



万水英语系列丛书

美国历史文化赏析系列



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美国文化反思

[美] M. E. Sokolik 著



Rethinking America

Advanced Readings in U.S. Culture



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万水美国历史文化赏析系列

美国文化反思

[美] M. E. Sokolik 著

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内 容 简 介

本书精选了 40 篇不同种类的阅读材料,包括散文、短篇小说、演讲、新闻故事等,对美国的文化和价值观念等进行了反思。每章都针对一个话题提供了两篇阅读材料,并附有对美国文化和当代生活侧面的分析,使读者了解美国人的态度、想法和价值观,并帮助读者进行与本国文化的比较,使读者在多文化交流中培养分析、比较和鉴别的能力。为了便于研究,本书保留了原著原貌,希望读者能够辨证地对待书中的一些观点。

本书适合大中专院校中高年级的师生、语言文化研究人员和中高级水平的英语爱好者。

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前言

本书的编写源起于教授以英语为第二外语的课堂的切身体会。许多教授第二外语的教师，包括我本人在内，都迫切地感觉到，应该寻找一些适宜的阅读材料和信息帮助学生尽快进入与美国文化的对话。

本书收集了不同种类的阅读材料——包括散文、短篇小说、演讲、新闻故事等。结合阅读材料设计了许多讨论题、单词扩充练习、写作题和进行相关练习。本书既可以在教师指导下使用，也可作为学生自备参考书。本书鼓励文化间的比较，向学生提供机会，让他们将书中内容与自己的价值观进行比较，同时，在与美国当地人进行接触的过程中，学生将学习更多的知识。

所有这些练习与活动，都是为了既增强学生的英语语言运用技能，又通过生动的相关阅读材料提高学生对文化的理解程度。

文章的结构

章的结构

每一章都是围绕着一个中心主题组织材料的。主题下面又有两个分主题。每个分主题包含两篇阅读材料，从不同的角度来探讨这个话题。

介绍性材料

Before You Read (背景材料)

每个阅读材料都由与话题相关的图表或信息予以引入。在该信息后，是阅读材料的一个简短总结，之后学生被要求在阅读正文前思考一至两个问题。

Glossary (词汇)

在有些材料中，也许会有些传统的大学词典中很难找到，或指代学生不太熟悉的人或地点的词汇。在这种情况下，本书列出了一个词汇表，在学生阅读材料前对这些不太熟悉的条目进行定义或解释。

About the Author (关于作者)

书中简短地介绍了大多数作者的生平，以备学生参考。

阅读材料

每个阅读教材都标有一些行数参数，以利于学生和老师查阅。

课后阅读

Check Your Comprehension(阅读理解)

每个阅读材料后都紧跟着三个以上的针对文章实际内容的问题。

Vocabulary(词汇练习)

材料后有词汇练习，它们的形式因材料而异。

Think About It (思考题)

本部分中所提问题要求学生超越材料本身的内容，联系自己与文章或故事所讨论主题相关的知识或经历。最后一个问题鼓励进行集体讨论或进行课外调查，看电视节目等。

综合练习

在每一章的结束，都有一些练习和活动帮助学生将这章四个阅读材料中的不同观点综合起来。

Discussion and Debate (讨论和辩论题)

这部分内容提供了几个问题以备课堂讨论或辩论之用。每章的最后一个问题都是相同的：要求学生结合本单元内容向同学提出另外一个问题。

Writing Topics (写作题目)

写作题目面向不同的写作水平，从简单的问答题或一段文字到信件和完整的论文，非常丰富。

On Your Own (自学)

本部分内容给出了对这一单元涉及话题的自学建议。练习都是以学生为主的。

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1

Economics



PART ONE (第一部分)**Money: The Almighty Dollar (金钱: 万能的美元)****Before You Read (背景材料)**

Table 1.1 Median Family Income
(in today's dollars)

1960	\$ 5,620
1970	8,734
1975	11,800
1980	17,710
1985	23,618
1987	25,986

Source: Bureau of the Census,
*Statistical Abstract of the United
States, 1989* (Washington, D.C., 1989),
table 712.

The United States' economic system, based on the principles of capitalism, is often said to produce materialistic values in the country's citizens, who care too much about money and possessions. In the following reading, the authors discuss briefly the basis of this materialism and of other American cultural values.

Before you read, think about these questions:

- Are Americans too concerned with wealth?
- What kinds of attitudes about wealth do people in your own culture have?

About the Authors (关于作者)

Conrad M. Arensberg and Arthur N. Niehoff are American anthropologists and editors of the book *Introducing Social Change*, from which this excerpt was taken.



American Cultural Values

by Conrad M. Arensberg and Arthur N. Niehoff

The rich resources of America, along with the extraordinary growth of its industrial economy, have brought a widespread wealth of material goods such as the world has not seen before. There has been a wholesale development and diffusion of the marvels of modern comfort—swift and pleasant transportation, central heating, air conditioning, instant hot and cold water, electricity, and laborsaving devices of endless variety. The high value placed on such comforts has caused industries to be geared to produce ever greater quantities and improved versions. Americans seem to feel that they have a “right” to such amenities.

10 Achievement and success are measured primarily by the quantity of material goods one possesses, both because these are abundant and because they indicate how much money an individual earns. This material evidence of personal worth is modified by the credit system; but still, credit purchases will carry an individual only so far, after which credit
15 agencies will refuse to advance more without evidence of fundamental wealth.

Since there is little display value in the size of one's paycheck or bank account, the average individual buys prestige articles that others can see: expensive clothing or furniture, a fine car, a swimming pool, an
20 expensive home, or one of the endless variety of devices that may have other functions but can also readily be seen by visitors—power mowers, barbeque paraphernalia, television, and stereophonic systems. A person's status is affected to a secondary degree by his level of education, type of occupation, and social behavior; but even these qualities seem
25 to be significant only in terms of how much income they help him to obtain. Thus, a college professor who has earned his Ph.D. will have less status in the general community than a business executive or film actor who has no college education but commands a much larger salary.

Excerpted from Conrad M. Arensberg and Arthur N. Niehoff, eds., *Introducing Social Change* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, Inc., 1971).

Check Your Comprehension (阅读理解)

1. According to the authors, how is status achieved in American culture?
2. How important is education to a person's status?
3. How is status most likely to be exhibited by an average American?

Vocabulary: In Context (结合上下文找出单词含义)

1. *Wholesale* (line 3) is closest in meaning to:
 - a. cheap, inexpensive
 - b. large, unlimited
 - c. not retail
2. *Amenities* (line 9) is closest in meaning to:
 - a. things that improve one's life
 - b. friendships
 - c. religious beliefs
3. If something has *little display value* (line 17), it:
 - a. has a low price
 - b. cannot be shown to other people
 - c. is too small to read
4. *Paraphernalia* (line 22) is closest in meaning to:
 - a. fire
 - b. food
 - c. equipment
5. *Commands* (line 28) is closest in meaning to:
 - a. directs
 - b. deserves
 - c. controls

Think About It (思考题)

1. What are some of the "side effects" of modern comforts?
2. Why do you think a movie actor has more "status" than a college professor? Do you think this value is appropriate?
3. How are attitudes about wealth in your own culture different from or similar to American ones?
4. (i) Which of the following things do *you* think are prestigious?
Place a check mark on the line next to each one.
(ii) Now ask an "average American" which items he or she finds prestigious. Place a check mark on each of those lines.

	YOU	"AVERAGE AMERICAN"
a. Having a Ph.D. in English	_____	_____
b. Having a Ph.D. in economics	_____	_____
c. Owning a bank	_____	_____
d. Owning a flower shop	_____	_____
e. Hiring a full-time babysitter (\$15,000 per year)	_____	_____
f. Hiring a full-time housekeeper (\$15,000 per year)	_____	_____
g. Eating in a French restaurant (\$50.00)	_____	_____
h. Eating in an American restaurant (\$50.00)	_____	_____
i. Owning an American pickup truck (\$25,000)	_____	_____
j. Owning a German sedan (\$25,000)	_____	_____

- (iii) How are your choices different from the average American's?
- (iv) Finally, looking at pairs a-b, c-d, etc., would one item of each pair be considered more prestigious than the other? Since money is not the most important factor in these choices, what other factors could influence "prestige"?

Before You Read (背景材料)

Table 1.2 Consumer Credit 1987

number of credit card owners	107,200,000
number of credit cards	841,000,000
dollars spent using credit cards	\$374,800,000,000
total credit card debt	\$152,500,000,000

Source: *The Nilson Report*, HSN Consultants (Los Angeles, 1988).

As table 1.2 shows, many Americans depend on credit to purchase the things they want. A recent trend in credit has been “gold” credit cards, which offer the user more services and, some might say, more “prestige.”

The following article tells of one man's experience with a “prestige” credit card.

Before you read, think about these questions:

- How are most purchases made in your culture (for example, with cash, checks, credit cards, or some other system)?
- Do you have any credit cards? If not, would you like to?

Glossary (词汇)

Fort Lauderdale City in the state of Florida; the headquarters of the American Express Corporation are found there.

Toys “Я” Us Large chain of toy stores

About the Author (关于作者)

Bob Greene is a journalist who writes for many newspapers and magazines. He has written several books as well.

Platinum Card

by Bob Greene

He had an embarrassed, furtive sound to his voice. He said he had a confession to make.

"I got the American Express Platinum Card," he said. He was referring to the new credit cards that are sold for \$250 a year to the top echelon of American Express's charge-card customers. 梯队 梯次

"You really have one?" I said.

"You can't use my name," he hurriedly said. "I'm a funeral director, and it wouldn't look good for the families around here to think that I'm spending their hard-earned money on something like the Platinum Card."

10 I asked him to tell me the whole story. "Start at the beginning," I said.

"Well, first I just had the regular American Express green card," he said. "I thought that was a pretty good card to have. Then we were at lunch at Kon-Tiki Ports, and the bill came. I gave the waiter my card. He 15 came back and said, 'I'm sorry, but it's going to be a while. There's a problem with the phone lines, and we have to wait to get verification on your card.'"

"My friend who was with me whipped out his Gold Card. He said, 'Will we have to wait with this?' The waiter said, 'No *sir*! Right away!'"

20 "They said *sir* to him. They never said *sir* to me. I thought, 'Phooey on this. I need a Gold Card!'"

So he applied for one and he got it. American Express's regular green cards cost \$35 a year; the Gold Cards cost \$65 a year. But he figured it was worth it.

25 Then, earlier this year, he looked at an American Express imprinting machine in a restaurant. There were decals on it showing the regular green card and Gold Card. But there was a new decal, too: the Platinum Card.

"I asked the person at the restaurant about it," he said. "He told me 30 that the Platinum Card costs \$250 a year, and only the very elite of American Express's customers could get one."

"I had to do it. I called American Express and asked how I could get a Platinum Card. The person on the phone was very snotty about it. The person said, 'We will determine who receives a Platinum Card. You cannot 35 apply for it. You must be invited.' Very aloof."

"Part of me realized that there is something very warped about a society that tells you that you can pay \$250 for a charge card that has

a different color to it than your regular charge card—and you actually want the \$250 card anyway.

40 “But each day I looked in my mail for an invitation. It didn’t come and it didn’t come. I felt brokenhearted. I wasn’t good enough for the Platinum Card. I wondered what I had done to get American Express mad at me.

“Each day I woke up and thought, ‘Maybe this is the day.’ Each day
45 passed, and I wasn’t one of the chosen people.

“But then it happened. In October, it came. The envelope was like parchment. There were platinum lines all over it. It made me feel like someone was asking me to marry their daughter.

“I opened it up. It was an invitation to obtain a Platinum Card. Not
50 an application—an invitation.

“I sent my check for \$250 in. When the card came, it was in an envelope from Fort Lauderdale. This is no kidding—I took it in the bathroom to open it up. I didn’t want anyone else around.

“Inside me, a little voice was saying ‘You’re living a double standard.’ I told the little voice to shut up.
55

“I had to use it right away. So I went down to a Toys “Я” Us store to buy a video game cartridge for one of my kids. Very casually, I handed my new Platinum Card to the girl behind the counter.

“All she said is, ‘I’m new here, I’ve never done an American Express
60 card before. I have to get the manager.’ The manager came up and he just processed the card. No big reaction. No bells ringing. People were standing behind me in line—no reaction from them either. I felt like I wanted to cry. I had just laid a Platinum Card on them—and nothing.

“I went home and walked in the house with a big smile on my face.
65 I said to my wife, ‘Guess what I got?’ I whipped out my Platinum Card. She said, ‘That’s nice, dear.’ I said, ‘No, honey, you don’t understand. This is a *Platinum Card*. She said, ‘Yes, honey. An American Express Card.’”

He said it was all downhill from there. So far, there has been virtually no reaction to the Platinum Card he spent \$250 for. Once he took
70 a friend to lunch, and when he paid for it with his Platinum Card, he thought he noticed two men at the next table looking over and smiling.

“But after lunch I kept asking myself: Were they smiling or were they smirking? Did they think I was one of life’s special few for having a Platinum Card? Or did they think I was a jerk for putting out \$250 for a
75 credit card?”

In his dark moments, he has had a troubling thought: “I see them sitting around in the American Express boardroom, and suddenly one of the big corporate bosses says: ‘I need a new pool in my back yard. Let’s color some of our cards platinum and see if we get some suckers
80 to pay \$250 for them.’”