

杨立民 徐克容 编著

# College English

第三册 第二分册

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

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(Part II)

*Yang Limin*  
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高等学校英语专业用书

大学英语教程

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第三册 (第二分册)

杨立民 徐克容等编著

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## CONTENTS

Lesson Nine.....	251
Text: Pompeii	
by Robert Silverberg	
Word Study: way, hand, break, call	
Grammar: 1. The Past Participle as an Adverbial Modifier	
2. The Past Participle in a Complex Object	
Lesson Ten.....	283
Text: Bütton, Button	
by Richard Matheson	
Word Study: draw, cut	
Grammar: 1. The Past Participle as an Attributive Modifier	
2. The Past Participle as a Predicative	
Lesson Eleven.....	314
Text: Diogenes and Alexander	
by Gilbert Highet	
Word Study: account, show	
Grammar: 1. Inversion	
2. Ways of Giving Emphasis	
Lesson Twelve.....	345
Text: Farewell, My Unlovely	
by Caskie Stinnett	
Word Study: expect, through	
Grammar: 1. The Appositive Clause	
2. The Perfect Infinitive Used After Modal Verbs	

Lesson Thirteen.....	375
Text: The Odour of Cheese	
by Jerome K. Jerome	
Word Study: hold, carry	
Grammar: Sentences of Unreal Condition	
Lesson Fourteen.....	405
Text: A Horseman in the Sky	
by Ambrose Bierce	
Word Study: lead, cover	
Grammar: Sentences of Implied Condition	
Lesson Fifteen.....	435
Text: The Oyster and the Pearl	
by William Saroyan	
Word Study: favor, prefer, fit	
Grammar: 1. Ellipsis	
2. Negative Questions	
3. Short Responses to Show	
One Attention	
Lesson Sixteen.....	486
Text: The Listener	
by John Berry	
Word Study: bear, put	
Grammar: The Subjunctive Mood	

## **Lesson Nine**

### **TEXT**

#### **Pompeii**

**by Robert Silverberg**

Not very far from Naples, a strange city sleeps under the hot Italian sun. It is the city of Pompeii, and there is no other city quite like it in all the world. Nothing lives in Pompeii except crickets and beetles and lizards, yet every year thousands of people travel from distant countries to visit it.

Pompeii is a dead city. No one has lived there for nearly two thousand years — not since the summer of the year A. D. 79, to be exact.

Until that year Pompeii was a prosperous city of 25000 people. Nearby was the Bay of Naples, an arm of the blue Mediterranean. Rich men came down from wealthy Rome to build seaside villas. Farmlands surrounded Pompeii. Rising behind the city was the 4000-foot Mount Vesuvius, a grass-covered slope where the shepherds of Pompeii took their goats to graze. Pompeii was a busy city and a happy one.

It died suddenly, in a terrible rain of fire and ash. The tragedy struck on the 24th of August, A. D. 79. Mount Vesuvius, which had slept quietly for centuries, erupted with savage violence. Tons of hot ash fell on Pompeii, hiding it from sight. For three days the sun did not break through the clouds of volcanic ash that filled the sky. And when the eruption ended, Pompeii was buried deep. A city had perished.

Centuries passed.... Pompeii was forgotten. Then, seventeen hundred years later, it was discovered again. Beneath the protecting shroud of ash, the city lay intact. Everything was as it had been the day Vesuvius erupted. There were still loaves of bread in the ovens of the bakeries. In the wine shops, the wine jars were in place, and on one counter could be seen a stain where a customer had thrown down his glass and fled.

To go to Pompeii today is to take a trip backward in time. The old city comes to life all around you. You can almost hear the clatter of horses' hoofs on the narrow streets, the cries of children and the laughter of the shopkeepers. The sky is cloudlessly blue, with the summer sun high in the sky. The grassy slopes of great Vesuvius rise to the heavens behind the city, and sunlight shimmers on the waters of the bay a thousand yards from the city walls. Ships from every nation are in port and strange languages can be heard in the streets.

Such was Pompeii on its last day. And so it is today, now that the volcanic ash has been cleared away. A good imagination is all you need to restore it to activity.

At dawn on August 24, in the year A. D. 79, Pompeii's 25000 people awakened to another hot day in that hot summer. There was going to be a contest in the arena that night and the whole town was looking forward to the bloody fights of the gladiators. The children headed toward school, carrying slates and followed by their dogs. In the forum the town's important men had gathered after breakfast to read the political signs that had been posted during the night. Elsewhere in the forum the wool merchants talked business. The banker was going over his account books. At the inn late-rising travellers from the East awakened and yawned and called for breakfast.

The quiet morning moved slowly along. There was nothing

very unusual about Pompeii. But tragedy was on its way. Beneath Vesuvius' vine-covered slopes a mighty force was about to break loose. At one o'clock in the afternoon the critical point was reached. The mountain blew up, raining death on thousands. Down in Pompeii, four miles from the summit, a tremendous explosion was heard.

"What was that?" people cried from one end of town to another. They stared at each other, puzzled, troubled. Were the gods fighting in heaven?

"Look!" somebody shouted. "Look at Vesuvius!"

Thousands of eyes turned upward. Thousands of arms pointed. A black cloud was rising from the shattered summit of the mountain. Higher and higher it rose. Like the trunk of a tree, it rose in the air, branching out as it climbed.

Minutes passed. The sound of the explosion died away, but it still reverberated in everyone's ears. The cloud over Vesuvius continued to rise, black as night, higher and higher. A strange rain began to fall on Pompeii — a rain of stones. The stones were light. They were pumice stones, consisting mostly of air bubbles. These poured down as though there had been a sudden cloudburst. The pumice stones did little damage.

"What is happening?" Pompeians asked one another. They rushed to the temples — the Temple of Jupiter, the Temple of Apollo, the Temple of Isis. Priests tried to calm the citizens. The sky was dark. An hour went by and darkness still shrouded everything. All was confusion. The people of Pompeii now knew that doom was at hand. Their fears were redoubled when a tremendous rain of hot ash began to fall. The wooden roofs of some of the houses began to catch fire as the heat of the ash reached them. Other buildings were collapsing under the weight of the pumice stones.

In those first few hours, only the quick-witted managed



to escape. A wealthy wool merchant called his family together and crammed jewelry and money into a sack. Lighting a torch, he led his little band out into the nightmare of the streets. Many hundreds of pompeiians fled in those first few dark hours. Stumbling in the darkness, they made their way to the city gates, then out and down to the harbor. They boarded boats and got away, living to tell the tale of their city's destruction. Others preferred to remain within the city, huddling inside the temples, or in the public baths or in the cellars of their homes. They still hoped that the nightmare would end.

It was evening now. And a new trouble was in store for Pompeii. The earth trembled and quaked! roofs went crashing in ruin, burying hundreds who had hoped to survive the eruption. In the forum the tall columns toppled. The entire city seemed to shake in the grip of a giant fist.

Three feet of pumice stones now covered the ground. Ash floated in the air. Poisonous gas came drifting from the crater, though people could still breathe. Roofs were collapsing everywhere. The cries of the injured and dying filled the air. Rushing throngs, blinded by the darkness and the smoke, rushed up one street and down the next, trampling the fallen in a crazy fruitless dash toward safety. Dozens of people plunged into dead-end streets and found themselves trapped by crashing buildings. They waited there, too frightened to run farther, expecting the end.

The poison gas thickened as the terrible night advanced. It was possible to protect oneself from the pumice stones but not from the gas, and Pompeiians died by the hundreds. Carbon monoxide gas prevents the body from absorbing oxygen. Victims of carbon monoxide poisoning get sleepier and sleepier until they lose consciousness, never to regain it. All over Pompeii, people lay down on beds of pumice stones,

overwhelmed by the gas, and death came quietly to them.

All through the endless night, Pompeiians wandered about the streets or crouched in their ruined homes or clustered in the temples to pray. By morning few remained alive. Not once had Vesuvius stopped hurling pumice stones and ash into the air, and the streets of Pompeii were filling quickly. At midday on August 25, exactly twenty-four hours after the beginning of the first eruption, a second eruption occurred. A second cloud of ash rose above Vesuvius' summit. The wind blew ash as far as Rome. But most of the new ash descended on Pompeii.

The deadly shower of stones and ash went into its second day. But it no longer mattered to Pompeii whether the eruption continued another day or another year. For by midday on August 25, Pompeii was a city of the dead.

## **Aids to Preview**

### **1. Notes**

#### **1) Pompeii**

An ancient city of Italy on the Bay of Naples. Founded in the 7th century B. C. by a tribe called the Oscans, it was later taken over by the Romans in the 1st century, and became a prosperous city until completely buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A. D. 79. The long-forgotten site of the city was rediscovered in 1748 and has been excavated since that time, revealing the habits and manners of life in Roman times and many rare and beautiful samples of Roman art. Most of these art treasures, cooking utensils, household furnishings and implements are now on display, in the Naples National Museum.

2) Naples

A city in south central Italy, on the Bay of Naples. It is a major seaport, and commercial, industrial and tourist center.

3) gladiators

Class of professional fighters, who fought each other for the amusement of the spectators in ancient Rome. The combats usually took place in amphitheaters. The defeated gladiator was usually killed by the victor unless the people expressed the wish that he be spared. Sometimes, instead of being pitted against another man, a gladiator was pitted against an animal, e. g. a lion or a tiger.

4) forum

A market and meeting place in ancient Roman towns in Italy. In modern usage, the word may mean the meeting itself—usually a discussion, or an exchange of views.

5) Jupiter

The supreme god in the religion of ancient Rome. Originally a god associated with rain and agriculture, he became the great father god concerned with all aspects of life.

6) Apollo

In the religion of the ancient Greeks, one of the most important Olympian gods, a symbol of light, of youthful manly beauty and of reason. He is also associated with prophecy, medicine, music, and poetry and the care of flocks and herds. After the 5th century B. C. he was frequently identified with the sun god. In art he was portrayed as the perfection of youth and beauty.

7) Isis

An ancient Egyptian goddess of fertility originally.  
But as time went on she became regarded as a  
beneficent mother goddess in ancient Rome.

## 2. Proper Names

Pompeii	庞培
Pompeiiian	庞培人
Robert Silverberg	
Naples	那不勒斯
Mediterranean	地中海
Mount Vesuvius	维苏威火山
Jupiter	朱庇特神 (古罗马的主神)
Isis	司生育繁殖的女神
Apollo	阿波罗神

## 3. Explain the italicised part:

- 1) The people of Pompeii now knew that *doom* was *at hand*.
- 2) ... he led his little *band* out into the *nightmare* of the streets.
- 3) And a new trouble was *in store* for Pompeii.
- 4) Dozens of people plunged into *dead-end* streets, ...
- 5) A good imagination is all you need to *restore it to activity*.
- 6) ... until they lose consciousness, never *to regain it*.

## 4. Useful phrases, collocations and idioms:

to be exact, to bury sth. deep, a loaf of bread,  
to be in place, to take a trip, to come to life,  
the clatter of horses' hoofs, to be in port, to clear  
away (ash, dirt, etc.), to restore sth. to, at  
dawn, to look forward to, to head toward some  
place, to be followed by, to talk business, to go

over account books, to break loose, to be about to do sth., to reach a critical point, to blow up, to rain death on, to branch out, to die away, (as) black as night, to consist of, to pour down, to do (much, little) damage, to go by, to catch fire, to cram sth. into a place, to call together, to light a torch, to make one's way to some place, to board a boat (plane), to tell a tale, to be in store for sb., to go crashing, to float in the air, to trample people, dead-end streets, to be trapped, to protect sb. from sth., to prevent sb. from doing sth., by the hundreds, to regain (lose) consciousness, to wander about, (to go) as far as, to descend on, to hurl sth. into the air.

**5. Note how this word is formed:**

4000-foot (Mount Vesuvius)

Other examples:

20-storey (hotel)

6-shelf (bookcase)

100-mile (road)

**6. Word study**

way *n*

- 1) the right direction to a place:

Is this the way to the Zoo?

We must ask the way.

Which way shall we go?

- 2) distance:

There is still a long way to go.

New Year's Day is still a long way off.

- 3) method:

This is not the way to do it.

4) manner:

I don't like the way she carries herself

lose the way 迷路

stand in one's way 阻某人之路

mend one's ways 改弦更张

get in (out of) one's way (别) 妨碍某人

go out of one's way to do sth. 尽力去做某事

in a way 在某种意义上

on the way 在路上

by the way 顺便说说

under way 正在进行

block the way 挡路

give way 断了, 陷下去了

keep out of the way 避开

in the way 妨碍人

in every way 在各方面

by way 通过某地, 借道某地

out of the way 地处偏僻

hand v, n

hand in 交进来

an old (new) hand 老(新)手

give sb. a hand 助某人一臂之力

at first hand 第一手

by hand 用手工(做成)

fall into sb's hands 落入某人之手

get the upper hand 占上风

wash one's hands of sth. 洗手不干某事

on the one (other) hand 一(另一)方面

hand over 交出来

need hands 缺少人手

get out of hand      失去控制  
at hand      即将来临  
change hands      易手  
give sb. a free hand      给某人自由行动权  
to have one's hands full      手头工作很多

break *vt, vi*

1) cause to come apart by force:

The boy fell out of the tree and broke his leg.  
Several records were broken at the sports meet.

2) split into pieces:

Don't drop it. It will break if you do.

3) violate:

He was criticized for breaking the school regulations  
(his word, his promise, the law) .

break down      (机器) 坏了  
break through      突破  
break out      爆发  
break up      驱散, 散开  
break away (from)      (从...) 逃脱  
break with...      与...断绝关系  
break off      中断了  
break in      中间插嘴; 夜入 (民宅) 行窃

break *n*

Let's have a break (coffee break, tea break) .  
Give me a break, will you! (Don't keep on  
scolding me or criticizing me.)

call *vt, vi*

1) shout:

I heard somebody calling.

- 2) give a name to:  
His name is Richard but we all call him Dick.
- 3) pay a short visit:  
If anyone calls, ask him to wait, will you?  
I'll be back soon.
- 4) wake:  
Please call me at 6 tomorrow morning.
- 5) summon:  
We must call a doctor.
- 6) telephone somebody:  
I called him this morning, but he could not be reached.

call for 要求

call on 拜访

call off 取消, 停止举行

call on (upon) sb. to do sth. 号召某人做某事, 请求某人做某事

call up 给...打电话

## Work on the Text

### 1. Factual questions:

- 1) Why does the author call Pompeii "a strange city"?
- 2) What was Pompeii like before it became a dead city?  
How do you account for its prosperity?
- 3) How did its sudden death come about?  
What year was that?
- 4) When was Pompeii discovered again?  
What did people find lying beneath the shroud of ash?



- 5) What does the author mean when he says "To go to Pompeii today is to take a trip backward in time"?

What does he imagine Pompeii was like on its last day?

How does he visualize the life of the Pompeians on that day?

- 6) Was there anything unusual about Pompeii before the eruption?

How does the author describe the eruption and the people's first reaction to it?

- 7) What happened minutes later?

What was the first thing to fall on Pompeii?

Did it cause much damage?

- 8) Why did the Pompeians feel that doom was at hand before any actual damage was done?

What caused the first deaths?

- 9) Did anybody survive? How?

Was it easy to find safety? Why not?

- 10) What was the second disaster that came in the evening?

Did this cause a lot of damage and death?

- 11) What finally killed off all the rest of the people?

- 12) How long did the eruption last?

Why does the author say that it no longer mattered to Pompeii whether the eruption continued another day or another year?

## 2. Questions on form:

- 1) Is this text a scientific piece or an article written just to recreate the horror of the eruption?

Is there any special moral or message in the text?