



研究生英语系列

ENGLISH FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

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修订本

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Unit One

Text

The Million-Pound Note
(The £ 1,000,000 Bank-Note)
by Mark Twain

1 When I was twenty seven years old, I was a mining-broker's clerk in San Francisco, and an expert in all the details of stock traffic. I was alone in the world, and had nothing to depend upon but my wits and a clean reputation; but these were setting my feet in the road to eventual fortune, and I was content with the prospect.

2 My time was my own after the afternoon board, Saturdays, and I was accustomed to put it in on a little sail-boat on the bay. One day I ventured too far, and was carried out to sea. Just at nightfall, when hope was about gone, I was picked up by a small brig which was bound for London. It was a long and stormy voyage, and they made me work my passage without pay, as a common sailor. When I stepped ashore in London my clothes were ragged and shabby, and I had only a dollar in my pocket. This money fed and sheltered me twenty-four hours. During the next twenty-four I went without food and shelter.

3 About ten o'clock on the following morning, seedy and hungry, I was dragging myself along Portland Place, when a child that was passing, towed by a nurse-maid, tossed a luscious big pear—minus one bite—into the gutter. I stopped, of course, and fastened my desiring eye on that muddy treasure.

My mouth watered for it, my stomach craved it, my whole being begged for it. But every time I made a move to get it some passing eye detected my purpose, and of course I straightened up then, and looked indifferent, and pretended that I hadn't been thinking about the pear at all. This same thing kept happening and happening, and I couldn't get the pear. I was just getting desperate enough to brave all the shame, and to seize it, when a window behind me was raised, and a gentleman spoke out of it, saying:

"Step in here, please."

4 I was admitted by a gorgeous flunkey, and shown into a sumptuous room where a couple of elderly gentlemen were sitting. They sent away the servant, and made me sit down. They had just finished their breakfast, and the sight of the remains of it almost overpowered me. I could hardly keep my wits together in the presence of that food, but as I was not asked to sample it, I had to bear my trouble as best I could.

5 Now, something had been happening there a little before, which I did not know anything about until a good many days afterward, but I will tell you about it now. Those two old brothers had been having a pretty hot argument a couple of days before, and had ended by agreeing to decide it by a bet, which is the English way of settling everything.

6 You will remember that the Bank of England once issued two notes of a million pounds each, to be used for a special purpose connected with some public transaction with a foreign country. For some reason or other only one of these had been used and canceled; the other still lay in the vaults of the Bank. Well, the brothers, chatting along, happened to get to wondering what might be the fate of a perfectly honest and intelligent stranger who should be turned adrift in London

without a friend, and with no money but that million-pound banknote, and no way to account for his being in possession of it. Brother A said he would starve to death; Brother B said he wouldn't. Brother A said he couldn't offer it at a bank or anywhere else, because he would be arrested on the spot. So they went on disputing till Brother B said he would bet twenty thousand pounds that the man would live thirty days, *anyway*, on that million, and keep out of jail, too. Brother A took him up. Brother B went down to the Bank and bought that note. Just like an Englishman, you see; pluck to the backbone. Then he dictated a letter, which one of his clerks wrote out in a beautiful round hand, and then the two brothers sat at the window a whole day watching for the right man to give it to.

7 They saw many honest faces go by that were not intelligent enough; many that were intelligent, but not honest enough; many that were both, but the possessors were not poor enough, or, if poor enough, were not strangers. There was always a defect, until I came along; but they agreed that I filled the bill all around; so they elected me unanimously, and there I was now waiting to know why I was called in. They began to ask me questions about myself, and pretty soon they had my story. Finally they told me I would answer their purpose. I said I was sincerely glad, and asked what it was. Then one of them handed me an envelope, and said I would find the explanation inside. I was going to open it, but he said no; take it to my lodgings, and look it over carefully, and not be hasty or rash. I was puzzled, and wanted to discuss the matter a little further, but they didn't; so I took my leave, feeling hurt and insulted to be made the butt of what was apparently some kind of a practical joke, and yet obliged

to put up with it, not being in circumstances to resent affronts from rich and strong folk.

8 I would have picked up the pear now and eaten it before all the world, but it was gone; so I had lost that by this unlucky business, and the thought of it did not soften my feeling toward those men. As soon as I was out of sight of that house I opened my envelope, and saw that it contained money! My opinion of those people changed, I can tell you! I lost not a moment, but shoved note and money into my vest pocket, and broke for the nearest cheap eating-house. Well, how I did eat! When at last I couldn't hold any more, I took out my money and unfolded it, took one glimpse and nearly fainted. Five millions of dollars! Why, it made my head swim.

9 I must have sat there stunned and blinking at the note as much as a minute before I came rightly to myself again. The first thing I noticed, then, was the landlord. His eye was on the note, and he was petrified. He was worshiping, with all his body and soul, but he looked as if he couldn't stir hand or foot. I took my cue in a moment, and did the only rational thing there was to do. I reached the note toward him, and said, carelessly:

"Give me the change, please."

10 Then he was restored to his normal condition, and made a thousand apologies for not being able to break the bill, and I couldn't get him to touch it. He wanted to look at it, and keep on looking at it; he couldn't seem to get enough of it to quench the thirst of his eye, but he shrank from touching it as if it had been something too sacred for poor common clay to handle. I said:

"I am sorry if it is an inconvenience, but I must insist. Please change it; I haven't anything else."

11 But he said that wasn't any matter; he was quite willing to let the trifle stand over till another time. I said I might not be in his neighborhood again for a good while; but he said it was of no consequence, he could wait, and, moreover, I could have anything I wanted, any time I chose, and let the account run as long as I pleased. He said he hoped he wasn't afraid to trust as rich a gentleman as I was, merely because I was of a merry disposition, and chose to play larks on the public in the matter of dress. By this time another customer was entering, and the landlord hinted to me to put the monster out of sight; then he bowed me all the way to the door, and I started straight for that house and those brothers, to correct the mistake which had been made before the police should hunt me up, and help me do it. I was pretty nervous; in fact, pretty badly frightened, though, of course, I was no way in fault; but I knew men well enough to know that when they find they've given a tramp a million-pound bill when they thought it was a one-pounder, they are in a frantic rage against *him* instead of quarreling with their own near-sightedness, as they ought. As I approached the house my excitement began to abate, for all was quiet there, which made me feel pretty sure the blunder was not discovered yet. I rang. The same servant appeared. I asked for those gentlemen.

12 "They are gone." This in the lofty, cold way of that fellow's tribe.

"Gone? Gone where?"

"On a journey."

"But whereabouts?"

"To the Continent, I think."

"The Continent?"

"Yes, sir."

"Which way—by what route?"

"I can't say, sir."

"When will they be back?"

"In a month, they said."

"A month! Oh, this is awful! Give me *some* sort of idea of how to get a word to them. It's of the last importance."

"I can't, indeed. I've no idea where they've gone, sir."

"Then I must see some member of the family."

"Family's away, too; been abroad months—in Egypt and India, I think."

"Man, there's been an immense mistake made. They'll be back before night. Will you tell them I've been here, and that I will keep coming till it's all made right, and they needn't be afraid?"

"I'll tell them, if they come back, but I am not expecting them. They said you would be here in an hour to make inquiries, but I must tell you it's all right, they'll be here on time and expect you."

13 So I had to give it up and go away. What a riddle it all was! I was like to lose my mind. They would, be here "on time." What could that mean? Oh the letter would explain, maybe. I had forgotten the letter; I got it out and read it. This is what it said:

You are an intelligent and honest man, as one may see by your face. We conceive you to be poor and a stranger. Enclosed you will find a sum of money. It is lent to you for thirty days, without interest. Report at this house at the end of that time. I have a bet on you. If I win it you shall have any situation that is in my gift—any, that is, that you shall be able to prove yourself familiar with and competent to fill.

No signature, no address, no date.

(from *The Million-Pound Note*
—The Commercial Press)

Section 1 Aids to Study

A. Notes on the text:

1. *The Million-Pound Note*: one of the short stories written by Mark Twain. The story is fabricated. The author exposed the omnipotence of money in the capitalist society.
2. Mark Twain: an American outstanding realist in the nineteenth century. For further information about the author, see the Notes on the Text in Unit Two of Book One.
3. San Francisco [ˌsænfɹənˈsiskəʊ] (Para. 1) a sea port in the western part of California in the United States, translated into Chinese as 旧金山.
4. Portland Place [ˈpɔːtlənd,pleɪs] (Para.3): a big street in London, translated into Chinese as 波特兰路.

B. Vocabulary:

1. mining-broker [ˈmaɪnɪŋ,bɹəʊkə] *n.* person who buys and sells stocks or shares for mines.
2. stock [stɒk] *n.* shares in the capital of a business company, translated into Chinese as 股票.
3. traffic [ˈtræfɪk] *n.* illicit trading: illegal drug traffic.
4. wit [wɪt] *n.* (usu. *pl.* with sing. meaning)
5. reputation [ˌrepjuˈteɪʃən] *n.* the opinion about the character, qualities, etc. of sb.
6. eventual [ɪˈventʃuəl] *a.* coming at last as a result: the eventual success of his efforts.

7. board [bɔ:d] *n.* a meeting of stock traffic.
8. venture ['ventʃə] *vi.* to dare to go: They ventured out on the thin ice and fell through.
9. brig [brig] *n.* a ship with two masts (=poles carrying sails) and large square sails on both of them.
10. ragged ['ræɡɪd] *a.* (with clothes) badly torn or in rags: a ragged coat; a ragged old man.
11. shabby ['ʃæbi] *a.* in bad repair or condition; much worn; poorly dressed: wearing a shabby overcoat.
12. shelter ['ʃeltə] I *n.* a building or enclosure offering protection: a wooden shelter in a public garden. II *vt.* to protect from harm; give shelter to : sheltering the homeless.
13. tow [təu] *vt.* to pull along by a rope or chain: to tow the car to the nearest garage.
14. toss [tɒs] *vt.* to throw.
15. luscious ['lʌʃəs] *a.* rich and sweet in taste and smell.
16. crave [kreiv] *v.* to have very strong desire for (sth):
17. straighten ['streɪtn] *v.* to (cause to) become straight, level, or tidy.
18. desperate ['despərit] *a.* (of a person) filled with despair and ready to do anything, regardless of danger.
19. brave [breiv] *vt.* to meet (danger, pain, or trouble) without showing fear.
20. gorgeous ['ɡɔ:dʒəs] *a.* richly coloured.
21. flunkey ['flʌŋki] *n.* = flunky: (derog.) servant in uniform.
22. sumptuous ['sʌmptʃuəs] *a.* costly-looking: a sumptuous feast; sumptuous clothes.
23. overpower [ˌəʊvə'paʊə] *vt.* overcome, defeat by greater strength.

24. sample ['sæmpl] *vt.* to get to know about by experience.
25. vault [vɔ:lt] *n.* a room with thick walls and a heavy door to protect it against fire and thieves, in which money, jewels, important papers, etc. are kept at a bank.
26. adrift [ə'drift] *ad.* (esp. of people) without guidance or control, at the mercy of circumstances: turn sb. adrift.
27. pluck [plʌk] *n.* courage; spirit.
28. possessor [pə'zesə] *n.* owner.
29. unanimously [ju:'næniməsli] *ad.* in complete agreement.
30. butt [bʌt] *n.* person who is a target for ridicule, jokes, etc.
31. resent [ri'zent] *vt.* to feel angry at.
32. affront [ə'frant] *n.* public insult.
33. shove [ʃʌv] *v.* (colloq.) to push (usu. heavily).
34. vest [vest] *n.* (= AmE undershirt) a short undergarment, usu. without coverings for the arms, worn on the upper part of the body next to the skin.
35. glimpse [glimps] *n.* a quick look or incomplete view of.
36. stun [stʌn] *vt.* to cause to lose the senses or sense of balance.
37. blink [blɪŋk] *vi.* to shut and open the eyes quickly once or several times.
38. petrify ['petrifai] *vt.* (fig.) to take away power to think, feel, act, etc. (through terror, surprise, etc.)
39. quench [kwentʃ] *vt.* to put out (flames, fire); to satisfy thirst, desire).
40. trifle ['traɪfl] *n.* thing, event, etc, of little value or importance.
41. consequence ['kɒnsɪkwəns] *n.* importance.
42. disposition [dɪspə'zɪʃən] *n.* person's natural qualities of mind and character.

43. customer ['kʌstəmə] *n.* person who buys things.
44. monster ['mɒnstə] *n.* person or thing of extraordinary size, shape or qualities.
45. tramp [træmp] *n.* person (usu. homeless) who goes from place to place and does no regular work.
46. abate [ə'beɪt] *v.* (liter.) (of winds, storms, floods, pain, etc.) make or become less.
47. lofty ['lɒftɪ] *a.* haughty; proud; consciously superior: a lofty appearance; in a lofty manner.
48. whereabouts [ˌhweə ə'baʊts] *ad.* in or near what place.
49. situation [sitʃu'eɪʃən] *n.* work, employment: Situations vacant; Situations wanted. (headings of newspaper notices of employment offered and asked for).

C. Idioms and useful phrases:

1. be content with: be satisfied with what one has.
I'm content with my salary.
For attributive, contented (not content) is used.
He went home with a contented look (smile).
2. carry out (Am & ScotE) = to take away.
3. bound for: ready to start; having started in the direction of.
The ship is bound for Finland.
4. step ashore (= go ashore): to leave a ship to go on land.
They stepped ashore from the ship.
5. keep one's wits together (= keep one's wits about one): to be ready to act sensibly according to what may happen.
She is a woman who keeps (has) her wits about her (together).
6. in possession of sth.: to have (own) sth.

The company is in possession of the land.

in the possession of sb.: owned by sb.

The land is in the possession of the company.

7. on the spot: at once; at the place of action; in a position of having to make the right action or answer.

(1) Any one breaking the rules will be asked to leave on the spot.

(2) Wherever she is needed, she's quickly on the spot.

(3) The question put me on the spot: I couldn't make an excuse or lie.

8. take sb. up on sth.: to accept from him his offer, challenge, bet, etc.

Why don't you take Jim up on his offer to lend you \$ 1,000?

9. be obliged to do: be compelled to do.

He was obliged to sell his car to pay his debt.

10. put up with: to endure without protest; to bear patiently.

(1) In summer, we have to put up with hot weather.

(2) I can't put up with this noise.

11. not in circumstances (= in /under no circumstances): never; whatever may happen.

(1) I was not in/under circumstances to offend my sick mother.

(2) In/Under no circumstances should you tell a lie.

12. take one's cue from (infrm.): to use the practice of (another person) as a standard for one's own actions.

(1) The boy took his cue from his sister and got the smallest pear for himself.

(2) He is learning to paint pictures by taking his cue from the classic school of artists.

13. shrink (back): to move back, to show unwillingness to

do sth. (from shame, dislike, etc.).

(1) A shy man shrinks from meeting strangers.

(2) She shrank back from the horrifying spectacles.

14. stand over: to be postponed.

(1) Let the matter stand over until the next meeting.

(2) We decided to stand over the meeting till Saturday.

15. play larks on sb.: to cause him to be the victim of a practical joke.

He played larks (more often a joke) on his little brother.

16. hunt up:

to look carefully for.

He is hunting up earlier quotations for recent words.
to find by search.

He employed his time in hunting up all the old students that he had known formerly.

Section 2 General Exercises

A. Questions on the text:

1. Why did Henry (the hero of the story) go to England instead of returning to the U.S. after he was rescued?
2. Did he have any money when he stepped ashore in London?
3. Did Henry see a woman throwing a pear on the road?
4. How did he come to know the two gentlemen?
5. What did the two brothers bet on?
6. Did he like the two brothers when he came out of their house with the letter? If not, why?
7. Why did he run to a cheap restaurant?
8. When did he find that the money in the letter was not a one-pounder?