

英语注释读物

美国人谈美国

(原名 WORKING)

[美] 斯特兹·特克尔 著



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· 英语注释读物 ·

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〔美〕 Studs Terkel 著

王槐挺、徐存尧、陶朔玉 注释

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出版说明

本书作者斯特兹·特克尔(Studs Terkel)1912年生于纽约市,后随父母迁往芝加哥。他在芝加哥大学法学院毕业后,曾先后当过广播剧演员、唱片节目广播员、电视节目主持人等,并在芝加哥广播电台多年从事广播采访工作。

特克尔是美国当代著名作家。本书是他的第三部著作,出版之后,也和前两部著作一样,很快就成了畅销书,被人称为真实纪录真人真事的“纪实杰作”。

这个选本的篇幅约为原书的三分之一,所选各篇基本上保留了原作的面貌,只是对编辑体例和个别字句做了一些改变和删节。由于本书是用口语写成的,不规范的说法很多,所以我们在注释时,只对疑难字句和背景知识做了些解释,各种语法问题一般就不注了。

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TERRY PICKENS (Newsboy)

Cliff's^① brother. He is fourteen. He has a Prince Valiant haircut^②. He is Newburgh's^③ leading collector of rock recordings as well as its most avid reader of science fiction. There are fifty-seven customers on his paper route, yet it takes him considerably longer to get his work done than Cliff or Billy. "I ride the bike all over the place. I go both sides of the street. Cliff hasn't got any hills. ^④ Mine's all hills."

I've been having trouble collecting. I had one woman hid from me once. I had another woman tell her kids to tell me she wasn't home. He says. "Mom, newsboy." She says (whispers), "Tell him I'm not home." I could hear it from the door. I came back in half an hour and she paid me. She's not a **dead-beat**. ^⑤ They'll pay you if you get 'em. Sometimes you have to wait...

If I don't catch 'em at home, I get pretty mad. That means I gotta come back and come back and come back and come back until I catch 'em. Go around about nine o'clock at night and seven o'clock in the morning. This one guy owed me four dollars. He got real mad at me for comin' around at ten

① Cliff 是 Terry Pickens 的弟弟，也是个报童。

② 下缘剪齐的一种发型，看上去像带着顶瓜皮帽，所以又称 basin haircut。

③ 地名，在 Indiana 州。

④ =Cliff hasn't got any hills on his route.

⑤ 赖帐的人。

o'clock. Why'd I come around so late? He probably was mad 'cause I caught him home. But he paid me. I don't care whether he gets mad at me, just so I get paid.

I like to have money. It's nice to have money once in a while instead of being **flat broke**^① all the time. Most of my friends are usually flat broke. I spent \$150 this summer. On nothing—candy, cokes, games of pool, games of pinball. We went to **McDonald's**^② a couple of times. I just bought anything I wanted. I wonder where the money went. I have nothing to show for it. I'm like a gambler, the more I have, the more I want to spend. That's just the way I am.

It's supposed to be such a great deal. The guy, when he came over and asked me if I wanted a route, he made it sound so great. Seven dollars a week for hardly any work at all. And then you find out the guy told you a bunch of **bull**^③. You mistrust the people. You mistrust your customers because they don't pay you sometimes.

Then you get mad at the people at the printing corporation. You're supposed to get fifty-seven papers. They'll send me forty-seven or else they'll send me sixty-seven. Sunday mornings they get mixed up. Cliff'll have ten or eleven extras and I'll be ten or eleven short. That happens all the time. The printers, I don't think they care. They make all these stupid mistakes at least once a week. I think they're half-asleep or something. I do my job, I don't see why they can't do theirs. I don't like my job any more than they do.

Sunday morning at three—that's when I get up. I stay up later so I'm tired. But the dark doesn't bother me. I run into

① 身无分文，一贫如洗。

② 美国的一家汉堡包联号商店。

③ =bullshit, rubbish, nonsense.

things sometimes, though. Somebody's dog'll come out and about **give you a heart attack**.^① There's this one woman, she had two big German **shepherds**,^② great big old things, like three or four feet tall. One of 'em won't bite you. He'll just run up, charging, bark at you, and then he'll go away. The other one, I didn't know she had another one — when it bit me. This dog came around the bush. (Imitates barking.) When I turned around, he was at me. He bit me right there (indicates scar on leg). It was bleeding a little. I gave him a real dirty look.

He ran over to the other neighbor's lawn and tried to keep me from gettin' in there. I walked up and delivered the paper. I was about ready to beat the thing's head in or kill it. Or something with it. I was so mad. I called up that woman and she said the dog **had all its shots**^③ and "I don't believe he bit you." I said, "Lady, he bit me." Her daughter **started giving me the third degree**^④ "What color was the dog?" "How big was it?" "Are you sure it was our yard and our dog?" Then they saw the dogs weren't in the pen.

First they told me they didn't think I needed any shots. Then they said they'd pay for the doctor. I never went to the doctor. It wasn't bleeding a whole lot. But I told her if I ever see that dog again, she's gonna have to get her papers from somebody else. Now they keep the dog penned up and it barks at me and everything. And I give it a dirty look.

There's a lot of dogs around here. I got this other dog, a little black one, it tried to bite me too. It lunged at me, ripped

① 吓你一大跳。

② 牧羊狗。

③ 打过（预防狂犬病的）针。

④ 开始盘问起我来了。

my pants, and missed me. (With the glee of **W. C. Fields**^①) I kicked it *good*. It still chases me. There are two black dogs. The other one I've kicked so many times that it just doesn't bother me any more. I've kicked his face in once when he was biting my leg. Now he just stays under the bushes and growls at me. I don't bother to give him a dirty look.

There were these two other dogs. They'd always run out in the street and chase me. I kicked them. They'd come back and I'd kick 'em again. I don't have any problems with 'em any more, because they got hit chasin' cars. They're both dead.

I don't like many of my customers, 'cause they'll **cuss**^② me if they don't get their papers just exactly in the right place. This one guy cussed me up and down for about fifteen minutes. I don't want to repeat what he called me. All the words, just up and down. He told me he drives past all those **blank**^③ drugstores on his blank way home and he could stop off at one of 'em and get a blank newspaper. And I'm just a blank convenience.

I was so mad at him. I hated his guts. I felt like taking a lead pipe to him or something. But I kept my mouth shut, 'cause I didn't know if the press guy'd get mad at me and I'd lose my route. You see, this guy could help me or he could hurt me. So I kept my mouth shut.

A lot of customers are considerate but a lot of 'em aren't. Lot of 'em act like they're doing you such a favor taking the paper from you. It costs the same dime at a drugstore. Every time they want you to do something they threaten you: (imi-

① 美国的一个滑稽演员。

② =curse.

③ blank 即——符号，用以代替骂人的话。blank drugstores 也写成——drug-stores。

tates nasty, nasal voice) “Or I’ll quit.”

What I really can’t stand: you’ll be collecting and somebody’ll come out and start telling you all their problems. “I’m going to visit my daughter today, yes, I am. She’s twenty-two, you know.” “Look here, I got all my sons home, see the army uniforms?” They’ll stand for like half an hour. I got two or three like that, and they always got something to say to me. I’ll have like two hours wasted listening to these people blabbin’ before they pay me. Mmm, I don’t know. Maybe they’re lonely. But they’ve got a daughter and a son, why do they have to blab in my ear?

A lot of the younger customers have had routes^① and they know how hard it is, how mean people are. They’ll be nicer to you. They tend to tip you more. And they don’t blab all day long. They’ll just pay you and smile at you. The younger people frequently offer me a coke or something.

Older people are afraid of me, a lot of them. The first three, four weeks— (muses) they seemed so afraid of me. They think I’m gonna rob ’em or something. It’s funny. You wouldn’t think it’d be like this in a small town, would you? They’re afraid I’m gonna beat ’em up, take their money. They’d just reach through the door and give me the money. Now they know you so well, they invite you in and blab in your ear for half an hour. It’s one or the other. I really don’t know why they’re afraid. I’m not old, so I wouldn’t know how old people feel.

Once in a while I come home angry, most of the time just **crabby^②**. Sometimes kids steal the paper out of people’s boxes. I lose my profits. It costs me a dime. The company isn’t re-

① 不少年轻的订户，从前都干过送报的活儿。

② =cranky, ill-tempered.

sponsible, I am. The company wouldn't believe you probably that somebody stole the paper.

I don't see **where being a newsboy and learning that people are pretty mean or that people don't have enough money to buy things with is gonna make you a better person or anything.** ① If anything, it's gonna make a worse person out of you, 'cause you're not gonna like people that don't pay you. And you're not gonna like people who act like they're doing you a big favor paying you. Yeah, it sort of molds your character, but I don't think for the better. If anybody told me being a newsboy builds character. I'd know he was a liar.

I don't see where people get all this bull about the kid who's gonna be President and being a newsboy made a President out of him. It taught him how to handle his money and this bull. You know what it did? It taught him how to hate the people on his route. And the printers. And dogs.

CARL MURRAY BATES (Stonemason)

We're in a tavern no more than thirty yards from the banks of the Ohio. ② *Toward the far side of the river, Alcoa* ③ *smokestacks belch forth; an uneasy coupling of a bucolic past and an industrial present. The waters are polluted, yet the jobs out there offer the townspeople their daily bread.*

① 意思是：当个报童，你就知道了，现在的人是又小气，又缺钱。可知道这又有什么出息呢。

② 俄亥俄河。

③ Aluminium Company of America (美国铝公司) 的简称。

He is fifty-seven years old. He's a stonemason who has pursued his craft since he was seventeen. None of his three sons is in his trade.

As far as I know, masonry is older than carpentry, which goes clear back to Bible times. Stone mason goes back way *before* Bible time; the pyramids of Egypt, things of that sort. Anybody that starts to build anything, stone, rock, or brick, start on the northeast corner. Because when they built King Solomon's Temple, they started on the northeast corner. To this day, you look at your courthouses, your big public buildings, you look at the cornerstone, when it was created, what year, it will be on the northeast corner. If I was gonna build a septic tank, I would start on the northeast corner. (Laughs.) Superstition, I suppose.

With stone we build just about anything. Stone is the oldest and best building material that ever was. Stone was being used even by the cavemen that put it together with mud. They built out of stone before they even used logs. He got him a cave, he built stone across the front. And he learned to use dirt, mud, to make the stones lay there without sliding around — which was the beginnings of mortar, which we still call mud. The Romans used mortar that's almost as good as we have today.

Everyone hears these things, they just don't remember 'em. But me being in the profession, when I hear something in that line, I remember it. Stone's my business. I, oh, sometimes talk to architects and engineers that have made a study and I pick up the stuff here and there.

Every piece of stone you pick up is different, the **grain's**①

① 石头的纹理。

a little different and this and that. It'll split one way and break the other. You pick up your stone and look at it and make an educated guess. It's a pretty good day layin' stone or brick. Not tiring. Anything you like to do isn't tiresome. It's hard work; stone is heavy. At the same time, you get interested in what you're doing and **you usually fight the clock the other way.** ① You're not lookin' for quittin'. You're wondering you haven't got enough done and it's almost quittin' time. (Laughs.) I ask the hod carrier what time it is and he says two thirty. I say, "Oh, my Lord, I was gonna get a whole lot more than this."

I pretty well work by myself. On houses, usually just one works. I've got the hod carrier there, but most of the time I talk to myself, "I'll get my hammer and I'll knock the chip off there." (Laughs.) A good hod carrier is half your day. He won't work as hard as a poor one. He knows what to do and make every move count makin' the mortar. It has to be so much water, so much sand. His skill is to see that you don't run out of anything. The hod carrier, he's above the laborer. He has a certain amount of prestige.

I think a laborer feels that he's the low man. Not so much that he works with his hands, it's that he's at the bottom of the scale. He always wants to get up to a skilled trade. Of course he'd make more money. The main thing is the common laborer — even the word *common* laborer — just sounds so common, he's at the bottom. Many that works with his hands takes pride in his work.

I get a lot of phone calls when I get home; how about showin' me how and I'll do it myself? I always wind up doin' it for 'em. (Laughs.) So I take a lot of pride in it and I do get,

① 你老是想教时间过得慢点。

oh, I'd say, a lot of praise or whatever you want to call it. I don't suppose anybody, however much he's recognized, wouldn't like to be recognized a little more. I think I'm pretty well recognized.

One of my sons is an accountant and the other two are bankers. They're mathematicians, I suppose you'd call 'em that. Air-conditioned offices and all that. They always look at the house I build. They stop by and see me when I'm aworkin'. Always want me to come down and fix somethin' on their house, too. (Laughs.) They don't buy a house that I don't have to look at it first. Oh sure, I've got to crawl under it and look on the roof, you know...

I can't seem to think of any young masons. So many of 'em before, the man lays stone and his son follows his footsteps. Right now the only one of these sons I can think of is about forty, fifty years old.

I started back in the **Depression times**^① when there wasn't any apprenticeships. You just go out and if you could hold your job, that's it. I was just a kid then. Now I worked real hard and carried all the blocks I could. Then I'd get my trowel and I'd lay one or two. The second day the boss told me; I think you could lay enough blocks to earn your wages. So I guess I had only one day of apprenticeship. Usually it takes about three years of being a hod carrier to start. And it takes another ten or fifteen years to learn the skill.

I admired the men that we had at that time that were stonemasons. They knew their trade. So naturally I tried to pattern after them. There's been very little change in the work. Stone is still stone, mortar is still the same as it was fifty years ago. The style of stone has changed a little. We use

① 指 1929-1933 年的大萧条时期。

a lot more, we call it golf. A stone as big as a baseball up to as big as a basketball. Just round balls and whatnot. We just fit 'em in the wall that way.

Automation has tried to get in the bricklayer. Set 'em with a crane. I've seen several put up that way. But you've always got in-between the windows and this and that. It just doesn't seem to pan out. We do have a power saw. We do have an electric power mix to mix the mortar, but the rest of it's done by hand as it always was.

In the old days they all seemed to want it cut out and smoothed. It's harder now because you have no way to use your tools. You have no way to use a string, you have no way to use a level or a plumb. You just have to look at it because it's so rough and many irregularities. You have to just back up and look at it.

All construction, there's always a certain amount of injuries. A scaffold will break and so on. But practically no real danger. All I ever did do was work on houses, so we don't get up very high—maybe two stories. Very seldom that any more. Most of 'em are one story. And so many of 'em use stone for a trim. They may go up four, five feet and then paneling or something. There's a lot of skinned fingers or you hit your finger with a hammer. Practically all stone is worked with hammers and chisels. I wouldn't call it dangerous at all.

Stone's my life. I daydream all the time, most times it's on stone. Oh, I'm gonna build me a stone cabin down on the Green River. I'm gonna build stone cabinets in the kitchen. That stone door's gonna be awful heavy and I don't know how to attach the hinges. I've got to figure out how to make a stone roof. That's the kind of thing. All my dreams, it seems like it's got to have a piece of rock mixed in it.

If I got some problem that's bothering me, I'll actually

wake up in the night and think of it. I'll sit at the table and get a pencil and paper and go over it, makin' marks on paper or drawin' or however...this way or that way. Now I've got to work this and I've only got so much. Or they decided they want it that way when you already got it fixed this way. Anyone hates tearing his work down. It's all the same price but you still don't like to do it.

These fireplaces, you've got to figure how they'll throw out heat, the way you curve the fireboxes inside. You have to draw a line so they reflect heat. But if you throw out too much of a curve, you'll have them smoke. People in these fine houses don't want a puff of smoke coming out of the house.

The architect draws the picture and the plans, and the draftsman and the engineer, they help him. They figure the strength and so on. But when it comes to actually makin' the curves and doin' the work, you've got to do it with your hands. It comes right back to your hands.

When you get into stone, you're gettin' away from the pre-fabs, you're gettin' into the better homes. Usually at this day and age they'll start into sixty to seventy thousand and run up to about half a million. We've got one goin' now that's mighty close, three or four hundred thousand. That type of house is what we build.

The lumber is not near as good as it used to be. We have better fabricating material, such as plywood and sheet rock and things of that sort, but the lumber itself is definitely inferior. Thirty, forty years ago a house was almost entirely made of lumber, wood floors...Now they have vinyl, they have carpet, everything, and so on. The framework wood is getting to be of very poor quality.

But stone is still stone and the bricks are actually more uniform than they used to be. Originally they took a clay bank