world speed record, which at that time was 77.13 miles an hour. The conditions he did it in were not exactly perfect. He chose a frozen lake, from which farmers swept away the snow to make a track. They put ashes on a track, to stop the wheels from slipping. It was a very cold day, but as usual Henry had no windscreen. He was forty years old—old enough to know better. As the car picked up speed, it slid about on the ice. Sometimes it hit the piles of snow which stood like a wall on either side of the track. But he broke the record at 91.37 miles an hour.