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英语短文集锦

本书编委会编

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Wanted: Friends for the Rhion!

TIME: Now

PLACE: . . . The wilds of East Africa

PERSONS: You and your guide

Guide: Look at that big rhino! Doesn't he look like a mistake that nature made? His legs are too short for his body.

You: Yes—and his hide seems to be too big for him. It makes me think of an old rug thrown over his bones. And those two horns make him look like a creature from the past.

Guide: That's what he is! He's a leftover from early times. His nearest relatives today are the horse and the zebra. The tapir is a relative, too. You know what a tapir is. It's that big beast with a long snout.

You: The rhino looks fat, lazy, dull and slow.

Guide: You're wrong! He's a nervous wreck, with a nasty temper. And he's surprisingly fast. He charges just about anything he sees. His hearing and sense of smell are good, but his eyesight is dim. An elephant or a buffalo can spot a man from far away and move off. But a rhino can't see anyone until he is very close. Then trouble starts!

You: Has a rhino ever charged you?

Guide: Yes, several times. Once I found a rhino stuck in a mudhole. I pulled him out with my truck. He paid me back by charging the truck, wrecking the side of it. Rhinos sometimes even charge trains. The train always wins, of course.

You: Rhinos must have a terrible home life!

Guide: They live alone. If you ever see two that stay together, one is a calf. He drinks his mother's milk until he is about two years old. By the time he is about five, he is fully grown. Then he goes off to live by himself.

If two bulls meet, they may fight until one or

both are dead. But—a funny thing—this bad-tempered animal is easy to tame. Once he is in a pen, he will even learn to eat out of a keeper's hand.

You: Have you ever seen a pet rhino?

Guide: Yes. I've seen a rhino in a zoo roll over to have his stomach scratched. The only danger is his size. He is so big that if he leans against his keeper—well, goodby, Mr. Keeper!

You: That rhino over there doesn't seem to be doing anything. He isn't even eating.

Guide: He will rest all day, mostly in the shade. Most of the time a rhino lies down to sleep. But sometimes he sleeps standing up, with his head hanging down.

Soon after sundown, he comes to life. Then he spends several hours at a water hole—almost always the same one. I like to watch a rhino play in the mud and then rub himself against trees and rocks. It's the only time he seems at all happy.

You should see a rhino eat! He barges through the brush like a bulldozer. His big lip tears off leaves and buds, then sucks them in like a vacuum cleaner. He even eats thorns.

YOU: I should think that all other animals would leave the rhino alone.

Guide: They do. Man is his only enemy. But man is enough! Fifty years ago, the black rhino was a common sight in Africa. Today there are only about 15,000 left.

You: Why is the rhino hunted? Is it good to eat? Is it killed for its hide?

Guide: It's hunted mainly for one thing—its horns. Many people in Asia believe that ground-up rhino horn has magic powers. A horn can be sold in Asia for several thousand dollars. So it's big business to kill rhinos for their horns.

You: Aren't there laws against hunting them?

Guide: Yes, there are. But the rhino isn't safe even in the big game parks. He is hunted quietly with Poi-

soned arrows or spears. Or he is trapped with wires fastened to a heavy log. Once he's trapped, he drags the log for miles. At last he is so tired he drops. The hunters then chop off the horns and leave the meat to rot.

You: How cruel!

Guide: Yes, it is a cruel death. And so is starving. People today are turning the rhino's wild land into farms. He will starve to death even if he is not hunted by man.

You: Poor beast! he has't a friend in the world, has he?

Guide: He has one friend—the little tickbird. The birds ride on his back, picking ticks from his hide. When anything comes near him, the birds on his back screech a warning.

You: But doesn't that screeching help hunters to find the rhino?

Guide: I'm sorry to say, it does. A rhino isn't very lovable, but I don't want him killed.

You: The government could save many rhino if they were kept in well-guarded parks.

Guide: That's about the only hope there is for this strange creature.

You: It would be a shame for his kind to die out, as dinosaurs have done. From now on, count me as a friend of the rhino.

Guide: Fine! But remember—stay out of his way!

替犀牛征友!

时间……现在

地点……东非的莽原

人物……你和你的向导

向导:看那只大犀牛!它看上去象不象大自然错误的产物?它的腿太短,和他的身体很不相称。

你:是的——它的皮看上去也太大了,让我想起一张扔在它骨架上的旧毯子。那两只角使它看上去象古生物。

向导:它正是一种古生物!它是古代遗留下来的动物。今天和它亲缘关系最近的动物是马和斑马。獾也是它

的亲属。你知道獾是什么。就是那种鼻子很长，身躯很大的野兽。

你：犀牛看上去又肥又懒，迟钝笨拙。

向导：你错了！它神经过敏，脾气很坏。而且行动惊人地敏捷。凡是见到的东西，它差不多都要向它冲撞过去。它的听力和味觉很灵，但是视力微弱。一头大象或野牛离得很远就能发现人而躲开，但是犀牛只有离得很近才能看到东西。于是就出麻烦了！

你：犀牛向你冲过吗？

向导：冲过几次。一次，我发现一头犀牛陷在泥坑里。我用我的卡车把它拉了出来。它给我的报答是向卡车冲去，把卡车的侧面撞坏了。犀牛有时甚至还撞火车。当然，火车总是赢的。

你：犀牛的家庭生活一定十分可怕！

向导：它们过独身生活。如果你曾见过两头呆在一起的，那么其中一头必定是牛犊。小犀牛吃母犀牛的奶，一直吃到两岁左右。到五岁左右就完全长成了。这时它就离开母亲去独立生活了。

如果两头雄犀牛相遇，它们会相斗到一方或双方都死去。但是——有一点很有趣——这种脾气火爆的动物很容易驯养。它一旦被关进围栏里，它甚至学会从看守人手里吃东西。

你：你见过供观赏的犀牛吗？

向导：见过。我在一个动物园里看到过一头犀牛。它会倒在地上打滚，让人搔它的肚皮。唯一的危险就是它的个头太大。它个儿这么大，要是往看守人身上一

靠——那么，看守先生，就再见了！

你：那边那头犀牛看上去什么也不干，连吃都不吃。

向导：它会一整天都闲呆着，大部分时间在阴凉里呆着。

犀牛大多数时间躺着睡觉。但是有时它也站着睡，耷拉着脑袋。

太阳下山后不久，它又活跃起来。在水坑里——几乎总是在同一个水坑里呆上几个小时。我喜欢看犀牛在泥里玩耍，然后在树或石头上蹭身子。这好象是它唯一高兴的时候。

你该看看犀牛吃东西！它就象一台推土机似的在灌木丛中横冲直闯。它的大嘴唇把树叶和苞芽扯下来，然后象真空吸尘器一样把它们吸进嘴里。它连刺都吃下去。

你：我看其它动物都不敢惹犀牛。

向导：是的。人是它唯一的敌人，然而光是人就够它呛了！

55年前，在非洲黑犀随处可见，而今天只剩下15000头左右了。

你：为什么要猎取犀牛，是它的肉好吃？还是为了取它的皮？

向导：猎取它主要是为了一样东西——它的角。在亚洲许多人认为犀牛角磨成的粉有魔力。一只犀牛角在亚洲可卖到几千美元。所以杀犀牛取它的角是一桩大买卖。

你：有没有法律禁止捕杀犀牛？

向导：有。但是即使在大的动物保护区里，犀牛也得不到安全。有人悄悄地用毒箭毒矛猎捕。或者用金属丝

拴在一根粗大的圆木上做成的夹子捕它。犀牛一旦被夹上,就会拖着圆木走好几英里,最后累得瘫了下去。猎人们就上去把角砍上,肉就扔在那儿任它烂掉。

你 :多么残酷!

向导:是啊,它们死得很惨。饿死也是一样惨。今天人们正在把犀牛栖息的莽原变成了农场。这样犀牛即使不遭人的捕猎,也会活活饿死。

你 :多可怜啊!它在这世界上一个朋友也没有,对不对?

向导:它有一个朋友——小扁虱鸟。这种鸟骑在它的背上,从它的皮肤上啄食扁虱。有什么东西靠近它时,在它背上的鸟就以尖叫声发出警告。

你 :但是那尖叫声不就帮助猎人去发现犀牛看牛了吗?

向导:很遗憾,正是那样。犀牛并不是很讨人喜欢的,但是我不希望犀牛遭人宰杀。

你 :如果把犀牛养在防卫严密的公园里,那么政府就能挽救许多犀牛。

向导:那大概是这种奇怪的生物得以存活下去的唯一的希望了。

你 :如果这种生物象恐龙那样绝灭,就可惜了。从现在起,把我算作犀牛的一个朋友吧。

:太好了!但是记住——躲着它一点!

Whirlybirds at work

We were over the Gulf of Mexico. From the helicopter,

we spotted a tower. Its steel body rose right out of the waves.

Joe Bolen, our pilot, slowed down to a crawl. He put us over the tower. Then, like a sea bird, we dropped onto the little landing field.

The tower is an oil rig, one of many in the Gulf. The rigs are for pumping oil from the land below the water.

men work, eat and sleep on the rigs. They spend ten days on the job, then return home for a rest. Helicopters carry them back and forth. The trip would cost less by boat. Yet the helicopters save money by making in one hour a trip that takes 11 hours by boat.

Whirlybirds are more than just busee. They also give speedy rescue service.

Once a hurricane damaged an oil rig so badly that it was expected to go down. But Joe Bolen braved the dangerous high winds to fly there.

He found the rig leaning over so far that he could not land. But he held his copter against the deck of the rig while the men climbed on. Without his daring rescue, they would have been lost. No boat or plane could have saved them in that storm.

Whirlybirds can go where nothing else can. They make it possible to drill for oil even in thick jungles.

A few years ago, oil men found a good place to drill in a south American jungle. No roads led there. But whirlybirds

flew in some men to cut down trees. Then bulldozers were flown in, piece by piece. Each piece dangled from a helicopter.

On the ground, the pieces were put together. The bulldozers cleared land for a big camp. Helicopters flew in everything needed at the work camp. Soon, drilling for oil was under way!

Electric companies must often run power lines for miles across mountain country. Helicopters help to get the lines up fast. A whirlybird carries each tall tower to the base that has been built for it. The tower is lowered carefully. Then it is quickly bolted into the base. Not long ago, 46 towers were put up in two and a half days!

After the towers are up, a copter flies over them, reeling out wire. Workmen thread the wire into slots in the tower arms.

Whirlybirds are also used to put steeples on churches. In the East, they carry ski-lift towers up mountains.

In the Northwest, helicopters work for lumber companies. Copters do jobs such as seeding new trees and putting out small forest fires. To put out fires, the pilot uses a large bucket of water at the end of a cable. Without landing, the pilot can fill the bucket at any nearby stream.

On large ranches, copters have sirens for scaring out cattle lost in the brush. "A copter can do the work of 16 cowboys," one rancher says. "And it will never ask for a day off!"