

读超自然现象 学英语

Paul O'Hagan 编著
罗慕谦 译



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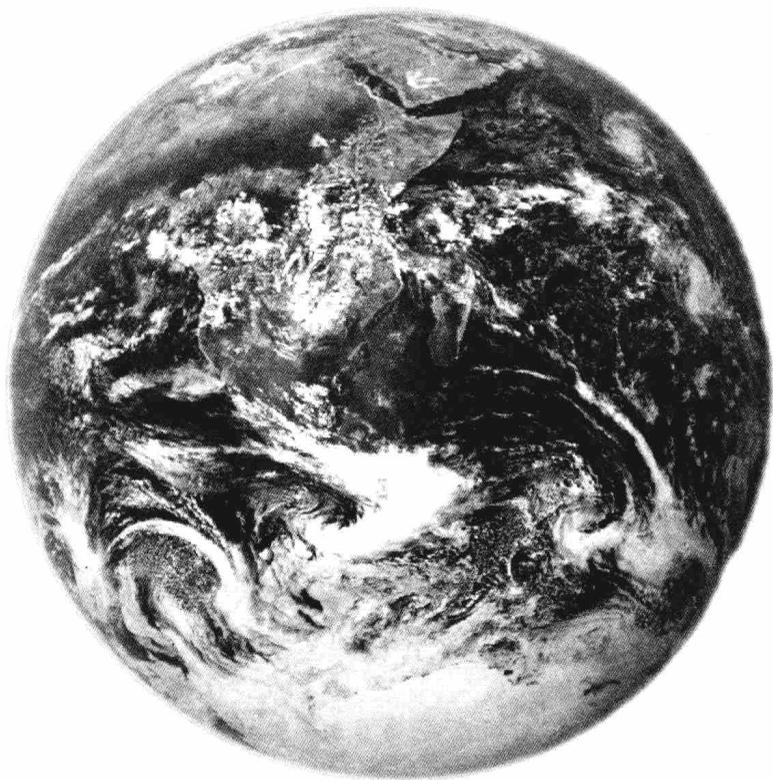
单元内容

- 人体自燃现象
- 从天而降的鱼雨
- 神秘的麦田圈
- 动物被肢解事件
- 巴巴多斯棺材大挪移
- 全身是电的“电人”
- 通古斯加大爆炸
- 埃及法老的诅咒
- 球状闪电的存在
- 神秘客弹簧腿杰克
- 外星人绑架事件
- 尼斯湖的大水怪

From Text to Talk
Strange Happenings From Around the World

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Introduction: *Our Mysterious World*

I have been interested in strange phenomena since I was a child. In that time I have read many books and watched quite a few documentaries¹ on the subject. However, like many people, I feel the idea of strange unknown events occurring does not really become real until we ourselves have an “encounter with the unknown.”

In my case, it happened in 1985 when I was teaching English in Madrid, Spain. I was on a day out to some woods just outside the city with three friends. It was an interesting place which had some history as there had been tunnels² built for military purposes during the Spanish Civil War³ of 1936 – 1939. We had seen some of the tunnels and were walking back to have some lunch when something strange happened.

I was walking beside one friend and there were two others in front of me. We were walking in the woods with no house or other building anywhere near by. Suddenly, I heard a sound as if a creaky old door was being slowly opened in an old house. The wind was blowing through the trees and the first thing I thought was that it had been an unusual sound effect caused by that. However, my two friends in front immediately turned back to speak to me. They asked me if we had heard it and when I said I thought it was due to the wind they said that no, that was not the reason. They informed me that the woods had a reputation for being a place where groups of witches (the occult⁴ was very popular at the time) used to gather to hold strange ceremonies. Other people walking through the woods had also had strange experiences. I never went back there as I left Spain a few months later but I have always remembered it.

Through the years I have heard or read about many different stories of strange happenings: UFOs⁵, ghosts, strange animals, ball lightning (now accepted by many scientists), electric people, fire walking⁶ and so on. I am now able to bring some of that information together in this book for the entertainment and education of the reader.

However, it is all too easy to bring a set of stories together in one book and amaze⁷ and shock readers without getting them to think. Here I have tried to

present, in a balanced way, stories that have been told many times in the English-speaking world. I do not want people to accept them uncritically⁸ and just to believe anything they read. Now, more than ever, it is important for people to think about what they read and hear. Advertisements, politicians, religious leaders and others want us to believe them without thinking too hard. Many of us want simple solutions to complex problems. It is too easy to believe everything we hear.

There are difficulties with the ideas of alien visitors coming to Earth, crop circles being created by aliens⁹ (or by massive teams of hoaxers¹⁰ for that matter; skepticism¹¹ works both ways) and a large animal living in a Scottish lake. Even with well-established events there are problems. How does ball lightning work? How come none of the explanations for the Tunguska event which might seem readily explainable¹² really seem to work 100%? Therefore, some of the problems in explaining these events are presented.

So enjoy the stories presented here. But be aware that people tell lies, make mistakes, suffer hallucinations¹³ and sometimes pass on stories that they want you to believe even though they have not checked them. This is not the attitude behind this book. But also be aware, as I mention in unit 10, that sometimes people honestly report things and are not believed until evidence finally proves them right.

Word Bank

1. **documentary** [ˌdɒkjʊ'mentəri] *n.* a film or television or radio program that gives facts and information about a subject 纪录影片
2. **tunnel** [ˈtʌnl] *n.* a long passage that allows pedestrians or vehicles to proceed under or through an obstruction such as a river, mountain, or congested area 隧道;地道
3. **Spanish Civil War** civil war in Spain (1936 – 1939) in which General Franco succeeded in overthrowing the republican government 西班牙内战
4. **occult** [ə'kʌlt] *n.* the realm of magic, witchcraft, or supernatural phenomena 神秘学;神秘仪式

5. **UFO** ['ju:fəʊ] *n.* unidentified flying object; an object seen in the sky which is thought to be a spacecraft from another planet 幽浮
6. **fire walking** the ceremony of walking barefoot over hot stones or a bed of embers 踏火
7. **amaze** [ə'meɪz] *v.* to cause someone to be extremely surprised 使大为惊奇
8. **uncritically** [ʌn'krɪtɪkəli] *ad.* in an uncritical manner 不加鉴别地
9. **alien** ['eɪliən] *n.* a creature from a different world 外星人
10. **hoaxer** ['həʊksər] *n.* someone who plays practical jokes on others 骗子
11. **skepticism** ['skeptɪsɪzəm] *n.* skeptical attitude or temper; doubt 怀疑的态度; 怀疑论
12. **explainable** [ɪk'spleɪnəbəl] *a.* capable of being understood 可说明的; 可解释的
13. **hallucination** [hə'lʊ:ʒɪ'neɪʃən] *n.* when you see, hear, feel or smell something which does not exist, usually because you are ill or have taken a drug 幻觉

这个神秘的世界

作者序

我从小就对各种奇怪神秘的现象很有兴趣。我那时候读了很多这方面的书,也看了一些这方面的纪录片。不过我跟很多人一样,都觉得除非是自己亲身遇到,否则这些怪事都只是传闻,不算真的。

我自己是在1985年碰到了这样的事,当时我在西班牙马德里教英文。有一天,我跟三个朋友去郊外的树林里散步。那地方很有意思,是个有历史的地方,留有很多1936到1939年西班牙内战期间建造的军事坑道。我们看了几个坑道后,往回走准备去吃午餐。就在这个时候,奇怪的事情发生了。

我当时走在一个朋友旁边,另外两个朋友走在我们前面。我们走在树林里,附近没有房屋,也没有任何其他建筑物。突然间,我听到一个声音,就像是老房子破旧的门吱吱嘎嘎被慢慢推开的声音。当时树林里有风,我第一个念头是那是风声造成的特殊效果。不过走在我们前面的两个朋友马上就回过头来,问我们是不是也听到刚刚那个声音。我跟他们说,我觉得那是风声,但是他们说,不对,原因不是风。他们接着告诉我,传说那片树林里常有成群的巫婆(巫术这类神秘的东西在当时非常流行)聚在一起进行各种古怪的仪式。而且其他走过那片树林的人,也有过很奇特的经历。后来我再也没去过这片树林,因为几个月后我就离开西班牙了,但是这段经历我一直没忘。

这些年来我听到也读到不少各式各样的奇闻异事:幽浮、鬼魂、奇特的动物、球状闪电(现在已经被许多科学家承认)、电人、蹈火等等。现在我把其中一些收录在本书里,算是为读者提供一些娱乐和知识。

不过,把一堆故事收录在一本书里,然后藉此惊吓震撼读者,却不刺激读者去思考,实在太容易了。我在这里尝试以更中立的方式呈现这些在英语世界流传已久的故事。我不希望读者全盘接受,想也不想就相信这些故事。现代人尤其应该在读了什么或听了什么之后先思考一番。广告、政客、宗教领袖等诸如此类的人,都希望我们不假思索就相信他们说的话。我们许多人也只想为复杂的问题找到一个简单的答案,所以我们很容易听到什么就相信什么。

外星人造访地球;田野里外星人留下的“麦田圈”(也许这些图案是一大群恶作剧的人创造出来的杰作,但是这两个说法都值得怀疑);苏格兰的湖里

住着大水怪。要相信这些传闻并不是那么容易,就算是已经证实过的事情也一样。球状闪电是怎么一回事?为什么对于通古斯加事件做出的解释似乎个个合理,却没有一个百分之百令人信服?因此除了描述事情的经过之外,我也会提到要解释这些现象所面临的问题。

现在就好好享受本书搜罗的奇闻异事吧。不过要记得,人会说谎、犯错、产生幻觉,有时候没经查证,就把他们希望你也相信的故事告诉你。本书写成的目的并不在此。不过也请记住,有些人的确是如实报导,但是在证据出现之前一直没有人相信,第 10 单元的故事就是一例。

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Unit 1

Spontaneous Human Combustion

人体自燃现象

Passage 1

MP3 1

On December 5, 1966 a man named Don Gosnell went down into the basement of an apartment building to read a gas meter¹. While he was there, he smelt a strange odor and noticed some blue smoke hanging in the air. He thought he should go to find Dr Bentley, a retired doctor who lived in one of the apartments.

In the bedroom Gosnell found more blue smoke and then, when he glanced into the bathroom he saw a horrific² sight. There, beside a metal walking frame, was a hole in the floor of the bathroom. It looked as if there had been a fire that had burned through the floor. But the horrible thing was that there was a part of a burnt human leg beside the hole!

Throughout the last 400 years or so, in many parts of the world, people have reported finding the remains³ of people whose bodies have been almost completely burned up. How it is possible to do this without using a large amount of fuel — such as in a cremation⁴ — is difficult to explain.

But there are other even stranger parts of the mystery. Usually, there is very little damage to anything beyond a few feet from the remains of the victim. Yet surely to burn a body requires high temperatures which should burn the entire building down.

Sometimes, as in the case of the retired physician mentioned above, it has been suggested that the victim was a careless⁵ smoker⁶. At other times, it has been argued that the person was a drinker who got drunk, fell asleep by the fire and then the clothes caught alight⁷.

Word Bank

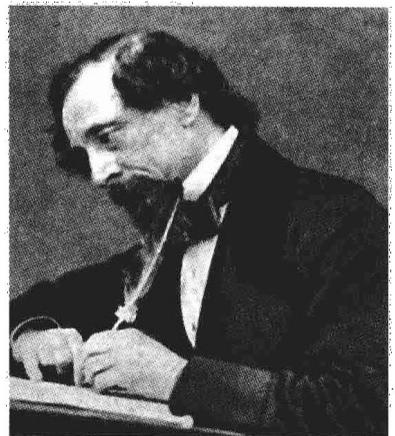
1. **gas meter** a device installed inside or outside a residential or commercial building to measure the amount of gas consumed in a specific period 煤气表
2. **horrific** [hɒ'rifɪk] *a.* very bad and shocking 可怕的
3. **remains** [rɪ'meɪnz] *n.* someone's dead body or the remaining parts of it 遗体; 剩余物
4. **cremation** [kri'meɪʃən] *n.* the burning of a corpse until only ashes are left 火葬; 焚化
5. **careless** ['keəlis] *a.* not paying enough attention to what one does 粗心的; 疏忽的
6. **smoker** ['sməʊkə] *n.* somebody who smokes something, especially tobacco products 吸烟者
7. **alight** [ə'laɪt] *a.* burning; on fire 燃烧着的

Passage 2

MP3 2

But these ideas do not fit the facts. First of all, they have often been put forward⁸ at times (such as the Victorian Age⁹ in Britain) when many people thought it was disgraceful to get drunk. Therefore they reasoned the person was being punished by God for their sins by being burnt alive. But in Dr Bentley's case, although he was a pipe¹⁰ smoker, his pipe was found in a tidy position beside his chair and there was no evidence he had somehow set himself on fire¹¹.

These strange events have happened so often that writers, especially about 200 years ago, used them as the basis for their stories. Most of the stories were not very good; most of them were written for the so-called "penny dreadfuls¹²," cheap magazines full of badly written horror stories. However, one exception was the famous English writer Charles Dickens¹³ who had a villain¹⁴ die by



Charles Dickens
(1812 - 1870)

spontaneous combustion¹⁵ in his novel *Bleak*¹⁶ *House*.

These deaths are so strange and mysterious that coroners¹⁷ investigating them often try to explain them rationally, as accidents of one kind or another. One exception was in 1905 when a coroner ruled that a death by fire was mysterious and that he did not understand it. The reason was that the victim, a woman who had been asleep by the fire had burns on her back not on the front, as you would expect if a hot cinder¹⁸ had shot out from the fire.

Word Bank

8. **put forward** to make something known, e. g. by stating it, publishing it, or formally submitting it for discussion 提出
9. **Victorian Age** a period in British history during the reign of Queen Victoria in the 19th century 维多利亚时期
10. **pipe** [paɪp] *n.* a short narrow tube with a small container at one end, used for smoking, especially tobacco 烟斗
11. **set (oneself) on fire** to cause to burn; ignite 放火烧……; 让……着火
12. **penny dreadful** cheap book or comic containing lurid stories of adventure, crime, or passion 廉价惊险小说
13. **Charles Dickens** an English writer whose novels depicted and criticized social injustice (1812 - 1870) 查尔斯·狄更斯
14. **villain** ['vɪlən] *n.* a character in a play, novel, or the like, who constitutes an important evil agency in the plot (戏剧、小说中的)反派角色; 恶棍
15. **combustion** [kəm'bʌstʃən] *n.* the process of burning 燃烧
16. **bleak** [bli:k] *a.* bare, desolate, and often windswept 荒凉的; 凄凉的
17. **coroner** ['kɔ:rənər] *n.* a public official formerly responsible for investigating deaths that appears not to have natural causes 验尸官
18. **cinder** ['sɪndə] *n.* the ashes that remain after a fire has burned out 余烬

Passage 3

A1P3 3

How could a human body catch fire? After all it is largely made up of water with a few chemicals added (to put it very simply). However, there is a lot of water in wood and it burns well enough. It should be remembered that the human body is largely composed of fat and those who have suffered a fire in the kitchen knows that fat can also burn without difficulty.

One theory is that if the human body is enclosed¹⁹ in a room (which is how most of the victims are found), there is not enough oxygen²⁰ to start a normal fire. However, there is enough for the body to start burning slowly like a wick²¹ inside a candle. Over several hours the body can be largely consumed²² but of course, often the oxygen runs out and part of the body is left.

Another theory is that microwaves²³ are somehow generated within the body and begin to burn it. Some people believe that there might be a connection with ball lightning (see unit 10).

We still do not know what causes these mysterious fires and it is hard to see where to begin in order to investigate them. However, as time passes, scientists who are skeptical about such matters are beginning to be intrigued²⁴ by the weight of evidence and are starting to put forward some theories.

Perhaps in time, even this most difficult of all mysteries may be found somehow to have a rational²⁵ explanation.

Word Bank

19. **enclose** [ɪnˈkləʊz] *v.* to surround or shut in something 围住; 关闭住
20. **oxygen** [ˈɒksɪdʒən] *n.* colorless gas that forms a large part of the air on Earth and which is needed by people, animals and plants to live 氧气
21. **wick** [wɪk] *n.* a string or piece of fabric that uses capillary action to draw the fuel to the flame in a candle, oil lamp, or cigarette lighter (蜡烛的)芯
22. **consume** [kənˈsu:m] *v.* to destroy something or somebody completely 烧毁; 毁灭

23. **microwave** [ˈmaɪkrəʊweɪv] *n.* a very short electromagnetic wave used for cooking food or for sending information by radio or radar
微波
24. **intrigue** [ɪnˈtriːɡ] *v.* to make somebody greatly interested or curious
激起……的好奇心
25. **rational** [ˈræʃənəl] *a.* agreeable to reason; reasonable; sensible 合理的; 基于理性的

Questions

1. When did Don Gosnell visit Dr Bentley's apartment block?
2. What did he experience at first?
3. Where did he see a horrific sight?
4. Describe the horrific sight he saw.
5. For how long have people been reporting these strange events?
6. Explain why these deaths are so mysterious.
7. What idea is put forward to explain them?
8. Why does it not fit the facts?
9. Who was the famous author who used spontaneous human combustion in one of his novels?
10. Name the novel.

Hints to help with answering the questions

- Q1: The answer is in the first sentence of Passage 1, but uses a different verb.
- Q2: If you experience something, you use the five senses so the answer must use two of them.
- Q3: The word used in the text is "glanced."
- Q4: Give a part of the human body.
- Q5: In the answer you should mention a period of centuries.
- Q6: Describe what should happen to the room and the temperature.
- Q7: Talk about drunkenness.
- Q8: Explain discrepancies between facts and theory.
- Q9: This is a famous English author in the nineteenth century.
- Q10: The name of the novel starts with "Bleak."

Conversation 1

A1P3 4

M: Mark S: Sarah J: Jane

M: Well, I have to say I've enjoyed these spooky¹ stories but you know, as the man said "There are more mysteries in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy²."

S: [*Laughs*] Oh listen, we've got a Shakespeare scholar here! A real man of culture!

J: Well, you said you weren't interested in a guy for his looks!

M: [*A little embarrassed*] You know what I mean. There are a lot of strange things going on in the world if half the stories can be believed.

S: Well, I've told my share of tall tales³ tonight, Mark, have you got a contribution⁴ to make?

M: Ok, have any of you heard of spontaneous human combustion? I've been interested in it for a long time.

J: Right, Mark. Fire away⁵ if you'll pardon the pun⁶!

M: The thing that fascinates me about it is that there is no obvious answer to it. I mean if you think you saw a UFO, you can theorize⁷ that aliens have visited the Earth.

J: Or if you see a ghost, you can talk about the dead coming back for a visit.

M: Right. But with this, it's hard to see how it's possible in any way.

Word Bank

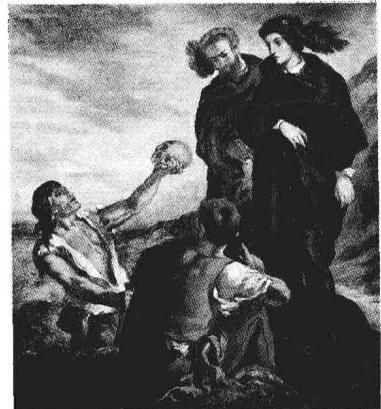
1. **spooky** [¹spu:ki] a. strange and frightening

令人毛骨悚然的

2. **There are more mysteries in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.**

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." — *Hamlet*; Act 1, Scene V, by William Shakespeare

“朋友，天上地下有很多事，在你的哲学想象



Hamlet and Horatio

之外。”——莎士比亚《哈姆雷特》第一幕第五场

3. **tall tale** a fanciful or greatly exaggerated story 荒诞不经的故事
4. **contribution** [ˌkɒntrɪˈbjʊːʃən] *n.* something that you do or give to help produce or achieve something together with other people, or to help make something successful 贡献
5. **fire away** to begin doing something, especially asking questions 开始说话或做事
6. **pun** [pʌn] *n.* an amusing use of a word or phrase which has several meanings or which sounds like another word 俏皮话, 双关
7. **theorize** [ˈθɪəraɪz] *v.* to speculate or form a theory about something 建立理论; 推理

Conversation 2

MP3 5

S: So what is it about? Something to do with fire?

M: Yeah. It's about people whose bodies are found almost completely burnt to ashes.

S: Wow, and I thought I was telling some scary tales. So, where are they found? Outside? I mean if it was in a building it would be burnt to the ground, wouldn't it?

M: That's one of the weirdest things about it. The bodies — or what remains of them are usually found in a room. The immediate surroundings are slightly burnt often enough. But apart from that, there usually isn't much damage more than a foot or so beyond the body.

J: I see what you mean about no obvious explanation. Surely the heat needed to destroy a body would set a room ablaze⁸.

M: Not only that, you would expect that much heat to destroy a body completely. However, there is usually part of a leg or arm or something like that left.

S: What about bones? If you burn a corpse in a crematorium⁹, the bones don't burn. They have to be crushed.

M: It just gets stranger. Often the bones are burnt along with the rest of the body. Not only that but in several cases, the skull¹⁰ is shrunk¹¹ by