

英语高年级系列阅读教材

Kramer Versus Kramer

克莱默夫妇之争

主编：王孟包
高卫东
编辑：仝亚辉
刘德江
冯 伟
陈万霞

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导 言

艾弗里·科尔曼 (Avery Corman)，纽约人士，是美国文坛近年来崛起的一颗新星。他曾为多家美国杂志撰稿，如麦考尔周刊 (McCall's)、红书 (Redbook)、纽约 (New York)、世界主义者 (Cosmopolitan) 以及读者文摘 (Reader's Digest)。他也曾因编写纪录影片的脚本而获奖。除了《克莱默夫妇之争》外，他还著有受人称颂的长篇小说《啊，上帝》、《皇帝的大雕像》等。

他的小说以现实主义的手法，对美国社会所存在的积弊进行无情的揭露，并给人以启迪。

艾弗里·科尔曼的长篇小说《克莱默夫妇之争》写于1977年，是在当时美国社会引起极大反响的一部畅销书。西方报刊和一些名人，接连发表了许多赞扬和推崇它的评论。小说后被改编成电影，并在1980年度美国“奥斯卡”金像奖的评选中，获得最佳影片、最佳导演、最佳电影改编、最佳男主角、最佳女配角五个一等奖。

小说描述了一对青年夫妇由于处理家庭事务上的矛盾而导致相互间悲欢离合的故事。小说发表后，在美国社会引起极大的反响，是因为它触及了千百万美国人为之痛苦和困扰，然而又不得其解的重大社会问题——家庭的解体。《克莱默夫妇之争》摆脱了某些以性关系和明争暗斗为主线而写家庭关系破裂的老调，刻画了一对既没有政治上的利害冲突以及对财产的觊觎和谋夺，又没有外遇的忠贞夫妇。他们本可以建立一个美满幸福的小家庭，但是却令人可悲地跌进了夫妻分离的痛苦深渊，从而带来了一系列的后患，并给下一代遗留了不可治愈的创伤。

作者在处理悲剧发生的原因上是别具匠心的。他没有简单地归咎于克莱默夫妇本身，而是不同凡响地揭示了在美国这样的社会里，人们一味追求个人的自由放纵，为满足自己的欲望逃避某些社会 and 家庭的职责，而引起社会道德观念的恶性变化。这是美国的社会制度中萌生出来的、有着深刻历史背景的根子，也正是小说令人深思之处。

在艺术风格上，小说的作者巧妙地运用现实主义的手法，向读者揭示了在美国社会华丽繁荣的外衣下，隐藏着使人们痛苦和困扰的根本问题。小说没有闹剧式的情节，没有故弄玄虚和骇人听闻的渲染，而是描述每日每时发生在读者周围的平凡而不起眼的细节，由此及彼，丝丝入扣，使读者感到亲切、逼真，从而激起人们的共鸣和深思，并催人泪下。尤其是对主人公及其周围人物的内心世界，作者作了富有人情味的淋漓尽致的刻画，或恼怒，或同情，或埋怨，或体贴，作者娴熟地用他那自然流畅、委婉如诉的文笔，对美国社会上存在的弊端作了毫不留情的砭刺。读后不禁使人掩卷长思，感慨无穷。

CONTENTS

Chapter One	(1)
Chapter Two	(11)
Chapter Three	(21)
Chapter Four	(28)
Chapter Five	(43)
Chapter Six	(53)
Chapter Seven	(64)
Chapter Eight	(79)
Chapter Nine	(89)
Chapter Ten	(99)
Chapter Eleven	(109)
Chapter Twelve	(124)
Chapter Thirteen	(139)
Chapter Fourteen	(147)
Chapter Fifteen	(156)
Chapter Sixteen	(170)
Chapter Seventeen	(182)
Chapter Eighteen	(193)
Chapter Nineteen	(208)
Chapter Twenty	(218)
The Film And The Stars	(223)
The American Family	(243)

CHAPTER ONE

He did not expect to see blood. He was not prepared for this, neither the books nor the instructor had mentioned bleeding or the brown stains on the sheets. He had been alerted to pain and he was prepared to help her overcome that.

"I'm here, honey. Come on, do your breathing now," he urged as he was supposed to, the good soldier.

"One, two, three, blow..."

"Fuck you!"^① she said.

He wanted to be the natural childbirth team member he had taken the course to be, the helpmate without whom none of it would be possible, but by the time they let him into the room, they had started without him. Joanna^② moaned random "sonofabitch's", while in the next bed, a woman was screaming in Spanish for her mother and for God, neither of whom appeared to be at hand.

"We'll do the breathing together," he said cheerily.

He was superfluous. Joanna closed her eyes to swim in the pain, and the nurse pushed him to the side so she could wipe up the blood and the shit.

When Joanna first presented her belly for him to listen to "it," he said it was a miracle. He said this automatically. The first signs of life had not really interested him. She was the one who had initiated the idea of having a baby, and he had agreed to this as the next logical step in the marriage. She became pregnant. It seemed to have little to do with him — her idea, her baby, her miracle.

Joanna began to stain severely in her sixth month. Her gynecologist^③, Dr Anthony Fisk, who had been identified in Vogue^④ magazine as one of the most successful, eligible young gynecologists in the Western world, prescribed to Joanna, "Rest in bed." There Joanna remained for the better part of three

① Fuck you—(a curse) damn you

② Joanna—乔安娜

③ gynecologist [ˌɡaɪniˈkɒlədʒɪst]—妇科学家

④ Vogue—《风尚》(杂志)

months, successfully reaching the full term of her pregnancy.

Joanna's attention to detail on such as the comparative merits of high chairs with beads for baby to spin and those without far exceeded his, and he ascribed it to the naturalness of motherhood that she, who had never been here before, had so quickly acquired the jargon of the trade. He had difficulty distinguishing between layette^① and bassinet^②, since layette sounded as though the baby should lay in it, rather than be the baby's clothes, while bassinet sounded like something the baby should bathe in, rather than lay on, where bumpers were easier for him to identify — they went around the crib and had visual educational material on them, like bunnies.

Lady Madonna^③ was the store where Joanna bought her maternity clothes, a name that seemed apt to him since she had satisfied every notion of the beautiful mother-to-be. Her skin was radiant, her eyes were bright, a madonna and chaste^④, thanks to the wisdom of Dr Fisk. Joanna Kramer was nearly professional in her looks, too slight at five-three to be taken for a model, possibly an actress, a striking, slender woman with long, black hair, a thin, elegant nose, large brown eyes, and somewhat chesty for her frame. "The prettiest girl around," Ted called her. His image of himself was less secure. A reasonably attractive man of five-ten with brown eyes and light-brown hair, he was self-conscious about his nose, which he felt was too long, and his hair, which had begun to thin. An indication of his self-image was that he felt most attractive when Joanna was on his arm. His hope was that the child would not, by some unfortunate irony, have his looks.

He was solicitous^⑤ during the pregnancy, he wanted to bring her spare-ribs^⑥ late at night, run out for ice-cream, but she had none of these clichéd whims^⑦, so he often brought her flowers instead, which before this he would have considered excessively romantic.

Joanna slept peacefully for a woman now in her seventh month. His nights were difficult as he moved in and out of wakefulness, a vague disturbance

① layette [lei'et]—新生儿的整套用品

② bassinet [bæsi'net]—摇篮或童车

③ Lady Madonna—圣母玛丽亚(此处为商店名)

④ chaste [tʃeɪst]—virtuous; decent, or modest in nature, behavior, etc.

⑤ solicitous [sə'lɪsɪtəs]—showing care, attention or concern

⑥ spare-rib—排骨

⑦ clichéd whims—queer habits of pregnant women

flickering^① just beyond his reach.

Ten couples assembled in a Greenwich Village^② brownstone. The promise of the instructor was that the women could have control over their bodies, which was greeted solemnly, no one noting the contradiction of ten bulging women, some of whom were having difficulty walking, having control over their bodies. The men, for their part, were promised they could be active participants in the birth of their own children. The instructor was an enthusiastic young woman in leotards^③, the only flat-bellied woman in sight.

The young woman then introduced into the proceedings a series of shocks to Ted's system. They were colour slides she projected on to a screen which showed the most graphic depiction he had seen yet of the development of the foetus^④, followed by pictures of new babies, awake mothers, beaming fathers. A real baby was coming, not a baby in a book or hidden within her belly, a breathing person, in his life.

The following day at lunchtime, while sitting on the steps of the 42nd Street Library eating an ice-cream pop, after having priced the birth announcements at Lord & Taylor^⑤ and before re-checking the prices on cribs at Saks^⑥, the realization came to him, the flickering in the distance took shape. It was fear. He was scared. He was scared Joanna would die. He was scared the baby would die. He was scared Joanna and the baby both would die. He was scared that they would be all right, but later he would die. He was scared about being able to afford the baby. He was scared about holding the baby, scared about dropping the baby. He was scared of the baby being born blind, retarded^⑦, crippled, with one arm, or one leg, with missing fingers, splotted^⑧ skin. He was scared that he would be found wanting, scared that he would not be a good father. He told Joanna none of this.

① flicker—to burn or shine unsteadily

② Greenwich Village—格林威治村

③ leotards—紧身衣裤

④ foetus [ˈfautas]—胎儿

⑤ Lord & Taylor—name of a corporation

⑥ Saks—name of a shop

⑦ retarded—畸形的

⑧ splotted [ˈsplotɪt]—having irregular patch (of colour)

The mechanism he chose for dealing with his fear was to obliterate^① it. He would be Godlike, control everything, leave nothing to ignorance or chance. He would be the best-trained, best-informed natural childbirth father anywhere. In the weekly classes, he was focused and intense. He could practically scan Joanna's middle with X-ray eyes like Superman and see the position of the baby. When Joanna began to experience increasing discomfort in her ninth month, he was extremely supportive. They practiced the breathing exercises daily at his encouragement. He was a model pre-daddy.

At the end of the natural childbirth course there was a motion picture shown in a local school of an actual birth by natural childbirth methods. In the audience were all types of expectant fathers and bellies of various possible shapes. He felt a kinship with these people, smiling at strangers. The film ended. The course was completed. Ted Kramer was ready to have the baby.

"Will you be disappointed in me if I don't succeed?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I was talking to somebody who had to be put out, and she feels guilty that she wasn't awake for it."

"There are no failures, like they said. Don't worry about that, darling. You take it as far as you can."

"Okay."

Just don't die on me, Joanna. I couldn't bear to lose you — which he could not say aloud. He did not want to frighten her, or bring his own fears to the surface.

When the call came, he was at his desk in the office, right where he was supposed to be, a ten-minute cab ride from the house, in control. It began to slip away from him at the start. He had not counted on the speed and the severity of Joanna's labour, and he reached the house to find her doubled up on the floor.

"My God — "

"It's bad, Ted — "

"Jesus — "

① obliterate [əb'lɪteɪt] — to remove all signs of

All the training suddenly went out of his head as he saw the extent of her pain. He held her until the contraction^① had passed. Then he took the bag which had been packed for days — he had kept his cab waiting — and they were on their way to the hospital.

"I can't stand it."

"You'll be okay, darling. Breathe."

"No."

"You can do it. Please, breathe!" And she made an attempt at the breathing rhythms, which were supposed to deprogramme^② the brain away from pain.

"It's gone."

"Darling, you've got to try to get on top of it next time. Remember. On top."

"Maybe they should just put me out."

At 79th Street and Park Avenue^③ the cab was stopped by a traffic jam.

"We can't have this!" he shouted at the cabdriver.

"What can I do, mister?"

Ted leaped out of the cab.

"Emergency! Woman in labour! Emergency!"

He raced out in the middle of traffic, holding cars up, directing others, an instant, crazed traffic cop. "Move that truck, goddammit. Let's break this up." Hardened New York City drivers bewildered by the sight of this maniac responded. In a moment of grandeur, he was a heroic figure rescuing his pregnant wife from a New York traffic jam. They sped to the hospital, the driver leaning on his horn at Ted's admonition^④— "Go through the lights. I'll pay the fines."

His moment was over, having lasted but a moment. When they reached the hospital, Joanna was taken upstairs, and he was alone in the reception-room waiting.

"This is unfair," he protested to the receptionist. "I'm needed upstairs

① contraction—fit of pain (产妇的)阵痛
② deprogramme—to divert the attention of
③ Park Avenue—公园大道
④ admonition [ædmə'nɪʃən]—warning

with my wife."

"They'll call down."

"When?"

"It takes about twenty minutes, Mr Kramer."

"These minutes are crucial."

"Yes, we know."

In the reception-room was a beefy^① man in his thirties, who lounged in a chair with the calm of someone watching television.

"First time?" he said to Ted.

"Do people really say that?" Ted snapped. "First time?"

"Listen, fella, I'm just being friendly."

"I'm sorry. It's — my first time," and Ted began to smile at himself.

"Third for me."

"The waiting. Just when you're feeling closest to her, they take her away."

"It'll be over soon."

"But I'm supposed to be there. We're doing natural childbirth."

"Right."

"Are you?"

"All due respects^②, that's crap. Knock her out, no pain, you got your baby."

"But that's primitive."

"Oh, yeah?"

"And don't you want to be there?"

"I'll be there. In a few days, in the middle of the night, I'll be there."

They had nothing else to say to each other; Ted fidgeted^③ in the correctness of his decision, the man relaxed with his. The receptionist told Ted he could go up, and he went to the maternity floor, where Joanna was theoretically waiting for his help. On the way, he went over the variety of tasks he was to perform: time her contractions, help her with the breathing, engage

① beefy—fat

② All due respects—to give you all due respects 请别见怪

③ fidget ['fɪdʒɪt]—to move the body restlessly

her in distracting^① conversation, dab her brow, moisten her lips. He would be in control. He would not even have time to be scared.

He walked into the room to find Joanna twisted on the bed in the middle of a contraction, and it was then that he received her “Fuck you!” when he tried to introduce the correct breathing procedures. The woman in the next bed was screaming in Spanish. The nurse was pushing him to the side. It was not going according to the course.

Eventually, Dr Fisk arrived, tall, a full head of blond hair. His first words to Ted were “Wait in the hall.” After a few minutes, the nurse motioned for Ted to come back into the room as Dr Fisk nodded and walked out.

“Won’t be long now,” the nurse said. “On the next contraction, we’re going to have her push.”

“How are you doing, honey?” he asked Joanna.

“This is the worst experience of my life.”

The contraction came, he encouraged her to push, and after several waves of severe contractions and pushing, he saw slowly appearing a black patch, the crowning of birth, the first signs of his own child. It was all of it outside his control, awesome.

“Mr Kramer?” Dr Fisk had returned. “We’re going to go in and have our baby.”

Ted kissed Joanna, she forced a smile, and he went with Dr Fisk to a room off the hall.

“Just do what I do, Mr Kramer.”

Ted played doctor. He scrubbed, put on a blue gown. And standing there in his doctor’s gown, looking in the mirror at the evidence of the charade^②, realizing how little control he actually had over any of it, he was suddenly engulfed by the fear he had been denying.

“Are you going to be all right?”

“I think so.”

“You’re not going to pass out in there, are you?”

“No.”

① distract—to draw away one’s attention from

② charade [ʃəˈreɪd]—象征性的动作

"You know, when they first started letting fathers into the delivery-room^①, somebody around here came up with a theory. He said that after seeing their wives give birth, some men temporarily pass out."

"Oh."

"He figured the men were either overwhelmed by the birth process, or they felt guilty about their wives' pain."

"Anyway, we don't have any real proof the theory holds up, but it makes for intriguing^② speculation, don't you think?"

"I'm not sure."

"Come, Mr Kramer. Don't pass out." Dr Fisk said, laughing, his insider's joke going unappreciated by Ted, whose face was frozen with tension.

They entered the delivery-room, where Joanna lay without dignity for this peak experience^③. She was prepared as though for some bizarre^④ sacrificial ritual^⑤, a sheet hung down her middle, her feet up in stirrups, in a room busy with people, doctors, nurses, and three student nurses who were there to observe Joanna with her legs up.

"Okay, Joanna, only push when I tell you then stop," the doctor said. They had practiced this at home; it was part of the course. Ted was momentarily reassured that something was familiar.

"Mr Kramer, stay next to Joanna. You can observe here." He indicated a mirror above the table.

"Now. Push! Push!" the doctor called out, and then everything very rapidly — Joanna screamed as the waves of pain kept coming, she tried to rest taking deep breaths between, and then more pushing as Ted held on to her, his arms around her as she pushed forward and forward. "Think out, baby!"^⑥ Ted said to her from the course, and she pushed with him holding on to her and pushed and pushed, and a baby was out crying, Joanna was crying, Ted was kissing Joanna on the forehead, on the eyes, kissing her tears, the others in the room not cold observers after all, beaming, even the star doctor, smiling, and

① delivery-room—room where pregnant women give birth to children

② intriguing [in'trɪŋ]—引起好奇心(或兴趣)的

③ peak experience—临产时刻

④ bizarre [bi'zɑː]—odd, strange

⑤ ritual ['ritʃʊəl]—仪式, 礼仪

⑥ Think out, baby—Try to think we are going to have a baby, darling.

during the celebratory^① mood as the baby was placed to the side to be weighed and tested, Ted Kramer stood over William Kramer and counted his limbs and his fingers and his toes and saw with relief that he was not deformed.

In the recovery-room^②, they talked quietly — details, people to be called, chores for Ted — and then she wanted to sleep.

“You were fantastic, Joanna.”

“Well, I did it.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

He went upstairs to the nursery for a last look at the baby, lying in a cardboard box. He was sleeping, a peanut^③.

“Good night, little boy,” he said aloud, trying to make it real for himself. “I’m your daddy.”

He went downstairs, made the phone calls, and for the next few days, aside from visits to the hospital when the baby’s presence was actual, while at work, while at home, Ted kept seeing the recurring image of that peanut face and was deeply touched.

He had not been the helpmate they talked about in the course, but breaking up the traffic jam was special, and then there was the moment — holding on to Joanna, physically holding her at the very moment of birth.

Later, when it all turned and he tried to remember if they were ever really close, he reminded her of that moment.

“I don’t distinctly remember your being there,” she said.

① celebratory [ˈsɛləˈbreɪtəri] — of celebration

② recovery-room — 产妇恢复室

③ peanut — small and lovely as a peanut

Exercises 1

I . Comprehension on language points:

1. (2 - 4) ... she, who had never been here before, had so quickly acquired the jargon of the trade.

What does the sentence mean in the context?

2. (2 - 12B) His image of himself was less secure.

What does the sentence mean? Why less secure?

3. (2 - 2B) His nights were difficult as he moved in and out of wakefulness, a vague disturbance flickering just beyond his reach.

Translate the sentence.

4. (4 - 15B) "Well, I was talking to somebody who had to be put out, and she feels guilty that she wasn't awake for it."

What does "to be put out" mean?

What does "it" stand for?

5. (4 - 6B) It began to slip away from him at the start.

What does the sentence mean?

6. (5 - 12) "Darling, you've got to try to get on top of it next time."

What does "to get on top of it" mean in the context?

7. (8 - 11) Dr Fisk said, laughing, his insider's joke going unappreciated by Ted.

What does the author mean by "insider's joke"?

Why did it go unappreciated by Ted?

II . Answer the following questions:

1. Was Ted proud of his wife? Give examples to support your point.
2. How did Ted rescue his pregnant wife from a New York traffic jam?
3. How did Ted feel when his wife was sent to the delivery room?
why?

CHAPTER TWO

They met on Fire Island^①, where he had a half share in a singles' group house^②, which permitted him to come out every other week-end, and she had a quarter share in a house, which gave her every fourth week-end, and with what was left of these arithmetic possibilities, they were at one of three open-house cocktail parties that were held on the Saturday of the week-end they both happened to be there.

Joanna was circled by three men on a crowded porch. Ted was watching her and their eyes met, as her eyes met with a dozen other men who were also hunting. Ted had been shuttling between a group house in Amagansett and the house in Fire Island, assuming out of the combined total of two singles' scenes^③ he would meet a Someone or at least a Someone Or Other. He had acquired the beach equivalent of street smarts^④ by now, which was to know where to stand and what to do to meet the pretty girl on the deck surrounded by three men and about to leave with one of them.

When Ted saw it was a person he had played volleyball with, he walked down to the front of the ramp to the house and leaned against the rail. He stopped him, exchanged banalities^⑤, and rather than appear to be rude, the man had to introduce Ted to his friend. She was Joanna and now they knew each other from the deck.

He did not see her on the beach the following day, but he took a guess at her being on one of the three busiest ferries off the island on Sunday night, so he sat at the ferry dock, trying to look like a nonchalant^⑥ week-enders reluctant to part with the sunset. She lined up for the second ferry. Ted noted she was not with a man, but with two girl-friends. Her friends were attractive, which would appeal to Larry^⑦ of the station-wagon. Ted's friend, Larry, was divorced and an

① Fire Island—火岛

② singles' group house—a house rented jointly by singles

③ singles' scenes—places where singles usually gather

④ street smarts—people in the street who know how to mix with others

⑤ banality [bəˈneɪləti]—陈腐、平庸

⑥ nonchalant [nɒnˈʃələnt]—unenthusiastic, casually indifferent

⑦ Larry—(人名)拉里

old station-wagon was left over from the settlement. Larry used it to offer women something of value at the end of a week-end, a ride back to the city. Entire group houses of women could be given rides, Larry in his station-wagon looking at times as though he were chauffeuring^① teams of stewardesses back from an airport.

"Hello, Joanna. It's Ted. Remember me? Do you have a ride?"

"Are you on this ferry?"

"I was just waiting for my friend. I'd better see where he is."

Ted strolled to the beginning of the dock and as soon as he was out of view, raced back to the house.

"Pretty ladies, Larry!" and he rushed him out of the house down to the dock.

Heading back to the mainland it was one of Joanna's friends who asked Ted the inevitable. "What do you do?" He had not fared well with the question over the summer. The women he had been meeting seemed to have a rating system^②; and on a scale of ten, doctors got a ten, lawyers and stockbrokers a nine, advertising agency people a seven, garment^③ centre people a three, unless they owned the business, which got them an eight, teachers, a four, and all others including "What exactly is that? 's, which was often Ted, got no more than a two. If he had to explain further, what exactly it was and they still did not know, he was probably down to a one.

"I'm a space salesman."

"Who with?" Joanna asked. He did not have to explain, a possible five.

"Leisure magazines."

"Oh, right,"

"How do you know them?"

"I'm at J. Walter."

She worked at an advertising agency, good and not so good, he thought. They were in the same field.

Joanna Stern had come to New York with a liberal arts degree from Boston University, which she discovered was not the key to the city. She had to take a

① chauffeur [ˈʃɔːfɜː]—to transport passengers like a chauffeur

② rating system—system of evaluation

③ garment—clothes; costume

secretarial course to qualify as a secretary and moved from “glamour job”^① to “glamour job,” one less tedious than the next, as her office skills improved, and she was eventually executive secretary to the public relations head of J. Walter Thompson^②.

When she was twenty-four she took her first apartment alone. She had become involved with a married man in her office and a room-mate was inconvenient. The affair lasted three months, ending when he drank too much, vomited on her rug and took the train home to his wife in Port Washington.

She would go back every Christmas to Lexington^③, Massachusetts and file a favourable progress report, “I’m dating and doing well at work.” Her father owned a successful pharmacy in town, her mother was a housewife. She was an only child, indulged, the favourite niece in the family, the favourite cousin. When she wanted to summer in Europe she did, when she wanted new clothes she had them, but as her mother was fond of saying, she was “never any trouble.”

Occasionally, she would scan the want ads to see if there might be something else she could do in the world. She was earning \$175 a week, the work was mildly interesting, she did not have much ambition to change. It was as she had said to her parents, “I’m dating and doing well at work.” Events had become familiar, though Bill, her present married man was interchangeable with Walt, the married man of the year before, and of the non-marrieds. She was starting to feel a little cheap and said she wanted to be invited up to his home in Stanford. Naturally, this was impossible, so they did the next best thing — they broke up.

Ted was not next. She kept him in a holding pattern somewhere over Fire Island and Amagansett. Ted Kramer had arrived at this point after wandering in and out of women’s lives into his early thirties, as they had wandered in and out of his. He completed NYU with a degree in business administration, qualifying him to do virtually anything or nothing. He took a job as a sales trainee for a small electronics firm, went into the Army as a six-month reservist, and had a one-year career as a wholesale appliances salesman. He never considered the

① glamour job—妖艳职业

② Walter Thompson—name of a company

③ Lexington—列克星敦