



英语电影

ENGLISH THROUGH MOVIES

朱维芳 编著

新雅 疯狂

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外语教学与研究出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

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FOREWORD

As the first reader of the manuscripts **English Through Movies**, I am happy to share with you my impression of the series.

I have an invested interest in reading the manuscripts, not because I am one of the authors, which is obviously untrue, but because I used to be an ardent movie-goer. This passion for movies accompanied me through my undergraduate and postgraduate studies at home, and my studies abroad. In retrospect, what hooked me to the movie studios was the dynamism movies gave me. A movie is a replay of life, and I took myself not as a “cold-blooded” watcher, but as an active participant in the life the movie heroes and heroines have gone through. In a sense, the movie studio provided me with a venue in which I relived the life my heroes and heroines lived. What else can be more dynamic than this experience?!

I cannot agree more with the editors that English movies offer best materials for Chinese learners of English to learn the language. You learn the dialogues? Yes. You learn the situations? Yes. You learn the characters? Yes. You learn the body language? Yes. You learn the culture? Yes. You name it, and you find it in the movies.

However, I hasten to add that not all movies can fulfill the functions mentioned above. I have to add a qualifier “good movies.” I think the editors of the series have taken pains in selecting the best movies, and it seems to me that the selections are no doubt among the best, if not the best.

In your use of the series, if you act as an active participant in the life of the movies, as I did, I am sure you will find **English Through Movies** quite moving and rewarding!

Gu Yueguo (Ph.D.)

Professor of Linguistics, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
AK. C. Wong Fellow of the British Academy

INTRODUCTION

Why this textbook?

It is my belief that learning English through movies is one of the best ways to grasp the language, for movies provide a much sought-after “shortcut” to English. It is this belief that has motivated me to edit this series, **English Through Movies**. Moreover, learning English by watching movies makes the learning process natural, educational and enjoyable.

English Through Movies has gone through several evolutionary stages before it reaches its present maturity. Trial classes were taught as early as in 1995. The materials were randomly selected, and poorly documented. A substantial advance was made during my one year research visit to Yale University between 1997 to 1998. The manuscript was almost ready upon returning home, and the course “English through Movies” was taught in real earnest to a class of 60 students for two years. This has given me enough experience to make the series more “classroom-friendly” than otherwise.

What does the textbook contain?

The series is intended to help learners go through the journey of learning English through movies in 4 stages, therefore there are 4 parts for each movie (each movie is one learning unit).

Part One: Understanding of the Movie, which includes the cultural

background of the movie, the genre of the movie, and the summary of the movie. An awareness of the movie's cultural background and genre, enables students to have a better understanding of the movie in its unique cultural and social setting.

Part Two: Close Study of the Movie, which contains excerpts from the movie. These excerpts have been especially selected to represent the essential themes and memorable lines that have become a part of the English language. Memorizing these excerpts will not only improve students' pronunciation and intonation, but will also give students a deeper feeling of the English language.

Part Three: Reflection on the Movie, which includes recordings of interviews I conducted when I was at Yale on those movies. The purpose of making the interviews is to give students opportunity to listen to Americans' views on the movie so as to compare them with theirs. This will help them learn American culture from different perspectives.

Why do you need this series?

This approach addresses the recognized limitations of many other language learning methods by offering an integrated and authentic way of language learning.

Once you can understand an authentic movie such as *The Sound of Music*, you will find that your listening comprehension has jumped to another level. Once you can learn the beautiful lines through imitation, you will find that your pronunciation and intonation have become more natural. Once you can express your reflections on the movie through oral presentation and essay writing, you will find that your

mind has sharpened through critical thinking. Once you can act out the movie, you will feel that English has become part of yourself.

The layout of the book

There are altogether 9 movies in each textbook and there are three books with different foci. Book 1, with an emphasis on English Language; Book 2, with an emphasis on culture studies; Book 3, with an emphasis on cross-cultural studies. Each textbook is accompanied by 9 CDs of multimedia (each unit has a CD) which will make your learning convenient and efficient. The scripts of the interviews and the Chinese translation of the excerpts are good aids to those who may find it difficult. The three books can be used in class as well as by self-study learners.

Acknowledgement

Teachers who participated in compiling **English Through Movies** are the following:

Unit One:	Cai Jing; Tan Wufeng
Unit Two:	Cai Jing; Tan Wufeng
Unit Three:	Cai Jing
Unit Four:	Cai Jing
Unit Five:	Cai Jing
Unit Six:	Tan Wufeng
Unit Seven:	Zhen Lihong
Unit Eight:	Tan Wufeng
Unit Nine:	Tan Wufeng

CONTENTS

Unit 1	Chinese Mothers and Their ABC Daughters	1
	The Joy Luck Club	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	3
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	9
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	25
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	45
	<i>Answer</i>	47
	<i>Translation</i>	49
Unit 2	Italian Americans and Mafia	59
	The Godfather	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	61
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	66
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	81
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	98
	<i>Answer</i>	99
	<i>Translation</i>	101
Unit 3	A Black Mother and Her White Daughter	111
	Imitation of Life	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	113
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	118
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	136
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	150

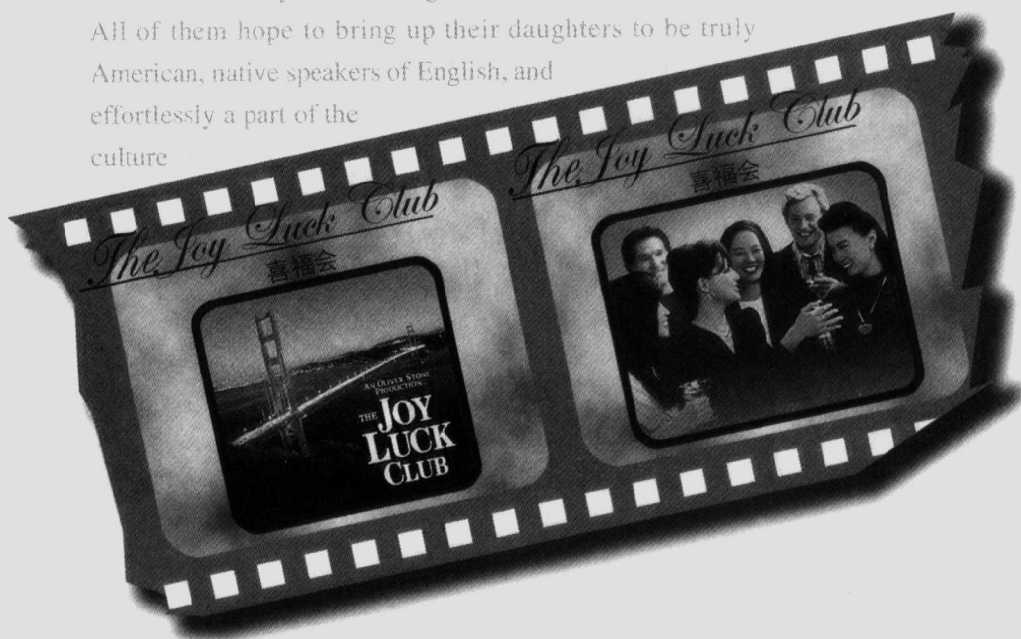
	<i>Answer</i>	152
	<i>Translation</i>	154
Unit 4	Love Across Cultures	167
	The English Patient	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	169
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	173
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	183
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	196
	<i>Answer</i>	198
	<i>Translation</i>	200
Unit 5	American Poet and an Oxford Professor	207
	Shadowlands	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	209
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	213
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	237
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	253
	<i>Answer</i>	255
	<i>Translation</i>	258
Unit 6	A Genius and a Psychology Professor	275
	Good Will Hunting	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	277
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	279
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	296
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	315
	<i>Answer</i>	316

	<i>Translation</i>	319
Unit 7	A Waitress and a Novelist	331
	As Good As It Gets	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	333
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	336
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	361
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	380
	<i>Answer</i>	382
	<i>Translation</i>	385
Unit 8	Ladies and Gentlemen	401
	Sense and Sensibility	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	403
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	409
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	418
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	433
	<i>Answer</i>	434
	<i>Translation</i>	437
Unit 9	Old Money and New Money	443
	Titanic	
	Part One Understanding the Movie	445
	Part Two Close Study of the Movie	450
	Part Three Reflection on the Movie	470
	Appendix:	
	<i>Glossary</i>	486
	<i>Answer</i>	488
	<i>Translation</i>	492

Chinese Mothers and Their ABC Daughters

The Joy Luck Club

Communication across cultures is the dominant theme of this movie. The older women in it were all raised in a traditional Chinese culture and are now living and raising their daughters in America. They are aware every day of the contrast between the two cultures. Their association, the Joy Luck Club, is their way of surviving the strains of this situation. All of them hope to bring up their daughters to be truly American, native speakers of English, and effortlessly a part of the culture.



• Part One Understanding the Movie

The Themes of the Movie

Communication across cultures is the dominant theme of this movie. The older women in it were all raised in a traditional Chinese culture and are now living and raising their daughters in America. They are aware every day of the contrast between the two cultures. Their association, the Joy Luck Club, is their way of surviving the strains of this situation. All of them hope to bring up their daughters to be truly American, native speakers of English, and effortlessly a part of the culture that American English embodies.

There is one sequence where the contrast of culture is a source of comedy, but it has serious and unhappy consequences. An American guest comes to the house of one of them. He behaves with all the incompetence and clumsiness of someone quite unfamiliar with Chinese ways of serving meals. He takes what he assumes is his portion of a dish, he spills food, and worst of all, he smothers a carefully seasoned and expertly prepared dish with vinegar. None of these mistakes would matter — except that his Chinese hosts cannot help feeling that his unintentional errors were deliberate insults. They feel affronted — as if his ignorance were calculated to upset and humiliate them.

The conflict between the two generations mirrors the contrast between American culture and Chinese culture. The older women cannot escape the frame of reference in which they were brought up. A daughter, in their eyes, should be obedient and subservient to her immediate family. When she is old enough to marry, she should transfer those “merits” to her husband and his family. The older women in the story were raised in these traditions, but their daughters have to make their lives in a world that has little use for subservient women. American society values competitiveness and independence, and even tolerates some degree of ruthlessness. Only effective communication can dispel these conflicts.



This is in part a matter of language. The older women have sufficient English for everyday purposes. But their mistakes mark them out as recent immigrants. Their English lacks the subtlety they need to communicate effectively with their daughters on sensitive issues. This is why symbolic possessions — the swan's feather, small items of personal jewelry — are so important in the story.

The daughters, on the contrary, have a native control of American English, but their poor command of Chinese cuts them off from the early experiences that have shaped their mothers. Only the quality that Suyuan recognizes in her daughter, June, the good heart, the generous spirit is sufficient to bridge the gap and heal the hurt. That style of living, like a natural talent cannot be taught, is of more value than the sophisticated intelligence displayed by Waverly, Lindo's daughter.

Background Information of the Movie

The four women whose stories are followed in this movie are all immigrants from their native China to America. They are all well aware of belonging to a minority that must struggle against hostility in order to survive. The setting of the story is a matter of historical fact. The time is the early 1990s, and according to the 1990 US Census, Asians made up at that time less than 3% of the US population. In some places, however, they seemed much more numerous than that figure suggests, because most of the newcomers from Asia settled near the ports-of-entry cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York. The prejudice they encountered is one theme of the story. It is not the most prominent, but it does explain how four of them — the four whose fortunes we follow, come to establish the Joy Luck Club. The members of the group are firm friends, as, in time, are their daughters. They meet weekly to play mah-jong, to eat Chinese food, and to celebrate the fact that they have survived another week.

The source of the movie is a novel of the same name by Amy Tan. You will notice, as you see the credits at the start of the movie, that this author (herself a Chinese American) was involved, with Ronald Bass, in the writing of the screenplay, and in other aspects of the production. So much

involvement is unusual for an author. Wayne Wang was the director. With Asian Americans involved at so many points in the production, we can expect authenticity from the movie. We can also expect that in the future *The Joy Luck Club* will come to be seen as historically important — a movie that asserts the presence and the creativity of Asians in the American community.

The Joy Luck Club is regarded as women's movie though there seems no reason why men should enjoy and appreciate it. It is true. However, the principal characters are women, and the focus is on the experience of women. The men in it are insignificant figures and unsatisfactory husbands. They have no more than a marginal role. The exception is the kindly second husband of Suyuan Woo who appears only in the closing sequences.



The Stories of the Movie

The story moves between China and America, and among the lives and fortunes of women of two generations. The older generation were all born in China, and we hear virtually nothing of how they came to emigrate, to marry, and to bear their children, so far from their place of origin. We focus instead on the sharp contrast between their earlier and later life. The younger generation know nothing of China at first hand, but — and this is a major theme of the story — each is profoundly affected by what has happened to her mother in the past. Only by understanding the past, can they, and we, understand why the bond between mother and daughter is so close, and why the relation between the two is so often difficult and unhappy. It is more often a source of frustration and hurt than that of inspiration and support. Watch for the symbol of their relationship, the swan feather — a recurring motif. It recalls the story of the duck that stretched its neck in the hopes of becoming a goose, and growing up instead to be a swan. It is a symbol of effort, of parental hope, and of expectation not just met, but exceeded. You may find it useful to have a brief summary of the stories, since the movie does not tell them in a simple sequence.

Story 1

Suyuan and her daughter June

Suyuan was married in rural China, and bore twin girl babies. Dire poverty forced her to make her way on foot to rejoin her husband, taking the babies with her. Sickness struck, and believing that she was going to die, she left the babies, with everything she had with her, hoping that someone would find and care for them. She left them, believing that her body must not be found accompanying them as that discovery would bring the worst possible luck to the finder. However, she did not die. She lost consciousness, and awoke in hospital. She never saw her babies again and she never forgot them. After she remarried, all her hopes were concentrated on the daughter of her second marriage, June. June herself, an ordinary little girl, with no special talents, experiences those hopes as an almost intolerable pressure. She feels she can never meet her mother's expectations, and she can never gain appreciation for what she is. Yet it is she who, after her mother's death, fulfils her dearest wish. She discovers that these twin half sisters have after all survived. June returns to China to see them, to tell them the sad news of the death of their mother, and to reunite the family. It is June who turns out to have the most valuable of talents — a good, generous disposition and a loving heart.

Story 2

Lindo and her daughter Waverly

Parents forced on the young Lindo a marriage to an immature, impotent and spiteful young man. Her mother-in-law made her life miserable, and she planned not to submit but to escape.

Lindo pretended hysterical alarm at a prophetic dream, in which the ancestors revealed to her the dreadful doom that would fall on the family if she remained in it. The matchmaker, she said, had been dreadfully mistaken in selecting her as the bride for the son of the household. His wife should have been the servant girl, Ah Ping, who was already pregnant with his son. If she remained, the black spot in her husband's back would spread and devour him. In that household she was at once believed. The servant girl got