

英语读物

文化寻根

李奇 刘孜 编

美国
社会
文化
丛书

之三

西安交通大学出版社



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“美国社会文化丛书”总序

90年代我们出版社曾多次和几位老编者漫话如何提高学生学习英语的能力,大家一致认为要学好一门外语除了语言因素外,还有许多非语言因素,其中非常重要的一点就是文化因素。读书时如果只是按语法把词汇意义串联起来,而不了解文化背景是行不通的。现在越来越多的学习者已经意识到了这一点,但要切实培养这种跨文化意识却不是一件容易的事。我们的漫话最终导出了一条思路——编一套既能增强英语阅读和理解能力又能了解异国文化的读物,以期助学生一臂之力。这就是1996年前后出版的“当今美国热门话题丛书”的由来。令人鼓舞的是丛书一经发行,读者争相购买,在短短的2年中连续重印,达7万册(各分册数)之多,超出了预期的社会效益。在与读者的交往中,我们深深体会到改革开放以后,人们有着强烈的求知欲,特别是年青的一代,他们不但

want to know more about the world,而且希望能 learn more through the foreign language they are studying。不言而喻,我们的目的达到了,带给我们的是几分成功的喜悦。

喜悦之余就是冷静的思考。思考“丛书”的缺憾和不足,思考“丛书”的意义是否都为读者领悟,思考选材是否典型地反映了美国文化的特点,思考注释点和理解题是否编写适当……。逐渐地,我们感觉到心底起伏着一种不安。首先不安的是“热门话题”这一总命题。

纵观世界历史,任何时候、任何国家和社会总有正面的和负面的现象,这些现象在某一时间范围内可能成为热门话题,但只会是短暂的。我们的“丛书”既然着眼于介绍美国文化就必须尽可能多的让读者了解人民,包括各地的风土人情、百姓的生活习俗、人们的喜怒哀乐、社会的正义和邪恶等等。借用美国前总统里根访华时在复旦大学对学生作的一次演讲中的一段话“... But meeting you and talking to you has only made me want to know more. And I sense that you feel the same way about Americans. You, too, wish to know more.”这里“wish to know more”应该就是指上述的各个方面。因此,这套丛书的确切命题应该是“美国社会文化丛书”。

基于这样的想法,我们立即组织编者修订这套丛书,与其说是修订倒不如说是更新,因为每本书都以更多的新篇章取代了原来的内容,同时也保留了原书部分不忍割爱的精彩篇章。当然每本书均有各自的侧重,但组合起来均围

绕总的主题。

语言是文化的载体,要领悟文化的内涵必须掌握语言。对于读惯了教科书的学生来说,阅读英文报刊、杂志会有困难,但如果在阅读过程中能刻意将文化与词汇、文化与语法、文化与语用、民族文化与语言评价等融入阅读,那么语言素质定会有很大的提高。这本来就是这套丛书的一个重要目的。

最后衷心希望新老读者能从这套新书中获得更多新的收益并对我们提出宝贵的批评和意见。

西安交通大学出版社

编辑部

2000年11月

前言

人类已进入信息时代,而大部分信息是要通过文字传播的。一个人如果想对某一问题进行广泛、深入、更具逻辑性的探讨和研究,他需要通晓西方先进发达国家的语言,而这些语言中最为重要的一种就是英语,因此具备较强的英语阅读能力,对于目的的实现,便显得越发重要了。

像它的姊妹篇一样,这本书是为有志于提高英语阅读能力和整体英语水平的读者编写的。

普遍受人喜爱的读物往往具有较强的思想性和趣味性,而且读者往往能够从中触摸到时代跳动的脉搏,《文化寻根》这本书便是如此。它不仅仅是语言的典范,而且为语言学习者提供了一个在主动积极思考过程中,更有效地学习生动、鲜活语言的途径。

影星奥黛丽·赫本、歌星科特·库本、球星阿加西、画家高更、物理学家爱因斯坦、精神病学家荣格、教师、政客、拳击手、模特儿、出版商,这些形形色色的人物慢慢地步入您的脑海,他们或许会改变您所熟悉的思维方式和既成的思想观念。买书人有的重在娱乐,有的重在求知或陶冶性情。这本书主要是为满足后者的需要而编写的。

总之,通过此书我们真心地想让每一位英语爱好者找到学习英语的乐趣,从而使英语水平得以提高。当然,我们的书中肯定会存在这样那样的问题,还恳请专家及读者指正。

编者

2000年10月

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1

We Can All Share American Culture

我们共同构成的美国文化

人们常说美国像一个大熔炉,使各种肤色的人种以及他们的风俗文化融为一体。然而,事实上美国文化并不像我们想象的那样具有较低的兼容性。美国人比欧洲人更保守,更具宗教信仰,特别是一些祖先是英国新教徒的美国人。

“**W**hat then is the American, this new man?” asked French immigrant Hector St. John de Crevecoeur in 1782. Two hundred ten years later, many Americans answer, “No one.” America has always treated its ethnic and racial minorities abominably. The only consolation they have for being shut out of the mainstream is that they should never have

wanted to join it in the first place. Happily — what with multicultural education and bilingualism — the very concept of a mainstream is being junked.

The facts that get pitched around in the multicultural debate are all familiar. Immigration has reached levels higher than at any other times since the turn of the century. Majorities or near majorities of students in some big-city school systems speak English as a second language, if they speak it at all. An urban underclass seems to cut off from any culture, much less mainstream American culture. What is new, however, is not the facts but our attitudes toward them. Once upon a time, Americans knew what to do with people who seemed different: obliterate the differences. Today increasing numbers of nominal Americans refuse to see America as anything more than a collection of ZIP codes. Their ideal is Yugoslavia, without machine guns. Multiculturalism, in the words of historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “belittles *unum* and glorifies *pluribus*.”

The stakes are high, and so is the decibel level. Why then is only one side of the argument being presented effectively? Schlesinger’s alternative to multiculturalism is “an open society founded on tolerance of differences.” That sounds pretty *pluribus*. If the toleration of differences is the be-all and end-all of America, then why not tolerate multiculturalism?

A less mealymouthed defense of the American character would begin by acknowledging its historical roots in the behavior of the Anglo settlers of 200 and 300 years ago — what are known today as Wasps. The Ur-Wasps brought with them a load of cultural baggage, which they unpacked when they

arrived. Their load included a politics of natural right, derived from English Whigs, Protestant churches, mostly Bible reading and "low" in ritual and theology, and a near religious belief in the virtues of working hard and getting rich. These traits reinforced one another: pulpits proliferated under nonauthoritarian government, and the work ethic flourished under the stimulus of earnest preachment.

The way of the Wasp linger today, despite condoms and Madonna. America attracts hard workers from broad and breeds them at home, whatever Japanese politicians may think. Thomas Jefferson could still vaguely recognize our politics (Aaron Burr would certainly recognize our dirty politics). Survey after survey finds that Americans are the most religious people in the industrialized world, and the seriousness with which we take our sex scandals amazes cynical Europeans.

Throughout American history, newcomers assimilated to this model, despite the doubts and hostility of their hosts. At the turn of the century, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge was worried that East European immigrants labored under a "Byzantine" inheritance that would make them inimical to republican rule. Sixty years earlier, Protestant mobs burned Irish Catholic churches. The Senator and the rioters were both mistaken in their fears. Even blacks, the oldest and most abused American minority group, bear the marks of Americanization. Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. may have written about the influence on him of the teachings of Gandhi, but when he spoke, the texts he cited were the King James Bible, the Declaration of Independence and My

Country, 'Tis of Thee. Minorities assimilated, because assimilation allowed them to get ahead here, and because here seemed better than any available alternative — especially their homelands.

One of the stumbling blocks to acknowledging and proclaiming such obvious truths may be the figure of George Bush, who is the most visible Wasp in America right now. But Bush is more post-Wasp than genuine article. Thomas Jefferson didn't think in clichés and speak in mush. There is also a lot worse in Wasp history than George Bush's inarticulateness, with slavery standing at the top of the list. The best defense of Waspdom is that it always included people who saw that slavery was wrong, and when it came to a fight, they won the war and (thanks to Lincoln) the argument. The way of the Wasp contained the correctives for its vices. It is the matrix of most of the good that America has done as well as the good that needs to be done.

This is not an argument in favor of DWEMs (dead white European males)—at least, not in favor of those recently dead. As an intellectual and social system, America is clearly superior to Europe, which for the past 200 years has been an assembly line for destructive ideas, and for destruction. We don't have to take second place to the continent of Robespierre and Enver Hoxha.

Americans should take pride, not in empty formulas of tolerance and diversity, but in the historic content of their culture, as homely as Benjamin Franklin's how-to-get rich maxims, or as sublime as Lincoln's second Inaugural Address. There is no need to say to those who demur, "Love it or leave

it.” They have already left, for internal exile. If there are Americans who feel as alienated as the strict Amish sect, let them live like the Amish — without harassment, but without subsidized proselytizing for their rejectionist world views. America has business—noble business—to attend to.

Notes

1. mainstream 主流
2. pulpit 教士
3. matrix 发祥地
4. maxim 格言
5. mealymouthed 说话转弯抹角的
6. Wasps 祖先是英国新教徒的美国人
7. obliterate 忘却

Reading Comprehension

1. The central idea of the essay would appear to be that _____.
 - A. American culture has been junked
 - B. America is a country with great tolerance and diversity
 - C. Americans like racial minorities
 - D. many Americans want to put their racial culture in the first place
2. Which of the following statements is NOT TRUE according to the author's description?
 - A. Americans consider their racial culture as their riches.
 - B. American people don't want to put their racial culture in the first place.
 - C. Americans want to assimilate the other's culture.

- D. America is a country with multicultural.
3. When did the immigration reach the high level?
 - A. At the end of the 18th century.
 - B. In the beginning of the 19th century.
 - C. In the beginning of the 20th century.
 - D. The time when it changed into another new century.
 4. What do Americans do with the people who seem different?
 - A. They want to keep the difference as usual.
 - B. They suggest people to change their own habits.
 - C. They want to remove the differences.
 - D. They ask the people who are different with them to change the differences.
 5. The sentence "multiculturalism is an open society founded on tolerance of difference" most likely means _____.
 - A. multiculturalism insists that every nation should follow other culture
 - B. multiculturalism believes that the tolerance of difference is the only way which can unite other nations
 - C. tolerance is the very important character for a nation
 - D. multiculturalism means to mix every culture up
 6. According to the article, Americans are most likely _____.
 - A. direct people
 - B. romantic people
 - C. realistic people
 - D. religious people
 7. Who was Martin Luther King Jr. ?
 - A. He was a leader of the Democratic Party.
 - B. He was a civil rights leader.
 - C. He was an American president.