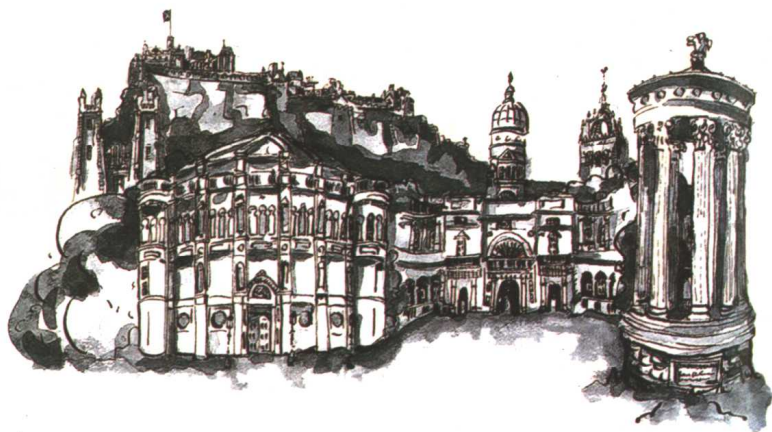


Extracurricular English for University Students

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大学课外英语

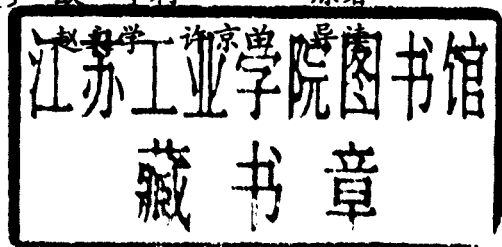
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麦琪的礼物

[美] 欧·亨利 原著



大学课外英语 · 1 ·

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麦琪的礼物

欧·亨利，本名威廉·西德尼·波特，1862 年生于美国北卡罗来纳州的格林斯博罗，1910 年在纽约病逝。作为美国最为多产的短篇小说作家之一，欧·亨利的作品以其新颖的构思，诙谐的语言，悬念突变的手法以及出人意料的结局而著称。所有这一切都来自作家本人丰富的人生阅历以及他对周围人和事物的细心观察和深刻了解。

年轻时，波特曾从事过许多不同的工作。他在德克萨斯州奥斯汀第一国民银行工作时被控贪污公款，被迫逃往洪都拉斯。1897 年他返回奥斯汀被捕，受审后在俄亥俄州的哥伦布监狱服刑 3 年。就是在这里，波特发现了自己的写作能才，开始尝试写作并且以许多不同的笔名发表作品，其中欧·亨利是他最常使用的一个。获释后他在纽约定居，继续自己成功的文学创作生涯。

短篇小说在美国曾一度是最受大众欢迎的一种写作形式。在此期间欧·亨利创作了大量的作品表现 20 世纪初的美国社会。在些作品构思巧妙，描写生动，文字简炼，悬念设置出人意料，集矛盾和怪异、幽默为一体，被誉为“美国生活的幽默百科全书”。在他创作的近 300 篇短篇小说，《白菜与皇帝》(1904) 和《四百万》(1906) 被公认为是最优秀的两部小说集。

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幸福 B

O. Henry

The Gift of the Magi

O. Henry, pseudonym of William Sidney Porter, was born in Greensboro, USA in 1862 and died in New York in 1910. One of the most prolific American short-story writers, he was, above all, famous for the unexpected concluding "twist" he would give to his stories which were based on his own various adventurous experiences and his acute capacity of observation of people and their habits.

After a youth spent in passing from one occupation to another, he was accused of embezzling funds from the First National Bank of Austin, Texas, where he worked and so he fled to Honduras. He returned to Austin in 1897 and after being tried and sentenced he spent three years in the Columbus prison in Ohio where he discovered his vocation for writing and began to publish his first works under different pseudonyms, O. Henry being the most used. When he was released he settled in New York where he continued his successful literary career.

In a period when the short story was the most popular narrative form in America, Henry produced a vast quantity, the best of which combine paradox and the grotesque with vivid description and authentic narrative tension. "*Cabbages and Kings*" (1904) and "*The Four Million*" (1906) are considered his best collections.

La Spiga
LANGUAGES

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY SEVEN CENTS. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr James Dillingham Young".

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day and she had only

Gift something given **Magi** three wise men who brought offerings to the infant Jesus

bulldozing intimidating, forcing **grocer** person selling tea, food etc **butcher** person selling meat **cheeks** sides of face below eyes **burned here**, became hot with embarrassment **impudatation** suggestion **parsimony** extreme care in spending **close** careful, not generous **dealing** business relations **but** except **flop down** fall down **shabby** in bad condition **couch** sofa, divan **howl** cry **instigates** causes, stimulates **made up of** composed of **sobs** acts of drawing in breath irregularly while crying **sniffles** acts of breathing in noisily **mistress** woman in position of authority **subsiding** going **stage here**, state **second** i.e sniffles **furnished flat** rented flat with furniture provided **beggar description** make words seem poor and inadequate **lookout** watch, search **mendicancy** poor, begging **squad** group of people **vestibule** entrance hall

coax persuade, make **appertaining** belonging **thereunto** in relation to (the letter-box) **bearing** with

flung to the breeze put in triumphantly

income money received

shrunk become smaller

blurred indistinct

unassuming modest, unpretentious **whenever** on any occasion

hugged embraced

attended gave care to

powder substance to give the skin colour **rag** piece of cloth

dully without interest **gray** colour between black and white

fence wood or metal barrier. **backyard** area behind a house

\$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling — something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown

present gift **saving** keeping for future use

Expenses money used for something

planning for thinking of

rare uncommon **sterling** of value

worthy having merit **owned** possessed

pier-glass long mirror

strips long, narrow pieces

fairly quite, moderately **conception** idea **looks** appearance

slender slim **mastered** become expert at

whirled, moved quickly

before in front of

mighty great

pride feeling of satisfaction.

airshaft passage for ventilation

depreciate reduce in value.

Had King Solomon been if King Solomon had been **janitor** person who takes care of a building doorkeeper **piled up** accumulated **basement**: underground part of building **pulled out** taken out **pluck at** pull **envy** feeling of discontent at another's fortune **about here**, around **rippling** undulating, waving

knee joint in the leg **garment** article of clothing

faltered hesitated

tear water from the eye **splashed** fell

worn in bad condition **carpet** floor covering.

On went she put on

hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie".

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair — said Madame. — Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars — said Madame, — lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation — as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value — the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends — a mammoth task.

whirl quick movement **sparkle** flash of light
fluttered moved quickly

flight set of stairs between one floor and another
collected herself recovered control of herself **panting** taking
short quick breaths **chilly** rather cold

yer (*slang*) your
sight look **looks** appearance
rippled moved undulatingly

tripped by danced with quick steps *here*, passed quickly **rosy**
colour of roses **wings** organs of flight **hashed** mixed up,
confused **ransacking** searching

turned ... inside out looked very carefully
fob pocket watch **chain** flexible length of metal links **chaste**
simple, pure **properly** in the right way **meretricious** attractive
on the surface but of little value
worthy having sufficient value
Quietness calm
applied was appropriate
hurried went quickly

Grand splendid
on the sly secretly **on account of** because of
leather strap long narrow piece of leather
gave way ... to was replaced by
curling irons instruments for curling hair
ravages damage

mammoth immense **task** job

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me — she said to herself, — before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do — oh, what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty".

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two — and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling — she cried, — don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again — you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice —

close-lying short **curls** coils, twists of hair

truant schoolboy child who stays away from school without good reason

Coney Island island off the south shore of Long Island, New York, site of a large amusement park **chorus girl** girl who dances in chorus of a musical comedy

frying-pan pan with long handle used for frying

stove cooker

chops slices of meat on the bone

doubled folded

step footstep, noise of feet

flight set of stairs **turned**: became

whispered said quietly

stepped in entered

fellow man

to be burdened with a family with the responsibility of a family

immovable still, not moving **setter** type of hunting dog

scent smell **quail** small bird

stared ... fixedly looked for a long time

peculiar strange

wriggled off got off with quick movements **went for** went towards

grow out: become long

awfully *here*, very **fast** quickly

what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it — said Della. — Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?" Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it — said Della. — It's sold, I tell you — sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs on my head were numbered — she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, — but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year — what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell — he said, — about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs — the set of combs, side and

laboriously with difficulty

patent obvious

anyhow in any way **ain't**! (*not standard*) aren't!

Christmas Eve the day before Christmas

for because

were numbered could be counted

put ... on start cooking

enfolded put his arms around **regard** look at

scutiny detailed examination **inconsequential** unimportant

wit person with intelligence

dark *here*, mysterious

illuminated made clear

drew took out **package** parcel **threw** put carelessly

haircut act of cutting hair

unwrap take off the paper from

had me going a while shocked me-

nimble. agile **tore at** pulled violently **string** thin cord

scream. cry **alas** *exclamation of pity*

wails loud cries

employment use

Combs pieces of plastic, bone or metal with narrow pointed teeth
along one side, used on hair