

大学英语阶梯阅读系列教程

Band 1

郭浩儒 苏 衡 主编

An Introduction to
British and American culture

英美文化概况

附注释、练习、答案



李英梅 选编

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内 容 简 介

本书介绍了英国、美国文化中具有代表意义的一些方面,如发展历史、语言、民族、政治、宗教等,使读者对这两个国家文化有一个整体的认识 and 了解。对于阅读过程中可能遇到的难点也一一给出注解。

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前 言

在进入新世纪的时候,大学生们无不在通过各种途径提高英语水平,以使自己拥有一个得心应手的交际工具,在激烈的人才竞争中占据有利位置。强烈的学习欲望应该令人称道,但也容易出现饥不择食、把别人成功的方法不加分析地照搬过来,或是人云亦云,受一些商业广告的诱惑,尝试那些似乎是有效的作法。这样做,其学习成效之低犹如寒流到来,学习愿望也会一下子降到零度。这的确令人十分遗憾。究其原因,恐怕是浮躁的学习心态使然。

语言知识的学习是一个认知过程,语言技能的掌握是一个在大量实践活动中一点一滴积累的过程。指导学习活动的方法只有符合了语言能力形成的规律才会发生作用。既然语言能力的形成是个相对漫长的过程,因而不能将提高英语水平寄希望于什么“捷径”或“速成”上。学好一种语言,非得下苦功不可,学好英语除了要多听、多说外,还要大量阅读。在阅读中,可以巩固课堂里学过的知识;可以扩大眼界;可以实践各种各样的阅读技巧;可以熟悉了解西方文化、社会习俗、风土人情、最新科技动态;可以了解英语各种文体的写作方法……一句话,你可以在轻松自然的状态下吸收语言,获得乐趣。何乐而不为!

在大学阶段,教师的主导作用逐渐转化为指导作用,语言环境和学习材料的重要性相对上升,学习者的能动性将发挥很大的作用。英语教学将从单纯课堂教学的模式,转化为大学英语课堂教学与学生课外自主学习相结合的双渠道模式。北京航空航天大学面向 21 世纪,在双渠道教学模式方面进行了探索和实践,要求学生每月读一本外语书,并且以不同方式进行检查。实践证明这不仅可行,而且得到学生的认同。

基于上述认识,我们组织编写了这套阶梯阅读系列教程。由学生根据个人兴趣爱好选读。由于不是指令性阅读,在很大程度上要靠阅读材料本身能够吸引学生。因此每一级读物有若干本,使学生有选择余地。在每一级读物中,有经典名著的简写本,有英美短篇小说选,有介绍最新科技的科技荟萃,有汇集西方社会热门话题的时文选读。此外,由于课外阅读的目的是巩固扩展语言知识,实践

阅读技巧,熟悉了解西方文化,因此我们每四、五千字设计了一个练习。练习分为内容理解和语言知识两部分,以主观题为主,题型多样。在适当的时候,有的书还要配上磁带,把文字阅读和有声阅读结合起来。

编 者

1999 年 6 月于北京航空航天大学

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British Culture

Unit 1 The British Isles and Great Britain

To the west and off the European continent, there are several thousands of islands on the Continental shelf. They are generally called the British Isles, of which the largest one is called Great Britain. For the convenience's sake¹, it is often shortened to Britain, but officially it is still called Great Britain. It runs nearly 1,000 kilometers from south to north and extends, at the widest part, about 500 kilometers from west to east. Its area is about 23,000 kilometers while the total area of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is only a little more than 24,000 square kilometers with a population of some 56 million.

The island of Great Britain itself is divided into three parts: England in the south, Scotland in the north, and Wales in the southwest. England is the largest and most developed of all the three. Scotland is the second largest, and Wales is the smallest of the three both in area and population.

The name Great Britain was not applied to this large island until the 17th century. Its southern part adopted² the name England in the 5th century when groups of invaders³ from Northern Europe, traditionally called the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, were taking possession of⁴ this area. Their language, the English language, spread far and wide and later became the official language of the nation. The "Engl-" part of the word comes from the word Angles while the "-ish" part means "belonging to". The word English means "the language that belongs to the Angels".

Britain does not share land border with any other countries except the Republic of Ireland. To the north of the islands the seaway is open between the coasts of Ireland and Norway to the

Arctic Ocean. Britain faces Holland, Germany, Denmark, and Norway across the North Sea. To the southwest across the English Channel is France, at the narrowest part the channel being only 33 kilometers in width. To the south across the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Biscay are Spain and Portugal, and America and Canada lie on the western side of the Atlantic Ocean.

The coastal line of the Great Britain runs about ten thousand kilometers, making it one of the countries with the longest coastline. In Britain no place is over one hundred and twenty kilometers from the sea.

Leaving Ireland on one side, the island of Britain can be divided into two parts: a Highland Zone in the north and west, and a Lowland Zone in the south and east. The dividing line runs approximately from the mouth of the River Exe in the southwest to near the mouth of the River Tees in the northeast.

The geographic feature of Britain determines its oceanic type of climate. But some British people claim that they have no climate but weather in England. Their argument is based on the variability⁵ of their weather and the small differences between the seasons. In spite of all this there are still seasons in Britain.

Broadly speaking, the English summer consists of June, July and August. In summer the days are long. But the temperature in summer is not so high as you might imagine, only about 20 C for most time, scarcely over 32 C. Winter includes December, January and February, January being the coldest month. Even in this coldest month, however, the average temperature is seldom below 3 C, while the freezing point is seldom reached. So the English people used to put the water pipes on the outside of their buildings. This could save money and space without risking the pipes exploding⁶. Autumn is the season of maturity and harvest. Spring is the season of

reawakening.

Another feature of the British weather is abundant rainfall, an evidence of its being oceanic type. The rainfall is distributed almost evenly through the twelve months of the year. Strictly speaking, there is neither wet season nor dry season, though autumn is the rainiest time with its rainfall amounting to 28% of the year's total.

It is common for people abroad to visualize⁷ the city of London shrouded⁸ in dense fog. The cars and people are said to inch forward on the street as if they were blind. It is true that Britain has a reputation for fog, but the fact is not as the foreigners imagine. In the large industrial city, such as London, the old fog, or the smog, as it is called today, was connected with the excessive⁹ use of imperfectly combusted¹⁰ coal and the humidity¹¹ of the atmosphere. Now coal is no longer used for cooking or heating in London, and the heat from the houses tends to disperse¹² the fog near the ground level. There are also strict regulations regarding pollution. As a result, now the visibility¹³ is not as bad as it was before.

Notes:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. for the convenience's sake 为方便起见 | 7. visualize 想像 |
| 2. adopt 采用 | 8. shroud 笼罩 |
| 3. invader 入侵者 | 9. excessive 过多的 |
| 4. take possession of 占据 | 10. combust 燃烧 |
| 5. variability 多变 | 11. humidity 湿度 |
| 6. explode 爆裂 | 12. disperse 驱散 |
| | 13. visibility 能见度 |

EXERCISES

I. Short answer questions.

1. What is the full name of Britain?

2. When did the name "Great Britain" begin to be used to refer to the British Island?
3. What did the word "English" mean in Anglo-Saxon's period?
4. What is the distance between the sea and the farthest place from sea in Britain?
5. Why did some British people have the argument that there is no climate but weather in Britain?
6. Why could the English people put the water pipes outside their buildings?

II. True or False.

1. The Island of Britain is divided into three parts; England in the north, Scotland in the south and Wales in the southwest.
2. The southern part of the island of Britain adopted the name Great Britain in the 5th century when the Northern European invaders took possession of the island.
3. Britain faces France to the southeast across the English Channel.
4. The coastline of Great Britain runs about ten thousand kilometers, which makes the country have the longest coastline in the world.
5. In England, the temperature in summer is not very high, only about 32 C for most time.
6. Strictly speaking, there is neither wet nor dry season in Britain because the abundant rainfall is distributed almost evenly through the twelve months of the year.

III. Fill in the blanks.

1. Of all the British Isles, the largest one is called _____.
2. The groups of invaders from Northern Europe, which took possession of the British Island in the 5th century,

- include _____, _____ and _____.
3. The only country with which Britain shares land border is _____.
 4. Roughly the island of Britain can be divided into two parts: a _____ in the north and west, and a _____ in the south and east.
 5. Based on the variability of the weather and the small differences between the seasons, it is claimed that there is no _____ but _____ in England.
 6. The abundant rainfall in England is mainly due to its _____ type of climate.
 7. It is a fact that London has a reputation for _____, and often people abroad visualize London a city shrouded in dense _____.
 8. The excessive use of _____ and the _____ are the two factors which led to the large cities in Britain to be shrouded in fog.

IV. Fill in the blanks with words and phrases given below.

excessive, For ...'s sake,

took possession of, adopt, shares, visualize

1. _____ God's _____, stop arguing and forgive him.
2. I like your methods of teaching and shall _____ it in my school.
3. Before 1945, the Japanese _____ large areas of the three provinces in the northeastern part of China.
4. India is one of the countries which _____ land border with China.
5. I can remember that I met him years ago, but I can not _____ what he looks like.
6. _____ rain fall does no good to crops.

Unit 2 The Development of English Language

The origin of language has been a tempting¹ subject to many scholars in history. After many years of meticulous² study, they finally reached the conclusion that some thousand years ago there was a neolithic³ people wandering in Asia and Europe. They all spoke the same language which the scholars called the Indo-European Language. But gradually the Indo-European-speaking people wandered apart and founded their habitats⁴ in different places. And their common language consequently⁵ began to be differentiated⁶ into various dialects which gradually developed into different national languages. But scholars can still find similarities between the modern languages used by different people in many parts of the world. Scholars have classified all these languages of the same origin as belonging to the Indo-European language family.

During their great migration, some of the Indo-European-speaking people wandered into North Europe, and became known as the "Germanic⁷ people" who were then subdivided⁸ into many tribes in later years. The language spoken by the ancient Germans was called the Germanic language or the Old English.

Beginning with the fifth century, some Germanic tribes known as the Anglo-Saxons started their invasion of the England. Their conquest of the small island country was so successful that their language, Old English, soon after became the dominant language on the island. The separation of the Anglo-Saxons from their brothers in North Europe resulted in the differences between their languages. But by their similarities it can be convincingly proven that they are of the same origin. If you take a page of present-day English and count the words of Germanic origin, you will find that they come to more than

seventy percent of the total.

Usually the development of English is divided into three main language periods: Old English, Middle English and Modern English.

Old English

No one can tell the exact time when Old English came into being in northern Europe. But the earliest written records of Old English date only from around the beginning of the 8th century. The manuscripts⁹ of Bede's *Ecclesiastical*¹⁰ *History of the English Nation* and Caedmon's *Hymn*¹¹ *on the Creation* are the earliest writings in Old English. The appearance of these writings was long after the introduction of Christianity into England.

Middle English

The Middle English period began soon after the Norman Conquest of 1066. After the coming of the Normans, London became more important as a center of activities. London Standard English gradually became the basis of the dialect used in the proximity¹² of London. And this gave birth to the official English language.

The coming of the Normans with their French language also influenced the English orthography¹³. This was because those who could write at that time were French-trained. They modeled on the French habit and introduced some French rules in writing. Their writings also caused large number of French words to enter the English language during the 14th and 15th centuries. In the latter half of the 14th century, the Normans lost their territory¹⁴ on the European Continent and they began to regard English as their home country. Consequently, more and more French-speaking people in England gave up French for English. Finally the Anglo-Saxon King and his court also used English instead of French.

Modern English

By the end of the 15th century London English had been accepted as a standard literary¹⁵ language in most parts of the country. One of the reason was that printing was introduced into England in 1476. London was the center of book-publishers in England. They published many books in London English, which were read by people all over the country. The development of production and social contacts¹⁶ required the service of an accurate language. In 1755, Samuel Johnson worked out his *Dictionary* which helped to establish a fixed spelling of the English words and define their meaning.

The quality of the English language was greatly improved by extensive borrowing which enabled it to have a large vocabulary¹⁷ for various purposes. But that is not the only reason for English to be qualified¹⁸ as an international language. The expansion of the British Empire helped to spread English into many countries and places all over the world. Now English is spoken as the native language in the United States, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Caribbean and South Africa. In some other countries, English is used as a second language; that is, a language necessary for certain officials, and for social, commercial¹⁹ and educational activities. These countries include India, Pakistan, Kenya, the Philippines, Ethiopia, and some other countries. It is also one of the working languages of the United Nations. English is the primary medium for modern science and technology. Almost all famous scholars and scientists seek to publish their research papers in English. If we take economic factors into consideration²⁰, we find that the combined²¹ GNP²² of the English-speaking countries and places takes up about half of the world's total. That's why English is still regarded as the most important international language.

Notes:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. tempting 诱人的,吸引人的 | 13. orthography 拼字法 |
| 2. meticulous 严谨的,一丝不苟的 | 14. territory 领土 |
| 3. neolithic 新石器时代的 | 15. literary 书面的 |
| 4. habitat 住处 | 16. social contacts 社会交往 |
| 5. consequently 因此,结果 | 17. vocabulary 词汇(量) |
| 6. differentiate 使…变异 | 18. qualify 具有…的资格 |
| 7. Germanic 日耳曼的 | 19. commercial 商业的 |
| 8. subdivide 再分 | 20. take...into consideration 考虑 |
| 9. manuscript 手稿,原稿 | 21. combine 结合 |
| 10. Ecclesiastical 教会的,传教士的 | 22. GNP (Gross National Product) |
| 11. Hymn 赞美诗 | 国民生产总值 |
| 12. proximity 临近地区 | |

EXERCISES

I. Short answer questions.

1. Which language family does English belong to?
2. How much does the number of English words of Germanic origin account for in the present-day English?
3. What is the time of the earliest records of Old English claimed to appear?
4. What kind of role did Samuel's *dictionary* play in the English language development history?
5. Can you name some countries where English is the native language?

II. True or False.

1. The appearance of the earliest written records of Old English — *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* and *Hymn on the Creation* — was long before the introduction of Christianity into England.
2. The English spelling was also greatly influenced by the coming of the Indo-Europeans with their French