

American Virtues

—— 美国文化英语读物

本书涵盖了美国人道德意识中有关诚实、勇气、自信、自控、宽容、竞争等12个方面的话题。本书文字地道通俗，是一本可以帮助广大读者了解美国社会文化的英语读物。

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美国人的 道德观



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前言

一说到美国,很多人都会想到它发达的科技和繁华的都市,想到它那所谓的自由自在的政治生态和流光溢彩的夜生活。不错,那是美国;但那却不是美国的全部。在美国强大的政治、经济和科学技术的背后,还有一些常常被人忽视的精神支柱,那就是被埋藏在许许多多寻常美国人心灵深处、直白而朴实的道德观。

本书的编者王晓丽、刘波从事英语教学二三十年,也曾留学美国,与美国社会底层的劳动人民有过广泛的接触,感受直接而真实。读完她们所编撰的这本《美国人的道德观》后,笔者发现,编者完全摆脱了英语教材或读物的桎梏,逆英语考试的指挥棒而动,不谈命题思路,也不讲阅读技巧,而是用浅近、地道的英语从十二个不同的侧面给我们展示了美国人全新的精神世界。这对我国广大的青少年英语爱好者,尤其是那些处在世界观形成过程中的中学生、大学生,十分有益。看完此书后,他们不但英语会有所提高,对美国人的精神世界也会有一个新的认识。

道德是人类精神世界的基石,也决定着人类的未来。良好的道德风范不但能使人类的精神世界坚不可摧,还能催人奋进,创造更多的物质财富。然而,如果缺少这块基石或者让它受到侵蚀,人类的精神世界就会动摇,甚至坍塌。正所谓“有才无德,其行不远”。英语阅读训练也是如此。技能固然重要,但内容却是根本。一理失去了这个根本,技巧也就丧失了其存在的价值。

李庆生

2006年12月

于珞珈山

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CHAPTER ONE

COMPASSION

In this chapter, we'll try many different ideas about compassion —why people feel it and why they don't, what it springs from and what it leads to, what kills it, and the place it has in people's lives.

compassion 同情

1. WHAT IS COMPASSION?

The Six O'clock News

Six o'clock. It is the time for the network news. People everywhere in the United States are watching

it. The anchorman announces the major stories:

anchorman 主持人

"An estimated 10,000 Mexico City residents died in an earthquake yesterday. Emergency workers hunt for survivors, guided by the cries coming up through the rubble..."

rubble 瓦砾

"Sally Anne Kelly, the 11-year-old girl reported missing from her New Jersey home two weeks ago, was found dead in a trash can by sanitation workers this morning. Police said she had apparently been raped and beaten to death..."

trash can 垃圾桶

sanitation worker

清洁工

"International relief agencies called the Ethiopian famines the worst of the decade..."

famine 饥荒

And, of course, the newscast reported on the "human interest" story of the day:

"Koko the chimp returns, safe, to the Wilmington

chimp (口) 黑猩猩

Zoo."

No two people respond to the news in exactly the same way.

Two teenagers are discussing the news upstairs in their room.

"Wow, what a day!"

"I'm sure glad Koko's back."

"Yeah, that's a relief."

"That chimp had me worried." ①

A woman eating dinner says to her husband, "Oh God, that poor child's family. At least the suspense is over for them. My God, can you imagine how that feels?"

"What?" says the husband.

"Sally Anne Kelly. The missing one. They found her body."

"Really — that's too bad. Where's the salt?" ②

There are all kinds of reactions, everywhere. It's impossible to predict who will react in what way. Some people are interested, others don't seem to care. Some people get excited, some don't seem to get involved. There are so many reactions you can have when you learn about somebody else's trouble.

Meanwhile, reporters are following up the Sally Anne Kelly story. Sally Anne's mother is on the way back from identifying the body.

News people, camera people and sound people close in on her. ③ For weeks she's been talking to the news people. They were helping her. Spreading the

relief 安慰

suspense 悬念

follow up 跟踪报道

close in on 逼近,
围拢来

① 那只猩猩一直让我担心。〔此例反映出人们,尤其是孩子对动物的同情心。〕

② 盐在哪里?〔丈夫对话题的转移反映出他对女孩失踪案的漠不关心。〕

③ 新闻记者、摄影记者和录音记者蜂拥而来采访她。

news was her best chance to find her child. Now she doesn't want to answer any more questions. " Please, no comment," she keeps telling them. " I have nothing to say." Finally she screams at all the reporters. " Don't you see — it's over! It's over. Why don't you leave me alone? Don't you have any shame? Don't you have any pity? Don't you have any compassion?"

leave sb. alone 不打扰

The reporters are human, so most of them are ashamed. Most of them do feel compassion. Some of them think: I wonder if reporting this kind of thing every day is making me hard inside?①

They forget that we watch it every day. Does it make us hard inside too? And why is it, anyway, that we like to watch such things? The news people wouldn't go after interviews with mothers whose children were murdered if we weren't interested. Sometimes people ask, " Why don't you report more good news?" But that's not the news that people buy. We seem to be interested in other people's suffering. Why? Is it because we're cruel or because we're kind? Does it say something good about us, or something bad?

go after 追求, 设法得到

cruel 冷酷的

The woman who said, " Oh God, that poor child's family" was compassionate. But why did she pick that family to feel sorry for? She had just heard about 10, 000 people dying in an earthquake. She had just heard about millions starving to death in Ethiopia.

feel sorry for 为……感到遗憾

starve to death 饿死

What is compassion, anyway? What is it for? What is its place in our lives?

The Story of Melissa Morrison

Melissa Morrison works in a New York advertising agency. This is what she says when someone asks her

① 我想知道每天报道这种事情是不是让我的心肠变硬了。

collapse 倒塌, 瘫倒

bruise 青肿, 伤痕

ambulance 救护车



about compassion.

"I grew up in a small town in Wisconsin. I went to college not far from there. When I moved to New York City it was quite a shock to me. On my first day I saw a man collapsed on the sidewalk. I didn't know if he was drunk or sick. His clothes were dirty. He was covered with bruises. It was right in the heart of town. It was a cold winter day. It was below freezing.

"What shocked me wasn't how he looked — I'd seen sights like that before. What shocked me was what everybody else was doing. They were walking around him. They were just ignoring it. They acted as if it were the most common sight in the world.

"So I went over to him, and I tried to wake him up. I'm not very strong. An older man stopped to help me. And a woman stopped and asked if she could help. We asked her to call an ambulance.

"And here's what I thought the moral was. First of all, people in the big city are hard-hearted. They're not very big in the compassion department. ① I don't know how they got that way. On the other hand, you can reach them. You just have to set an example. They saw me helping, then they stopped to help. Set an example and people will follow. That was the moral of that story, I thought then.

"That was five years ago, I've lived in New York City for five years now. Every day I move through crowds. I see hundreds, maybe thousands of people. Every day on the way to work I see somebody collapsed on the sidewalk, or in some other kind of trouble. If a homeless person asks me for some change, I give him something. But if I see somebody collapsed on the street, I walk right by. I can't be late to my job every

① 他们没有多少同情心。

day.

" I'm not so sure anymore what the moral of the story is."

What is compassion? Is it something everyone feels or something only a few of us feel? Do people have less of it than they used to? Is it a feeling we can't do much about anyway, nowadays, since it's the government's job to help the needy? Are our feelings of any use, then? Why should we feel compassionate? What do we get out of it? Should we get anything out of it?

the needy 需要帮助的人

People have always asked questions like these. In the pages that follow you'll find some of the answers they've come up with.

The Definition of John Donne

John Donne lived about 400 years ago. He was a poet and a clergyman. Once he gave a sermon on the subject of church bells. In Donne's time the great bell in the church tower would be rung when somebody died. This was called a "death knell". When a bell tolled in those days and you asked, "Who is that for? Who has died?"

clergyman 牧师

sermon 讲道

death knell 丧钟

toll 鸣

This is part of Donne's sermon:

No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the Continent,
a part of the main; if a clod be washed
away by the sea, Europe is the less...

clod 土块

Any man's death diminishes me, because I
am involved in mankind. And therefore
never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee.

diminish 减少

thee (古英语) 你

With this sermon Donne gave a definition of compassion. Compassion comes from our connection to other people. We're not separate, like islands.

We're connected. Why does it matter to us what happens to other people?① It matters because we feel connected to them.

apply to 适用于

Donne's idea doesn't only apply to death. Compassion in all things works because of a feeling of connection. When we don't feel compassionate for someone in pain, it is because we don't feel connected.

Compassion Is Sharing Another's Feelings

scrape 擦伤

No matter how cold-hearted the world may seem at times, people do feel compassion. It's one of the most common emotions people have. When a mother sees her child scrape his knee, she drops whatever she's doing and rushes to help him. She feels that scrape as though it happened to her. When a friend tells you his bicycle was stolen, and you're really sorry, you're feeling compassion. You don't have to be as unhappy about your friend's loss as your friend is. You don't have to feel bad for more than a second. You're feeling compassion if you just wish for a moment that the bad thing didn't happen. Compassion is sharing someone else's feelings.

torture 折磨

screw up (脸) 变形

You may be in a movie theatre. There is a scene that shows someone being tortured in a dentist's chair. You screw up your face. For a moment you're afraid for your teeth. You're afraid even though you know you're safe and no one is being tortured. It is only a movie, only actors pretending. That feeling of involvement is compassion, too. Compassion is what makes movies interesting. Compassion makes us feel connected even to imaginary people.

① 为什么发生在别人身上的事情对我们是有意义的呢?

urge 强烈愿望, 冲动

You see someone else suffering, and you feel too. You may not feel everything the other person feels. But you do feel a little of what that person feels. You probably also feel the urge to help. No one knows exactly why people feel this way. They just do, sometimes.

2. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND COMPASSION

We Are Born to Feel Compassion

Is compassion something you can be taught? Is it something you learn by example? Or are you born with it, like the ability to see and hear?

No doubt teaching and examples help. But research shows that we are born with the ability to feel compassion. How we feel it and what we do about it changes as we grow. We learn slowly to use our ability to feel compassion. But we learn to use it because we have a gift for it. We learn to use compassion the same way we learn to walk and talk. We see adults doing it and we learn by watching them.

gift 天赋

Mental health workers study how children feel compassion. Here are some of the things they have learned. Newborn infants are upset when they hear other babies crying. No other sound upsets them as much. Older infants react to the pain of others as if it were happening to themselves. When they see another child get hurt and start to cry, they themselves begin to cry. Children around one year old begin to know the difference between someone else's pain and their own. In one case, a one-year-old boy saw a friend crying. He brought his mother over to comfort the friend, even though the friend's mother was also in the room. Slightly older children have a clearer idea of what other children need. In another case, a 15-

react to 对……反应

toddler 蹒跚学步的
幼儿
teddy bear 玩具熊
security blanket 让
小孩抓摸得到安全感的毛毯

month-old toddler named Michael saw his friend Paul crying. Michael fetched his teddy bear to comfort Paul. When that didn't work, Michael brought Paul's security blanket from another room. By the time they are two or three years old, different children start to show different amounts of compassion.

Animals Feel Compassion

Even animals feel compassion. We can see it in the results of an experiment in which scientists tested the compassion of monkeys.

lever 杠杆

First, a group of monkeys were trained to avoid an electric shock. The monkeys would hear a sound. After the sound, they would be given an electric shock. The monkeys could avoid the shock by pulling a lever after they heard the sound. The monkeys learned to pull the lever so they would not get the shock.

closed-circuit video
闭路录像

Then the monkeys were separated. Only the first monkey could hear the sound. Only the second monkey could reach the lever. But they could see each other over a closed-circuit video. Whenever the first monkey heard the sound it would become afraid. It knew a shock was coming, and it had no way of stopping it. The monkey who could reach the lever could not hear the sound. But it could see the expression of fear and shock on the other monkey's face. The moment the first monkey showed that it was afraid, the second monkey pulled the lever.

3. DIFFERENT LEVELS OF COMPASSION

One End of Compassion

Some people have no compassion at all. Some have almost more than we can believe to be possible. Human compassion goes from point A to point Z. It

goes from zero to an amount that cannot be measured.

Here is an extreme example of a lack of compassion.

In the early 1960s, the newspapers reported an ugly crime. A man planted a time bomb in his mother's luggage just before she got on a plane to Florida. He knew that if she died in a plane crash he would receive millions of dollars in insurance money. The plane blew up in the air. His mother was killed — along with 40 passengers.

luggage 行李

plane crash 飞机失事

blow up 爆炸

Why does this man strike people as monster? Was it because he killed his mother? Not really. When a son kills his mother we may call it an "unnatural" crime, because most people love their mothers. But we understand that there can also be hatred between sons and mothers. It is a passionate relationship. A crime like that could be partly a crime of passion. The fact that he did it for money makes it worse, of course. The fact that he killed not one but 40 people makes it even more horrible. But it is not just a question of numbers. The fact is that this man killed 40 strangers, without thinking at all about them or their families. This story tells us something about compassion. This, we can say, is the limit at one end. This is as little compassion as you can have.

passionate 易动情的

The Other End of Compassion

What is the other limit? What is the most compassion a person can show for others? A hand grenade falls into a group of soldiers. For a second it lays there without going off. There's no knowing how long it will be before it explodes. It could take another half a second, or another two seconds.

hand grenade 手榴弹

explode 爆炸