

英语分级阅读课本

GRADED

ENGLISH

READERS

STAGE 2(B)

龙 日 金 主 编

西南师范大学出版社



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前 言

《英语分级阅读课本》是供高等院校英语专业低年级阅读课(原名泛读课)使用的一套系统教材,全书共分六级、十二册。它是根据国家教委新近组织制定的《高等院校英语专业基础阶段教学大纲》为指导,结合西南地区高校英语教学实际而编写的,旨在培养英语专业学生的阅读能力,提高阅读课的教学质量。

本书具有以下几个方面的特点:

1.循序渐进,拾级而上。全书内容由浅入深,难度逐册增大。学员从中学英语水平开始阅读,到基础阶段结束时可达到借助词典读懂中等难度原著的水平。六级课本的词汇量分别为:1000~1200,1200~1500,1500~2000,2000~3000,3000~4000,4000~5000。

2.便于教师课堂操作。课文长度按不同的级别分别控制在1000,1500,2000,3000,4000,5000字左右,教师可根据《大纲》的具体要求规定每节课的阅读时间,训练学员的速读能力。

3.题材广泛。教材的课文全部选自英、美近期出版物,语言生动活泼,清新明快。体裁包括:小说、传记、历史、游记,科普、科幻、神话、圣经故事和描写英、美等国风土人情的作品。选材上尽量照顾了内容的知识性、科学性和趣味性。

4.具有可检查性。每篇课文后都编有“阅读理解”、“词

汇”和“答问”三种练习，教师可随时了解学生对文章的理解程度、对词汇的掌握情况及他们的口头表达能力。

5. 读者面广。本教材可供本科院校、专科院校及教育学院英语专业低年级学生使用（不同的学校可根据学员的实际水平选用不同起点和终点）。本教材还可帮助自学英语人士及广大英语爱好者提高阅读速度和理解能力，有较大的适用性。

由于编者水平有限，教材可能有不少缺点，敬请各界读者不吝指正。

编 者

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THE LADY, OR THE TIGER?

Along, long time ago, there was a semi-barbaric king. I call him semi-barbaric because the modern world, with its modern ideas, had softened his barbarism a little. But still, his ideas were large, wild, and free. He had a wonderful imagination. Since he was also a king of the greatest powers, he easily turned the dreams of his imagination into facts. He greatly enjoyed talking to himself about ideas. And, when he and himself agreed upon a thing, the thing was done. He was a very pleasant man when everything in his world moved smoothly. And when something went wrong, he became even more pleasant. Nothing, you see, pleased him more than making wrong things right.

One of this semi-barbaric king's modern ideas was the idea of a large arena. In this arena, his people could watch both men and animals in acts of bravery.

But even this modern idea was touched by the king's wild imagination. In his arena, the people saw more

than soldiers fighting soldiers, or men fighting animals. They enjoyed more than the sight of blood. In the king's arena, the people saw the laws of the country at work. They saw good men lifted up and bad men pushed down. Most important, they were able to watch the workings of the first law of Chance.

Here is what happened when a man was accused of a crime. If the king was interested in the crime, then the people were told to come to the arena. They came together and sat there, thousands of them. The king sat high up in his king's chair. When he gave a sign, a door below him opened. The accused man stepped out into the arena. Across from him, on the other side of the arena, were two other doors. They were close together and they looked the same. The accused man would walk straight to these doors and open one of them. He would choose either one of the doors. He was forced by nothing and led by no one. Only Chance helped him--or didn't help him.

Behind one of the doors was a tiger. It was the wildest, biggest, hungriest tiger that could be found. Of course, it quickly jumped on the man. The man quickly--or not so quickly--died. After he died, sad bells rang, women cried, and the thousands of people walked home slowly.

But, if the accused man opened the other door, a

lady would step out. She was the finest, and most beautiful lady that could be found. At that moment, there in the arena, she would be married to the man. It didn't matter if the man was already married. It didn't matter if he was in love with another woman. The king did not let little things like that get in the way of his imagination. No, the two were married there in front of the king. There was music and dancing. Then happy bells rang, women cried, and thousands of people walked home singing.

This was the way the law worked in the king's semi-barbaric country. Its fairness is clear. The criminal could not know which door the lady was behind. He opened either door as he wanted. At the moment he opened the door, he did not know if he was going to be eaten or married.

The people of the country thought the law was a good one. They went to the arena with great interest. They never knew if they would see a bloody killing or a lovely marriage. This uncertainty gave the day its fine and unusual taste. And they liked the fairness of the law. Wasn't it true that the accused man held his life in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter. The princess was as beautiful as any flower in the king's imagination. She had a mind as wild and free as the king's. She had

a heart like a volcano. The king loved her deeply, watched her closely, and was very jealous of her. But he could not always watch her. And in his castle lived a young man. This young man was a worker. He was a good worker, but he was of low birth. He was brave and handsome, and the princess loved him, and was jealous of him. Because of the girl's semi-barbarism, her love was hot and strong. Of course, the young man quickly returned it. The lovers were happy together for many months. But one day the king discovered their love. Of course he did not lose a minute. He threw the young man into prison and named for his appearance in the arena.

There had never been a day as important as that one. The country was searched for the strongest, biggest, most dangerous tiger. With equal care, the country was searched for the finest and most beautiful young woman. There was no question, of course, that the young man had loved the princess. He knew it, she knew it, the king knew it, and everybody knew it, too. But the king didn't let this stand in the way of his excellent law. Also, the king knew that the young man would now disappear from his daughter's life. He would disappear with the other beautiful lady. Or he would disappear into the hungry tiger. The only question was, 'Which?'

And so the day arrived. Thousands and thousands of people came to the arena. The king was in his place,

across from those two doors that seemed alike but were truly very different.

All was ready. The sign was given. The door below the king opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, he seemed like a prince. The people had not known that such a fine young man had lived among them. Was it any wonder that the princess had loved him?

The young man came forward into the arena, and then turned towards the king's chair. But his eyes were not on the king. They were on the princess, who sat to her father's right. Perhaps it was wrong for the young lady to be there. But remember that she was still semi-barbaric. Her wild heart would not let her be away from her lover on this day. More important, she now knew the secret of the doors. Over the past few days, she had used all of her power in the castle, and much of her gold. She had discovered which door hid the tiger, and which door hid the lady.

She knew more than this. She knew the lady. It was one of the fairest and loveliest ladies in the castle. In fact, this lady was more than fair and lovely. She was thoughtful, loving, kind, full of laughter, and quick of mind. The princess hated her. She had seen, or imagined she had seen, the lady looking at the young man. She thought these looks had been noticed and even returned.

Once or twice she had seen them talking together. Perhaps they had talked of nothing important. But how could the princess be sure of that? The other girl was lovely and kind, yes. But she had lifted her eyes to the lover of the princess. And so, in her semi-barbaric heart, the princess was jealous, and hated her.

Now, in the arena, her lover turned and looked at her. His eyes met hers, and he saw at once that she knew the secret of the doors. He had been sure that she would know it. He understood her heart. He had known that she would try to learn this thing which no one else knew--not even the king. He had known she would try. And now, as he looked at her, he saw that she had succeeded.

At that moment, his quick and worried look asked the question: 'Which?' This question in his eyes was as clear to the princess as spoken words. There was no time to lose. The question had been asked in a second. It must be answered in a second.

Her right arm rested on the arm of her chair. She lifted her hand and made a quick movement towards the right. No one saw except her lover. Every eye except his was on the man in the arena.

He turned and walked quickly across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating. Every breath was held. Every eye was fixed upon that man. Without

stopping for even a second, he went to the door on the right and opened it.

Now, the question is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady?

As we think deeply about this question, it becomes harder and harder to answer. We must know the heart of the animal called man. And the heart is difficult to know. Think of it, dear reader, and remember that the decision is not yours. The decision belongs to that hot-blooded, semi-barbaric princess. Her heart was at a white heat beneath the fires of jealousy and painful sadness. She had lost him, but who should have him?

Very often, in her thoughts and in her dreams, she had cried out in fear. She had imagined her lover as he opened the door to the hungry tiger.

And even more often she had seen him at the other door! She had bitten her tongue and pulled her hair. She hated his happiness when he opened the door to the lady. Her heart burned with pain and hatred when she imagined the scene: He goes quickly to meet the woman. He leads her into the arena. His eyes shine with new life. The happy bells ring wildly. The two of them are married before her eyes. Children run around them and throw flowers. There is music, and the thousands of people dance in the streets. And the princess's cry of sadness is lost in the sounds of happiness!

Wouldn't it be better for him to die at once? Couldn't he wait for her in the beautiful land of the semi-barbaric future?

But the tiger, those cries of pain, that blood!

Her decision had been shown in a second. But it had been made after days and nights of deep and painful thought. She had known she would be asked. She had decided what to answer. She had moved her hand to the right.

The question of her decision is not an easy one to think about. Certainly I am not the one person who should have to answer it. So I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door--the lady, or the tiger?

I. COMPREHENSION: Answer the questions without looking back at the passage. When finished, check your answers with the teacher.

1. The king became even more pleasant when something went wrong because .
 - a. he was semi-barbaric
 - b. he was a very strange man

- c. he took great pleasure in making wrong things right
- d. he easily turned the dreams of imagination into facts
2. Which of the following is not true?
- The king loved his daughter very much.
 - The princess deeply loved the young man.
 - The young man also loved the princess.
 - The king did not find out that the young man and his daughter were in love.
3. According to the article anyone who was put in the arena _____.
- would either be eaten or married
 - would be punished by the king
 - would take a princess for wife
 - None of the above
4. The princess hated the lady behind one of the doors on the side of the arena because _____.
- the lady hated her
 - the lady hated the young man
 - she was jealous of the young man
 - she thought the young man and the lady were in love
5. One valid conclusion you can draw from the article is that _____.
- the princess would like to see the young man die

b. the princess would like the young man to marry the lady

c. there was no tiger behind either of the two doors

d. no one knew what would happen to the young man

II. VOCABULARY: The following words and phrases have been taken from the passage you have just read. Circle the letter before the best meaning or synonym for the word or phrase as used in the passage.

1. softened, page 1, par. 1

'...because the modern world, with its modern ideas, had softened his barbarism a little.'

a. to make less

b. to make more pleasant

c. to cause to become less severe

d. to cause to become civilized

2. smoothly, page 1, par. 1

'He was a very pleasant man when everything in his world moved smoothly.'

a. simply

b. regularly

c. without result

d. without trouble