

咖啡屋美语丛书

美国大众 文化风景线

肖恩·霍利 著
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编者的话

时光荏苒，白驹过隙，新一轮的千年纪元正向着我们昂首走来。电讯技术在飞速发展，向来天涯之遥今日已近如咫尺。国际间的交往越发频繁，文化的整合与交融日益彰显朗现，从这一角度讲，现代化的过程也就是国际化的过程。我们喝着可乐，吃着汉堡，听着摇滚乐，穿着雅皮装，言必称“Hi、Sorry、Bye-bye”，不知不觉间我们已经成了林语堂先生所说的不西不中的边缘人了。然而林语堂先生实为学贯中西，吾辈才真是在文化冲荡中不知所措，不知所从。所以我们一方面要大力弘扬民族文化，同时，更要对异域文化做到了如指掌，惟有如此才能游刃于中外文化之间而百战无殆。

美国文化对今日世界之深远影响，已广为人们所接受认可。语言是文化的载体，最能反映文化的特色与发展趋赴。因此，欲了解美国文化，最直接的方法就是学习美语；同样，学习美语，又不可不了解美国的文化。美国文化兼容并包各家文化，如瀚海之纳百川，因而形态光怪陆离，发展日新月异。曾几何时美国人还自豪地称之为“文化的熔炉”，几年前又被冠以“文化大拼盘”，后一称谓少了一分自信与霸气，多了一分迷惑与平和，原因无他，盖其发展之

快令美国人亦为之瞠目。一些旅居海外的美国人不由慨叹,对美国文化稍一疏离则只有瞠乎其后,望之兴叹的份了。美国人尚且如此,何况我们这些“老外”呢?

鉴于此,我们编写了这一套咖啡屋美语丛书,旨在通过介绍美语的流衍嬗变,为广大读者提供一个紧跟时代潮流的途径,为读者开启一个了解美国文化最新动态的窗口。是为本套丛书之主要旨趣与使命。

咖啡屋者,新识旧雨聚首闲聊之场所也。当您即将奔赴大洋彼岸留学深造时,当您蓦然发觉自己苦学了几年英语仍看不懂原版录象、VCD时,当您对美国社会、美国文化亟欲了解却苦于无法身临其境时,当您与外商谈完生意忽想幽他一默轻松气氛时,不妨先到我们的咖啡屋小憩片刻。在这里,我们奉献给您的是用九十年代最新潮、最流行的原料精制而成的咖啡,每一滴都充满着美国文化的香馨馥郁,每一杯都盈溢着当今时代的风尚潮流,苦中有甜,甜后余香,令人回味无穷。

如果我们的咖啡屋没有让您失望的话,那么,下次再来咖啡屋时,别忘了带上您的朋友,来共同分享这份快乐。我们会由衷地感到愉悦与欣慰。

编者

前 言

《美国大众文化风景线》收入二十篇有关当代美国大众文化的英语时文,题材多样,涉猎面较广,适于大学生及其他具有一定的英语水平的学习者使用。本书内容新颖,聚焦九十年代的新人新事,既有对现在的描述,也有对过去的回顾和对未来的展望。本书雅俗共赏,既可为普通的英语学习者介绍当代美国大众文化的基础知识,也可为专门从事美国大众文化研究的学者提供新的切入点。

本书由体例统一的二十个单元组成。

每一个单元包括以下六项基本内容——

①要点(Main Points):用汉语写成,起导读作用,使中国读者能够在极短的时间内了解时文的概要;

②时文(Article):用美国英语写成,内容涉及美国大众文化中的某一个或某几个方面(政治、军事、历史、文艺、体育、商业、传媒、时尚、饮食、旅游、娱乐、名人效应、社会思潮或生存状态等);

③注释(Notes):用汉语写成,侧重于文化背景知识注释(大众文化专有名词注释、名人生平注释、今日热点注释或重大社会历史事件注释等),兼顾语言注释(疑难词句内涵注释、口语表达法注释、俚语表达法注释、新造词语注释或缩写词语注释等);

④词汇(Vocabulary):采用英汉对照形式列出词汇表,使中国读者能够轻松地跨越一些英语生词障碍;

⑤细节记忆填空题(Reading for Details):采用英语单词多项选择填空形式,帮助读者回忆并牢记时文中的一些具体细节和文化常识;

⑥阅读理解思考题(Reading for Meaning):采用英语疑问句的形式,启发读者积极思考,更好地把握时文的整体结构,更加深刻地理解时文的主要内容。

面对彼岸良莠并存、千姿百态、光怪陆离的当代美国大众文化,我们中国人理应扪心自问:中国大众文化现状如何?如何优化大众文化?如何使大众文化这道风景线更亮丽——少一些假恶丑的阴影,多一些真善美的光辉?

隋 刚

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McFast Food

麦当劳快餐

Main Points

- ▣ 快餐的定义和特点
- ▣ 麦当劳快餐的发展史
- ▣ 麦当劳始终如一的经商观念
- ▣ 麦当劳的商业形象设计和广告促销手段
- ▣ 麦当劳的全球势力范围
- ▣ 麦当劳快餐的同一性和多样性
- ▣ 快餐业内部的竞争和汉堡包大战
- ▣ 麦当劳的发展速度、年销售额和“汉堡包科研”
- ▣ 麦当劳受到的各种指责
- ▣ 特大汉堡包的文化导向
- ▣ 快餐对人体健康的不良影响
- ▣ 麦当劳面临的严峻的商战局势

Fast food is defined as standardized restaurant foods that are prepared in mass, served rapidly and are uniform in taste and quality because they are typically sold by nationwide chains. Although decades ago the term was mostly *synonymous* with "convenience," today it has connotations of food that is "inexpensive," "unhealthy," "robotic," and "greasy."

Still, fast food is a \$ 103 billion a year business in the U. S. There are nearly 200,000 fast-food outlets, twice the number in 1980. According to the National Restaurant Association, 37% of Americans ate at least one meal away from home on the average day in 1986. On the average, Americans consume about 20% or one meal in five, away from home, spending a whopping 40% of their total food dollars. Young people aged 18-24 are most likely to eat out and consume over 250 meals a year away from home.

Nationally, Americans spend an average of \$ 526 per person in bars and restaurants in 1986, according to the Food Institute. According to the National Restaurant Association, 55% of Americans prefer restaurants that specialized in American cooking.

The *prototypical* and most popular fast food by far is the hamburger. The *quintessential* American light meal, it is named for the city of Hamburg in Germany, where residents pounded their beef soft in the 19th century. By 1912, "hamburger" patties were served on buns. The current *ubiquity* of hamburgers stems from the success of the White Castle restaurant chain in the 1920s, but it would be decades later before McDonald's would make the beef patty-

in-a-bun sandwich a global institution.

McDonald's was founded in California in 1940 by brothers Mac and Dick McDonald. The McDonald's phenomenon began in 1948, when the McDonald brothers decided that too much of their income went to pay *car hops*, dishwashers, and fry cooks. To cut costs, the brothers developed a standardized menu which led to unbelievably fast service, lower prices, and freedom from tipping.

In 1952, they ran an ad in American Restaurant for "McDonald's Self-Service System Drive-Ins," which featured "no car hops, no waitresses, no dishwashers, no dishes, no more silverware, . . . The McDonald system eliminates all of this!"

"Kroc" of Gold

Milkshake salesman and entrepreneur Ray Kroc (1902 - 1984) bought the small chain and began to *franchise* the restaurant nationwide in 1954. Kroc devised a uniform system of standards for food preparation including the exact temperature and amount of time a hamburger should be cooked and how much ice should be put in a soft drink cup. His shrewd business philosophy still guides the company today: provide uniform quality, in a matter of minutes, to a hurried public.

McAdvertising^①

McDonald's became a national chain in the 1960s and became well known for its marketing symbols: the company *logo*, a pair of golden arches; the com-

pany mascot, a clown called Ronald McDonald; and the posting of national sales figures at every store ("Over 100 Billion Sold"). Surveys have shown that Ronald is recognized by 96 percent of all American schoolchildren, second only to Santa Claus. McDonald's is the second most recognized brand in the world next to Campbell's Soup.

Through the years, a variety of catchy *advertising jingles* have been used to further root McDonald's into the minds of the public including their most successful one: "You Deserve a Break Today" (1970 - 74). Other jingles include: "Your kind of Place" (1966 - 70), "It's a Good Time for the Great Taste of McDonald's" (1984 - 90), "What You Want Is What You Get" (1992 - 96), and "My McDonald's" (1997)

Global Burgers

Today McDonald's is the largest restaurant chain in the world with locations now in Moscow and Beijing. The simple original menu of hamburgers, french fries and soft drink has been expanded over the years to include fish, chicken, breakfast, and even salad items. The *Filet-O-Fish* sandwich was added to the menu after a *franchisee* in Cincinnati pleaded for something to help business in his battle against the Big Boy fish sandwiches in Catholic parts of town. (Catholics were not supposed to eat meat (beef) on Fridays). The world-famous Big Mac was invented to compete against Burger King's Whopper. In recent years, in order to portray a more "healthy" image, McDonald's has introduced items like reduced-fat Mc-

Nuggets and the McLean burger in which the use of seaweed extract helps reduce the fat content from the usual 19 percent to 9 percent. Despite its product uniformity, McDonald's has been known to alter menu items in an attempt to conform to local tastes in certain markets.

Burger Wars

McDonald's success has spawned a wide array of *hamburger-and-shake* rivals. The most prominent of the fast-food franchises that followed McDonald's lead include Burger King, Wendy's, Hardees, and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). The term "burger wars" is now used to describe the competition between the national burger chains. Each chain spends millions of dollars annually in TV and radio advertising, movie tie-ins, celebrity endorsements, Olympic sponsorship,^② and numerous other causes. (McDonald's spent over \$40 million just for the TV ad time during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.)

Every day, 1.7 million children under the age of 6 eat at one of the national hamburger chains. The average American eats over 200 hamburgers a year and will eat 8,389 hamburgers in his or her lifetime. Hamburger restaurants are the leading type of fast-food chain making up nearly 1/3 of all restaurants. Pizza comes in second. Family dining is third and chicken is fourth.

HERE'S A SAMPLING OF SOME MIND-BOGGLING McFACTS ABOUT McDONALD'S:

- * There are over 12, 100 McDonald's franchises in the U.S. alone.
- * On an average day, over 134 million Americans eat out, of these, 22 million eat at McDonald's.
- * McDonald's serves 145 hamburgers per second.
- * A new McDonald's opens every 17 hours somewhere in the world.
- * McDonald's franchises gross over \$ 1.8 billion each year.
- * McDonald's even has its own Hamburger University in Illinois where ambitious employees go to get degrees in "Hamburger Science."

NOT EVERYONE IS HAPPY ABOUT "HAPPY MEALS"

Not everyone is thrilled with the proliferation of McDonald's. FORTUNE magazine once called the golden arches visual pollution. Some health-conscious purists wouldn't think of stepping foot in a place to eat a fattening burger. Others hate McDonald's because of its reputation of being a billion-dollar business that is built on the backs of low-paid teenagers, retirees, and minorities. Still others hate the hamburger magnate simply because there are so many of them. Some parents who don't want their kids to be weaned on greasy foods, don't appreciate the way McDonald's tries to lure their children with free toys tie-ins and *built-in playgrounds* in the restaurant. In some cities, there seems to be a set of golden arches every few blocks. In fact, the "Mc" from McDonald's has gained a "robotic," "mass-produced" connotation in such recent terms as McJob, (a bor-

ing, unchallenging, low-wage job in the service industry) and McPaper, (College slang for a paper written in a quick, careless manner without much research).

Why fast food is getting bigger

Despite the opposition, the fast-food business is a \$ 103 billion annual business in America, thanks in large part to bigger, nastier products that are luring repeat business. Americans have begun to feel far less *squeamish* about eating giant-sized portions of fast food than four years ago when newspapers nationwide ran photos of President Clinton scarfing down jumbo-sized meals at McDonald's between jogs, says Christopher Wolf, director of The Food Channel, an on-line Web site about food trends. Since then, he says, "America has spun out of control in portion sizes."

There's another driving force behind this feeding frenzy: Americans are enamored with the notion of living large.^③ This is especially true among teen-age boys, who eat more fast food than just about anyone. They want everything bigger, from oversized jeans to *mega-combo* meals.

"Bigness is addictive because bigness is about power," says Irma Zandi, a teen marketing consultant. Few teen-age boys can actually finish a 64-ounce Double Gulp. But, she says, "it's empowering to hold one in your hand."

Coronary on a crust^④

"The fast-food industry is feeding America's fat tooth," says Jayne Hurley, senior nutritionist at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer interest group. "It is raising our society to like fat." Eat four slices of Pizza Hut's Triple Decker pizza and you've consumed an entire day's worth of calories and salt, and 1 and 1/2 days' worth of saturated fat, Hurley says. "We're talking coronary on a crust," Hurley warns.

The biggersize fast food trend is causing bigger-sized Americans. "Americans have a big mismatch between the calories we take in and the calories we burn," says Karla Roehrig, professor of food science at Ohio State University. The average weight of an adult is eight pounds greater than it was only 10 years ago. Nearly 60 percent of Americans are overweight.

McDonald's is now trying to persuade customers to "supersize" their orders. New products, in particular, help drive consumers back to quick-service eateries. And bigger meals help boost the amount consumers spend.

Fallen arches^⑤

But despite 22 million customers every day, Top management is unhappy because sales in U.S. stores have been flat in the past two years and profit margins are eroding. Some of the 2,750 franchisees are unhappy--some are downright angry--because rapid store expansion has *cannibalized* sales and the company's advertising and promotions have been ineffectual. Jerry Della Femina, a well-known ad executive and owner of two New York restaurants says this

about McDonald's advertising: "[They] need to have fewer press conferences about new products. . . . One of the worst things that's happened to McDonald's is folks aren't sure if they are going to buy the burgers or a toy watch."

The challenges of market saturation are beginning to work against the Golden arches. The chain's biggest problem is that customers are increasingly going elsewhere for their junk-food fix: to Burger King for arguably better burgers, to Wendy's for better variety, or to Einstein Bros for better coffee and *bagels* in the morning.

Owning a McDonald's franchise used to be a ticket to a fast-food fortune. But the chain has now become vulnerable and outclassed on such factors as price, taste and menu-variety. The expansion push illustrates the company's dilemma: McDonald's needs more stores to dominate trading areas, increasing the chances that a hungry consumer will head for the golden arches. But the more stores that go up, the harsher the economics becomes. McDonald's new boss Jack Greenberg says the company has scaled back on its expansion plans. From a managing standpoint, McDonald's is making a difficult transition. From all views, the company that is used to crushing its competition looks like it's in for a long war.

McDonald's still has some advantages in the burger wars, not least of which is the fact that they are still one of the most powerful brands in the world. Fast food customers are certainly not going to go away, but they just might go somewhere else for lunch.