

THE ECLECTIC READERS 美国语文读本

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美国原版经典语文课本



THE ECLECTIC READERS

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WILLIAM H. MCGUFFEY

上海三联书店

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LESSON 1	THE GOOD READER	1
LESSON 2	THE BLUEBELL	6
LESSON 3	THE GENTLE HAND	8
LESSON 4	THE GRANDFATHER.....	13
LESSON 5	A BOY ON A FARM	15
LESSON 6	THE SINGING LESSON	18
LESSON 7	DO NOT MEDDLE.....	21
LESSON 8	WORK	26
LESSON 9	THE MANIAC	28
LESSON 10	ROBIN REDBREAST	31
LESSON 11	THE FISH I DIDN'T CATCH	33
LESSON 12	IT SNOWS	37
LESSON 13	RESPECT FOR THE SABBATH REWARDED ...	40
LESSON 14	THE SANDS O' DEE.....	43
LESSON 15	SELECT PARAGRAPHS	45

LESSON 16	THE CORN SONG.....	47
LESSON 17	THE VENOMOUS WORM	50
LESSON 18	THE FESTAL BOARD	52
LESSON 19	HOW TO TELL BAD NEWS	55
LESSON 20	THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM.....	57
LESSON 21	“I PITY THEM”.....	60
LESSON 22	AN ELEGY ON MADAM BLAIZE	62
LESSON 23	KING CHARLES II AND WILLIAM PENN	64
LESSON 24	WHAT I LIVE FOR	67
LESSON 25	THE RIGHTEOUS NEVER FORSAKEN.....	69
LESSON 26	ABOU BEN ADHEM.....	72
LESSON 27	LUCY FORESTER	74
LESSON 28	THE REAPER AND THE FLOWERS	79
LESSON 29	THE TOWN PUMP	81
LESSON 30	GOOD NIGHT	87
LESSON 31	AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL	89
LESSON 32	MY MOTHER’S HANDS	93
LESSON 33	THE DISCONTENTED PENDULUM	95
LESSON 34	THE DEATH OF THE FLOWERS	98
LESSON 35	THE THUNDERSTORM	101
LESSON 36	APRIL DAY	104
LESSON 37	THE TEA ROSE.....	107
LESSON 38	THE CATARACT OF LODORE	112
LESSON 39	THE BOBOLINK	116

LESSON 40	ROBERT OF LINCOLN	120
LESSON 41	REBELLION IN MASSACHUSETTS STATE PRISON	123
LESSON 42	FAITHLESS NELLY GRAY	129
LESSON 43	THE GENEROUS RUSSIAN PEASANT	132
LESSON 44	FORTY YEARS AGO	135
LESSON 45	MRS. CAUDLE'S LECTURE	138
LESSON 46	THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH	142
LESSON 47	THE RELIEF OF LUCKNOW	144
LESSON 48	THE SNOWSTORM	147
LESSON 49	BEHIND TIME	150
LESSON 50	THE OLD SAMPLER	153
LESSON 51	THE GOODNESS OF GOD	157
LESSON 52	MY MOTHER	160
LESSON 53	THE HOUR OF PRAYER	161
LESSON 54	THE WILL	163
LESSON 55	THE NOSE AND THE EYES	167
LESSON 56	AN ICEBERG	169
LESSON 57	ABOUT QUAIL.....	172
LESSON 58	THE BLUE AND THE GRAY	176
LESSON 59	THE MACHINIST'S RETURN.....	179
LESSON 60	MAKE WAY FOR LIBERTY.....	183
LESSON 61	THE ENGLISH SKYLARK	187
LESSON 62	HOW SLEEP THE BRAVE	189

LESSON 63	THE RAINBOW	190
LESSON 64	SUPPOSED SPEECH OF JOHN ADAMS	191
LESSON 65	THE RISING	195
LESSON 66	CONTROL YOUR TEMPER	199
LESSON 67	WILLIAM TELL	202
LESSON 68	WILLIAM TELL	213
LESSON 69	THE CRAZY ENGINEER	218
LESSON 70	THE HERITAGE	225
LESSON 71	NO EXCELLENCE WITHOUT LABOR.....	228
LESSON 72	THE OLD HOUSE CLOCK	231
LESSON 73	THE EXAMINATION	233
LESSON 74	THE ISLE OF LONG AGO	238
LESSON 75	THE BOSTON MASSACRE	240
LESSON 76	DEATH OF THE BEAUTIFUL	245
LESSON 77	SNOW FALLING	246
LESSON 78	SQUEERS’S METHOD	247
LESSON 79	THE GIFT OF EMPTY HANDS	252
LESSON 80	CAPTURING THE WILD HORSE	254
LESSON 81	SOWING AND REAPING.....	259
LESSON 82	TAKING COMFORT	261
LESSON 83	CALLING THE ROLL	264
LESSON 84	TURTLE SOUP	266
LESSON 85	THE BEST KIND OF REVENGE	270
LESSON 86	THE SOLDIER OF THE RHINE	273

LESSON 87	THE WINGED WORSHIPERS	277
LESSON 88	THE PEEVISH WIFE	279
LESSON 89	THE RAINY DAY	282
LESSON 90	BREAK, BREAK, BREAK	283
LESSON 91	TRANSPORTATION AND PLANTING OF SEEDS	284
LESSON 92	SPRING AGAIN	289
LESSON 93	RELIGION THE ONLY BASIS OF SOCIETY ...	292
LESSON 94	ROCK ME TO SLEEP	294
LESSON 95	MAN AND THE INFERIOR ANIMALS	297
LESSON 96	THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT	300
LESSON 97	A HOME SCENE	303
LESSON 98	THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS	306
LESSON 99	A CHASE IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL	308
LESSON 100	BURIAL OF SIR JOHN MOORE	313
LESSON 101	LITTLE VICTORIES	315
LESSON 102	THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE	320
LESSON 103	THE ART OF DISCOURAGEMENT	322
LESSON 104	THE MARINER'S DREAM	326
LESSON 105	THE PASSENGER PIGEON	329
LESSON 106	THE COUNTRY LIFE	334
LESSON 107	THE VIRGINIANS	336
LESSON 108	MINOT'S LEDGE	341
LESSON 109	HAMLET	344

LESSON 110	DISSERTATION ON ROAST PIG	349
LESSON 111	A PEN PICTURE	354
LESSON 112	THE GREAT VOICES	358
LESSON 113	A PICTURE OF HUMAN LIFE	360
LESSON 114	A SUMMER LONGING	365
LESSON 115	FATE	367
LESSON 116	THE BIBLE THE BEST OF CLASSICS	368
LESSON 117	MY MOTHER’S BIBLE	370

LESSON 1

THE GOOD READER

1. It is told of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, that, as he was seated one day in his private room, a written petition¹ was brought to him with the request that it should be immediately read. The King had just returned from hunting, and the glare of the sun, or some other cause, had so dazzled his eyes that he found it difficult to make out a single word of the writing.

2. His private secretary happened to be absent; and the soldier who brought the petition could not read. There was a page, or favorite boy servant, waiting in the hall, and upon him the King called. The page was a son of one of the noblemen of the court, but proved to be a very poor reader.

3. In the first place, he did not articulate² distinctly. He huddled his words together in the utterance, as if they were syllables of one long word, which he must get through with as speedily as possible. His pronunciation was bad, and he did not modulate³ his voice so as to bring out the meaning of what he read. Every sentence was uttered with a dismal monotony⁴ of voice, as if it did not differ in any respect from that which preceded it.

4. "Stop!" said the King, impatiently. "Is it an auctioneer's list of goods to be sold that you are hurrying over? Send your companion to me." Another page who stood at the door now entered, and to

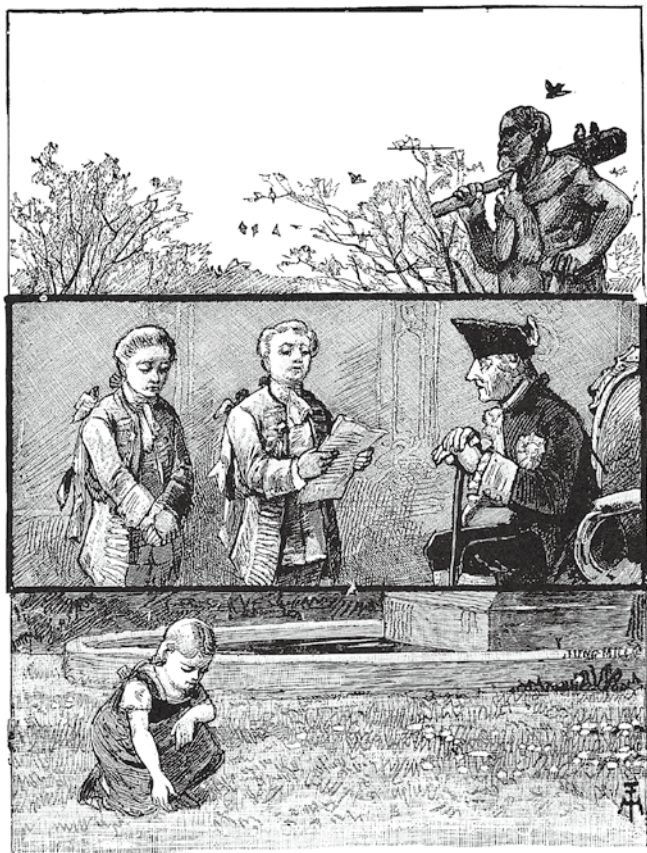
1 Petition, a formal request.

2 Articulate, to utter the elementary sounds.

3 Modulate, to vary or inflect.

4 Monotony, lack of variety.

him the King gave the petition. The second page began by hemming and clearing his throat in such an affected¹ manner that the King jokingly asked him whether he had not slept in the public garden, with the gate open, the night before.



5. The second page had a good share of self-conceit, however,

¹ Affected, *unnatural and silly*.

and so was not greatly confused by the King's jest. He determined that he would avoid the mistake which his comrade had made. So he commenced reading the petition slowly and with great formality, emphasizing every word, and prolonging the articulation of every syllable. But his manner was so tedious that the King cried out, "Stop! are you reciting a lesson in the elementary sounds? Out of the room! But no: stay! Send me that little girl who is sitting there by the fountain."

6. The girl thus pointed out by the King was a daughter of one of the laborers employed by the royal gardener; and she had come to help her father weed the flower beds. It chanced that, like many of the poor people in Prussia, she had received a good education. She was somewhat alarmed when she found herself in the King's presence, but took courage when the King told her that he only wanted her to read for him, as his eyes were weak.

7. Now, Ernestine (for this was the name of the little girl) was fond of reading aloud, and often many of the neighbors would assemble at her father's house to hear her; those who could not read themselves would come to her, also, with their letters from distant friends or children, and she thus formed the habit of reading various sorts of handwriting promptly and well.

8. The King gave her the petition, and she rapidly glanced through the opening lines to get some idea of what it was about. As she read, her eyes began to glisten, and her breast to heave. "What is the matter?" asked the King; "don't you know how to read?" "Oh, yes! sire," she replied, addressing him with the title usually applied to him: "I will now read it, if you please."

9. The two pages wore about to leave the room. "Remain," said the King. The little girl began to read the petition. It was from a poor widow, whose only son had been drafted¹ to serve in the army, although his health was delicate and his pursuits had been such as to unfit him for military life. His father had been killed in battle, and

¹ Drafted, *selected by lot*.

the son had a strong desire to become a portrait painter.

10. The writer told her story in a simple, concise¹ manner, that carried to the heart a belief of its truth; and Ernestine read it with so much feeling, and with an articulation so just, in tones so pure and distinct, that when she had finished, the King, into whose eyes the tears had started, exclaimed, "Oh! now I understand what it is all about; but I might never have known, certainly I never should have felt, its meaning had I trusted to these young gentlemen, whom I now dismiss from my service for one year, advising them to occupy their time in learning to read."

11. "As for you, my young lady," continued the King, "I know you will ask no better reward for your trouble than the pleasure of carrying to this poor widow my order for her son's immediate discharge². Let me see whether you can write as well as you can read. Take this pen, and write as I dictate³." He then dictated an order, which Ernestine wrote, and he signed. Calling one of his guards, he bade him go with the girl and see that the order was obeyed.

12. How much happiness was Ernestine the means of bestowing through her good elocution, united to the happy circumstance that brought it to the knowledge of the King! First, there were her poor neighbors, to whom she could give instruction and entertainment. Then, there was the poor widow who sent the petition, and who not only regained her son, but received through Ernestine an order for him to paint the King's likeness; so that the poor boy soon rose to great distinction⁴, and had more orders than he could attend to. Words could not express⁵ his gratitude, and that of his mother, to the little girl.

13. And Ernestine had, moreover, the satisfaction of aiding

1 Concise, *brief and full of meaning*.

2 Discharge, *release*.

3 Dictate, *to utter so that another may write it down*.

4 Distinction, *honorable and notable position*.

5 Express, *to make known the feelings of*.

her father to rise in the world, so that he became the King's chief gardener. The King did not forget her, but had her well educated at his own expense. As for the two pages, she was indirectly the means of doing them good, also; for, ashamed of their bad reading, they commenced studying in earnest, till they overcame the faults that had offended the King. Both finally rose to distinction, one as a lawyer, and the other as a statesman; and they owed their advancement in life chiefly to their good elocution.

NOTES.—Frederick II. of Prussia (b. 1712, d. 1788), or Frederick the Great, as he was called, was one of the greatest of German rulers. He was distinguished for his military exploits, for his wise and just government, and for his literary attainments. He wrote many able works in the French language. Many pleasant anecdotes are told of this king, of which the one given in the lesson is a fair sample.

LESSON 2

THE BLUEBELL

1. There is a story I have heard—
 A poet learned it of a bird,
 And kept its music every word—
2. A story of a dim ravine,
 O'er which the towering tree tops lean,
 With one blue rift¹ of sky between;
3. And there, two thousand years ago,
 A little flower as white as snow
 Swayed² in the silence to and fro.
4. Day after day, with longing eye,
 The floweret watched the narrow sky,
 And fleecy clouds that floated by.
5. And through the darkness, night by night,
 One gleaming star would climb the height³,
 And cheer the lonely floweret's sight.
6. Thus, watching the blue heavens afar,
 And the rising of its favorite star,
 A slow change came—but not to mar;

¹ Rift, *a narrow opening, a cleft.*

² Swayed, *swung.*

³ Height, *an elevated place.*

7. For softly o'er its petals¹ white
There crept a blueness, like the light
Of skies upon a summer night;
8. And in its chalice², I am told,
The bonny³ bell was formed to hold
A tiny star that gleamed like gold.
9. Now, little people, sweet and true,
I find a lesson here for you
Writ in the floweret's hell of blue:
10. The patient child whose watchful eye
Strives after all things pure and high,
Shall take their image by and by.

1 Petals, the colored leaves of a flower.

2 Chalice, a cup or bowl.

3 Bonny, beautiful.

LESSON 3

THE GENTLE HAND

Timothy S. Arthur (b. 1809, d. 1885) was born near Newburgh, N.Y., but passed most of his life at Baltimore and Philadelphia. His opportunities for good schooling were quite limited, and he may be considered a self-educated man. He was the author of more than a hundred volumes, principally novels of a domestic and moral tone, and of many shorter tales—magazine articles, etc. “Ten Nights in a Barroom,” and “Three Years in a Mantrap,” are among his best known works.

1. When and where it matters not now to relate—but once upon a time, as I was passing through a thinly peopled district of country, night came down upon me almost unawares. Being on foot, I could not hope to gain the village toward which my steps were directed, until a late hour; and I therefore preferred seeking shelter and a night’s lodging at the first humble dwelling that presented itself.

2. Dusky twilight was giving place to deeper shadows, when I found myself in the vicinity¹ of a dwelling, from the small uncurtained windows of which the light shone with a pleasant promise of good cheer and comfort. The house stood within an inclosure, and a short distance from the road along which I was moving with wearied feet.

3. Turning aside, and passing through the ill-hung gate, I approached the dwelling. Slowly the gate swung on its wooden hinges, and the rattle of its latch, in closing, did not disturb the air until I had nearly reached the porch in front of the house, in which a slender girl, who had noticed my entrance, stood awaiting my arrival.

¹ Vicinity, *neighborhood*.