

英语读物

美国
社会
文化
丛书

之一

胜利女神

主编 折鸿雁

西安交通大学出版社



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内容简介

一个不慎落井、历经 48 小时又重见天日的小姑娘;离婚父母之间就孩子监护权的争执;电影《卡萨布兰卡》中男女主人公的恩恩怨怨、感情纠葛;美国前总统约翰·肯尼迪遇刺事件的众说纷纭;功夫明星李小龙所引发的美国女性对心目中的亚裔男性形象的探讨;波黑少女斯拉塔以日记形式记述的波黑战争;处于父母和儿女夹层之间的“三明治”一代的困惑;艾滋病的无孔不入在人们心中所造成的恐慌;少男少女恋爱中的暴力事件;……几十篇耐人寻味的小文章,将会带您步入美国社会,引发您对美国当前社会的反思,同时又使您领略到英语语言的魅力。

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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。

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编辑部

2000年11月

前言

学习英语的目的在于交流思想,获取信息,感受异域的文化风情,了解与自己专业及相关领域的最新发展动态。而当今的英语学习却往往步入一种误区:学习者常常以记住单词的多少来衡量英语水平的高低,以某项英语考试成绩的高低来论成败。很多人阅读一篇英语文章的目的是要记住多少个单词,学习多少个句型,从而把英语阅读变成一种单调、枯燥的负担。而以考试为导向的英语学习法更直接地影响了学习者的热情,考试成绩的起伏牵动着学习者的情绪,使他们忽而信心十足,忽而悲观颓丧,甚至半途而废。

能不能有一本书能够凭借其广阔的涉及面,颇具争议的话题,以及极其深厚的文化内涵牢牢抓住读者,使他们怀着极大的热情,带着强烈的求知欲主动去阅读、掌握文章的主旨,理解作者所要表达的观点,并在此基础上进行思考,提炼、形成自己的观点;同时,在不知不觉中,使

他们的阅读能力能有一个质的飞跃呢？正是抱着这一宗旨，我们编辑了这本书。本书自始至终贯彻了我们对语言学习的共识，希望读者能从本书中了解到另一个迥异的社会，同时阅读能力又能得到一定程度的提高。

本书的文章题材跨度大，内容深刻：从单身父亲的困境到离婚女人的内心世界；从明星、总统遇刺到女孩被绑架；从艾滋病的蔓延到处于父母和孩子夹层中的“三明治”一代的困惑；……。对于美国这片物质文明高度发达的土地上存在着的虐待、暴力、绑架、谋杀、早恋、早孕、家庭畸形等社会问题，本书给予了无情的揭露。如果美国无法治愈这些顽疾，其悲剧性将不可避免。然而，本书并不是对美国社会予以全盘否定。一个社会不会只有阴暗的、不可示人的一面，它必然还有其向上、灿烂的一面。对于美国社会中温情脉脉、积极进取的一面，本书也给予了充分的肯定。例如：“摆脱不幸”一文中，一名普普通通的家庭主妇在儿子已被医学界权威判处死刑之后，以伟大的母爱使身患不治之症的孩子重获新生，这揭示出爱的力量，亲情的力量。任何社会都需要这种力量来维护，正是这种人性中最原始、最真诚的爱使得一种文化得以发展、进步。

美国社会是一个集多元化和复杂化为一体的大熔炉（the melting pot）。有人说美国是“人间天堂”，经济发达，国力强盛，民族富庶，但“天堂”里不乏贫困、失业、犯罪、家庭暴力；有人把美国誉为“自由之地”，但又有多少人的梦幻在

此破灭。凡此种种美国社会中的强烈反差,需要读者在阅读中进行思考、对比,进而做出正确的判断。

本书由西安交通大学的折鸿雁先生担任主编。鉴于编写时间仓促和水平有限,如有不当之处,望读者朋友不吝赐教。

编者

2000年10月

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1

The Little Girl in the Well

落井获救的小女孩

1987年,在美国德克萨斯州,18个月的小女孩杰西卡不慎坠入枯井。持续48小时的营救工作牵动着亿万人的心。根据这一事件拍成的电视剧在全球引起轰动。5年过去了,杰西卡能否记得当时的情景?心灵上的创伤愈合了吗?

“Come watch me,” says Jessica McClure, grabbing a visitor by the hand and leading her into her kingdom, a pink and white bedroom filled with clowns, stuffed animals and a bed decorated with hearts. Dressed in a lavender top and raspberry leggings, she slides onto the back of her wooden horse, and with all the confidence of a precocious six-year-old, rocks and counts by fives. “Five, ten, fifteen . . . one hundred! I can count by tens, too,” she says, her grin revealing a gap where she’s just lost

her first teeth. "Wanna hear me?"

Not long ago, in the years following her rescue from a well in which she was trapped twenty-two feet beneath the surface, Jessica found it difficult to stay in this room: On a typical night, haunted by frightening memories, she cried herself to sleep. Then she suffered nightmares, calling out "No!" and "Don't!" Finally, she sought refuge in her parents' bed.

That terrified little child bears no resemblance to the lively and self-assured first grader Jessica is today. "It took a couple of years before she didn't need me quite so much," says Jessica's mother, Cissy, twenty-three, curled up on the sofa in their home outside Midland, Texas. "Now she wants to be Little Miss Independent. She's a normal six-year-old, and she thinks she can do it all."

Nevertheless, the five years since her rescue have not been without turmoil: Jessica has endured her parents' divorce, as well as continued surgeries to repair the physical injuries of her fall. And for Cissy, the pain has been more than skin deep. Although happily remarried, she is haunted by the sorrow, grief and guilt any mother would feel when she leaves her child unattended, even briefly, and in the blink of an eye a tragic accident changes their lives forever.

On October 14, 1987, the little girl, then eighteen months old, left alone for a few minutes by her mother in her aunt's backyard, dangled her feet over a small, eight-inch-wide well. As she tried to stand up again, she plunged into the darkness.

All of Midland pulled together to free Jessica from what could have been a premature grave. Rescuers drilled a twenty-nine-foot vertical shaft parallel to the well and then bored a

five-foot-long horizontal tunnel through solid rock to reach her. The story was so dramatic, and Jessica's cries from the depth of the well so heartbreaking, that the rescue drew international attention.

Possibly due to her age at the time of the accident, Jessica appears emotionally unhurt by those long hours alone in the well, when she cried and sang "Winnie-the-Pooh" and "Jesus Loves Me" for comfort. In fact, the little girl says she has no memory of her accident: When the family watched a 1989 TV movie depicting the rescue, Cissy says she had to convince Jessica the story was about her. "She kept saying, 'Are they going to get that little girl out, Mama?'" she says. "I had to keep explaining, 'Yes, honey, that little girl is you, and they did get you out.'"

And although Jessica has occasional nightmares, she says they're strictly the monster-in-the-closet variety.

Painful reminders

The physical signs of the accident are still in evidence. Thanks to continued surgeries, the scar on Jessica's forehead, caused by rubbing her head against the well's rocky wall, has become less noticeable. But another scar, a half-dollar-size bald spot just above the back of her neck, remains sharply visible.

Surgeons eventually had to amputate the little toe on her right foot, which had been crushed in the well; the skin grafts they used saved the rest of her foot from gangrene.

But though Jessica's injuries have healed, Cissy has found it difficult to forget the pain and uncertainty of the ordeal and

its hurtful aftermath. She and her husband, Chip, were just eighteen at the time, little more than children themselves. And though Midland supported the young couple, since then there has been something of a reaction against them.

The McClures, it was rumored, were spending money sent by well-wishers that was meant for their daughter. In fact, the bulk of Jessica's money, at the time an estimated \$ 700,000, is in a trust fund governed by a board of directors and will not be available to her until she is twenty-five. Neither of the McClures can withdraw from the account except to pay for their daughter's medical and school expenses.

It is true, however, that Cissy and Chip managed to work their way through money that came directly to them. Although she won't comment on the total they received, Cissy admits it was substantial.

Another rumor—that the McClures had a troubled marriage—proved true also: The couple filed for divorce in March 1990. Although Cissy refuses to talk about what led to the breakup, court records reflect the family's turmoil. Each party cited irreconcilable differences and filed petitions asking the court to bar the other from communicating in a vulgar and indecent manner, and from kidnapping Jessica.

Cissy admits that the divorce was more painful because it was so public, but she rejects any suggestion that the breakup was caused by the pressures of fame. "I think the reason we got divorced is because we married so young," she says. Though their relationship was intense at first, Chip and Cissy are trying to get along for Jessica's sake: "We can still talk," Cissy says.