

大學一年級英文教本
FRESHMAN READINGS
IN ENGLISH.

F. T. CHING

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FRESHMAN READINGS IN ENGLISH

BARREN SPRING

By Pearl S. Buck

Liu, the farmer, sat at the door of his one-room house. It was a warm evening in late February, and in his thin body he felt the coming of spring. How he knew that the time had now come when sap should stir in trees and life begin to move in the soil he could not have told himself. In other years it would have been easy enough. He could have pointed to the willow trees about the house and shown the swelling buds. But there were no more trees now. He had cut them off during the bitter winter when they were starving for food and he had sold them one by one. Or he might have pointed to the pink-tipped buds of his three peach trees and his six apricot trees that his father had planted in his day; so that now, being at the height of their time, they bore a load of fruit every year. But these trees were also gone. Most of all, in any other year than this, he might have pointed to his wheat fields, where he planted wheat in the winter when the land was not needed for rice, and where, when spring was moving into summer, he planted the good rice, for rice was his chief crop. But the land told nothing, this year. There was no wheat on it, for the flood had covered it long after wheat should have been planted and it lay there cracked and like clay but newly dried.

Well, on such a day as this, if he had his buffalo and his plow as he had always had in other years, he would have gone out and plowed up that cracked soil. He ached to plow it up and make it look like a field again, yes, even though he had not so much as one seed to put in it. But he had no buffalo. If anyone had told him that he would eat his own water buffalo that plowed the good land for him, and year after year pulled the stone roller over the grain and threshed it at harvest he would have called that man idiot. Yet it was what he had done. He had eaten his own water

buffalo, he and his wife and his parents and his four children, they had all eaten the buffalo together.

But what else could they do on that dark winter's day when the last of their store of grain was gone, when the trees were cut and sold, when he had sold everything, even the little they had saved from the flood, and there was nothing left except the rafters of the house they had and the garments they wore? Was there sense in stripping the coat off one's back to feed one's belly? Besides, the beast was starving too, since the water had covered even the grass lands, and they had had to go far afield to gather even enough to cook its bones and flesh. On that day when he had seen the faces of his old parents set as though dead, on that day when he had heard the crying of his children and seen his little daughter dying, such a despair had seized him as made him like a man without his reason, so that he had gathered together his feeble strength and he had done what he said he never would; he had taken the kitchen knife and gone out and killed his own beast. When he did it, even in his despair, he groaned, for it was as though he killed his own brother. To him it was the last sacrifice.

Yet it was not enough. No, they grew hungry again and there was nothing left to kill. Many of the villagers went south to other places, or they went down the river to beg in the great cities. But he, Liu the farmer, had never begged. Moreover, it seemed to him then that they must all die, and the only comfort left was to die on their own land. His neighbor had come and begged him to *set out* forth with them; yes, he had even said he would carry one of the old parents on his back so that Liu might carry the other, seeing that his own father was already dead. But Liu had refused, and it was well, for in the next two days the old mother was dead, and if she had died on the way he could only have cast her by the roadside lest the others be delayed and more of them die. As it was he could put her safely into their own ground, although he had been so weak that it had taken him three days to dig a hole deep enough for her little old withered body. And then before he could get her buried he and his wife had quarreled over the poor few clothes on the old body. His wife was a hard woman and she would have buried the old mother naked, if he had let her, so as to have the clothes for the children. But he made her leave on the inner coat and

trousers; although they were only rags after all, and when he saw the cold earth against his old mother's flesh—well, that was sorrow for a man, but it could not be helped. Three more he had buried somehow, his old father and his baby daughter and the little boy who had never been strong. *this three people had died slowly.*

That was what the winter's famine had taken from them. It would have taken them all except that in the great pools lying everywhere, which were left from the flood, there were shrimps, and these they had eaten raw and were still eating, although they were all sick with a dysentery that would not get well. In the last day or so his wife had crawled out and dug a few sprouting dandelions. But there was no fuel and so they also were eaten raw. But the bitterness was good after the tasteless flesh of the raw shrimps. Yes, spring was coming.

He sat on heavily, looking out over his land. If he had his buffalo back, if he had his plow that they had burned for fuel, he could plow the land. But when he thought of this as he did many times every day, he felt helpless as a leaf tossed upon the flood. The buffalo was gone; gone also his plow and every implement of wood and bamboo, and what other had he? Sometimes in the winter he had felt grateful that at least the flood had not taken all the house as it had so many houses. But now it suddenly came to him that he could be grateful for nothing, no, not even that he had his life left him and the life of his wife and the two older children. He felt tears come into his eyes slowly as they had not even come when he buried his old mother and saw the earth fall against her flesh, bared by the rags which had comforted him that day. But now he was comforted by nothing. He muttered to himself.

"I have no seed to plant in the land. There the land lies! I could go and claw it up with my hands if I had the seed and the land would bear. I know my good land. But I have no seed and the land is empty. Yes, even though spring comes, we must still starve!"

And he looked, hopeless, into the barren spring.

THE BEAST OF BURDEN

By W. Somerset Maugham

At first when you see the coolie on the road, bearing his load, it is as a pleasing object that he strikes the eye. In his blue rags, a blue of all colors from indigo to turquoise and then to the paleness of a milky sky, he fits the landscape. He seems exactly right as he trudges along the narrow causeway between the rice fields or climbs a green hill. His clothing consists of no more than a short coat and a pair of trousers; and if he had a suit which was at the beginning all of a piece, he never thinks when it comes to patching to choose a bit of stuff of the same color. He takes anything that comes handy. From sun and rain he protects his head with a straw hat shaped like an extinguisher with a preposterously wide, flat brim.

You see a string of coolies come along, one after the other, each with a pole on his shoulders from the ends of which hang two great bales, and they make an agreeable pattern. It is amusing to watch their hurrying reflections in the padi water. You watch their faces as they pass you. They are good-natured faces and frank, you would have said, if it had not been drilled into you that the oriental is inscrutable; and when you see them lying down with their loads under a banyan tree by a wayside shrine, smoking and chatting gaily, if you have tried to lift the bales they carry for thirty miles or more a day, it seems natural to feel admiration for their endurance and their spirit. But you will be thought somewhat absurd if you mention your admiration to the old residents of China. You will be told with a tolerant shrug of the shoulders that the coolies are animals and for two thousand years from father to son have carried burdens, so it is no wonder if they do it cheerfully. And indeed you can see for yourself that they begin early, for you will encounter little children with a yoke on their shoulders staggering under the weight of vegetable baskets.

The day wears on and it grows warmer. The coolies take off their coats and walk stripped to the waist. Then sometimes in a man resting for an instant, his load on the ground but the pole still

on his shoulders so that he has to rest slightly crouched, you see the poor tired heart beating against the ribs: you see it as plainly as in some cases of heart disease in the out-patients' room of a hospital. It is strangely distressing to watch. Then also you see the coolies' backs. The pressure of the pole for long years, day after day has made hard red scars, and sometimes even there are open sores, great sores without bandages or dressing that rub against the wood; but the strangest thing of all is that sometimes, as though nature sought to adapt man for these cruel uses to which he is put, an odd malformation seems to have arisen so that there is a sort of hump, like a camel's, against which the pole rests. But beating heart or angry sore, bitter rain or burning sun notwithstanding, they go on eternally, from dawn till dusk, year in year out, from childhood to the extreme of age. You see old men without an ounce of fat on their bodies, their skin loose on their bones, wizened, their little faces wrinkled and apelike, with hair thin and gray; and they totter under their burdens to the edge of the grave in which at last they shall have rest. And still the coolies go, not exactly running, but not walking either, sidling quickly with their eyes on the ground to place their feet, and on their faces a strained, anxious expression. You can make no longer a pattern of them as they wend their way. Their effort oppresses you. You are filled with a useless compassion. 你充滿着一种无能为力的怜悯。

In China it is man that is the beast of burden. 驮兽 (驮马驴) .
 “To be harassed by the wear and tear of life, and to pass rapidly through it without the possibility of arresting one's course,—is not this pitiful indeed? To labor without ceasing, and then, without living to enjoy the fruit, worn out, to depart, suddenly, one knows not whither,—is not that a just cause for grief?”

So wrote the Chinese mystic.

THE SONG OF THE RIVER

By W. Somerset Maugham

河上船夫的歌

You hear it all along the river. (You hear it, loud and strong, from the rowers as they urge the junk with its high stern, the mast lashed alongside, down the swift running stream. You hear it from the trackers, a more breathless chaunt, as they pull desperately against the current, half a dozen of them perhaps if they are taking up a wupan, a couple of hundred if they are hauling a splendid junk, its square sail set, over a rapid.) On the junk a man stands amidships beating a drum incessantly to guide their efforts, and they pull with all their strength, like men possessed, bent double; and sometimes in the extremity of their travail they crawl on the ground, on all fours, like the beasts of the field. They strain, strain fiercely, against the pitiless might of the stream. The leader goes up and down the line and when he sees one who is not putting all his will into the task he brings down his split bamboo on the naked back. Each one must do his utmost or the labor of all is vain. And still they sing a vehement, eager chaunt, the chaunt of the turbulent waters. I do not know how words can describe what there is in it of effort. It serves to express the straining heart, the breaking muscles, and at the same time the indomitable spirit of man which overcomes the pitiless force of nature. Though the rope may part and the great junk swing back, in the end the rapid will be passed; and at the close of the weary day there is the hearty meal and perhaps the opium pipe with its dreams of ease. But the most agonizing song is the song of the coolies who bring the great bales from the junk up the steep steps to the town wall. Up and down they go endlessly, and endless as their toil rises their rhythmic cry. He, aw-ah, oh. They are barefoot and naked to the waist. The sweat pours down their faces and their song is a groan of pain. It is a sigh of despair. It is heart-rending. It is hardly human. It is the cry of souls in infinite distress, only just musical, and that last note is the ultimate sob of humanity. Life is too hard, too cruel, and this is the final despairing protest. That is the song of the river.

BIRTH OF A SISTER

By Tan Shih-hua

My uncle's school moved to another temple—a little larger than the old one, but further away from our house. To prevent me from getting too tired, walking to and from the school, he took me to live with him, and sent me home every Saturday. He adopted the European method of holidays. In his school, just as in the public schools, we had one day a week for rest. In private schools the pupils had to sit over their books from one Chinese holiday to another, and holidays in China are as rare as springs in a desert.

One week day I was called out from the class. Our maid was waiting for me. I gathered that something must be wrong with my mother. We had a maid in the house only on days when mother was unable to work. I walked home in a great hurry. On the way the maid told me news which I had not expected at all.

"Your mother has borne you a sister."

I was glad; I had always been so lonely at home.

The maid turned me over to my grandmother. Craftily and solemnly the old woman led me into mother's room. My mother was lying silent on her bed. She was pale and thin. Her arms were stretched out on the cover. A funny little bit of a bed stood next to hers. Something wrapped in white and made entirely of little balls and wrinkles was in it.

"A little girl," said my grandmother.

I wanted to touch my little sister, but my grandmother would not let me. Having failed in this, I decided to go immediately to a store and get her some sweets. My grandmother sat down on my mother's bed and released her high, thin laughter. She would stop, look at me, then laugh again. I paid dearly for those sweets. My grandmother loved to tease me.

I said to her, "It is nice to have a girl."

dowry ['daʊəri] n. 嫁妆
P. 103 104

"No, it is very bad," she said. "Here in Szechwan, we have to give a dowry with the bride. It is just an expense. It would be different if we were living in Kiangsu—there people pay the bride's family."

I did not agree with my grandmother. But she did not care. She was laughing again, probably remembering those sweets.

Careful not to spill it, the maid brought my mother a bowl of boiled chicken. Every woman in China gets boiled chicken for a few days after her labor. Chicken is good. I looked longingly at the bowl. Mother put me next to her on the bed, and we ate the chicken together.

Taking away the empty bowl, my grandmother looked at me, and said seriously and in a businesslike manner, "Really, Shih-hua, it would not be bad if your mother bore you a sister or a brother every year; then you would eat chicken quite often." [622]

A month later, our house was buzzing with relatives. Such a lot of them. My mother was walking about, sweet and affable, but still white and thin, although she had not worked all that month. She entered the sitting room with my little sister in her arms, and all the relatives, one after another, came up to her and touched the little big-eyed girl, whose small stomach was covered with a red flannel apron—a protection against the cold. The relatives argued about whose nose the little girl was going to have, whose eyes, whose mouth. They wished her good fortune.

"May she grow up to be as intelligent as her mother."

"May she become a good hostess."

"May she be the most beautiful bride in Hsien-Shih."

"She will be a famous authoress."

This last wish was expressed by my elder uncle. I knew it because, being himself fond of writing, he always said the same thing to every new-born baby.

The inspection was over, the little girl was wrapped up again and carried away. The relatives presented my mother with gifts. There were eggs in woven baskets, cackling hens, bags of sugar, selected rice—beautiful rice, which one would like to string on a thread and wear for a necklace, so beautiful it was—and sweets....

My grandmother glanced from the bag of sweets to me, and began laughing again.

The procession of relatives moved to the dining room. At the table, the return gifts from our family were distributed, each relative receiving two red eggs. I was sad; we did not have enough money, so I could not stick a gilt-paper hieroglyphic meaning "luck" on the eggs.

[k'ai-sung-fu]

A year later, on my sister's birthday the same relatives again crowded into our house. A red tablecloth was put on a table in the sitting room, and all sorts of objects were spread out: a needle and thread, a saucepan, a teapot, a paint-brush, an inkpot, a knife, a book of verses, a book of stories, a flexible fencing-foil, a piece of printed silk.

Then the little girl, who, in her embarrassment, was trying to stick her foot into her mouth, was brought to the table, to see what object she would pick up first. If she takes a brush, she will be an authoress; if she grabs at a saucepan, she will be a housewife; if she touches silk, she will be a well-dressed woman; if she picks up a foil, she will make herself famous as a heroine or a chieftain.

I don't know what object my little sister chose. Judging by the fact that she is now in Peking University, and shows a great deal of interest in literature, she must have chosen a brush or a book. However, she was a niece of two teachers. So many books and so much stationery were piled up that day on the red cloth that the insignificant needle and thread had no chance of getting into the hands of little Shih-kuen.

In those days, she was the important person in the house. But I did not mind. I was grown up. I was six years older than she.

affable [afəbəl] adj. 和蔼可亲的.

A DISSERTATION UPON ROAST PIG

By Charles Lamb

Mankind, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M. was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his Mundane Mutations, where he designates a kind of golden age by the term Cho-fang, literally the Cook's holiday. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother) was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swineherd, Ho-ti, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect mast for his hogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son Bo-bo, a great lubberly boy, who being fond of playing with fire, as youngsters of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which, kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with the cottage (a sorry antediluvian makeshift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labor of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one of those untimely sufferers, an odor assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from?—not from the burnt cottage—he had smelt that smell before—indeed this was by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young firebrand. Much less did

it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burned his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away from his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted—*crackling!* Again he felt and fumbled at the pig. It did not burn him so much now, still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious; and surrendering himself up to the new-born pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion, when his sire entered amid the smoking rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hailstones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following dialogue ensued.

"You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burned me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you! but you must be eating fire, and I know not what—what have you got there, I say?"

"O, father, the pig, the pig! do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out "Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste—O Lord!"—

with suchlike barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.

Ho-ti trembled in every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavor, which, make what sour mouths he would for a pretense, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious) both father and son fairly sat down to the mess, and never left off till they had dispatched all that remained of the litter.

Bo-bo was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbors would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the good meat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's cottage was burned down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night-time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Ho-ti himself, which was the more remarkable, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were closely watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Peking, then an inconsiderable assize town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it, and burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy, against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given,—to the surprise of the whole court, townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present—without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision; and, when the court was dismissed, went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or

money. In a few days his Lordship's townhouse was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world. Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery, that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked (*burned*, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string, or spit came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful and seemingly the most obvious arts, make their way among mankind.

AN OPTIMIST LOOKS AT CHINA

By Hu Shih

It is in the direction of abolishing the numerous evils of the old tradition that China has achieved the greatest success in the past few decades. She has successfully prohibited the foot-binding which has been a terrible curse to Chinese womanhood for at least a thousand years. The hereditary absolute monarchy has been overthrown, and with it are gone all those institutions which for centuries have been its paraphernalia: the imperial household with its unlimited number of wives and concubines, the institution of eunuchism, the parasitic nobility born to power, and many others. With the revision of Chinese law and the reform of legal procedure, the ancient tortures and inhuman punishments were abolished. The opening of new schools marked the disappearance of the mechanical and exacting form of literary composition, known as the Octopartite, which had been required as the standard form in all state examinations, and for the mastery of which the best years and energies of the whole educated class of the past six centuries had been sacrificed.

These are a few of the more fundamental departures from the old tradition. They are not merely isolated items of reform; they are indicators of fundamental changes in attitudes toward the most important phases of life. The binding of women's feet, for example, was not merely an isolated institution of extreme cruelty and brutality, but also the clear and undeniable evidence of a general attitude toward womanhood which ten centuries of native religion and moral philosophy had failed to condemn and rectify. The abolition of foot-binding, therefore, is not merely the passing away of an inhuman institution, but an indication of the coming of an entirely new attitude toward womanhood. In that sense, it is veritably a moral revolution.

This revolution with regard to womanhood, which began with the agitation of Christian missionaries against foot-binding, has been going on all these years. It includes the opening of schools for

girls, the gradual spread of co-education in practically all universities and colleges, the entrance of women into professional and even official life, the recognition under the new Civil Code of their equal rights to inherit property with their brothers, and the rapid changes in the law and custom concerning marriage and divorce. The revolution is far from completion; but it has already achieved in a few decades what twenty-five centuries of Confucianist humanitarianism and twenty centuries of Buddhist mercy had never dreamed of achieving. May we not call this a great progress?