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Vanity Fair



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社会科学文献出版社

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张道真 主编

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序

这次应社会科学文献出版社之邀，主编了这套《英语课外自学文库》，旨在为英语学习者创造一个良好的英语阅读环境。

长期以来，我深感国内缺乏适当的英语读物，在书店能够看到的英文原版图书不是价格昂贵，就是鸿篇巨制，对在校的学生及英语学习者来讲，这样既会造成畏难情绪又不实用，对培养他们学习英语的兴趣、提高他们的英语水平极为不利。社会科学文献出版社针对这种情形，同时配合他们的“自学英语行动计划”，精心策划出版《英语课外自学文库》，并诚邀我担纲主编，他们用心良苦，我也欣然应允。

《英语课外自学文库》首批编辑出版的各辑图书都是依据在世界各地流传广泛而受欢迎的英语文学作品缩写而成（以后还要出版各类英文版知识性读物），是长期在非英语国家从事英语教育的英国专家 S.E. Paces 特意为中国学生精心打造的。

这样的简写读本实际上也非常适合中国的初学英语的成年人。有些内容只要掌握上千词汇甚至几百词汇就能阅读，同时，语法结构也简单化。更为可取的是，每册图书都配有一张动画光盘，既可以像唱卡拉 OK 那样随字幕跟读，又可以在光盘上做相应的练习，而且光盘还具有修改练习错误的功能。总之，是一套听说读写兼顾，很实用又很有趣味的英语读物。

读原文著作，听原声讲话，通过英语学习英语，是吸收英语知识，掌握英语规律最有效的途径。大量阅读英语著作的作用很多，首先是培养阅读的兴趣和能力。认真读完这几十本简写著作，在为

精彩的故事所吸引的同时，英文阅读自然也打下了初步基础；其次是巩固课内所学知识，提高整体英文水平。课堂上所学的知识，孤零零很难巩固，如果在阅读中反复印证，就会既丰富了语法知识，又扩大了词汇量，不知不觉中语言修养就得到了稳步提高；再有就是通过阅读，能开拓视野，体会异域风情和文化背景，扩大知识面，反过来又为进一步学好英语打下基础。另外，在这里我要建议读者要充分利用原声朗读光盘来学习语音，提高口语能力。在读完一本书或一段文字之后，结合跟读录音，像讲故事一样的进行复述。试试看，你的英文水平会有神速的进步。

我念书的时候条件艰难，英文原著不容易找，我是千方百计地寻觅。现在，国家逐步富裕起来，有条件出版更多更好的英语读物给莘莘学子，让他们很容易从学校图书馆里借来阅读，让他们很容易从书店里买来做藏书随时翻阅。希望这套颇具规模的《英语课外自学文库》成为可以让学生们尽情遨游的英语学习海洋，成为广大读者乐而忘返的英语学习乐园。那么，作为主编，更作为一名英语教育工作者，我将倍感欣慰。

张道真

2003年7月于深圳

Introduction

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) lived at almost the same time as *Charles Dickens* (1812–1870). These two writers were the leading English novelists of the nineteenth century. While Dickens preferred to write about the sufferings of the poor people in England, Thackeray chose to expose the follies of the rich. He described his book "*Vanity Fair*" as a novel without a hero. Thackeray described men and women just as they are in real life – neither wholly good nor wholly bad, but all of them are deceived or deluded in some way. He wrote about the social life of the upper classes of England 170 years ago, at the time when Napoleon Bonaparte was threatening the peace of Europe.

The title "*Vanity Fair*" comes from the town of Vanity in John Bunyan's book "*The Pilgrim's Progress*". Bunyan describes a year-long fair held in that town, where hawkers sold fine houses, land, positions, titles, kingdoms, evil pleasures and delights of all kinds. The phrase "*Vanity Fair*" now means the world with its glittering temptations and pleasures which always deceive human beings. In his book, Thackeray describes a world peopled by greedy, pompous, self-satisfied men and women who live without God, without religion, and without moral scruples of any kind.

In this edition, Thackeray's story has been simplified so that students may enjoy reading it without having to use the dictionary too often. However, the author has tried to keep to Thackeray's unique way of telling the story and of describing the characters of people, hoping that the reader may understand at least a little of the genius that made Thackeray stand out amongst 19th century novelists.

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At Miss Pinkerton's School for Young Ladies



Early in the nineteenth century, on a lovely, sunny afternoon in June, a large family coach drew up in front of the iron gate of a stately brick building in *Chiswick*, London. The gate bore a bright brass plate with these words:

ACADEMY FOR YOUNG LADIES,
HEADMISTRESS, MISS PINKERTON

A black servant sitting beside the coachman climbed down and rang the bell. Instantly a score of young heads could be seen peering out through the narrow windows while the red nose of kind-hearted *Miss Jemima* appeared over the flower-pots in *Miss Pinkerton's* private drawing-room.

"*Mrs. Sedley's* coach is here, sister," announced *Miss Jemima*. "The black servant has just rung the bell and the coachman has a new red waistcoat."

"Have you completed all the preparations for *Miss Sedley's* departure?" asked that stately lady, *Miss Pinkerton*, the headmistress, in her usual majestic manner.

"I have, sister. The maids were up at four o'clock this morning, packing her luggage. I have placed in her trunk your letter to her mother, the bill, and of course a copy of *Doctor Johnson's* dictionary."

Miss Pinkerton graciously nodded her approval.

"Sister," went on *Miss Jemima* in a timid voice, "may we . . . do you think that we . . . I . . . might give a copy of the dictionary to *Becky Sharp*? She is also leaving today. She is going to spend a week with the *Sedleys*, you know."

"*Miss Jemima!*" thundered *Miss Pinkerton*, "have you lost your reason? Give a dictionary to *Becky Sharp*? *Never!*"

"Well, sister, it is only two shillings and nine-pence, and poor

Becky will be miserable if she does not get one. Every young lady receives one when she leaves."

"Not one word more, if you please," said Miss Pinkerton in an icy tone.

Miss Amelia Sedley's father was a rich London merchant while Miss Rebecca Sharp was only a poor pupil who paid no fees but who earned her schooling by teaching French. Miss Pinkerton was confident that she had done enough for Rebecca without granting her the honour of a farewell dictionary. Amelia was a favourite pupil of Miss Pinkerton's and it had long been clear that Rebecca was not.

Amelia is to play an important part in this story, and we shall now introduce her to the reader. She was a dear little creature, so sweet and tender-hearted that everyone loved her. Her eyes shone with tenderness and affection — except when they filled with tears, as they often did. The tender-hearted girl used to cry over a dead bird or over a mouse that the cat had killed. If anyone said an unkind word to her, she would simply burst into tears.

Miss Amelia now came slowly down the stairs, surrounded by her friends who were weeping, as she of course was, at her departure. They gave her flowers and presents which were loaded into the coach beside her trunks. With them was a very old and shabby leather trunk which bore the name of Miss Rebecca Sharp.

That young lady now came downstairs, quite alone. Miss Jemima touched her arm. "Becky," she said, "you'll go and say goodbye to Miss Pinkerton, won't you?"

"I suppose I must," said Becky. She knocked at Miss Pinkerton's door and entered calmly, saying in French with a perfect accent, "Miss Pinkerton, I have come to say goodbye."

Miss Pinkerton did not understand French but she was too proud to admit this, especially to this pupil whom she disliked so much. She said coldly, "Miss Sharp, I wish you good morning." She then turned to Amelia and kissed her affectionately. "Heaven

bless you, dear child!" she said to her. Over Amelia's shoulder she shot a look of great displeasure at Becky. Miss Jemima caught the look and pulled at Becky's arm. "Come away, Becky," she said and led her to the Sedleys' carriage. Nobody cried over Becky's departure.

At last Amelia finished her tearful farewells to her friends, and the black servant closed the door on his weeping mistress and her tight-lipped friend. He jumped up beside the coachman. "Gee-whup!" the coachman shouted to his horses, cracking his whip.

"Stop!" cried Miss Jemima, rushing to the gate with a parcel in her hands. "It's some sandwiches, my dear," she explained to Amelia. "You may be hungry on the way. And, Becky, here is a book for you that my sister . . . that . . . It is Doctor Johnson's dictionary . . . you must not leave without that. Goodbye. God bless you!" The kind-hearted woman stood in the garden, weeping with emotion.

The coach started off and that very instant Miss Sharp put her pale face out of the window and threw the book back into the garden. It fell at the feet of Miss Jemima who nearly fainted with terror at the awfulness of the deed. The carriage rolled away and the great iron gates closed. The two young ladies had left school and a new life was in front of them. What pleasure and what pain awaited them in *Vanity Fair*!





Rebecca Sharp in vanity fair



After Miss Sharp had seen the dictionary flying out of the carriage window and landing at the feet of the shocked Miss Jemima, she leant back in her seat with a smile of satisfaction on her pale face. "So much for the dictionary! Thank God I'm out of Chiswick!" she said.

"Oh Becky, how could you do it?" asked Amelia, who was as shocked as Miss Jemima at this bold action.

"I hate the place. I hate them all," cried Miss Sharp in a rage. "I hope that I shall never set eyes on them again. I have been treated worse than any servant in the kitchen. I have never had a friend or a kind word from anybody except you. I have been made to look after the little girls and to talk French until I have grown tired of my mother-tongue. If Miss Pinkerton should die this very moment, I shouldn't shed a tear." She paused to get her breath and then gave a twisted smile. "It was fun teaching Miss Pinkerton French. She could not understand a word. I suppose that was the reason why she let me leave. Well, thank heavens for French! *Vive la France! Vive Bonaparte!*"

"Oh, Rebecca, for shame!" cried Amelia in horror. At that time England was at war with France where *Napoleon Bonaparte* was the Emperor, and to say "Long live Bonaparte!" or "Long live France!" was like saying, "Long live the devil!" "Oh, Rebecca, how can you have such wicked, revengeful thoughts?"

"Revenge may be wicked, but it is natural," Rebecca replied. "I am no angel," and to speak the truth, she certainly was not.

Miss Sharp complained that no one was kind to her. Perhaps that was because she herself was not kind to anyone. The world is like a looking-glass and reflects our own faces. When we frown, it gives back a frown, and when we laugh, it laughs back at us. Miss Sharp was filled with bitterness towards her fellow creatures,

and if we look back into her early years, we can find the reason for this.

Miss Sharp's father, an unsuccessful artist, had been a teacher of drawing at Miss Pinkerton's Academy. He was a clever man and a very entertaining companion, but he was often drunk and always in debt. He had married a young Frenchwoman, an actress by profession. Miss Sharp always kept silent on that point. She used to say that her mother came from an aristocratic French family and indeed spoke proudly of her noble descent.

Rebecca's mother died when Rebecca was little more than a child. Some years later, when her father was seriously ill, he begged Miss Pinkerton to look after the young girl. He died when Rebecca was seventeen and Miss Pinkerton engaged the girl as a pupil-teacher. Her duties were to teach French. Her privileges were to have free board, lodging and schooling.

Rebecca was small, thin, pale and sandy-haired. Her beauty lay chiefly in her eyes which were of a peculiar greenish shade and strangely attractive. At the side of the other young ladies, tall and robust as most of them were, she looked a mere child. But she knew far more about life than did those innocent, sheltered girls. How often in the past had she had to deal with her father's creditors! How often had she had to tell the butcher, the baker, the grocer, that she could not pay now but she would later on! What talk, unsuitable for a young girl's ears, had she listened to when her father had entertained his drunken friends!

She hated the life at Miss Pinkerton's. The absurd vanity of the headmistress, the foolish good-nature of her sister, Miss Jemima, the silly talk of the older girls — all disgusted her. She had no liking for anyone but Amelia. (Who could help but love Amelia?) Rebecca envied the wealth of the other young ladies, and she was determined to get out of her "prison" (such was the name she gave to the Academy) as soon as she could.

Her chance came when Miss Pinkerton, learning of Becky's excellence in music, asked her to teach music. Miss Sharp refused.

"I am here to teach the girls French," she said, "not to teach music and save money for you. Pay me and I'll teach it. If you don't, I won't."

"How dare you speak to me like that?" Miss Pinkerton asked, with a great air of offended majesty. Becky simply laughed in her face. "Pay me or get rid of me," she said. "Find me a good place as governess in a nobleman's family." Miss Sharp made herself more and more unpleasant until Miss Pinkerton gave way. She recommended Miss Sharp for the post of governess in *Sir Pitt Crawley's* family. Then Miss Sedley, now in her seventeenth year, invited Becky to spend a week at her home before she began her duties.

It was not long before the Sedleys' coach drew up outside the family mansion in *Russell Square*. In the hall, the servants stood curtsying and smiling to welcome their young mistress, and Amelia's parents gave her a loving welcome. They welcomed Rebecca kindly too.

You can be sure that Amelia showed her friend over every room in the house and everything in every one of her drawers — her books, her piano, her dresses, and all her trinkets and treasures. When Becky saw the beautiful shawls that *Jos Sedley* had brought home for his sister from India, she said, "It must be delightful to have a brother," and easily won the pity of tender-hearted Amelia for being alone in the world, an orphan, without friend or family.

"Isn't your brother very rich?" Becky asked.

"I believe he has a large income."

"And is your sister-in-law very beautiful?"

"La! Joseph is not married," said Amelia with a laugh.

Rebecca fell silent and her face took on a thoughtful look. Her thoughts ran like this: Mr. Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried. Why shouldn't I marry him? I shall only be here a week and that is a very short time, but I shall have a try, I shall."

We must not blame Miss Sharp for her intention. She had no parents to find a husband for her. Indeed if she did not find a

husband for herself, there was nobody in the whole wide world who would take the trouble to do so.

Joseph Sedley was twelve years older than his sister. He had just arrived home on leave after working as a tax official in India. He was lazy, easy-going and greedy. He was very fat, as well. Jos did not like his own enormous size. Every now and then he made desperate attempts to lose weight, but his laziness and love of eating and drinking were too strong for him, and he was soon back at his usual three heavy meals a day. Like many fat men, he liked to have his clothes made too tight for him. He also insisted on bright colours and a youthful style. He was as vain as a young girl. Perhaps it was his vanity that made him so shy and sensitive. It was not going to be easy for Rebecca to win him in a week.



Rebecca and Amelia have their admirers



Jos Sedley did not come to his parents' house until the third day after the young ladies' arrival. Miss Rebecca hid her disappointment and certainly did not waste her time. She won the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Sedley by the respectful gratitude that she showed towards them. Mr. Sedley was delighted by the way she laughed at his jokes. The whole household thought that she was sweet and really charming. Jos thought so too when he met her. When she looked at him with her beautiful eyes, his heart went thump — thump, and his red face became redder still.

"I wish Becky could stay with us another week," said Amelia, and Jos' face showed his approval. A request for an extension of Becky's leave of absence was immediately sent off to Sir Pitt Crawley. That same evening, Jos invited the young ladies to a party in the Royal Gardens at *Vauxhall*. Everyone was pleased.

"We must find a gentleman to accompany *Emmy*," said Mr. Sedley. "Shall we send round and ask *George Osborne* if he will come?" He gave a knowing look at his wife who smiled with pleasure while Amelia blushed as only girls of seventeen can.

George Osborne came to dinner. After dinner, when they were about to leave the house for *Vauxhall*, there was a bad thunderstorm. The four young people decided to stay at home and, as Mr. and Mrs. Sedley went out to visit friends, they had the house to themselves.

George Osborne, now Lieutenant Osborne of the Guards, whose name had brought a blush to Amelia's cheek, was Mr. Sedley's godson. Throughout his twenty-three years of life he had been counted almost a member of the Sedley family. Joseph and Amelia had been like brother and sister to him. Amelia had fallen in love with the handsome young officer and he was fast falling in love with her. This pleased both the Sedley and the Osborne families as

they had long cherished the idea of marriage between the two.

"Will you play for us, Amelia?" asked George. He took her hand to lead her to where the piano stood at the back of the dimly-lighted drawing-room. This left Joseph alone with Rebecca at the drawing-room table.

"There is no need to ask family secrets," said Miss Sharp. "These two have revealed theirs."

"I believe the matter will be settled as soon as he is promoted captain. He's in the Guards, you know. A splendid fellow."

"And your sister is the dearest creature in the world. He is a very lucky man," said Miss Sharp with a sigh.

When an unmarried lady sits talking with a single gentleman on the subject of marriage, there is a feeling of intimacy between them. Joseph felt it and for the first time in his life found himself talking without any shyness or hesitation to a person of the opposite sex. Miss Sharp asked him question after question about India and this gave him a chance to air his knowledge and to show himself in a very favourable light. He was quite delighted with himself and his charming companion.



"Jos is really enjoying himself," whispered George to Amelia. "Your friend has worked a miracle."

"I do hope so," Miss Amelia whispered back. Like most women, she was a match-maker at heart and would have been very pleased to find a wife for her brother.

When Mr. and Mrs. Sedley came home, they found that the young people were so busy talking that they had not heard the sound of their carriage wheels.

"What a beautiful voice you have, Miss Sharp! I have never heard that song so beautifully sung," Jos was saying.

"Fine, Jos! That's the way," said Mr. Sedley who liked to tease his son. Jos instantly fell silent, and soon after, left the house.

The young people had arranged to go to Vauxhall the following night, and Amelia, as she kissed Rebecca good-night, whispered, "I am sure that Jos will speak tomorrow." The same night, as Joseph was getting into bed, he said to himself, "I'll pop the question at Vauxhall." Fortune certainly seemed to be smiling on Rebecca.

The next morning, Lieutenant Osborne came to the Sedleys' house to ask if he might bring his friend *William Dobbin* to dine there that evening before going to Vauxhall. Mrs. Sedley readily agreed.

William Dobbin was an old friend of George Osborne's. They had been at school together and now were serving in the same regiment. As a schoolboy, Dobbin had been a great admirer of George, believing him to be the bravest, cleverest and most handsome boy in the world. George had always made fun of shy, awkward and rather stupid Dobbin but he liked his admiration. Besides, Dobbin was a useful sort of fellow who was ready to do anything for a friend.

"There is not a finer soldier in the service," Osborne told the ladies that morning, "nor a better officer, although I must say that he is nothing much to look at." He looked towards the mirror at his own handsome image and smiled with much satisfaction.