

# Improving Your English

## 中学生英语读物精选

第一辑



主 编 何兆熊  
副主编 戴炜华  
张彦斌

上海外语教育出版社

**Why**<sup>®</sup>  
外教社

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编 者 何兆熊 何琮周



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## 前言

**常** 常有人问我们学英语难不难,对于这个问题,我们的回答是既不难也难。说不难,是因为语言是人天生的能力,正常人生来就具有掌握语言的能力,掌握语言应该是人人都能办得到的事;说难,是因为我们想掌握的是一门外语,是一种在我们的生活环境中并非每时每刻都在使用的陌生的语言。这就是外语和母语的根本区别,也就是为什么掌握好一门外语这么不容易。那么,怎样才能克服这个困难,尽可能快、尽可能好地学好外语呢?回答是两个字:实践。语言不是一套死的符号,语言存在于使用之中。掌握一门外语,意味着能听、说、读、写这种语言。这四种基本语言技能的培养只有一个途径,那就是实践,大量的实践,也就是多听、多说、多读、多写。我们选编这一套名为 *Improving Your English* (《中学生英语读物精选》) 的读物的目的就是为了给广大中学生以及其他众多的英语学习者提供更多的英语阅读材料。

许多人的成功经验证明,大量阅读是培养英语能力、提高英语水平的一种重要的、有效的途径。但由于种种原因,目前我国大、中学生的英语阅读量都比较小。除了每册教科书里那篇幅很有限的十来篇课文外,学生几乎不再读一点什么别的东西。当然,客观上要找到适合他们阅读的课外阅读材料也不很容易。我们编辑的这一套《中学生英语读物精选》就是为了给广大的具有高中以上英语程度的英语学习者和爱好者提供适合他们程度和口味的阅读材料。

*Improving Your English* (《中学生英语读物精选》) 所收入的所有阅读材料都是出自英美作者之手的原文,只有必要时才在个别地方作了细小改动,所以所有材料的语言文字是地道的。文篇的体裁和题材十分多样,有记叙文,也有说明文,有寓言故事,也有科普知识,有名人小传,也有报刊摘选,有地理历史知识,也有风土人情简述。我们希

望这些形式、内容多样的文章能激发读者的兴趣,既能达到提高英语阅读能力的目的,又能通过阅读学会用英语来吸取信息,拓宽自己的知识面。每篇阅读材料的字数都在 500 个词左右,对文中的某些单词,我们按该词在文章中出现的上下文给出词义和词性,并根据《英语发音词典(第 13 版)》的音标体系标出了发音(习惯使用 13 版以前音标体系的学习者,可参看书后所附的音标表);对文中的某些语言难点,我们作了注释,以减少读者阅读时的阻力,提高兴趣和信心。每一辑里的文章大体上按照由浅到深的顺序编排。

阅读,不论是用母语还是用外语,目的都是为了获取信息。我们希望广大读者在使用这套阅读材料的过程中,能感受到用英语看书的乐趣,在不知不觉中提高自己的英语阅读能力,同时又扩大了自己的知识视野,真正有所得益。

编者

2000 年 3 月于上海

# **CONTENTS**

Unit 1	The Lonely Giant .....	1
Unit 2	Five of Aesop's Fables .....	5
Unit 3	How Do Animals Know When an Earthquake Is Coming? .....	10
Unit 4	Education in the United States .....	14
Unit 5	Debbie Moone's Problem Page .....	18
Unit 6	The Smoking Mountain .....	22
Unit 7	Why Don't Girls Think Like Boys? .....	27
Unit 8	Mysteries of the Sea .....	31
Unit 9	Edison's Thinking Cap .....	36
Unit 10	Food and Health .....	39
Unit 11	The Youngest Painter in the World .....	44
Unit 12	Hello .....	48
Unit 13	Colour .....	52
Unit 14	Sports around the World .....	56
Unit 15	Flowers .....	60
Unit 16	Strange Souvenirs .....	64
Unit 17	All Thumbs .....	68
Unit 18	You Will Go to Prison ... at Home .....	73
Unit 19	Do UFO's Come from Outer Space?.....	79
Unit 20	Professional Sports .....	84
Unit 21	The Debt-Collector .....	88
Unit 22	First Aid .....	93
Unit 23	The First Four Minutes .....	98
Unit 24	The Life Style of a Rock Star .....	103

Unit 25 Keeping Up with the Joneses .....	108
Key to Comprehension Questions .....	112
英语音标.....	121

## The Lonely Giant

**O**n a fine spring day, a group of schoolboys in Vienna were running along the street.

“Look!” one of the boys cried. “There’s the crazy man!”

A short, stocky man in an old green coat was walking ahead of them. His long hair looked as if it had never been combed. His pockets were stuffed with paper and pencils and all sorts of things. Sometimes he pulled out a piece of paper and wrote quickly on it, talking to himself. Sometimes he growled like a bear, and sometimes he laughed and waved his arms around.

The boys watched the strange man as he went down the street.

Then the boys ran on. But one boy, Franz, dropped behind. He wanted to stay with his friends, but he had to go home and practice the piano. His parents had promised that if he practiced every day they would take him to the concert to hear the music of the great composer Ludwig van Beethoven<sup>1</sup>, who had not appeared in public<sup>2</sup> for many years. And Franz didn’t want to miss seeing the great man<sup>3</sup> — a giant in the world of music.

The night of the concert came. Most of the important people in Vienna were there.

Franz stood on tiptoe to see the stage. He noticed that even “the crazy man” was there. In his old green coat he walked right



up onto the stage, and nobody stopped him!

Franz saw him stand before the orchestra and pick up the baton. He couldn't believe his eyes. Was "the crazy man" the great Beethoven? The orchestra began to play the Ninth Symphony<sup>4</sup>.

The people had never heard such music. Indeed, this was the first performance of the Ninth Symphony and some of its music is considered among the greatest Beethoven ever wrote. The audience was impressed by the composer's new ideas.

When the orchestra stopped playing, the people shouted "Bravo!" and clapped. But Beethoven couldn't hear them. The poor composer was deaf. He could hear neither the beautiful music he had written nor the cheering of the crowd. One of the performers gently turned him around so that he could see the people clapping.

Beethoven had a sad and lonely life. When he became deaf, he hid<sup>5</sup>. He talked to people and made friends only through his music. Today, though he has been dead for more than a hundred years, his music still makes friends for him.

## New Words and Phrases

1	Vienna	/vi'enə/		维也纳(奥地利首都)
2	crazy	/'kreɪzɪ/	adj.	发疯的
3	stocky	/'stɒkɪ/	adj.	粗壮的
4	be stuffed with	/stʌfd/		塞满了
5	growl	/graʊl/	v.	吼叫
6	Franz	/frɑ:nts/		弗朗茨(人名)
7	composer	/kəm'pəʊzə/	n.	作曲家
8	orchestra	/'ɔ:kɪstrə/	n.	交响乐队
9	baton	/'bætn/	n.	指挥棒
10	audience	/'ɔ:diəns/	n.	听众
11	Bravo	/'brɑ:vəʊ/	int.	好!(喝彩声)
12	clap	/klæp/	v.	拍手,鼓掌

## Notes

- 1 Ludwig van Beethoven 路德维希·范·贝多芬(1770—1827),世界著名的德国作曲家。
- 2 appear in public 公开露面
- 3 miss seeing the great man 错过见到这位伟人(的机会)  
动词 miss 后面跟动名词意为“错过、没能做到”,又如:  
He missed winning the race. 他没能赢得比赛。
- 4 the Ninth Symphony 第九交响曲,这里指贝多芬最伟大的交响乐作品《第九交响曲》,又名《合唱交响曲》。
- 5 When he became deaf, he hid. 他聋了以后便深居简出。  
hid 是 hide 的过去时,这里作不及物动词用,意为“独来独往,不多和别人交往。”

## Comprehension

### I. Answer the following questions:

1. Why did the schoolboys think that the short, stocky man in a green coat was crazy?
2. What did Franz' parents promise to do if he practiced the piano every day?
3. What surprised Franz at the concert?
4. What did the audience at the concert think of the Ninth Symphony?
5. Do you think Beethoven was really a lonely man?

### II. Judge whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F):

- ( ) 1. At first none of the schoolboys knew that the so-called “crazy man” was a great musician.
- ( ) 2. The “crazy man” was friendly to the schoolboys and waved to them.
- ( ) 3. Franz was one of the lucky people who attended the

first performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

- ( ) 4. Beethoven could hear his own music, but not the clapping from the audience.
- ( ) 5. As he was deaf, Beethoven could not make friends.

## Five of Aesop's Fables<sup>1</sup>

**A**esop was an ancient Greek story teller. A fable is a tale in which animals speak, think, and act like men. It expresses some truth useful to men.

### The Wolf and the Lamb

As a wolf was drinking water, he noticed there was a lamb at some distance<sup>2</sup> downstream. He decided at once to seize him, but he thought he should first prove that this was the right thing to do.

"Why are you dirtying my water supply?" he demanded as if he really wanted to know.

"I can't disturb your water," said the lamb meekly, "for it runs from you to me, not from me to you."

"In any case<sup>3</sup>, a year ago you called me bad names."

"Oh, sir," said the lamb, trembling and wishing he could drink in peace, "A year ago I wasn't born. I couldn't have had anything to do with it."<sup>4</sup>

"That doesn't matter," said the wolf. "If it wasn't you, it was your father, and that's the same thing." And without another word, he took hold of the lamb and destroyed him.

**A TYRANT NEVER LACKS EXCUSES.**

## **The Lioness**

Once there was a great stir among the beasts. They wanted to know which one could produce the largest family.

They took the subject up with the lioness.<sup>5</sup> "And how many do you have at a birth<sup>6</sup>?" they asked her.

"One," said the lioness, "but that one is a lion."

QUALITY COMES BEFORE QUANTITY.

## **The Dog in the Manger**

A dog had his bed in a manger. There he barked and showed his teeth, and in this way kept the horses from their hay.

"See," said one of them, "what a horrible beast! He has taken over the manger though he can neither eat the hay himself nor allow those who could eat it to do so."

## **The Lion and the Mouse**

A lion was sleeping in the forest when a mouse marched over his nose by accident and woke him up. At this the lion knocked the little creature to the ground and held him there with his paw.

"Let me go," begged the mouse, who wished he had not taken such chances with a lion.<sup>7</sup> "I have so little value, and you are so important."

The lion, smiling at his little prisoner's fright, generously let him go.

Not long after, the lion ran into the ropes of hunters<sup>8</sup>, and finding himself caught without hope of escape, roared so that the whole forest could hear him. The roar reached the mouse, who ran to the spot<sup>9</sup> and began to gnaw at the ropes that tied the lion. Pretty soon he had freed the great beast.

KINDNESS IS SELDOM THROWN AWAY.

## The Goose with the Golden Eggs

A certain man, by good fortune, owned a goose that each day laid a golden egg. But he was dissatisfied with this slow process and wished he might seize the whole treasure at once. If I had all the golden eggs at once, I would never have to work again, he told himself. So he killed his property and, cutting her open, found her the same as any other goose!

THOSE WHO WANT TOO MUCH LOSE ALL.

### New Words and Phrases

1	Greek	/ gri:k /	<i>adj.</i>	希腊的
2	fable	/ 'feɪbl /	<i>n.</i>	寓言
3	downstream	/ 'daʊn'stri:m /	<i>adv.</i>	在下游
4	disturb	/ dɪ'stɜ:b /	<i>v.</i>	扰乱
5	meekly	/ 'mi:kli /	<i>adv.</i>	温顺地
6	tyrant	/ 'taɪərənt /	<i>n.</i>	暴君
7	stir	/ stɜ: /	<i>n.</i>	骚动
8	manger	/ 'meɪndʒə /	<i>n.</i>	马、牛等的食槽
9	by accident			碰巧
10	paw	/ pɔ: /	<i>n.</i>	爪
11	gnaw at	/ nɔ: /	<i>v.</i>	咬, 啃
12	goose	/ gu:s /	<i>n.</i>	鹅

### Notes

#### 1 Aesop's Fables 伊索寓言

《伊索寓言》是希腊、罗马时代流传下来的故事。作者 Aesop / 'i:sɒp /, 伊索, 约公元前 6 世纪希腊寓言作家, 相传原为奴隶, 善讲寓言故事, 讽刺权贵。

- 2 at some distance 在远处
- 3 in any case 不管怎么说,无论如何,又如:  
In any case, you have to finish the work today. 你今天怎么都得把这活干完。
- 4 I couldn't have had anything to do with it. 我不可能和这有关。  
couldn't 后面跟完成时的用法,表示没有可能曾经做过某事。
- 5 They took the subject up with the lioness. 他们和母狮子谈这事。  
这里 subject 作“话题”解
- 6 at a birth 一次产崽
- 7 he had not taken such chances with a lion 小老鼠懊悔不该冒险爬到狮子的头上去  
take chances 冒险
- 8 ran into the ropes of hunters 被猎人的绳索绊住
- 9 spot 地点  
这里指母狮子被猎人逮住的地方。

## Comprehension

### I. Answer the following questions:

1. In the first fable, what excuses did the wolf give for destroying the lamb?
2. In the second fable, did the lioness think it important how many young lions she had at a birth?
3. In the third fable, why did the horses think the dog a horrible beast?
4. In the fourth fable, how was the lion's kindness toward the mouse repaid?
5. In the last fable, why did the man kill the goose that laid golden eggs?

### II. Judge whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F):

- ( ) 1. The wolf finally found a good excuse to eat the meek

lamb.

- ( ) 2. The lion was the strongest beast not because it could produce the largest family.
- ( ) 3. The horses did not think it right that the dog should have his bed in a manger.
- ( ) 4. The truth expressed in the fourth fable is "Be kind to others and they will be kind to you."
- ( ) 5. The man in the last fable made a mistake when he killed the goose.



## How Do Animals Know When an Earthquake Is Coming?

**S**cientists who try to predict earthquakes have gotten some new helpers recently — animals.

That's right, animals. Scientists have begun to catch on to<sup>1</sup> what farmers have known for thousands of years. Animals often seem to know in advance<sup>2</sup> that an earthquake is coming, and they show their fear by acting in strange ways. Before a Chinese quake in 1975 snakes awoke from their winter sleep early only to freeze to death in the cold air<sup>3</sup>. Chickens refused to enter their coops. All of this unusual behavior, as well as physical changes in Earth, warned Chinese scientists of the coming quake. They moved people away from the danger area and saved thousands of lives.

One task for scientists today is to learn exactly which types of animal behavior predict quakes. It's not an easy job. First of all not every animal reacts to the danger of an earthquake. Just before a California quake in 1977, for example, a horse became very nervous and tried to break out of his stall. The horse next to him, however, remained perfectly calm. It's also difficult at times<sup>4</sup> to tell the difference between normal animal restlessness and "earthquake nerves." A zoo keeper once called earthquake researchers to say that his cat had been acting strangely. It turned out that the cat had an upset stomach<sup>5</sup>!