# 高等学校英语专业高年级阅读教材

主编 高广文

# Perspectives

# I

西安交通大学出版社

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# 内 容 提 要

本教材是根据教育部高等学校外语专业教学指导委员会英语组制订的《英语教学大纲》(2000 年 4 月修订)编写的英语专业阅读教材。全书共两册,20 章,按题材分为:论阅读、大自然、人、人与社会、哲学、文化、艺术、心理学、科学与技术、经济与经济学、历史、教育、语言、男人与女人、政治、环境保护、媒体、人物传记、宗教、论死亡。每章含 4－5 篇文章,既有论说文,又有短篇小说、戏剧和诗歌。本教材适合青年教师、研究生、英语专业高年级学生使用将给使用者英语质量的提高、视野的开拓、思辩能力的增强以及综合素质的培养提供较大帮助。

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# 前　言

阅读在语言学习中有着不可替代的作用，在外语学习中尤其如此。阅读既是掌握、扩大词汇的有效途径，也是巩固已有语言知识、丰富表达技巧、提高表达质量的有效途径。这一点是不容置疑的。在交际中，听和说是重要的，但如果没有阅读，就不可能提高口头表达的质量，就不可能有向写和译转化的质的飞跃。阅读又是吸收、借鉴前人积累的知识的有效途径，不管知识传播的手段如何发展变化，要把他人的知识变成自己思想的一部分，没有阅读，真正意义上的转化就失去了基础。在我国，听、说、读、写、译是指导外语教学实践、衡量外语教学质量的行之有效的准则。阅读之所以处于中心位置，其意义也在于此，这也是我们编写这套教材的初衷。

《观点》(*Perspectives*)是为我国高等院校英语专业高年级学生编写的阅读教材，供两学期使用。根据中华人民共和国教育部外语教学指导委员会英语组制订并颁发的我国高等院校英语专业高年级教学大纲的要求，我们在选取阅读材料时，作了如下考虑：

(一) 阅读量要大。我们认为，英语专业高年级阅读课首先要解决量的问题，没有量的增大，就不能保证质的提高。三五百字的短文，对训练学生的阅读技巧是有帮助的，但这一任务应在打基础的低年级教学中完成，高年级教学的重点应在提高；阅读短文的另一个作用是应试，应试教育只适用于短期培训，我们不主张在正规高等教育中推行不利于学生素质提高的应试教育。本教材所选文章平均在 2 000 到 3 000 英文单词左右，每章 4－5 篇文章，表达的内容和表达方式都有一定的难度，既有助于提高高年级学生的阅读质量和水准，又方便使用者酌情进行取舍。

(二) 阅读内容要广。随着我国改革开放不断深入发展，人才市场对高校毕业生要求更高、更全面，而我国高等外语院校课程设置较单一，毕业生知识结构不甚合理。为给学生提供内容尽可能广泛的阅读材料，我们在章节安排上包括：论阅读、大自然、人、环境保护、人与社会、经济与经济学、哲学、历史、科学与技术、教育、政治、语言、男人与女人、文化、艺术、媒体、心理学、人物传记、宗教、论死亡，共 20 章，分一、二册。在可能的情况下，我们也收编了部分在同一问题上观点针锋相对的文章。我们期望本教材能在开拓学生视野、启发学生思维、提高学生的思辨能力和创造力方面起一定的作用。

(三) 选文体裁要多样。除题材的广泛性外，我们在选取各章阅读材料时，也力争体现体裁的多样性。选文以论说文为主，也适当包括了一些诗歌、小说、戏剧作品。体裁的多样性既体现语言的多重功能，帮助学生加深对语言本身的理解，提高学生运用语言的能力，又可以使读者少一点单调感，提高阅读兴趣和效果。

本教材的全体编写人员都付出了很大努力。在 88 篇文章中，高广文同志编写了 27 篇，胡小花同志编写了 18 篇，贾丽萍同志编写了 12 篇，常晓梅同志编写了 10 篇，蔚兰同志编写了 8 篇，冯晓媛同志编写了 7 篇，刘育红同志编写了 6 篇。

本教材的编写得到了西安外国语学院有关部门和英语系的大力支持，得到学院英语专业学者、专家的指导和帮助，更得到西安交通大学出版社的鼎力支持，我们在此一并表示谢忱。没有他们的支持，就不会有这套教材。由于资料限制，选文不一定都合适，其余文字中若有谬

误，当属编写者水平有限，望专家学者及读者不吝指教，以利于我们修正。

编　者

2000 年 5 月于西安

# Contents

# Unit One On Reading

## Of Studies

Francis Bacon

*Writing was to Francis Bacon* (1561-1626) *an entrancing diversion from a busy public life and his writings reveal a superb intellect and exhilarating practicality. In Bacon's hand the essay is an impersonal gem of worldly wisdom. The style is a tour de force. Every sentence is loaded with material, and virtually every sentence could be expanded into a sizable essay of its own. The aphoristic skill and wise experience of Bacon unite to form some of the most memorable and penetrating phrases in English. The present piece is one of the best known essays in his* Essays. *Other writings of Bacon's include* Instauratio Magna (*"The Great Renewing"*), *and* The New Atlantis.

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgement and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgement wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience; for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need proyning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others are to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else, distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtile; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. Abe-

unt studia in mores. Nay there is no stond or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies: like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen; for they are cymini sectores. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

## Notes

**proyning** (arch.) pruning
**curiously** (arch.) carefully; attentively
**maketh** (arch.) makes
**doth** (arch.) does
**subtile** (arch.) subtle
***Abeunt studia in mores*** (L) "Studies have an influence upon the matters of those that are conversant in them." (Bacon's note)
**stond** (arch.) hindrance; stoppage
**wrought** (arch.) worked
**never** ever
**the schoolmen** philosophers of the Medieval Ages
***cymini sectores*** (L) hair-splitters
**receipt** recipe

## Questions for Discussion

1. Bacon gives the reader advice on several things related to reading. Work out an outline to summarize the major points Bacon makes in the essay.
2. This essay contains many memorable statements. What statement impresses you most? And how?
3. The statement "Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted" is regarded as a motto by many readers. Is these readers' preference justifiable? Explain.
4. Is this essay personal or impersonal in style? What could be the possible effect of that style?

## Vocabulary & Expression

I. Most of the English words have more than one meaning and the appropriateness is determined by the context in which it is used. Find in your dictionary the meaning of each of the following words that Bacon may have in mind.

retiring　discourse　disposition　execute　humour　crafty　confer

Ⅱ. Rewrite each of the following statements in your own words.

1. Studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience.
2. They teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation.
3. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted.
4. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.

**Further Study**

The essayist Francis Bacon is also known as the "Father of Modern Science." Do a library research on Bacon's major writings and present your findings to the class, to justify the title.

## How Should One Read a Book?

Virginia Woolf

*Virginia Woolf* (1882-1941) *was born in London and grew up in the fashionable bohemian section of the city. She published profusely in fiction as well as in essays. By the example of her first novels and in essays Woolf made a case against the heavy objective realism and showed a preference for lyric adaptations of the stream-of-consciousness, best exemplified by* To the Lighthouse (1927) *and* The Waves (1931). *Her essays collected in the two volumes of* The Common Reader (1025-1032) *did much to shape modern taste with their easy, keen suggestiveness.*

In the first place, I want to emphasize the note of interrogation at the end of my title. Even if I could answer the question for myself, the answer would only apply to me and not to you. The only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions. If this is agreed between us, then I feel at liberty to put forward a few ideas and suggestions because you will not allow them to fetter that independence which is the most important quality that a reader can possess. After all, what law can be laid down about books? The Battle of Waterloo was certainly fought on a certain day; but is *Hamlet* a better play than *Lear*? Nobody can say. Each must decide that question for himself. To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place on what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of those sanctuaries. Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions—there we have none.

But to enjoy freedom, if the platitude is pardonable, we have of course to control ourselves. We must not squander our powers, helplessly or ignorantly, squirting half the house in order to water a single rose-bush; we must train them, exactly and powerfully, here on the very spot.

This it may be, is one of the first difficulties that faces us in a library. What is "the very spot"? There may well seem to be nothing but a conglomeration and huddle of confusion. Poems and novels, histories and memoirs, dictionaries and blue-books; books written in all languages by men and women of all tempers, races and ages jostle each other on the shelf. And outside the donkey brays, the women gossip at the pump, the colts gallop across the fields. Where are we to begin? How are we to bring order into this multitudinous chaos and so get the deepest and widest pleasure from what we read?

It is simple enough to say that since books have classes-fiction, biography, poetry—we should separate them and take from each what it is right that each should give us. Yet few people ask from books what books can give us. Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false, of biography that it shall be flattering, of history that it shall enforce our own prejudices. If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning. Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice. If you hang back, and reserve and criticize at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read. But if you open your mind as widely as possible, then signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness, from the twist and turn of the first sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other. Steep yourself in this, acquaint yourself with this, and soon you will find that your author is giving you, or attempting to give you, something far more definite. The thirty-two chapters of a novel—if we consider how to read a novel first-are an attempt to make something as formed and controlled as a building: but words are more impalpable than bricks; reading is a longer and more complicated process than seeing. Perhaps the quickest way to understand the elements what a novelist is doing is not to read, but to write; to make your own experiment with the dangers and difficulties of words. Recall, then, some event that has left a distinct impression on you-how at the corner of the street, perhaps, you passed two people talking. A tree shook; an electric light danced; the tone of the talk was comic, but also tragic; a whole vision, an entire conception, seemed contained in that moment.

But when you attempt to reconstruct it in words, you will find that it breaks into a thousand conflicting impressions. Some must be subdued; others emphasized; in the process you will lose, probably, all grasp upon the emotion itself. Then turn from your blurred and littered pages to the opening pages of some great novelist—Defoe, Jane Austen, Hardy. Now you will be better able to appreciate their mastery. It is not merely that we are in the presence of a different person—Defoe, Jane Austen, or Thomas Hardy—but that we are living in a different world. Here, in *Robinson Crusoe*, we are trudging a plain high road; one thing happens after another; the fact and the order of the fact is enough. But if the open air and adventure mean everything to Defoe they mean nothing to Jane Austen. Here is the drawing-room, and people talking, and by the many mirrors of their talk revealing their characters. And if, when we have accustomed ourselves to the drawing room and its reflections, we turn to Hardy, we are once more spun round. The moors are around us and the stars are above our heads. The other side of the minds is now ex-

posed—the dark side that comes uppermost in solitude, not the light side that shows in company. Our relations are toward people, but towards Nature and destiny. Yet different as these worlds are, each is consistent with itself. The maker of each is careful to observe the laws of his own perspective, and however great a strain they may put upon us they will never confuse us, as lesser writers so frequently do, by introducing two kinds of reality into the same book. Thus to go from one great novelist to another—from Jane Austen to Hardy, from Peacock to Trollope, from Scott to Meredith—is to be wrenched and uprooted; to be thrown this way and then that. To read a novel is a difficult art. You must be capable not only of great fineness of perception, but of great boldness of imagination if you are going to make use of all that the novelist—the great artist—gives you.

But a glance at the heterogeneous company on the shelf will show you that writers are very seldom "great artists"; far more often that a book makes no claim to be a work of art at all. These biographies and autobiographies, for example, lives of great men, of men long dead and forgotten, that stand cheek by jowl with the novels and poems, are we to refuse to read them because they are not "Art"? Or shall we read them, but read them in a different way, with a different aim? Shall we read them in the first place to satisfy that curiosity which possesses us sometimes when in the evening we linger in front of a house where the lights are lit and the blinds not yet drawn, and each floor of the house shows us a different section of human life in being? Then we are consumed with curiosity about the lives of these people—the servants gossiping, the gentlemen dining, the girl dressing for a party, the old woman at the window with her knitting. Who are they, what are their names, their occupations, their thoughts, and adventures?

Biographies and memoirs answer such questions, light up innumerable such houses; they show us people going about their daily affairs, toiling, failing, succeeding, eating, hating, loving, until they die. And sometimes as we watch, the house fades and the iron railings vanish and we are out at sea; we are hunting, sailing, fighting; we are among savages and soldiers; we are taking part in great campaigns. Or if we like to stay here in England, in London, still the scene changes; the street narrows; the house becomes small, cramped, diamond-pained, and malodorous. We see a poet, Donne, driven from such a house because the walls were so thin that when the children cried their voices cut through them. We can follow him, through the paths that lie in the pages of books, to Twickenham; to Lady Bedford's Park, a famous-meeting-ground for nobles and poets; and then turn our steps to Wilton, the great house under the towns, and hear Sidney read the *Arcadia* to his sister; and ramble among the very marshes and see the very herons that figure in that famous romance; and then again travel north with that other Lady Pembroke, Anne Clifford, to her wild moors, or plunge into the city and control our merriment at the sight of Gabriel Harvey in his black velvet suit arguing about poetry with Spenser. Nothing is more fascinating than to grope and stumble in the alternate darkness and splendour of Elizabethan London. But there is no staying there. The Temples and the Swifts, the Harleys and the St. Johns beckon us on; hour upon hour can be spent disentangling their quarrels and deciphering their characters and we tire of them we can stroll on, pass a lady in black wearing diamonds, to Samuel Johnson and Goldsmith and Garrick; or cross the channel, if we like, and meet Voltaire

and Diderot, Madame du Deffand; and so back to England and Twickenham—how certain places repeat themselves and certain names! —where Lady Bedford had her Park once and Pope lived later, to Walpole's home at Strawberry Hill. But Walpole introduces us to such a swarm of new acquaintances, there are so many houses to visit and bells to ring that we may well hesitate for a moment, on the Miss Berry's doorsteps, for example, when behold, up comes Thackeray; he is the friend of the woman whom Walpole loved; so that merely by going from friend to friend, from garden to garden, from house to house, we have passed from one end of English literature to another and wake to find ourselves here again in the present, if we can so differentiate this moment from all that have gone before. This, then, is one of the ways in which we can read these lives and letters; we can make them light up the many windows of the past; we can watch the famous deed in their familiar habits and fancy sometimes that we are very close and can surprise their secrets, and sometimes we may pull out a play or a poem that they have written and see whether it reads differently in the presence of the author. But this again rouses other questions. How far, we must ask ourselves, is a book influenced by its writer's life—how far is it safe to let the man interpret the writer? How far shall we resist or give way to the sympathies and antipathies that the man himself rouses in us—so sensitive are words, so receptive of the character of the author? These are questions that press upon us when we read lives and letters, and we must answer them for ourselves, for nothing can be more fatal than to be guided by the preferences of others in a matter so personal.

But also we can read a book with another aim, not to throw light on literature, not to become familiar with famous people, but to refresh and exercise our own creative powers. Is there not an open window on the right hand of the bookcase? How delightful to stop reading and look out! How stimulating the scene is, in its unconsciousness, its irrelevance, its perpetual movement—the colts galloping round the field, the woman filling her pail at the well, the donkey throwing back his head and emitting his long, acrid moan. The greater part of any library is nothing but the record of such fleeting moments in the lives of men, women, and donkeys. Every literature, as it grows old, has its rubbish-heap, its record of vanished moments and forgotten lives told in faltering and feeble accents that have perished. But if you give yourself up to the delight of rubbish-reading you will be surprised, indeed you will be overcome, by the relics of human life that have been cast out to moulder. It may be one letter—but what a vision it gives! It may be a few sentences—but what vistas they suggest! Sometimes a whole story will come together with such beautiful humour and pathos and completeness that it seems as if a great novelist had been at work, yet it is only an old actor, Tate Wilkinson, remembering the strange story of Captain Jones; it is only a young subaltern serving under Arthur Wellesley and falling in love with a pretty girl at Lisbon; it is only Maria Allen letting fall her sewing in the empty drawing-room and sighing how she wished she had taken Dr. Durney's good advice and had never eloped with her Rishy. None of this has any value; it is negligible in the extreme; yet how absorbing it is now and again to go through the rubbish-heaps and find rings and scissors and broken noses buried in the huge past and try to piece them together while the colt gallops round the field, the woman fills

her pail at the well, and the donkey brays.

But we tire of rubbish-reading in the long run. We tire of searching for what is needed to complete the half-truth which is all that the Wilkinsons, the Bunburys, and the Maria Allens are able to offer us. They had not the artist's power of mastering and eliminating; they could not tell the whole truth even about their own lives; they have disfigured the story that might have been so shapely. Facts are all they can offer us, and facts are a very inferior form of fiction. Thus the desire grows upon us to have done with half-statements and approximations; to cease from searching out the minute shades of human character, to enjoy the greater abstractness, the purer truth of fiction. Thus we create the mood, intense and generalised, unaware of detail, but stressed by some regular, recurrent beat, whose natural expression is poetry; and that is the time to read poetry when we are almost able to write it.

Western wind, when wilt thou blow?
The small rain down can rain.
Christ, if my love were in my arms,
And I in my bed again!

The impact of poetry is so hard and direct that for the moment there is no other sensation except that of the poem itself. What profound depths we visit then—how sudden and complete is our immersion? There is nothing here to catch hold of; nothing to stay us out in our flight. The illusion of fiction is gradual; its effects are prepared; but who when they read these four lines stops to ask who wrote them, or conjures up the thought of Donne's house or Sidney's secretary; or enmeshes them in the intricacy of the past and the succession of generations? The poet is always our contemporary. Our being for the moment is centered and constricted, as in any violent shock of personal emotion. Afterwards, it is true, the sensation begins to sound and to comment and we are aware of echoes and reflections. The intensity of poetry covers an immense range of emotion. We have only to compare the force and directness of

I shall fall like a tree, and find my grave,
Only remembering that I grieve,

With the wavering modulation of

Minutes are numbered by the fall of sands,
As by an hour glass; the span of time
Doth waste us to our graves, and we look on it;
An age of pleasure, revelled out, comes home
At last, and ends in sorrow; but the life,
Weary of riot, numbers every sand,
Wailing in sighs, until the last drop down,
So to conclude calamity in rest,

Or place the meditative calm of

> Whether we be young or old,
> Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be,

Beside the complete and inexhaustible loveliness of

> The moving Moon went up the sky,
> And nowhere did abide;
> Softly she was going up,
> And a star or two beside—

Or the splendid fantasy of

> And the woodland hunter
> Shall not cease to saunter
> When, far down some glade,
> Of the great world's burning,
> One soft flame upturning
> Seems, to his discerning,
> Crocus in the shade,

To bethink us of the varied art of the poet; his powers to make us at once actors and spectators; his power to run his hand into character as if it were a glove, and be Falstaff or Lear; his power to condense, to widen, to state, once and for ever.

"We have only to compare"—with those words the cat is out of the bag, and the true complexity of reading is admitted. The first process, to receive impression with the utmost understanding, is only the half the process of reading; it must be completed, if we are to get the whole pleasure from a book, by another. We must pass judgment upon these multitudinous impressions; we must make of these fleeting shapes one that is hard and lasting. But not directly. Wait for the dust of reading to settle; for the conflict and questioning to die down; walk, talk, pull the dead petals from a rose, or fall asleep. Then, suddenly without our willing it, for it is thus that Nature undertakes these transitions, the book will return, but differently. It will float to the top of the mind as a whole. And the book as a whole is different from the book received currently in separate

phrases. Details now fit themselves into their places. We see the shape from start to finish; it is a barn, a pig-sty, or a cathedral. Now then we can compare book with book as we compare building with building. But this act of comparison means that our attitude has changed; we are no longer the friends of the writer, but his judges; and just as we cannot be too sympathetic as friends, so as judges we cannot be too severe. Are they not criminals, books that have wasted our time and sympathy; are they not the most insidious enemies of society, corrupters, defilers, the writers of false books, faked books, books that fill the air with decay and disease? Let us then be severe in our judgments; let us compare each book with the greatest of its kind. There they hang in the mind the shapes of the books we have read solidified by the judgments we have passed on them—*Robinson Crusoe*, *Emma*, *The Return of the Native*. Compare the novels with these—even the latest and least of novels has a right to be judged with the best. And so with poetry—when the intoxication of rhythm has died down and the splendour of words has faded, a visionary shape will return to us and this must be compared with Lear, with Phèdre, with The Prelude, or if not with these, with whatever is the best or seems to us to be the best in its own kind. And we may be sure that the newness of new poetry and fiction is its most superficial quality and that we have only to alter slightly, not to recast, the standards by which we have judged the old.

It would be foolish, then, to pretend that the second part of reading, to judge, to compare, is as simple as the first—to open the mind wide to the fast flocking of innumerable impressions. To continue reading without the book before you, to hold one shadow-shape against another, to have read widely enough and with enough understanding to make such comparisons alive and illuminating—that is difficult; it is still more difficult to press further and to say, "Not only is the book of this sort, but it is of this value; here it fails; here it succeeds; this is bad; that is good." To carry out this part of a reader's duty needs such imagination, insight and learning that it is hard to conceive any one mind sufficiently endowed; impossible for the most self-confident to find more than the seeds of such powers in himself. Would it not be wiser, then, to remit this part of reading and to allow the critics, the gowned and furred authorities if the library, to decide the question of the book's absolute value for us? Yet how impossible! We may stress the value of sympathy; we may try to sink our own identity as we read. But we know that we cannot sympathize wholly or immerse ourselves wholly; there is always a demon in us who whispers, "I hate, I love", and we cannot silence him. Indeed, it is precisely because we hate and we love that our relation with the poets and novelists is so intimate that we find the presence of another person intolerable. And even if the results are abhorrent and our judgments are wrong, still our taste, the nerve of sensation that sends shocks through us, is our chief illuminant; we learn through feeling; we cannot suppress our own idiosyncrasy without impoverishing it. But as time goes on perhaps we can train our taste; perhaps we can make it submit to some control. When it has fed greedily and lavishly upon books of all sorts—poetry, fiction, history, biography—and has stopped reading and looked for long spaces upon the variety, the incongruity of the living world, we shall find that it is changing a little; it is not so greedy, it is more reflective. It will begin to bring us not merely judgments on particular books, but it will tell us that there is a quality common to certain

books. Listen, it will say, what shall we call this? And it will read us perhaps *Lear* and then perhaps the *Agamemnon* in order to bring out that common quality. Thus, with our taste to guide us, we shall venture beyond the particular book in search of qualities that group books together; we shall give them names and thus frame a rule that brings order into our perceptions. We shall gain a further and a rarer pleasure from that discrimination. But as a rule only lives when it is perpetually broken by contact with the books themselves—nothing is easier and more stultifying than to make rules which exist out of touch with facts, in a vacuum—now at last, in order to steady ourselves in this difficult attempt, it may be well to turn to the very rare writers who are able to enlighten us upon literature as an art. Coleridge and Dryden and Johnson, in their considered criticism, the poets and novelists themselves in their considered sayings, are often surprisingly relevant; they light up and solidify the vague ideas that have been tumbling in the misty depth of our minds. But they are only able to help us if we come to them laden with questions and suggestions won honestly in the course of our own reading. They can do nothing for us if we herd ourselves under their authority and lie down like sheep in the shade of a hedge. We can only understand their ruling when it comes in conflicts with our own and vanquishes it.

If this is so, if to read a book as it should be read calls for the rarest qualities of imagination, insight, and judgment, you may perhaps conclude that literature is a very complex art and that it is unlikely that we shall be able, even after a lifetime of reading, to make any valuable contribution to its criticism. We must remain readers; we shall not put on the further glory that belongs to those rare beings who are also critics. But still we have our responsibilities as readers and even our importance. The standards we raise and the judgments we pass steal into the air and become part of the atmosphere which writers breathe as they work. An influence is created which tells upon them even if it never finds its way into print. And that influence, if it were well instructed, vigorous and individual and sincere, might be of great value now when criticism is necessarily in abeyance; when books pass in review like the procession of animals in a shooting gallery, and the critic has only one second in which to load and aim and shoot and may well be pardoned if he mistakes rabbits for tigers, eagles for barn door fowls, or misses altogether and wastes his shot upon some peaceful cow grazing in a further field. If behind the erratic gunfire of the press the author felt that there was another kind of criticism, the opinion of people reading for the love of reading, slowly and unprofessionally, and judging with great sympathy and yet with great severity, might this not improve the quality of his work? And if by our means books were to become stronger, richer, and more varied, that would be an end worth reaching.

Yet who reads to bring about an end, however desirable? Are there not some pursuits that we practise because they are good in themselves, and some pleasures that are final? And is not this among them? I have sometimes dreamt, at least, that when the Day of Judgment dawns and the great conquerors and lawyers and statesmen come to receive their rewards—their crowns, their laurels, their names carved indelibly upon imperishable marble—the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when He sees us coming with our books under our arms, "Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading."