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# 《21 世纪报》 英语读物精粹

4

*The Best from The 21<sup>st</sup> Century*  
—Science and Technology

何兆熊 选编

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MARCH 30, 2000

business & economy

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— Science and Technology

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## 编者前言

《21 世纪报》是由国内最大的英文报系中国日报社主办，颇受广大读者，尤其是青少年读者欢迎的一份国内出版的英文报纸。这份报纸之所以能拥有较大的读者群，无疑是因为它具有较高的可读性。所谓可读性体现在内容和文字两个方面。就内容而言，除了重大的国内外时事新闻外，这份报纸刊登的许多文章的内容都是广大青少年读者感兴趣的，和他们的生活十分贴近的；就文字而言，这份报纸的英语比较浅近，具有高中以上英语水平的人大体都能阅读。

尽快、尽好地掌握英语，是广大青少年的迫切愿望。大量阅读是学习外语的一种重要方法。但总的来说，目前适合青少年阅读的英语出版物还不够多。于是我们便萌发了从《21 世纪报》中挑选一些精粹文章汇编成册，以飨读者的想法。我们翻阅了 1995 年以来的《21 世纪报》，根据内容分别汇编成《文化篇》、《语言篇》、《科技篇》和《思考篇》四种，为减少阅读过程中的阻力，我们对文集中的部分生词、难点和难句作了一些注释。这样的读物具有很强的知识性和趣味性。读者不仅能获得大量有关世界各国的社会文化知识、有关英语语言的知识、最新的科技发展信息、学会不少做人的道理，同时也必将提高自己的英语水平。可以说是“轻轻松松学英语”的一种好方式。

我们相信我们所做的这项工作是有意义的，广大读者一定能从这套读物中获益。对《21 世纪报》编辑部给予的支持，我们在此表示感谢。

2000 年 5 月

# Contents

1. New technology changes lives .....	1
高新技术改变我们的生活	
2. New technology changes office work .....	4
高新技术使办公室工作改观	
3. Technology transforms fiction into reality .....	7
技术将虚构变为现实	
4. New technology looks you in the eye .....	11
高新技术对你坦然正视	
5. New Internet technologies for the New Year .....	15
新的一年,新的因特网技术	
6. Combatting Internet porn .....	20
清扫网络色情	
7. Supercomputer for 21st century is on its way .....	24
21 世纪的超级计算机正在研制中	
8. Fibre optics getting smaller, faster .....	27
光纤越来越小,越来越快	
9. 2000: Trouble lurks ahead .....	30
2000 年:麻烦在前面	
10. A computer that can think for itself .....	33
一种能自己思考的计算机	
11. Computers help kids to speak .....	36
计算机帮助儿童学说话	
12. Human intelligence declining .....	39
人类的智力在衰退	
13. El Nino threatens to bring destructive weather .....	42
厄尔尼诺将带来灾难性天气	
14. El Nino threatens crops, livelihood .....	46
厄尔尼诺威胁农作物和生计	
15. El Nino has kinder, gentler side .....	50

厄尔尼诺有其仁慈温和的一面

16. Predicting the big ones ahead of time .....	53
预测大地震	
17. New technology for quakes .....	56
预测地震新技术	
18. We still can't forecast the shakers .....	60
我们还不能预报地震	
19. Do Martians exist? .....	64
真有火星人的吗?	
20. Hopes high for new mission to Mars .....	69
对再次登陆火星的高度期望	
21. Possible evolution of new life in the universe .....	73
宇宙中可能存在新生命的演变	
22. Black holes raise new questions about galaxies .....	76
黑洞提出了关于银河系的新问题	
23. Hard evidence for global warming .....	79
全球变暖的确凿证据	
24. World's rivers running dry .....	82
世界上的河流正在干枯	
25. Sharks face extinction .....	86
鲨鱼面临灭绝	
26. Amazon rainforest needs monitoring .....	89
亚马逊雨林急需监测	
27. Traffic pollution can be remedied .....	92
交通造成的污染可以治理	
28. Icy mission seeks secrets in history of planet's climate .....	96
顶风冒寒探求地球的气候演变	
29. A mysterious new source of energy .....	99
一种神秘的新能源	
30. Digging into earth's secrets .....	103
挖掘地球的奥秘	
31. Ice discovered in moon crater .....	107

月球陨石坑中发现冰

32. Eve's footprints found on beach ..... 110  
海滩上发现夏娃的脚印
33. DNA found on pens, keys, phones can be traced... 114  
从笔、钥匙、电话上发现的 DNA 可以认定个人
34. High-tech security screening coming soon ..... 117  
高科技安检不久将投入使用
35. Biometric ID knows body ..... 122  
生物统计认定法能辨认人体各部分
36. Obesity rivals smoking as health risk ..... 125  
肥胖对健康的威胁不逊于吸烟
37. Researchers still argue on obesity ..... 128  
对于肥胖症,研究人员依然有争论
38. Find your food libido: expert ..... 131  
专家建议:找到你的食欲高潮
39. Better nutrition leading to taller people ..... 134  
营养好了,人长高了
40. Rich living brings new disease ..... 139  
富裕生活带来新的疾病
41. Diseases plague humanity again ..... 142  
疾病再次侵袭人类
42. Cancer still a tough issue to solve ..... 146  
癌症仍然是顽症
43. Light used to fight cancer ..... 149  
以光治癌
44. Women hurt more, but cope better ..... 152  
女人痛感强,但忍痛能力也强
45. New drug discovered to control winter doldrums... 155  
发现能控制冬季忧郁的新药
46. Light deficiency the key to depression ..... 158  
光线不足是抑郁的关键
47. New hope for curing AIDS ..... 162  
治疗爱滋病的新希望

48. Paediatricians condemn spanking kids .....	165
儿科医生反对打小孩屁股	
49. Death row organ swap denounced .....	168
死囚用器官换取生命受到谴责	
50. New drug challenges traditional cures .....	171
传统药物受到新药的挑战	
51. Eat right, exercise and live longer .....	175
合理的饮食和适度的锻炼有利长寿	
52. Study: Diet, exercise fend off frailty .....	180
研究表明:饮食和锻炼可以推迟衰老	
53. Dental health may affect heart .....	183
牙齿健康会影响心脏	
54. Laser technique takes the bite out of dentistry ...	186
激光技术使齿科手术不再痛苦	
55. Heart problems linked to seasons .....	190
心脏病和季节有关	
56. A cure for cold? They're working on it .....	193
感冒药? 他们正在研制	
57. Surgery techniques improved .....	197
外科技术有改进	
58. Surgical glue to replace stitches .....	201
外科粘胶将取代缝针	
59. The elderly seize back youth .....	204
返老还童	
60. Longevity affected by heredity, diet, stress .....	208
长寿受遗传、饮食和压力的影响	
61. DNA strands hold secrets of longevity .....	211
DNA 端粒解开长寿之谜	
62. Cloned egg raises concern .....	214
克隆人卵引起关注	
63. Scientists work to clone organs .....	217
科学家试图克隆器官	
64. What will they copy next? .....	220



他们接着要克隆什么？

65. Human duplication scares, fascinates public ..... 223  
克隆人令公众既害怕又兴奋
66. Physicist predicts clone fest ..... 227  
物理学家预言将出现克隆高潮
67. UK to freeze human eggs ..... 231  
英国将冷冻人卵
68. Cell phones: next generation ..... 234  
下一代的手机
69. Scientists debate hot mobile phone safety issues ... 237  
科学家对手机的安全争论热烈
70. Digital cameras gaining ground ..... 241  
数字相机日渐流行
71. Digital broadcasting to precede 2000 ..... 245  
2000 年前广播将数字化
72. Digital TV to be popular by 2008 ..... 249  
2008 年数字电视将会普及
73. Robots destined to become part of everyday life ... 253  
机器人定会成为日常生活的一部分
74. Toys go high-tech in '98 ..... 257  
'98 年玩具高科技化
75. Top scientific discoveries of 1998 ..... 260  
1998 年的重大科学发现
76. US ahead of Europe in high-tech race ..... 264  
在高科技的竞争中美国胜欧洲一筹
77. A race for top place in space station ..... 267  
空间站老大之争
78. Countries share manufacturing ..... 270  
各国联手制造
79. X-rays penetrating a century ..... 273  
X 光的一百年
80. Concept cars offer glimpses of the future ..... 276  
概念化汽车使我们窥见未来

## New technology changes lives

NEW YORK — The usual economic statistics provided little evidence in 1995 of the industrial and technological changes that had begun to affect everyone's life.

In fact, the traditional US statistics almost disguised events. Gross domestic product (GDP), retail sales, unemployment and other popular measurements remained within narrow ranges.<sup>①</sup> Even inflation stayed even.

But all the while the future was forming in a cauldron (container) of creativity. The revolution in technology promised to exert more might than the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s.<sup>②</sup>

That revolution began the change from a society largely agricultural to one mostly industrial, from farm to city, from small companies to large. This one seems destined to<sup>③</sup>

---

① Gross domestic product ... remained within narrow ranges. 国内生产总值……维持低幅度的变动。

② The revolution in technology promised to exert more might than the Industrial Revolution of 1800s. 技术革命有望比 18 世纪的工业革命产生更大的威力。

③ seem destined to 似乎注定会

bring even bigger, more creative changes.

The world in creation relies heavily on information as a raw material, gathering, analyzing, processing, packaging, transferring and distributing it.

Its content includes data on business, investment, entertainment and education. Its media is electronic mail and the Internet. Its primary tools are the computer and all the appliances that interact with it, such as cellular phones<sup>①</sup>, pagers<sup>②</sup>, copiers, fax machines, TV and whatever new device emerges from the corporate laboratories or the home shops of innovators.

Early estimates are that more than 29.5 million television sets were sold in the United States in 1995. And 3.4 million camcorders<sup>③</sup>. And 8.2 million computers. And that more than \$ 20 billion was spent on home information products — phones answering devices, fax machines, word processors, computers and software.

The American home was transformed in 1995, and it was only the beginning. An estimated 12 million Americans now work full time at home, while the Electronic Industries Association believes about 54 million conduct at least some work from a home office.

A Conference Board study indicates more than 90 per cent of all US companies now have an address on the Internet, the network that ties together the world of information.

For users, their home in a sense has become office, school, library, museum, theatre and work place, and may

---

① cellular phone 蜂窝电话, 移动电话, 手机

② pager *n.* 传呼机

③ camcorder *n.* (可携式) 摄像放像机

become the voting booth<sup>①</sup> of the future — as well as a place to raise a family and spend more time with them.

Already, they can bank, invest, order groceries, consult with doctors, make hotel reservations, send and receive mail instantly, and plan ski trips. Why, they might not even have to leave the house to ski: virtual reality<sup>②</sup>, so real as to fool the senses, is already available.

Such rapid change — each new development seems to lead to a dozen more — is the early stages of what inevitably will seem more far-fetched as it develops. The year 1995 was simply a sample of what is to come.

Including the new community. The new community shrinks time<sup>③</sup>, eliminates distance, and ignores cultural differences, so that individuals 10,000 miles apart and with utterly dissimilar life experiences might find more in common than they do with the family across the street or, conceivably, their own families.

Whereas the community of the past was unified in a small universe through meeting halls, schools and churches, the new community encompasses the world, interacting electronically, transporting information rather than people.

The new world could be a boon<sup>④</sup> to freedom and creativity, but it has the simultaneous potential for limiting freedom and creativity and invading privacy.

(21st-Agencies)

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① voting booth 投票站

② virtual reality 虚拟现实

③ shrink time 缩短时间

④ boon *n.* 非常有用的东西

## 第2篇

# New technology changes office work

Office technology — voice mail, the Internet, and other modern computer programmes — is making the secretary obsolete.<sup>①</sup>

In white-walled suites<sup>②</sup> throughout America, computer programmes such as Microsoft Office and Lotus Smart Suite have put more power to manage and organize into the hands of workers who once were hired chiefly to take shorthand and answer phones.

Today, these people, once called “secretaries,” have become office professionals.

A case in point<sup>③</sup>, Roxanne Rehak, an executive assistant, prepares Powerpoint audiovisual presentations for two company presidents and organizes arrangements for hundreds of vendors at the company's annual convention.

Judy Swann, a senior administrative assistant with Bal-

---

① obsolete /'ɒbsəli:t/ *a.* 淘汰的

② suite /swi:t/ *n.* 套房

③ a case in point 一个典型的例子

timore Gas & Electric Co, uses databases to keep track of customer complaints, coordinate those complaints with engineers and generate reports on customer service.

And Tamika Hill, an executive assistant at a building maintenance firm, uses a desktop<sup>①</sup> publishing programme to generate company literature.

“The software and technology skills are a must-have,” said John Hoey, a human resources manager.

“You really can’t work here if you have not worked with Microsoft Office in a PC intensive environment.”

Office management programmes have made once-difficult or time-consuming tasks much easier, and office assistants have taken full advantage.

Professional Secretaries International (PSI) says a survey of its members showed that 98 per cent regularly use wordprocessing software, while 89 per cent use spreadsheets.<sup>②</sup>

About 73 per cent use presentation graphics<sup>③</sup> programmes, 58 per cent use databases and 53 per cent use e-mail or other online services. PSI, with 47,000 members worldwide, bills itself as the largest professional organization of office assistants.

“Administrative staff are contributing more in the work force,” said Rick Stroud, a PSI communication coordinator. “Many of the administrative staff can do many of the jobs that once were farmed out to other offices.”

Thus you have the “devolution of the secretary into a new breed. A secretary takes direction, takes shorthand and typing,” said George Ann Fay, a trainer and author of office

---

① desktop *a.* 桌面的

② spreadsheets *n.* 电子数据表

③ graphics *n.* 图表

management books.

Office professionals, she said, are decision-makers.

“They coordinate the meetings, they put together the transparencies,<sup>①</sup> they write the speeches.”

Another PSI survey showed that 23 per cent of its members worked as administrative assistants and 21 per cent had job-specific titles that included the terms coordinator or specialist. Only 20 per cent were called secretaries.

(21st-BS)

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① transparency *n.* (投影仪上用的)透明胶片纸

## Technology transforms fiction into reality

A brave new world of artificial wombs<sup>①</sup>, robot surgeons<sup>②</sup> and freeze-dried corpses<sup>③</sup> brought back to life is no longer a fantasy, say some of the leading experts on scientific developments.

It is not a question of whether such technological achievements will ever be possible but when they will be invented.

The most far-fetched ideas of scientists today, such as a complete meal in a pill and house-cleaning robots, will become reality within our children's life-time, according to a survey of scientific futurologists conducted by *Wired*, the international technology magazine.

By the turn of the century, a male birthcontrol pill will have finished clinical trials and be widely available for men who want the simplicity of a pill and the option of a re-

---

① artificial wombs 人造子宫

② robot surgeon 机器人外科医生

③ freeze-dried corpse 冷干尸体



versible contraceptive<sup>①</sup>.

“A chemical or hormone supplement will soon make it much easier for men to take control in family planning,” say the scientists.

It will also be possible in the same timescale to buy custom-designed clothes, measured by digital body-scanners and delivered to shoppers within 24 hours.

Addidas has already begun testing a digital foot-scanner for measuring shoes, and Levi Strauss can supply women with personalized jeans within a delivery period of three weeks.

Custom-tailored clothes for the masses should be on sale by 1999. It will take a further eight years for clothes to be made of “smart” fabrics that can alter their properties to keep people warm in winter and cool in summer.

Eventually clothes will assume some of the functions performed by lap-top computers and mobile phones<sup>②</sup> today.

“Embedded<sup>③</sup> electronics may enable fabrics to serve as computer screens or communications devices,” the scientists say. To keep in touch there will be holographic telephones within 20 years, transmitting 3-D images of callers as well as their voices.

Nanotechnology<sup>④</sup>, which operates on the scale of one billionth of a metre, will produce a wealth of new devices for the home based on microscopic robots that can remove rust and reconfigure plastic. The toilet seat that changes shape for whoever sits on it will become a reality.

Robots capable of cleaning houses will be sold in shops

---

① reversible contraceptive 反向避孕

② lap-top computer and mobile phone 便携式电脑和移动电话

③ embed *vt.* 嵌入

④ nanotechnology *n.* 毫微技术