

外教社大学生拓展阅读系列

总主编 冯庆华 刘全福

人生 启示录

主 编 孙黎
编 委 陈菊 王英男 张新彬

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前言

为帮助在校大学生和英语爱好者提高英语阅读水平及英汉翻译能力,我社隆重推出了这套具有一定规模的英汉对照“外教社大学生拓展阅读系列”。该丛书由上海外国语大学冯庆华教授担任总主编,各分册编者均为上海外国语大学在读博士及硕士研究生。本丛书共 10 册,分别为《健康新概念》、《社会多棱镜》、《文苑风景线》、《影视百花园》、《科技新视野》、《都市流行风》、《人生启示录》、《人物风云榜》、《音乐新时空》、《体坛万花筒》。与同类出版物相比,“外教社大学生拓展阅读系列”具有如下特点:一是题材广泛,几乎囊括了与人们生活息息相关的诸多

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Betty Ann

Ina Hughs

If you judge people, you have no time to love them.

— Mother Teresa^①

Mistakes.

We all make them. Sometimes, if we're lucky, an eraser will do the trick, and we can rub it across the page, wipe away the dust, and all that's left of our careless mess is a hardly noticeable smudge.

But some mistakes can't be erased. No matter how old or young we are.

I was in the ninth grade the first time I really thought about all this. That year, I learned to diagram^② sentences on the blackboard, got my learner's permit, wore my first strapless bra, wrote poetry I never read to my parents — but by far, the toughest lesson I learned was that life doesn't come with erasers. I couldn't make something that had happened not happen. Even imagination is powerless. There are no erasers. I was 14, and I wished then, and I wish now, that I could erase or imagine away what I did, what we all did, to Betty Ann.

She came to our school from Cleveland, Ohio^③, and to our ninth-grade class in Richmond, Virginia^④, Cleveland was on another planet.

① Mother Teresa, 德兰修女(1979年曾获诺贝尔和平奖)

② diagram: 用图解法表示; 绘制……的示意图

③ Ohio: 俄亥俄州(美国州名)

④ Virginia: 弗吉尼亚州(美国州名)

贝蒂·安

假如你要去评判别人,你就没有时间去爱他们了。

——德兰修女

过错。

每个人都会犯错。如果幸运的话,我们能找块橡皮擦去所有的错误,掸掉所有的灰尘,至多留下一些轻易看不见的污迹。

但有些错误是擦不掉的,不管你的年纪有多大。

第一次意识到这点是我上九年级时。那年,我开始用图解法在黑板上分析句子,拿到了初级证书,开始穿无带胸罩,自己偷偷摸摸写诗而不愿念给父母听——但是,到目前为止,我一生中得到的最大教训就是:生活中是没有橡皮的。我不能让已经发生的事归于零。即使想象力此刻也帮不上忙,没有橡皮。那年,我14岁,不管是当时还是现在,我都希望我拥有这样一块橡皮,用它擦去我对贝蒂·安所做过的一切。

她来自俄亥俄州的克利夫兰。对我们这些居住在弗吉尼亚州里士满的九年级学生来说,克利夫兰简直就在另外一个星球上。

“Oh, hi! Ohhooo ...” whispered Margie under her breath, as Mrs. Johnson introduced Betty Ann in homeroom that first day. Margie could be real snooty sometimes. Nobody took her too seriously when she got into her rich-kid, old-money mood. She’d entertain us with cruise stories and New York gossip every afternoon as we sat on the front steps after lunch, licking the icing off Oreos and begging quarters for a Dr. Pepper from the drink machine in the gym. Margie would try to impress us, in her high-pitched, bragging voice, with the Vogue models she knew and how they shampooed their hair with beer, that people who ate their whole dinner with their salad fork were not the kind of people her family wanted her to marry into.

Actually, Margie was as insecure and as homely as the rest of us, and her life was about as exciting as the metric system, but we all knew Margie. We all knew everybody. Except Betty Ann. Most of us had been in the same class since kindergarten.

Then came Betty Ann of Cleveland, in her peasant blouses, rolled-down socks, and strange ideas. If it had been just Margie who dug into Betty Ann, it wouldn’t have turned out the way it did; she probably could have handled that. But we all were in on it.

I guess what started us off was when Betty Ann wrote a better English composition than Susan Henderson. Susan was the writer of the class, and we were very proud of her. Her weekly story was always so good, Miss Moon usually chose it to read aloud to the class every Friday. Susan would sit back in her desk, a pencil stuck behind her ear, looking to all of us just like a promising young literary genius we could say we once knew.

The Friday after Betty Ann arrived on the scene^①, Susan twirled her pencil, leaned back in her desk, and waited for the best composition of the week to be read. Hers, of course.

① on the scene: 在场, 到场

“哦，哈！哦喔喔……”在教室里约翰逊夫人向我们介绍贝蒂·安时，玛吉低声地哼哈着。玛吉有时真的是太傲慢了。当她摆起阔小姐的架子时，没人跟她顶真。每天下午当我们坐在门前的台阶上舔奥利奥饼干上的糖衣或站在体操馆内的冷饮机前时，玛吉总想给人留下很深的印象，说起话来嗓门很高，很夸张。她给我们讲时尚杂志上的人物，讲他们是怎么用啤酒洗头，讲她的父母不希望她嫁给只用生菜叉用餐的人。

事实上，玛吉跟我们所有的人一样，既不可靠也很平常。她的生活同刻度尺一样平淡无奇，但是我们了解她。我们了解每一个人，除了贝蒂·安。我们大部分人从幼儿园开始就是同学了。

现在贝蒂·安从克利夫兰来了，穿着乡下人穿的宽松上衣、卷边的短袜，脑子里面装的尽是一些古怪念头。假如仅仅是玛吉一个人伤害她的话，事情也不会发展成后来的样子，贝蒂·安可能会对付过去。但我们所有的人都参与了。

我猜我们真正开始恶作剧是在贝蒂·安写了篇比苏珊·亨德森好的作文以后。苏珊是我们班的才女，我们都为她感到骄傲。她的周记总是写得很好，穆恩小姐总是在周五选择她的文章读给大家听。苏珊往往靠在椅背上，耳朵后面夹一支铅笔，看着我们的样子像极了大有前途的文学天才。

贝蒂·安来了以后的第一个周五，苏珊倚在座位上，手里转着铅笔，等着老师念本周写得最好的作文。当然是她的。

Only it wasn't. It was Betty Ann's, and it was about a black poet named Langston Hughes and how he had become a spokesman for his people. Susan's stories were always about horse shows or opening nights^①.

We'd never heard of Langston Hughes. Besides, this was an all-white private school. Martin Luther King was being nailed^② by most of the adults we knew. All in all, it was a real bomb to have Betty Ann go on about Langston Hughes's "Black Nativity" and his description of the "maple-sugar child" and how he thought Carl Sandburg's poems fall on the page like blood clots of song from the wounds of humanity.

In Susan's stories, the "telephone jangled" and "the rainbow painted the sky". Stuff like that. Betty Ann was writing about the civil war in Spain and the black ghettos of Harlem. Langston Hughes was from Cleveland. We might have guessed.

Mrs. Johnson came to the part in Betty Ann's composition where Langston Hughes wrote a poem about how he liked watermelon so much that if he should meet the queen of England, he'd be proud to offer her a piece. That was when Agnes Matherson's eyes caught mine (or was it the other way around?) and we started imitating the queen of England eating a piece of watermelon. The whole class burst out laughing. The rest of the story was never read, and everybody but Betty Ann had to stay after school and clean blackboards. The next day at lunch, Betty Ann found a note under her lettuce saying we were sorry, but the cafeteria was sho' nuf out of watermelon.

After that, she became the class joke. What she wore, what she said, what she ate somehow always gave one of us an idea for a wisecrack. There was a kind of one-upmanship about getting Betty Ann that had less to do with Betty Ann than with our own

① opening night: (戏等)上演的第一夜

② nail: 使(目光、注意力等)集中于

可是,这一次情况不一样了。这回念的是贝蒂·安的,故事中的主角是位叫兰斯顿·休斯的黑人诗人,写他怎么变成人民的代言人。而苏珊的故事往往是关于马匹展览会或首场演出之夜的。

我们从未听说过兰斯顿·休斯其人。另外,这是一所私立白人学校,我们所知道的家长都不太欢迎马丁·路德·金。总而言之,贝蒂·安描写的这位黑人兰斯顿·休斯就像投下了一枚炸弹,还有他对槭糖小孩的描写以及他对卡尔·桑德堡的诗篇的看法。他说那些诗像是跌落在纸上的人性伤口的血痂。

在苏珊的故事中,往往是“让人心烦意乱的电话铃”和“铺满彩虹的天空”等诸如此类的东西。贝蒂·安写的却是西班牙内战和纽约的黑人住宅区哈莱姆。我们猜,兰斯顿·休斯也是来自克利夫兰的。

约翰逊夫人念到贝蒂·安的作文中兰斯顿·休斯在诗中写自己很爱吃西瓜,以致愿意献给英国女王一片。就在这时,安吉·玛森看了看我(或者是我看了看她?),我们开始模仿女王吃西瓜的样子。全班哄堂大笑,接下来的部分便没再念。除了贝蒂·安,放学后所有的人都被留了下来,还被罚擦黑板。第二天午饭时,贝蒂的菜盘子底下压了一张条子,我们向她道了歉,但自助餐厅到处响彻着有关西瓜的故事。

从那以后,贝蒂·安成了全班的笑料。她穿的、说的、吃的,都是我们取笑的对象。我们这种胜人一筹的做法主要是源于我们恃强凌弱的意识,而不是她本身有什么不对之处。我那时并不了解

jungle mentality. I know that now, but I didn't think about it then. She became a pawn.

She started getting sick a lot. There'd be whole weeks when she'd miss school, but the Betty Ann's stories went on even without her. She came to our school from another planet. She was our little moron, our Polack, our village idiot.

Then one day, Betty Ann and I were assigned a project together. Everyone had selected a partner, and a project together. Everyone had selected a partner, and I was out of town at a school swimming meet the day the assignment was given, so I got stuck with Betty Ann. Everyone kidded me, and I laughed with them. The day before the project was due, I had to go over to her house after school to work on it with her. Her mother fixed a plate of cookies and kept coming into the room to see if I wanted more Coke or anything. She said I was the only one of Betty Ann's friends who had come over after school, and she was glad to meet me.

The phone rang while I was there, and it was for me. Betty Ann's mother was in the kitchen when I heard Margie giggling at the other end of the line: "Have you eaten any maple sugar candy or watermelon, keddo?"

She waited for me to snicker^① and undercover^② laugh.

I saw Betty Ann's mother just standing in the kitchen with her back to me, pretending not to be listening. It was as if she had heard everything. I hung up. I think it was at that moment when I began to see what we had been doing.

"Why don't you girls like Betty Ann? She likes you ..."

Nobody had ever asked me a question before or since that made me feel so stupid.

If kindness could kill, Betty Ann would have been dead in a

① snicker: 窃笑, 暗笑

② undercover: 暗中, 秘密地

这一点，现在才领悟到。她只不过被我们利用了而已。

贝蒂·安开始经常生病，有时几个星期都不能来上课，但关于她的故事却从未停止过。她来自另外一个星球，她是低能儿，她是波兰人，她是乡野白痴。

直到有一天，贝蒂·安和我被分配在一起共同设计一个方案。每个人都选择了自己的伙伴，一起做一个项目。每个人都选了，而我那天恰巧去城外的一个学校参加游泳比赛，所以我被安排和贝蒂·安一组。每个人都取笑我，我同他们一块儿大笑。任务到期的前一天，我不得不到她家去和她一块儿设计。她妈妈给了我一碟曲奇饼干，设计过程中也不时地进来问我要不要可乐或别的什么。她说，我是贝蒂的朋友当中唯一一个来他们家的人，她很高兴遇见我。

电话铃响了，是找我的。贝蒂·安的妈妈在厨房，我听见玛吉在电话的另一端咯咯地傻笑：“你吃了槭糖和西瓜吗？”

她在那一端等着我在这边压低声音窃笑。

我看见贝蒂·安的妈妈就站在厨房背对着我，假装没在听。不过看起来她好像什么都听到了。我挂了电话。我想，就是在那一刻，我才开始意识到我们究竟一直在做什么。

“你们这些女孩为什么不喜欢贝蒂·安呢？她喜欢你们……”

以前从没有问题会让我觉得自己如此愚蠢。

假如善意能杀人，接下来的一个礼拜，贝蒂·安肯定已被我杀了。不过一切都太晚了。她父母替她转了学，后来我们听说

week. But it was too late. Her parents moved her to another school, then we heard later that she'd a nervous breakdown.

Once, years later when I was home from college, I saw Betty Ann in the doctor's office. She didn't even recognize me.

Sticks and stones only break bones. Words can shatter the soul. A little, quiet, picked-on^① 10-year-old runs away because kids on the bus laugh at him. A sensitive ninthgrader flips out because a group of self-rising girls decide to throw her to the wolves. We tell ourselves it takes more than that to send someone over the edge. Maybe so, maybe not.

But there are no erasers.

(from *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*)

① picked-on: 被作弄的