



丛书创作\勇者小组

闪电英语



# 阅读幽默

编著：陈植荣 郝杰



广东省出版集团  
广东经济出版社

國際交流

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# 闪电英语 ②

丛书创作\勇者小组



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# **Topics About Inventions and Machines**

关于发明和机器的话题



## Why do golf balls have dimples?

So that they look cute? NO!

Because the **dimples maximize the distance golf balls travel**. Dimpled balls travel up to four times farther than smooth-surfaced golf balls.

In the early days of golf, smooth-surfaced balls were used until golfers discovered that old, **bumpy** balls traveled longer distances. The science of **aerodynamics** helps explain the **dimples phenomenon**. The dimples reduce the **drag** on a golf ball by redirecting more air pressure behind the golf ball rather than in front of it. The higher levels of pressure behind the golf balls force them to go far distances.

The dimples change the levels of pressure by bringing the main air stream very close to the surface of the golf ball. The dimples, or "turbulators," increase the **turbulence** in the **layer** of air located next to the surface of the ball. This high-speed air stream near the ball increases the amount of pressure behind the ball—thereby forcing the ball to travel **farther**.

### 说文解字

- ① dimple n. 酒窝，微凹处。
- ② maximize v. 使达最大或最高限度，反义词：minimize，将……减至最小程度。
- ③ bumpy adj. 凹凸不平的。航空中用来形容气流不稳的。



- ④ aerodynamics n. 气体力学, 空气动力学; 以 -mics 作后缀的还有 economics 经济学。
- ⑤ phenomenon n. 现象。复数形式为 phenomena。
- ⑥ drag n. 牵引, 阻碍物。
- ⑦ turbulence n. 乱流, 骚动; 形容词为 turbulent。
- ⑧ layer n. 层 a layer of air 空气层。
- ⑨ farther far 的比较级, 远的意思, 还有另一种形式 further, 其最高级是 farthest, furthest。

## Did Thomas Edison really invent the light bulb?

The history of the light bulb reads like a story straight out of a tabloid magazine. Contrary to what schools have taught for years, the American icon, **Thomas Edison**, neither invented the light bulb, nor held the first patent to the modern design of the light bulb.

Apparently, the we gave the esteemed Mr. Edison credit for the invention solely because he owned a power company, later known as **General Electric**, and a light bulb is just a bulb without a source of electricity to light it. In reality, light bulbs used as electric lights existed 50 years prior to Thomas Edison's 1879 patent date in the U.S..



Additionally, **Joseph Swan**, a British inventor, obtained the first patent for the same light bulb in Britain one year prior to Edison's patent date. Swan even publicly unveiled his carbon filament light bulb in New Castle, England a minimum of 10 years before Edison shocked the world with the announcement that he invented the first light bulb. Edison's light bulb, in fact, was a carbon copy of Swan's light bulb.

How do the two inventors, from two different countries invent exact same thing? Very easily, if one follows in the others, **footsteps**. Swan's initial findings from tinkering with carbon filament electric lighting, and his preliminary designs, appeared in an article published by Scientific American. Without a doubt, Edison had access to, and eagerly read this article. Giving Mr. Edison the benefit of the doubt, and stopping sort of calling him a plagiarist, we can say that he invented the light bulb by making vast improvements to Swan's published, yet unperfected designs.

Swan, however, felt quite differently, as he watched Edison line his pockets with money made from his invention, and took Edison to Court for patent **infringement**. The British Courts stood by their patent award for the light bulb to Swan, and Edison lost the **suit**. The British Courts forced Edison, as part of the settlement, to name Swan a partner in his British electric company. Eventually, Edison managed to acquire all of Swan's interest in the newly renamed **Edison and Swan United Electric Company**.

Edison fared no better back home in the U.S., where the U.S. Patent Office already ruled, on October 8, 1883, that Edison's patents were **invalid**, because he based them upon the earlier art



of a gentleman named William Sawyer. To make matters worse, Swan sold his U.S. patent rights, in June 1882, to Brush Electric Company. This chain of events stripped Edison of all patent rights to the light bulb, and left him with no hope of purchasing any.

Edison dusted himself off, and went into business setting up a direct current (DC) system of power distribution in New York City, and selling the light bulbs that used this electricity. The light bulb business only flickered between 1879 and 1889, until word-of-mouth advertising of lower electricity costs fanned the flame, and business boomed. Edison's client base rapidly expanded to three million customers over the span of 10 years.

Always at the center of controversy, Edison next found himself in competition with Westinghouse for the sale of the first electric chair to execute criminals in New York. Edison's chair used the DC system of electricity, while Westinghouse used the AC (alternating current) system, designed especially for it by Nickola Tesla. Both Edison and Westinghouse emphasized the humanity of electrocution and the safety of their electrical system as selling points when pitching their chairs to New York.

Edison's bid for the sale of his chair was a mere formality and a ploy to have the Westinghouse system of electricity chosen by New York for the electric chair. He endorsed the Westinghouse AC system of electricity as the system of choice to be used for the electric chair, reasoning that the public would associate the Westinghouse AC system with the killing power of the electric chair, and would see the system as unsafe for



household use.

Edison made this strategic move in anticipation that the public would flock to the safety of his DC system, as he needed increased sales of the system, because of the great monetary investment he had made in the system. Edison's plan succeeded, in part, as New York did select the Westinghouse electric chair over his model.

What he could not **take into account**, was the fact that, unbelievably, Westinghouse never tested the chair, and the chair failed on its "Maiden Voyage." Though Edison's carefully laid plan went up in smoke, he did get the last laugh, as for years people referred to being electrocuted as being "Westinghoused," even though its chair was no longer in use.

It only took a matter of years before the public realized that the benefits of the AC system far outweighed those of the DC system. Edison's DC system took back seat, and the AC system took center stage. People in the U.S. and worldwide chose the AC system over the DC system, because AC currents deliver electricity to power lines with greater efficiency. The DC system is no longer in use today.

### 说文解字

- ① prior to 在……之前。
- ② carbon n. 副本。
- ③ footprint n. 足迹；在文中是“步某人后尘”的意思。
- ④ infringement n. 侵犯，侵害。



- ⑤ suit n. 讼案, 还可表示动作, “适宜”的意思。
- ⑥ invalid adj. 无效的; 同义词: null, inoperative.
- ⑦ dust v. 扫去灰尘, 文中作比喻。
- ⑧ flicker v. 闪闪发光, 文中作“繁荣”解。
- ⑨ word-of-mouth adj. 口述的。
- ⑩ take into account 考虑到……

## Why does a newspaper tear smoothly up and down but not side to side?

Newspaper is made up of tiny wood fibers. If you take a close look with a magnifying glass, you'll see that the fibers all line up in the same direction, up and down on the page. This gives the sheet of newspaper a grain.

When you tear the newspaper from top to bottom it tears evenly because you are tearing in the direction of the grain. But when you tear it from side to side, it tears unevenly because you're tearing against the grain.

### 说文解字

- ① up and down 上上下下; 前前后后; 与 side to side 对应。
- ② be made up of 由……制成或制造。



e.g. The model plane is made up of wood.

③ fiber n. 纤维。

④ line up 形成一排。line sb. up “让人站成一排”，e.g. line up the suspects 让嫌疑犯站成一排。line sth. up “安排或组织某事物”。e.g. He's lined up a live band for the party. 他已为聚会安排了一个伴奏乐队。

⑤ grain n. 纹理。

⑥ against 反义词为 “for”。

## How did coins get their names?

One can bank on the fact that most coins derive from Latin words, and are named after people, places, or things.

Even the word coin, translates from the Latin "cuneus," meaning wedge, and was thus named because early coins resembled the wedges the dies used to coin coins. Our cent, from the Latin "centum", meaning one hundred, our dime, from the Latin "decimus", meaning tenth, and the French franc, from the Latin "Franconium Rex", meaning King of the Franks, are all examples of the naming of money, the root of all evil, which translates from the Latin word "mona", meaning to warn!

On to a more weighty manner in which people named coins, that is the physical weight. The English pound, translates from





the Latin "pondo", meaning pound, or, to get more heavily into detail, from the Latin "libra pondo," meaning a pound of weight. This method of **naming** coins weighed heavily in naming of the Spanish peso and of the Italian lira.

A sense of **fairness** dictates that some coins bear the names of the metals of which they are composed. Thus, our nickel is made of nickel. Location, not Latin, sometimes figures **prominently** into the naming of some (oops!) coins. Our very own dollar, not always in paper form, **originally** hailed from the silver mines of Bohemia, where Bohemians extracted silver for the coins, and minted them in the town of Joachimsthal. Realizing that the coin they termed the Joachimsthaler, sort of lacking in creativity, was rather lengthy, our Bohemian friends lost the head of the name, and kept the tail, with the end result being the **thaler**. The thaler eventually lost its lisp, and became our dollar.

Many countries used their word for crown, for example, crown, sovereign, krone, krun, krone, corona (not the beer), to demonstrate that some crown authority initially granted permission to mint them. Other countries named coins **in honor** of their heros, such as the Panamanian balboa, after the explorer Balboa, the Venezuelan bolivar, after one of it's national heros, and the Peruvian sol, also not a beer, but the Spanish word for sun, after this ancient Incan object of **worship**.