

高等学校文科英语泛读教材

THOMAS ALVA EDISON



托马斯·阿尔瓦·
爱迪生

外语教学与研究出版社

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内 容 简 介

本书以传记形式，概述了美国著名科学家和发明家爱迪生为人类社会造福而勤奋自学、顽强劳动的一生。

爱迪生只上过三个月的学，但他在科学发明事业中刻苦钻研，以坚韧不拔的毅力克服了种种困难，经过千万次失败之后，终于完成了电灯、留声机、电影和蓄电池等两千多项科学发明。他对科学技术的发展作出了极大的贡献，成了世界上最受尊敬和爱戴的人物之一。

本书文笔流畅，句子结构比较简单，浅明易懂。现加中文注释，作为高等学校文科英语初级泛读教材，也可以供其他掌握了一千个左右英语词汇的初学者阅读之用。

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1 YOUNGEST CHILD

Thomas Alva Edison¹ was born in the early morning hours of the 11th of February, in 1847, in the busy little town of Milan,² Ohio,³ in the Middle West of the United States. His father's small red house stood on a little hill near the Huron River.⁴ Lake Erie⁵ was not far away. The ground was covered deeply by snow. The darkness of winter was weakly lighted by candles and oil lamps, but the child who was born on that day was going to be the one to light the lamp that shines everywhere in the world.

Samuel⁶ Edison walked nervously outside the closed door of his wife's room. His wife, Nancy,⁷ had asked God to allow her to have this child. The three youngest of her six children had died in the long, hard winters there. Her oldest daughter, Marion,⁸ was to be married⁹ soon. Pitt Edison was almost 15 years old, and Harriet¹⁰ Ann, whom they called Tannie, was 13. A baby would make them all

1. Thomas Alva Edison ['tɒməs 'ælvə 'edɪsn]: 托马斯·阿尔瓦·爱迪生。
2. Milan [mi'læn]: 米兰。 3. Ohio [əu'haɪəu]: 俄亥俄 (美国中西部的一个州)。
4. Huron ['hjuərən] River: 休伦河。 5. Lake Erie ['iəri]: 伊利湖。
6. Samuel ['sæmjʊəl]: 塞缪尔 (男子名)。 7. Nancy ['nænsi]: 南希 (女子名, Ann 的昵称)。
8. Marion ['mærɪən]: 玛丽恩 (女子名)。
9. be 与带 to 的不定式连用可以表示计划或安排要做某事。 10. Harriet ['hæriət] Ann: 哈丽特·安 (女子名)。

very happy.

Nancy Elliott¹ Edison loved children—all children. She was a strong little woman. Her family had come to America from Scotland. She had been a teacher before she married Samuel Edison of Ontario,² Canada. She was 18 when she married him.

Nancy's life was not easy. Her tall young husband could jump, run, and fight better than anyone in his town. He was always doing those three things. It was difficult for him to remain interested in any one business, and therefore he changed from one trade to another many times. Also, he was a person who became angry very quickly and very often.

Sam³ Edison came to the United States of America to escape the government of Canada. He had joined a group trying to change that government by force in 1837. When it won the fight against Sam Edison's group, the Canadian government said he had tried to destroy his country's government, and sent soldiers to catch him.

This made Edison decide to leave Canada. He ran as fast as he could towards the United States. Soldiers and their hunting dogs followed quickly behind him. He ran for two days without stopping to sleep, crossed the ice of

1. Elliott ['eljət]: 埃利奥特; 这里 Elliott 是中间名(上页注 10. 的 Harriet 也是中间名), 它前面的 Nancy 是教名, 它后面的 Edison 是姓。 2. Ontario [ɒn'tɜəriəu]: 安大略(加拿大省名)。 3. Sam [sæm]: 塞姆(男子名, Samuel 的昵称)。

the St. Clair River,¹ and arrived in Port Huron,² Michigan,³ U.S.A.

When Sam Edison stopped running and saw where he was, he decided to go further south. He reached Milan, Ohio, and decided it would be a good town in which to sell materials for building houses. Milan was a new town where many people were then settling. He stayed there and started a business selling wood. He built a pretty red house with a white fence and brought his wife and children there to live in it.

Years later, Sam Edison was walking nervously outside his wife's room. Finally, the woman neighbor⁴ who was helping his wife opened the door and came out.

"You have a fine boy," she said. "He has light⁵ hair and blue eyes—very much like his mother."

"I am glad he has a face like his mother's," Sam Edison said. "If he also has a character like hers when he is older, that will be better yet!"

The neighbor smiled. Nancy Edison was known as a good person. "I don't know if he will," the neighbor said; "but I think he is an unusual child. He has a very big head."

The first time Sam Edison saw his seventh and last child, he thought the child's head was too large. He was

1. St. Clair [kleə] River: 圣克莱尔河。 2. Port Huron: 休伦港。
3. Michigan ['mɪʃɪɡən]: 密执安 (或译米西根), 美国中北部的一个州。
4. woman neighbor: 女邻居 (这里 woman 当形容词用)。 5. light: 淡色的。

afraid the baby was ill.

"Do you think the child's body will grow big enough for such a large head?" Sam asked his wife.

"He is perfect!" Nancy said. She loved the boy from the moment she first saw him. All her life, she believed in everything he did and told doubting people that he was right.

They named the boy Thomas Alva Edison. He was usually called Alva when he was young, and his mother always called him Al.

Little Al began very soon to prove that he was unusual. First, he almost never cried. He laughed all the time. He seemed to try to make other people laugh, too.

As a baby, too, he often became very interested in some object. He would then appear to be trying to think of how he could get it into his hands. He moved his mouth and eyes as people do when they are thinking. He never stopped trying to do a thing that he had decided to do. As soon as he learned to walk, he would walk, without any help, towards whatever he wanted.

Little Al's appearance was very pleasant. His head was large but well-formed. But his thick, light-colored hair was a problem. It pointed up¹ from his head, and would not remain in place.² Nancy Edison had to cut his hair short, although she did not like to do that. At the

1. point up: 指向上方, 竖起来。
于原位。

2. remain in place: 停留在位置上, 安

age of three years, Alva was moving his fingers through his hair¹ when he was thinking, as a man does.

As early as anyone can remember,² Thomas Alva Edison asked many questions about everything. He seemed to want to learn to talk, only to ask questions. As soon as he learned, he began to ask them, and he asked them during his whole life. Some of his questions had no easy answers; some of them were unimportant. But he never stopped asking them. He asked so many that most of his family did not want to answer any more. But his mother always tried to help.

"Why does the wind blow?" he asked his father.

"I don't know, Al," Sam Edison said.

"Why don't you know?" Alva asked.

Alva was interested in everything. He seemed to think that all nature was full of unknown things, and that it was his job to discover them. He was helping his mother gather eggs one day, when they found a goose, sitting on its eggs. (A goose is a large bird which people cook and eat.)

"Why is the goose not eating with the other birds?" Al wanted to know.

"It is sitting on³ its eggs," said his mother.

"Why?" asked Al.

"To keep them warm," his mother said.

1. moving...hair: 用手指理他的头发。
的记忆所及。

3. sit on eggs: 抱窝。

2. As early...remember: 就人们

"Why does it want to keep them warm?"

"So they will hatch."

"What does 'hatch'¹ mean?"

"A baby goose hatches when it breaks the egg it is born in, and comes out of it."

"If an egg is kept warm, will a goose come out?"

"If it is the right time, and if the egg is a goose egg."

"Oh."

That afternoon, Al caused no trouble for his family. They did not see him anywhere. At the end of the day, Al's father tried to find the boy. Sam found Al on a neighbor's farm, sitting on some goose eggs. He was sad that no little goose had decided to come out!

Al's brothers and sisters were so much older than he was, that he usually played alone or stayed with his mother. Al tried to do everything his brother Pitt did. When Pitt made pictures, Al made pictures. When Pitt read a book, Al tried to read, too.

Most of the time Al played near the house, where his mother could see him. When she looked away, he would walk away. And because Al was so interested in so many things, he was often in danger. One time he went inside a building where wheat is stored. He fell into the wheat, coming to² rest with his head entirely covered by the wheat. He almost died, because he had no air there. But

1. hatch: 孵化. 2. come to: 得到……结果.

someone pulled Al out by his feet. Another time, he fell into some water and had to be pulled out, wet and afraid.

He often visited the grain mill¹ of Sam Winchester, who liked to experiment with new things. At this time Winchester was trying to make a device that would fly. He did this by filling a large bag with something like air, but of less weight. This made Al interested in flying. He put several chemicals² together and believed that anyone who ate the chemicals would weigh less than air. Al asked Michael³ Oates, a man who worked for Al's father, to eat it and fly. After Oates ate what Al had made, he became so ill that he needed a doctor's help. Al seemed to think it was a failure of Michael Oates—not of Al's own—that Oates did not fly.

For doing these things, Al was whipped. His father thought that only whipping Al would stop him from making trouble. His mother believed that if you don't whip a boy when he does something wrong, he won't become a good man. And she decided not to allow this to happen to Al. He was whipped, but he did not stop being interested in everything.

When he was six years old, Al was whipped harder than ever before. He had been playing in one of his father's farm buildings. Then, he decided to make a small fire. "I wanted to see what it would do," he said. The fire spread

1. grain mill: 碾坊 (或碾房). 2. chemicals: 化学制品 (常用复数).
3. Michael ['maɪkl]: 迈克尔(男子名).

quickly. Al escaped, but the building was completely burned. The fire spread almost far enough to burn the whole town. What Al had done was too bad and too dangerous for nothing to be done about it.¹ But you cannot do to a six-year-old boy what you would do to a man who did bad things.

Samuel Edison said that he would whip his son in the middle of the town to teach him not to do dangerous things. He asked the townspeople to come and watch. Children were often whipped at that time, but never in public. The townspeople came and brought their children, to teach them not to do such things. Sam Edison whipped his young son while they all watched. Alva did not become angry with his father. But, after that, he never seemed to think of pain as an important thing—his own pain, or other people's.

Al was soon in trouble again. One day he went to play with another boy in a little river. After some time, Al discovered that he was alone. He waited for the boy to come back. But when it became late and the boy did not come back, Al went home. He said nothing about what had happened but, in the middle of the night, he was

1. What Al had done...about it. 这是个主从复合句,其中 what Al had done 是主语从句; was too bad and too dangerous... 是谓语。too+形容词+for+宾语 含有否定的意思,如: too beautiful for words (美得言语不能形容); to be done about it 可以看作是 nothing 的定语。too bad...to be done about it 意为:坏到、危险到不可不加以惩罚的地步。

awakened and asked about his friend.

"I waited and waited," Al said. "He never came."

The boy had fallen into the water and died. Al did not understand that he should have told people what had happened. However, his father began to think there was something wrong with Al.¹ Samuel was afraid his son did not care what happened to other people.

When Al was seven years old, his father's business became poorer. Samuel Edison decided to go to another town. He remembered the pretty little town of Port Huron, in Michigan, where he had entered the United States.

Port Huron was built where the St. Clair River enters Lake Huron. Sam Edison found a house at the northern edge of the town at Fort Gratiot,² an old French settlement. It was a big, strong house with trees around it. From it, one could see the lake and the river. The rooms of the house were big, and there were four big fireplaces. There were apple trees and a garden and farm buildings. The Edisons took everything they owned with them, and rode on a train, and then on a wagon, to Detroit,³ Michigan. Then they went on a boat up the St. Clair River to their new home.

Before Al had time to know Port Huron well, he became ill with a sickness called scarlet fever.⁴ He was ill

1. there was something wrong with Al: 阿尔有些不正常。 2. Fort Gratiot ['græʃiət]: 格拉西奥特堡。 3. Detroit [də'troit]: 底特律(美国的汽车工业城市)。 4. scarlet fever: 猩红热。

for a long time. Therefore, his mother did not send him to school that year. He played alone and stayed with his mother, who loved him to be near. Later in Al's life, when he became deaf, people decided that this illness was a cause of his deafness.

A short time after this, Samuel Edison decided to make a tall building, more than 30 yards high, on a hill, so that people could look at the land around Port Huron. For 25 cents,¹ visitors could go to the top of the building and look through a telescope there. Al stayed at the building and took the money people paid. After some time, people stopped coming to see the view. Al and his mother often went to the top alone and sat looking at the lake and the river. There they talked as if they were of the same age.

Because his family had gone from one town to another, and because of his illness, Al did not start going to school until he was eight years old. He went to a small school, with all the classes in one room. The teachers were a churchman and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. G.B. Engle. Most of the teaching was done by giving the students things to remember. Al liked to ask "why" and get answers, not just to learn and remember anything the teacher told him. Therefore, he did not do well in this school.

After three months in the school, Al heard Engle say:

1. for 25 cents: 给二角五分钱。

"That Edison boy does not have a good mind.¹ He cannot learn."

Al was a quiet boy, but the unfairness of this made him very angry. He took his hat and coat and went home. "I will never go back to that school," he said.

When his mother learned from him what had happened, she was angrier than he was. The next morning, she went to see Mr. Engle. "I understand that you think my son does not have a good mind," Nancy Edison said.

"He does not work carefully enough on his studies," the teacher said.

"I have been a teacher," Al's mother told Engle, "and I think I can say that Al has a better mind than most boys his age do." Nancy Edison also said that the Engles' ways of teaching must be wrong.

Engle then said that a mother's love might make her unable to believe what was true about her son. Nancy Edison became angry. "I myself will teach Al," she said. "He won't come here again!"

Al went to school only three months of his life. After that time, his mother was his teacher. He studied every day, according to his mother's firm plan, not only in the winter but also in the summer, when the other boys were playing. He did not object² to this, because his mother gave him not only learning, but the love of learning. She

1. does not have a good mind: 脑子不好。

2. object to: 反对。

thought it was more important to think than simply to remember facts.

Nancy Edison's way of teaching was to read to Al the best books she could find—books by the great English writers Shakespeare and Dickens, and many important books of history. When he was eight years old, Al became interested in reading good books. By the time he was nine, he could read difficult books very quickly. He had to learn to do everything for himself. Certain things, which require remembering facts and rules, he never really learned. He learned to do number problems,¹ but he did not like to do them.

He did not think about numbers the way most people do. One day, when he had learned that a bushel²—a measurement used by farmers—of wheat weighs 80 pounds, he said to his mother, “I am a bushel of wheat.”

“Why do you say that?” she asked.

“I weigh 80 pounds,” he said.

When Al was nine years old he read a schoolbook about science, containing some experiments that could be done at home. Giving him this book was like allowing him to see a whole new world. He tried all the experiments in the book. After that time, Al spent all the money he got to buy things for experiments.

Some of Al's experiments destroyed things in the house.

1. number problems: 算术题。 2. bushel ['buʃl]: 蒲式耳(计量谷物等的容量单位,在英国一个蒲式耳等于 33.358 升,在美国一个蒲式耳等于 35.238 升)。