

大学英语

四级统考阅读理解精选

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188

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内 容 简 介

本书根据国家教委颁布的大学英语教学大纲要求,以大学英语四级考试大纲为依据,把大学英语四级统考的阅读理解样题作为标准,精选文章 188 篇。书中所选文章题材广泛,体裁多样,内容新颖,语言规范,考试针对性强,且具知识性、科学性和趣味性。文章均选自英语素材,其长度和难易度均与四级统考大致相当。每篇文章之后编写了阅读理解练习,书末附有答案,以加强阅读理解之效果,同时提高考生的应试能力。

本书可供各类院校大学生、出国培训人员等英语应试人员学习参考,也可供外语教师指导学生考前复习之用。

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前 言

大学英语四级考试大纲规定的考试内容中, 阅读理解是一个重要的考试项目。阅读理解的主要目的是测试考生通过阅读获取信息的能力, 既要求准确, 也要求有一定的速度。大纲中还规定, 该部分具体测试考生以下方面的能力:

1. 掌握所读材料的主旨和大意;
2. 了解说明主旨和大意的事实和细节;
3. 既理解字面的意思, 也能根据所读材料进行一定的判断和推论;
4. 既理解个别句子的意义, 也理解上下文的逻辑关系。

考试时, 要求考生在限定的时间内快速读完阅读试题, 全面理解, 并对供选择的答案作出正确判断。

阅读理解试题题材广泛 (包括人物传记、社会、文化、日常知识、科普知识等), 体裁多样 (包括叙述文、说明文、议论文等), 实质上是对读者的英语词汇、语法、文化背景知识及分析问题能力等进行综合测试。

阅读理解试题部分在整个试卷中所占的分值最大 (40分), 这就使阅读理解部分在整个考试中的地位更加突出, 是考生在英语考试中能否成功的决定性因素。因此, 考生们对阅读理解部分都十分关注, 甚至有些考生对该部分的应试产生了恐惧心理。这是可以理解的。其实, 只要考生通过大量的阅读实践, 学会正确的阅读习惯, 掌握相应的阅读技能, 就能在提高阅读速度的同时, 提高应试阅读理解的能力。

本书根据国家教委颁布的大学英语教学大纲要求，以大学英语四级考试大纲为依据，把大学英语四级统考的阅读理解样题作为标准，精选文章 188 篇。所选文章体裁各异，内容新颖，语言规范，考试针对性强，且具有知识性、科学性和趣味性。文章均选自英语素材，其长度、难易与四级统考大致相当。每篇文章之后编写了阅读理解练习，书末附有答案，以加强阅读理解之效果，同时提高考生的应试能力。

本书在编写过程中参考了国内外众多有关阅读的著作和试题，个别文章直接引自这些材料。对此，编者一并表示感谢。由于编者水平有限，缺点和错误在所难免，欢迎广大读者提出宝贵意见。

编 者

1996 年 1 月 20 日

1

Language is, and should be, a living thing, constantly enriched with new words and forms of expression. But there is a vital distinction between good developments, which add to the language, enabling us to say things we could not say before, and bad developments, which subtract from the language by rendering it less precise. A vivacious, colourful use of words is not to be confused with mere slovenliness. The kind of slovenliness in which some professionals deliberately indulge is perhaps akin to the cult of the unfinished work, which has eroded most of the arts in our time. And the true answer to it is the same — that art is enhanced, not hindered, by discipline. You cannot carve satisfactorily in butter.

The corruption of written English has been accompanied by an even sharper decline in the standard of spoken English. We speak very much less well than was common among educated Englishmen a generation or two ago.

The modern theatre has played a baneful part in dimming our appreciation of language. Instead of the immensely articulate dialogue of, for example, Shaw (who was also very insistent on good pronunciation), audiences are now subjected to streams of barely literate trivia, often designed, only too well, to exhibit “lack of communication”, and larded with the obscenities and grammatical errors of the intellectually impoverished. Emily Post once advised her readers: “The theatre is the best possible place to hear correctly—enunciated speech”. Alas, no more. One young actress was recently reported to be taking lessons in how to speak badly, so that she should fit in better.

But the BBC is the worst traitor. After years of very successfully helping to raise the general standard of spoken English, it suddenly went into reverse. As the head of the Pronunciation Unit coyly put it: “In the 1960’s the BBC

opened the field to a much wider range of speakers". To hear a BBC disc jockey talking to the latest ape-like pop idol is a truly shocking experience of verbal squalor. And the prospect seems to be of even worse to come. School teachers are actively encouraged to ignore little Johnny's incoherent grammar, atrocious spelling and haphazard punctuation, because worrying about such things might inhibit his creative genius.

1. The writer relates linguistic slovenliness to tendencies in the arts today, in that both _____.
 - A occasionally aim at a certain fluidity
 - B from time to time show a regard for the finishing touch
 - C appear to shun perfection
 - D may make use of economical short cuts
2. "Art is enhanced, not hindered, by discipline" (lines 11 ~ 12) means _____.
 - A an artist's work will be finer if he observes certain aesthetic standards
 - B an unfinished work is bound to be comparatively inferior
 - C the skill of certain artists conceals their slovenliness
 - D artistic expression is inhibited by too many rules
3. What is it claimed has happened to spoken English?
 - A Writing problems are not reflected in poor oral expression.
 - B On the whole, people don't worry if they make mistakes.
 - C Educated Englishmen now are less communicative than they were in the past.
 - D Like written English, it has undergone a noticeable change for the better.
4. Teachers are likely to overlook linguistic lapses in their pupils since _____.

- A they find that children no longer respond to this kind of discipline nowadays
 - B they fear the children may become less coherent
 - C more importance is now attached to oral expression
 - D the children may be discouraged from giving vent to their own ideas
5. What do you deduce of the writer's attitude to the developments in English? He thinks that _____.
- A the English are more lax linguistically, and he strongly condemns this
 - B the English are more relaxed, and he tends to be complacent about the changes
 - C there is little to hope for, except in the attitude of school teachers
 - D there is some cause for satisfaction, even in the attitudes of school teachers

2

The greatest recent social changes have been in the lives of women. During the twentieth century there has been a remarkable shortening of the proportion of a woman's life spent in caring for children. A woman marrying at the end of the nineteenth century would probably have been in her middle twenties, and would be likely to have seven or eight children, of whom four or five lived till they were five years old. By the time the youngest was fifteen, the mother would have been in her early fifties and would expect to live a further twenty years, during which custom, opportunity and health made it unusual for her to get paid work. Today women marry younger and have fewer children. Usually a woman's youngest child will be fifteen when she is forty-five and can be expected to live another thirty-five years and is

likely to take paid work until retirement at sixty. Even while she has the care of children, her work is lightened by household appliances and convenience foods.

This important change in women's life-pattern has only recently begun to have its full effect on women's economic position. Even a few years ago most girls left school at the first opportunity, and most of them took a full-time job. However, when they married, they usually left work at once and never returned to it. Today the school-leaving age is sixteen, many girls stay at school after that age, and though women tend to marry younger, more married women stay at work at least until shortly before their first child is born. Very many more afterwards return to full- or part-time work. Such changes have led to a new relationship in marriage, with the husband accepting a greater share of the duties and satisfactions of family life, and with both husband and wife sharing more equally in providing the money, and running the home, according to the abilities and interests of each of them.

1. For women at the beginning of the twentieth century, the amount of time spent taking care of children _____.
 - A was shorter than in previous centuries
 - B was longer than in previous centuries
 - C was considered to be surprisingly long
 - D accounted for a great part of their lives
2. According to the passage, around the year 1900 most women married _____.
 - A at about twenty-five
 - B in their early fifties
 - C as soon as possible after they were fifteen
 - D at any age from fifteen to forty-five
3. We are told that, in an average family about 1900 _____.
 - A many children died before they were five
 - B seven or eight children lived to be more than five

- C the youngest child would be fifteen
 - D four or five children died when they were five
4. When she was over fifty, the late nineteenth-century mother _____.
- A would be healthy enough to take up paid employment
 - B was usually expected to die fairly soon
 - C would expect to work until she died
 - D was unlikely to find a job even if she wanted one
5. According to the passage, the woman of today usually _____.
- A marries instead of getting paid work
 - B marries before she is twenty-five
 - C has more children under fifteen
 - D has too few children

3

Any social structure, particularly that of Victorian England, is so much a matter of sentiment and prejudice that the descriptions given by contemporary novelists may be as worth studying from one point of view as statistics are from another. Novels begin by reflecting the structure, and end by confirming or modifying it. Our own ideas of our dissolving and re-forming society are affected by novels and films, which help to set or change the tone as well as capture it. Victorian novelists worked within a more established social framework; they had less scope for evaluating social importance differently and their accounts, however slanted, tally more closely with each other than those of modern novelists are likely to do a century from now. Some of the Victorian novelists were more at home with certain segments of society than with others, and their personal reactions to the system differed; but the social world in which their creatures moved

is real, solid and essential one. The classic age of English society — as it seems in retrospect — was also the classic age of English fiction. Except for a few uncharted areas, the novelists knew where they stood (whether or not they liked it) and so did their readers.

The half century from roughly 1830 to 1880 excludes the later Victorian novelists with their more private, or at least more highly contrasting, pictures of society. It also allows some unity of theme. During these decades the aristocracy and landed gentry, although less powerful than they had been, were still predominant in government and the countryside. Their social prestige, which had substantially survived the changes of the thirties and forties, was to weaken under agricultural depression, electoral and military reform, the opening of the Civil Service to competitive examination, and the growing power of finance on the one hand and organized labour on the other. But this decline did not really set in until the closing years of the century.

1. Victorian novels are a useful guide to Victorian social structure because they _____.
 - A are sentimental
 - B contain statistics
 - C reflect prejudices
 - D are prejudicial
2. Modern novelists give a less exact picture of their society than Victorian novelists do because _____.
 - A they wish to re-form society
 - B their society is less stable
 - C they are affected by films
 - D they change their tone too often
3. An essential characteristic of the classic age of fiction was that _____.
 - A there was only one realistic character in each novel

- B the novelist and the reader reacted differently to the system
 - C the novelist was content with his position in society
 - D the novelists depicted the whole of society
4. The novels of the late nineteenth century differed from mid-century novels in that they _____.
- A presented a wider section of society
 - B observed the classical unities
 - C isolated novelists in society
 - D were more subjective
5. During the years 1830~1880, the upper classes _____.
- A declined in power in the countryside
 - B no longer controlled society
 - C were still powerful
 - D lost their social prestige

4

A child who has once been pleased with a tale likes, as a rule, to have it retold in identically the same words, but this should not lead parents to treat printed fairy stories as sacred texts. It is always much better to tell a story than read it out of a book, and, if a parent can produce what, in the actual circumstances of the time and the individual child, is an improvement on the printed text, so much the better.

A charge made against fairy tales is that they harm the child by frightening him or arousing his sadistic impulses. To prove the latter, one would have to show in a controlled experiment that children who have read fairy stories were more often guilty of cruelty than those who had not. Aggressive, destructive, sadistic impulses every child has and, on the whole, their symbolic verbal discharge seems to be rather a safety valve than an incitement to overt action. As to fears,

there are, I think, well authenticated cases of children being dangerously terrified by some fairy story. Often, however, this arises from the child having heard the story once. Familiarity with the story by repetition turns the pain of fear into the pleasure of a fear faced and mastered.

There are also people who object to fairy stories on the grounds that they are not objectively true, that giants, witches, two-headed dragons, magic carpets, etc., do not exist; and that instead of indulging his fantasies in fairy tales, the child should be taught how to adapt to reality by studying history and mechanics. I find such people, I must confess, so unsympathetic and peculiar that I do not know how to argue with them. If their case were sound, the world should be full of madmen attempting to fly from New York to Philadelphia on a broomstick or covering a telephone with kisses in the belief that it was their enchanted girl-friend.

No fairy story ever claimed to be a description of the external world and no sane child has ever believed that it was.

1. The author considers that a fairy story is more effective when it is _____.
 - A repeated without variation
 - B treated with reverence
 - C adapted by the parent
 - D set in the present
2. Some people dislike fairy stories because they feel that they _____.
 - A tempt people to be cruel to children
 - B show the primitive cruelty in children
 - C lend themselves to undesirable experiments with children
 - D increase a tendency to sadism in children
3. Fairy stories are a means by which children's impulses may be _____.

- A beneficially channelled
 - B given a destructive tendency
 - C held back until maturity
 - D effectively suppressed
4. According to the passage great fear can be stimulated in a child when the story is _____.
- A in a realistic setting
 - B heard for the first time
 - C repeated too often
 - D dramatically told
5. The advantage claimed for repeating fairy stories to young children is that it _____.
- A makes them come to terms with their fears
 - B develops their power of memory
 - C convinces them there is nothing to be afraid of
 - D encourages them not to have ridiculous beliefs

5

Complaining about faulty goods or bad service is never easy. Most people dislike making a fuss. But if something you have bought is faulty or does not do what was claimed for it, you are not asking for a favour to get it put right. It is the shopkeeper's responsibility to take the complaint seriously and to replace or repair a faulty article or put right poor service, because he is the person with whom you have entered into an agreement. The manufacturer may have a part to play but that comes later.

Complaints should be made to a responsible person. Go back to the shop where you bought the goods, taking with you any receipt you may have. Ask to see the buyer in a large store. In a small store the assistant may also be the owner so you can complain direct. In a chain store ask to see the man-

ager. If you telephone, ask the name of the person who handles your enquiry, otherwise you may never find out who dealt with the complaint later.

Even the bravest person finds it difficult to stand up in a group of people to complain, so if you do not want to do it in person, write a letter. Stick to the facts and keep a copy of what you write. At this stage you should give any receipt numbers, but you should not need to give receipts or other papers to prove you bought the article. If you are not satisfied with the answer you get, or if you do not get a reply, write to the managing director of the firm, shop, or organization. Be sure to keep copies of your own letters and any you receive.

If your complaint is a just one, the shopkeeper may offer to replace or repair the faulty article. You may find this an attractive solution. In certain cases you may have the right to refuse the goods and ask for your money back, but this is only where you have hardly used the goods and have acted at once. Even when you cannot refuse the goods you may be able to get some money back as well. And if you have suffered some special loss, if for example a new washing machine tears your clothes, you might receive money to replace them. If the shopkeeper offers you a credit note to be used to buy goods in the same shops but you would rather have money say so. If you accept a credit note remember that later you will not be able to ask for your money. If the shopkeeper refuses to give you money, ask for advice from your Citizens' Advice Bureau before you accept a credit note. In some cases the shopkeeper does not have to give you your money back — if, for example, he changes an article simply because you don't like it or it does not fit. He does not have to take back the goods in these circumstances.

1. The shopper may make a complaint because _____.
A he dislikes causing a fuss.

- B it doesn't do what is claimed for it
 - C the article bought is not up to standard
 - D he was at fault in buying the article
2. What agreement does the shopkeeper make with the customer?
- A To take his complaint seriously.
 - B To sell him the goods.
 - C To replace or repair a faulty article.
 - D To put right poor service.
3. When complaining in person, you should _____.
- A get a receipt for what you buy
 - B speak to someone in authority
 - C talk direct to the assistant
 - D ask to see the buyer
4. If you accept a credit note, you _____.
- A can use it in another shop
 - B can't say you would have preferred the money
 - C can ask for your money later
 - D can't use it anywhere else
5. If a shopkeeper will not give you money you should _____.
- A take a credit note instead
 - B refuse to leave the shop
 - C ask your office for advice
 - D find out your lawful rights

6

It had been a pleasantly warm day, without much wind, and with enough cloud to prevent the heat of the sun becoming too great. Charles had spent a long time studying the level of the water in the boat, and had discovered that, by

evening, it had fallen very slightly. This, it would seem, must mean that the boat was not taking in water, which was fortunate, because any attempt to empty it out suggested greater effort than he felt equal to. One other immediate problem had held his wandering thoughts for a few moments at long intervals. This was the problem of Harcourt. The thing to do, Charles realised, was to put poor Harcourt in the sea. It should be a simple matter and take no more than a few seconds. Charles arranged in his mind exactly how it could most easily be done, but his body did not react to the suggestions of his mind. Charles told himself that it was his hands that were the trouble. It was better, really, not to find out how badly they were burned. There was nothing to be done about them except not use them.

But then, suddenly, almost without knowing how he did it, Charles moved, stood up, bent over the body of poor Harcourt, lifted it and let it slip as gently as possible into the sea. Afterwards he stood in the stern of the boat for a long time, watching the colour of the sea deepen and the sky become increasingly farther off with the coming of night. In a curious way he felt strangely happy. The problem of his rescue had not yet begun to trouble him.

After a time Charles's returning interest in living showed itself in the simple form of hunger. With some difficulty, owing to the water in the boat, he explored its stores and found food and water in air-tight tins. He also found a neat package wrapped in green oiled silk. He unwrapped it and found maps. Neat, beautifully designed and printed, spotlessly new, they lay across his knees and he was no longer alone in a world of water. At that moment these clean official maps, correct in every detail, were as comforting as the sound of a human voice, as cheering as a candle in darkness.

1. The day was not too hot because _____.
A the sun wasn't shining