

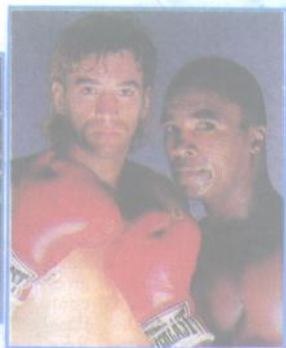
出国留学人员

李翔玲 王云安 编

●郝克琦 审校

英语考试必读

——美国文化背景



西安交通大学出版社

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内 容 简 介

本书旨在帮助出国留学人员从整体上对应试英语所涉及的美 国文化背景知识有个较为全面系统的认识,着重介绍美国地理、历史、文学、艺术、政治和经济等与英语考试密切相关的问题,同时辅之以英语应试实例。考生可在系统了解美国文化的基础上,从听力、语法和阅读方面达到全方位突破。

本书可供托福、EPT 等辅导班教学使用,也可作为大学高年级学生的参考用书。

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——美国文化背景

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Contents

I	Introduction	(1)
II	Geography	(9)
	Exercises	(13)
	Background Reading	(24)
III	History	(32)
	Exercises	(38)
	Background Reading	(51)
IV	Politics and Laws	(83)
	Exercises	(90)
	Background Reading	(109)
V	Economy and Business	(128)
	Exercises	(135)
	Background Reading	(149)
VI	Literature	(159)
	Exercises	(166)
	Background Reading	(180)
VII	Education	(230)
	Exercises	(237)
	Background Reading	(250)
VIII	Mass Media and Propaganda	(267)

Exercises	(273)
Background Reading	(282)
X Appendix	(290)

I Introduction

对于出国留学人员各种英语考试,国内英语教育工作者已有相当多的研究。他们或从题型着手,分门别类,总结分析;或从难点出发,贯输做题之窍门;或以语法结构为主线,逐一进行讲解阐述,辅之以练习。总之,这几方面均能给学生很大帮助。另外,有一点越来越引起国内外专家学者的重视,那就是英语应试中涉及到的美国文化背景知识。

近年来,我国外语教学界对教学中的文化因素日益重视,在不同层次开展了研究。从目前外语教学和研究的情况看,涉及文化的有几种不同情况:(1)在教授语言(语音、语法、词汇、篇章、文体)的同时,结合语境和文化背景、文化内涵;(2)分析学生由于文化因素干扰造成的语言错误,从而提高学生对于文化的敏感性,使他们认识到交际绝不是只掌握语言形式所能解决;(3)开设所学语言国家的历史、文学、概况等课程,系统地传授知识文化;(4)开设语用学、国情语言学、语言与文化、跨文化交际学等课程,从理论上提高学生的跨文化交际意识和能力;(5)开展语用学、国情语言学、跨文化交际学的研究工作,搜集大量例证,作系统的文化对比,使这些学科和我国的实际相结合,引出普遍意义的结论。无论文化教学或文化研究都存在一个层次问题。文化与语言密不可分,文化无所不在,因此,总的说来,文化随着语言水平的提高愈益显得重要,文化比重在教学中也应随之加大。托福考试作为一种高水平的语言测试,托福教学中的文化比重更应引起足够的重视。

密执安州立大学英语研究中心的某教授说过:“一国的学问具有与该国文化不可分割的关系。为了节省时间而只学语言,忽略了文化的知识,并不是明智的学习态度。”为此,有关学者呼吁考生不要拘泥于课本及参考资料,而应通过更为广泛的新闻媒介来提高

分数,譬如广播、电视、电影、英文报纸、杂志以及各种场合、情景的录音、录像带教材。其目的就是让学生通过文化浸透来掌握语言,达到事半功倍的效果。然而,事实上,大多数学生都要受到种种条件的限制,很难通过这些途径提高文化的知识,进而更好地掌握英语。这样,出一本美国文化背景知识方面的书就显得刻不容缓。

本书旨在帮助考生从整体上对应试英语所涉及的文化知识有个较为全面的认识,从而得以高分突破,众所周知,应试英语所含的文化背景知识不仅仅局限于美国文化,它还包括人类共同的文化,诸如人类进化、科学技术等。但是,多年的教学实践使我们认识到,构成学生障碍的往往是地地道道的美国文化。这样,本书将主要针对英语应试中涉及到的美国文化。同时,考虑到文化的无所不包,本书将针对考生的薄弱环节,着重介绍美国的地理、历史、文学、艺术、政治、经济等。在简要介绍的同时将辅之以英语考试实例,阐述文化背景知识之于英语应试的重要性,在各种英语考试精选、详解、大全充斥书市的90年代,本书独辟蹊径,从全新的角度研究,使考生在系统了解美国文化的基础上,从听力、语法、阅读方面全方位突破。

以下是我们对一套全真托福试题中的部分试题从文化背景角度进行的剖析。文化背景知识之于托福的重要性由此可见一斑。

听力:

1. At the snack bar——that's where you can get a good hamburger!

- (A) Are the hamburgers any good at the snack bar?
- (B) You can buy good hamburgers at the snack bar.
- (C) The hamburgers at that snack bar are getting better.
- (D) Where is the snack bar that sells the best hamburgers?

本句话说的是:在快餐店才能买到好的汉堡包。如果考生能将 snack bar 和 hamburger 迅速联系起来,那无疑能立刻作出正确的选择,即(B)。实际上,快餐文化首先在高速度、快节奏的美国兴起,最负盛名的当推 McDonald's,主要经营 hamburgers 和 French fries(油炸土豆片),其次是 Kentucky Fried Chicken 和 Arby's,后者

几乎成了烤牛肉 roast beef 的代名词。这就告诉我们,如果考生具备这方面的背景知识,本来听不懂或没有把握的句子立刻就变得易如反掌。

2. This school is lucky to have a teacher as good as professor Janson.

She's one in a million.

What does the man mean?

- (A) Professor Janson has won a million dollars.
- (B) Professor Janson is lucky to be teaching at that school.
- (C) Teachers like Professor Janson are rare.
- (D) There are a great many teachers of professor Janson's subject.

此题标准答案为(C)。这里, one in a million 是关键词,意思是百里挑一,很难得。由此可以看出,汉语和英语在比喻和成语的表达方面有时有着惊人的相似。如: as lean as a rake (骨瘦如柴), as dark as pitch (一片漆黑), as mute as a fish (噤若寒蝉), as close as an oyster (守口如瓶)。这些比喻虽然形象不同,但他们所表达的功能却大同小异。而且,有些成语形象、形式和含义都基本相同,如: run after a shadow (捕风捉影), spend money like water (花钱如流水), fish in troubled water (混水摸鱼)等。

语法结构和词汇:

1. _____ west of the Rocky Mountains.

- (A) Tornadoes almost occur never
- (B) Tornadoes never occur almost
- (C) Never tornadoes almost occur
- (D) Tornadoes almost never occur

本题主要是测试考生的语法结构,显而易见,正确答案是(D)。但是,考生有必要掌握一定的美国地理知识。由于来自西部或西北部的冷气流越过 Rocky Mountains,与来自太平洋的热气流在 Rocky Mountains 以西即太平洋沿海地带形成相互对峙的静止状态,因而就不会在 Rocky Mountains 以西形成龙卷风。龙卷风之

所以在中部几个州比较频繁,是因为中部地势平坦、气候干燥。因此,从 Minnesota 到 Texas 有 Tornado Valley 之称。

2. Pocahontas, a seventeenth-century Powhatan Indian, went to the Jamestown colony as her father's emissary.

- (A) ward (B) attendant
(C) messenger (D) translator

这是一道词汇题。假如考生不知道 emissary 的具体意思,那就只有猜测要选的答案了。考生只要具备一定的美国历史知识,就会轻而易举地猜出该词的意思。The Jamestown colony, 又名 the Colony of Virginia, 是 1607 年英国移民在美洲建立的第一个殖民地, 位于 Old Dominion of Virginia, 当时的北美洲是印第安人的乐园, 因而这些移民自然就成为大多数土著印第安人不共戴天的敌人。鉴于这一历史情况, emissary 最为可能的同义词就肯定是 messenger 了。

3. Before the arrival of farmers and ranchers, the rolling plains of Texas were pristine prairies.

- (A) prismatic (B) unbounded
(C) inimitable (D) unspoiled

如果考生对 pristine 一词的意思不了解,就很难做出正确的选择。然而,一定的地理知识会使本题变得简单。Texas 位于美国西南部,属于著名的 the Great Plains, 有 Cattle Kingdom 的别称。密苏里州以西的大规模开发到 1840 年才开始,在 farmers 和 ranchers 到来之前,这里自然是一片荒野。如果具备这些背景知识,考生定会选择(D)了。人类的开发给这片土地带来了文明与繁荣,但同时也破坏了自然界的生态平衡。

阅读:

During the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States both the impetus to produce landscape art and the subject of landscape altered appreciably as the pressure of events surrounding the Civil War witnessed the emergence of a new national consciousness. It was a

time when certain fundamental religious beliefs were assaulted by new scientific doctrines and when new critical writings, particularly those of John Ruskin, exercised an important influence on art. The landscape paintings from the Ganz collection provide an opportunity to examine the shifts in taste and the pluralities of style that characterized American landscape painting, especially in the latter part of the century.

In the early years of the nineteenth century American landscape was closely associated with the republican ideals of the new nation and took on significance in the popular imagination as a form of national propaganda. Landscape painting was conceived of as a vehicle for the articulation of the new republic's unique historical and moral position in world history. This position was subscribed to by Thomas Cole, the dean of the Hudson River School, and was based on a religious interpretation of wilderness motifs. While the American concern for the founding of a school of historical landscape was most assertive in the first half of the century and is attested to in such grandly ambitious paintings as Cole's famous moral allegory depicting the Course of Empire, interest in creating a national art based on American nature continued to influence the formal evolution of landscape painting.

1. With what topic is the passage primarily concerned?
 - (A) The moral position of the United States in world history.
 - (B) John Ruskin's influence on nineteenth-century art.
 - (C) A religious interpretation of wilderness motifs.
 - (D) The evolution of landscape painting in the United States.
2. What phenomenon does the author mention as occurring at the time of the Civil War?
 - (A) The revival of fundamental religious beliefs.
 - (B) An increased interest in national geography.
 - (C) A period of stagnation in the arts and sciences.
 - (D) The emergence of a new national consciousness.

3. According to the passage, why is the Ganz collection significant?
- (A) It reflects changes in American landscape painting.
 - (B) It includes many critical writings of the era.
 - (C) It appeals to the popular imagination of republicans.
 - (D) It documents the paintings of the Hudson River School.
4. According to the passage, landscape painting early in the nineteenth century was used to
- (A) finance a school of historical landscape painting.
 - (B) further the ambitions of young politicians.
 - (C) represent and reaffirm the ideals of a new nation.
 - (D) realistically depict the country's physical beauty.
5. The term "a vehicle" in line 10 can best be replaced by
- (A) a frame.
 - (B) an instrument.
 - (C) a print.
 - (D) an automobile.
6. Why does the author mention the Course of Empire?
- (A) To criticize the use of allegory in art.
 - (B) To create an awareness of United States history.
 - (C) To contrast Cole with his contemporaries.
 - (D) To give an example of a painting typical of the time.
7. The author implies that a nation's art is often used to express the
- (A) ideology behind the country's educational system.
 - (B) artists' changes in mood and temperament.
 - (C) prevailing thoughts and ideals of its people.
 - (D) tensions between different political parties.

这篇文章实际上是将 19 世纪早期的美国风景画艺术与 19 世纪后期的美国风景画艺术进行对比,只有对内战前后美国人的国民意识,即 national consciousness 有所了解,才有可能彻底抓住本文的中心思想。首先,第二段中的: "...the republican ideals of the nation and took on significance in the popular imaginations as a form of national propaganda. ...the articulation of the new republic's unique

historical and moral position in world history ... ”当时美利坚合众国在世界的历史地位和道德地位究竟有什么独特之处？最早来到北美的移民许多是 Puritans (新教徒)、Calvinists (加尔文教徒) 和 Quakers (教友派教徒)。他们来到北美大都是为了逃避本国的宗教及政治迫害, 在这个陌生的地方建立一个自由、理想的国家、即所谓“a City of God”。正如北美第一个殖民地 the Colony of Virginia 的创建者 John Smith 所言: “Heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a place for man’s habitation” (上帝从未给人类创造过比这更为美好的栖息之地)。在这里进行的是一场人与自然的殊死搏斗。Labor 和 pioneering 战胜一切困难, 而 democracy 正是实现上帝赋予每个美国人的权利, 即《独立宣言》中所提到的 life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness。因此, 内战以前的绘画艺术大都是理想化了的、罗曼蒂克式的模式, 歌颂人定胜天, 机会均等。然而, 内战将美国人从梦幻中惊醒。正如一位作家所言: “内战在这个国家的历史上划开一道切口, 使在过去 20 甚至 30 年前就已开始出现的变化顷刻间戏剧化。”从此美国进入领土扩张和社会改革的时代, 工农业开始实行机械化, 传统的宗教观念受到了科学的挑战。与此同时, 社会问题也日益尖锐, 艺术表现也相应变得现实、多样化起来。这样, 第一段中“... a new national consciousness... religious beliefs were assaulted by new scientific doctrines... 就会容易理解, 进而本文的中心思想也就一目了然, 标准答案 1(D); 2(D); 3(A); 4(C); (5)(B); (6)(D); 7(C) 就不难选出。

通过以上的试题分析, 可以看出文化背景知识在托福试题中的重要性, 同时也说明: 在语言学习中, 纯语言是很重要的, 但还应包括文化的学习, 二者不可偏废。忽视了这一点, 语言学习就不是一个完整的过程。诚然, 这并不是说只要具备背景知识, 就可以所向无敌, 背景知识必须要与语言知识相辅相成, 才能大幅度提高托福成绩, 这点已被我们多年来的实践所证明, 550 分往往是一个分水岭, 相当多的考生认为自己在这个高度上很难有个飞跃。我们认为, 具备 550 分托福成绩的考生已经掌握了基本语言知识, 如果在

此基础上加强文化背景知识的熏陶,再辅之以系统的全真托福训练,必定能在短期内有个飞跃。当然,550分以下的考生就更应该注意学习文化背景知识,语言知识与背景知识双管齐下,才能有希望早日实现托福高分突破。

语言是文化的载体,又是文化的一个组成部分。在外语学习中,不重视文化知识(包括交际文化和知识文化)显然会落后于客观的需要。必须注重提高自己的文化敏感性,但这并不意味着我们需要移植别国的文化。了解和熟悉所学语言国家的文化,目的在于更顺畅地进行交际,而对于托福考生则是为了高分突破,达到留学的目的,而非其他。当然,在学习的过程中,我们要去其糟粕,取其精华,本着批判吸收的态度。

II Geography

Listening:

The national weather map shows a high pressure area all along the eastern coastline which brought them very pleasant, sunny weather from New York to Florida. But showers and thunderstorms are occurring from the Ohio River all the way south to the Gulf coast, depositing heavy amounts of rain over the southern states.

By far the worst of the storms has occurred in and around Texas. Some Texas stations have reported up to fifteen inches of rain in a twenty-four-hour period with high winds and thunderstorms. Two tornadoes were reported along the Gulf coast of Texas, but we have no confirmation of damages or injury.

Heavy amounts of snow were reported in the Rocky Mountain region with record cold temperatures in Denver and Boulder. As much as a foot of snow has fallen in some of the mountain stations.

In contrast, temperatures in Arizona and the desert Southwest went over the one-hundred-degree mark again today under bright, sunny skies.

1. How could you best describe the weather for the southern states?

- (A) Sunny (B) Pleasant
(C) Rainy (D) Snowy

我们知道, Ohio River 位于 the Appalachian Mountains 以西, 从 Ohio River 往南一直到 Gulf of Mexico, 途经几个州普降大雨。因此, 正确答案是(C)。如果考生对 Ohio River 和 Gulf of Mexico 的地理位置有一个直观的概念, 并知道墨西哥湾暖流对这一地区的春季降雨量有着直接的影响, 这个问题就会变得容易。

2. How much rain was reported in Texas?

- (A) Two inches (B) Fifteen inches
(C) Twenty-four inches (D) One foot

3. Where were tornadoes reported?

- (A) Near Denver (B) In Florida
(C) In the desert Southwest (D) Along the Gulf Coast

这两道题密切相关,因为 storm 经常与 tornado 相随,而 tornado 在美国中部 the Great Plains 最为频繁,故北起 Minnesota 南到 Texas 有 Tornado Valley 之称。这些地理知识会帮助考生选择出正确答案(B)和(C)。

4. In which state were temperatures over one hundred degrees?

- (A) Florida (B) Texas
(C) Arizona (D) Boulder

正确答案是(C)。从地理位置来看也只能选择 Arizona。Arizona 南部属西南沙漠,其气候特征为高温、干旱少雨。

5. What was the weather like in the Rocky Mountains?

- (A) Hot (B) Warm
(C) Cool (D) Cold

正确答案是(D)。

这段短文囊括了美国几个最具代表性的气温带。如果考生具备这方面的背景知识,那么,做题的准确性也将大幅度提高。美国本土大部分位于暖温带和亚热带,气温适宜,降水丰富。由于本土幅员辽阔、地形多样,故气候复杂多变。东北部沿海和五大湖区属大陆性温带阔叶林气候。因受寒流和北方冷气流的影响,冬季较长且寒冷多雨雪;夏季较为炎热。东南部和墨西哥湾沿岸地带属亚热带森林气候。温暖湿润。中部平原地区春夏气温高,温差大,冬季寒冷多雨雪,寒潮和飓风常造成灾难性天气。太平洋沿岸地区的北段全年湿润多雨,属温带海洋性气候。西部内陆高原冬季干燥寒冷,夏季干燥炎热。

Structure and Vocabulary:

1. Because the Appalachian Mountains were difficult to cross, Kentucky was not settled _____ the eastern coastal area was.

- (A) otherwise (B) until after
(C) instead (D) in spite of

从美国的历史来看,最先开发的是东部沿海地区,独立战争时的十三个殖民地均位于东部,它们是 Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Virginia. Kentucky 位于 the Appalachian Mountains 以西,一直到 1775 年才得以开发,1792 年加入联邦。故正确答案应为(B)。

2. In economic terms, California is more aptly compared with nations than with states.

- (A) tactfully (B) fittingly
(C) profitably (D) persistently

California 在面积上仅次于 Alaska 和 Texas,是美国第三大州,也是美国人口最多的一个州。由于得天独厚的自然条件,California 工农业生产得以全面发展,完全可以自足,在美国经济中有着举足轻重的地位。因此,此题的正确答案就不难选出(B)了。

3. The landscape can change abruptly after a rainstorm in the Desert Southwest.

- (A) quickly (B) sharply
(C) favourably (D) slightly

Desert southwest 是美国有名的沙漠区,沙漠里的气候和景致瞬息万变。abruptly 既有 quickly 的意思,也有 sharply 的含义。这里正确答案应为(A)。

Desert Southwest 有著名的“Painted Desert”和“Death Valley”。前者是世界罕见的自然景观,在 Arizona 州东北部,总面积约 19 400 平方公里,海拔多在 1 500 米以上。气候干燥,化学作用极其微弱,故岩石的原始色泽保持完好。在阳光照射下,岩石呈粉红、黄、蓝、白、紫、紫红等多种颜色,且随着时间变化,景色变化迷离。

本题中所提的 landscape 很可能指的就是“Painted Desert”。“Death Valley”(死亡峡谷)是一条沙漠地沟,位于加州内华达山脉东麓,长约 225 公里,低于海平面的面积达 1 408 平方公里,最低处为-85 米,是西半球陆地的最低点。这里降雨极少,夏季炎热,平均气温达 52°C。

Reading:

If Jacques Cartier, the first of the early explorers to challenge North America's mighty St. Lawrence River, had been available for comment while the St. Lawrence project was under way, he would have been caught up in the wonder of one of man's greatest engineering feats of this or any other century. He would have witnessed the drama of man against the river; thousands of men and great machines carving out a 27-foot-deep channel that would open an ocean waterway from the Atlantic to the extremities of the Great Lakes.

Overwhelming is the word to describe what has happened on the St. Lawrence. But it could be that the amazement of the earlier-day visitor would have been exceeded by the gratification of seeing two neighboring nations, whose very existence gives the explorer a claim to immortality, combining their skills and resources to tame the torrents of a mighty river and harness its energy for the ultimate benefit of all mankind.

1. Which of the following titles best sums up the passage?

- (A) Jacques Cartier and the St. Lawrence River
- (B) The Mighty St. Lawrence River
- (C) Harnessing the St. Lawrence River
- (D) The St. Lawrence River Tamed

2. According to the passage, Jacques Cartier

- (A) was amazed at the St. Lawrence River project.
- (B) witnessed the drama of man against the river.
- (C) was involved in the construction of the channel.