

The Best English Essays

英文散文精选

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学图书馆

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哈尔滨工业大学出版社



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哈尔滨工业大学出版社

2002.8

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英文散文精选/秦明利主编. —哈尔滨: 哈尔滨工业大学出版社, 2002. 8
ISBN 7-5603-1781-2

I. 英… II. 秦… III. 英语—阅读教学—高等学校—自学参考资料 IV. H319.4

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2002)第 063446 号

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出版发行	哈尔滨工业大学出版社
社 址	哈尔滨市南岗区教化街 21 号 邮编 150006
传 真	0451—6414749
印 刷	地矿部黑龙江测绘印制中心印刷厂
开 本	787×960 1/16 印张 16 字数 330 千字
版 次	2002 年 8 月第 1 版 2002 年 8 月第 2 次印刷
书 号	ISBN 7-5603-1781-2/H·195
印 数	12 001 ~ 14 000
定 价	18.00 元

序

英语是国际语。在经济全球化大环境中,它不仅是不同文化间相互交流的工具,也是不同国家之间“相互竞争的手段”。英语在 21 世纪的特殊定位为外语教育界提出了新的任务和目标。

今后若干年内,广大外语教师面临的任务是:加强实用性教育,包括尽快提高大学生的综合英语能力,使学生的听说读写等能力得到全面发展;而且在此基础上,使大学生掌握在经济、科技和文化等方面进行跨文化交际的能力。显然,这是直接关系到我们国家能否尽快培养出具有强大竞争力的一流人才的十分艰巨的任务。

面临这样巨大的历史性的挑战,我校外语系部分有丰富阅历和教学经验的英语教师,在教材改革和建设方面集思广益,作出初步尝试,推出《大学英语系列教材》,旨在为培养学生的英语综合能力奠定基础。这一系列主要包括:大学英语听说、大学英语阅读、大学英语写作、大学英语词汇、英文散文精选、大学英语语法、大学英语四级试题分项训练、大学英语六级试题分项训练等。

教材体现较先进的教学理念,引进大量国外资料,涵盖文化、科技、教育、经济、政治等,内容最新,丰富多样,实用性强,有利于开阔学生的视野和扩大他们的知识面。教材实践中,练习的设计有很强的操作性,既有利于培养学生相互交往能力,也有利于培养他们的逻辑推理和解决问题的能力。

此系列教材仅是我们在培养大学生综合英语能力方面所进行的尝试,因经验和水平有限,难免有很多不尽人意之处,恳请同仁和读者指教。

哈尔滨工业大学《大学英语系列教材》

编委会

2002 年 8 月

前 言

在学习英语的过程中,你是否常有这样的感觉和经历:时间花了很多,单词记得不少;练习不停地做,文章不断地读,但在实际运用英语时,却不知如何开口,从何下笔。或开口往往词不达意,不知所云;或下笔才思枯竭,毫无感觉。有时好不容易憋出点东西,还常常用词不当,语言生硬,错误多多,条理不清。其中主要的原因就是对英语语言及文化感悟不深,运用不足,熟练程度不够。

要克服以上困难,提高英语运用能力,掌握当今社会的竞争“武器”,最直接而有效的方法就是有选择地、适量地熟读并背诵英语精美散文或名篇佳句。

学习语言,无论是中文,还是外语,名篇美文的吟诵是一个不可或缺的重要环节。学习英语要背诵,这是许多英语学习者的成功经验,也是我国外语界前辈当年学习英语的经历与心得。背诵看似事倍功半的苦功,实则于事半功倍的捷径。

诵读英语名篇美文,可以感受和欣赏英语语言之美,运用之妙。

诵读英语名篇美文,可以训练用英语思维,培养良好的语感。

诵读英语名篇美文,可以了解英语语言所蕴涵的丰富文化,提高文化素养。

诵读英语名篇美文,可以激发英语学习的兴奋点。

诵读英语名篇美文,可以加强语言的熟练程度,实现语言的再创造。

这就是本书编写的初衷和目的。

本书的主要特点是:

——选材以语言精美和内容精彩为首要标准。

——在兼顾欣赏性、可读性、知识性和可模仿性的前提下,尽可能广泛地覆盖各类题材、各类体裁的篇章段落。

——有经典名篇,也有精美时文。

——编排以篇章长短为序。

——对文中难词、难点加以简单注释(主要体现文中出现的意思)。

——本书所选的大多数篇章曾在编者执教的哈尔滨工业大学的英语教学中使用过,是经实际教学使用后筛选出来的。实践证明:这些名篇美文语言流畅优美,思想精辟,耐人回味。经常诵读,有利于提高学习兴趣,熟练掌握英语;有利于增进智慧,陶冶情操。

——本书可配合从本科生到研究生各个层次的教学使用,按需取舍。

由于编选时间仓促,编者水平有限,书中疏误之处在所难免,恳请专家、读者批评指正。

编 者

2002 年 8 月于哈尔滨工业大学

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How Women Changed History

Vivienne Gill

Men sometimes say, "We are better and cleverer than women. Women never invent things. We do." It is true that men have invented a lot of useful things: the alphabet¹, machines, rockets, and guns, too. But scientists and archeologists² now agree that women invented one very important thing. It has changed history. They invented agriculture. Before the invention of agriculture men were hunters. They went out every day. Sometimes they killed animals—sometimes animals killed them. Life was difficult and dangerous. Women had to go out every day, too. They collected roots, fruit and grasses. Then, one day, more than 10,000 years ago, a woman dropped some grass seeds. She dropped them near her home in the Middle East. They grew—and the first wheat was born. The idea grew, too. Women planted roots and fruit trees. Then they could stay at home and look after the children—and the animals. Women like baby animals. Archeologists think that women kept the first domestic animals³: dogs, cows, sheep and goats. That idea grew, too. Then their husbands did not have to go hunting for meat. They stayed at home. They built villages and cities. Civilization began. Men began civilization—after women invented agriculture.

(202 words)



1. alphabet *n.* 字母表
2. archeologist *n.* 考古学家
3. domestic animals 家畜

On Etiquette¹

William Hazlitt²

Etiquette to society is what apparel³ is to the individual. Without apparel men would go in shameful nudity⁴ which would surely lead to the corruption⁵ of morals; and without etiquette society would be in a pitiable⁶ state and the necessary intercourse⁷ between its members would be interfered with by needless offences and troubles. If society were a train, etiquette would be the rails along which only the train could rumble⁸ forth; if society were a stagecoach, the etiquette would be the wheels and axis⁹ on which only the coach could roll forward. The lack of proprieties¹⁰ would make the most intimate friends turn to be the most decided enemies and the friendly or allied countries declare war against each other. We can find many examples in the history of mankind. Therefore I advise you to stand on ceremony¹¹ before anyone else and to take pains not to do anything against etiquette lest you give offences or make enemies¹².

(163 words)

注释

1. On Etiquette 论礼仪
2. William Hazlitt 威廉·黑兹利特(1777 ~ 1830), 英国评论家、散文家。
3. apparel *n.* 衣着, 服饰
4. nudity *n.* 赤裸, 裸体
5. corruption *n.* 腐败, 堕落
6. pitiable *adj.* 可怜的, 卑劣的
7. intercourse *n.* 交流, 交往
8. rumble *vi.* 辘辘行驶
9. axis *n.* 轴
10. propriety *n.* 适当
11. stand on ceremony 讲究礼节
12. lest you give offences or make enemies 免得触犯人或树敌

A Liberal Education

T. H. Huxley¹

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe², the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost³, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance⁴. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes⁵ are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity⁶ with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated⁷—without haste, but without remorse⁸.

(187 words)

注释

1. T. H. Huxley 托马斯·亨利·赫胥黎(1825~1895),英国生物学家、不可知论者,信奉达尔文进化论。在这篇文章中,他提出自由教育的目标是对自然法则的认识。
2. The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe. 棋盘便是这个世界,棋子便是宇宙万象。
3. to our cost 我们付出代价之后
4. makes the smallest allowance for ignorance 决不由于我们无知而放过我们半步
5. stake *n.* 赌注
6. overflowing generosity 慷慨有余
7. And one who plays ill is checkmated. 不懂对弈的人被将死。
8. remorse *n.* 同情,怜悯

The Lover

Carson McCullers¹

First of all, love is a joint experience between two persons—but the fact that it is a joint experience does not mean that it is a similar experience to the two people involved. There are the lover and the beloved, but these two come from different countries. Often the beloved is only a stimulus for all the stored-up love which has lain quiet within the lover for a long time hitherto². And somehow every lover knows this. He feels in his soul that his love is a solitary thing. He comes to know a new, strange loneliness and it is this knowledge which makes him suffer. So there is only one thing for the lover to do. He must house³ his love within himself as best as he can; he must create for himself a whole new inward world—a world intense and strange, complete in himself. Let it be added here that this lover about whom we speak need not necessarily be a young man saving for a wedding ring—this lover can be man, woman, child, or indeed any human creature on this earth.

(187 words)

注释

1. Carson McCullers 卡森·麦卡勒斯(1917~1967), 美国南方作家。主要作品有《伤心咖啡馆的民谣》。
2. hitherto *adv.* 迄今, 至今
3. house *vt.* 收藏

Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?

Martin Luther King¹

We must work passionately and indefatigably² to bridge the gulf between our scientific progress and our moral progress. One of the great problems of mankind is that we suffer from a poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance. The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually.

Every man lives in two realms³, the internal and the external. The internal is that realm of spiritual ends⁴ expressed in art, literature, morals, and religion. The external is that complex of devices, techniques, mechanisms and instrumentalities by means of which we live. Our problem today is that we have allowed the internal to become lost in the external. We have allowed the means by which we live to outdistance⁵ the ends for which we live. So much of modern life can be summarized in that suggestive⁶ phrase of Thoreau⁷: "Improved means to an unimproved end." This is the serious predicament⁸, the deep and haunting problem, confronting modern man. Enlarged material powers spell⁹ enlarged peril if there is not proportionate growth of the soul. When the external of man's nature subjugates¹⁰ the internal, dark storm clouds begin to form.

(199 words)



1. Martin Luther King 马丁·路德·金, 美国黑人民权运动的著名领袖。著名演讲《我有一个梦想》已成不朽之作。本文节选自《我们从这里走向何方: 混乱还是共同》。
2. indefatigable *adj.* 不知疲倦的
3. realm *n.* 领域
4. end *n.* 目标
5. outdistance *vt.* 超过, 凌驾于……之上

6. suggestive *adj.* 启发性的
7. Thoreau 梭罗, 美国超验主义作家。
8. predicament *n.* 险境
9. spell *vt.* 意味着, 招致
10. subjugate *vt.* 征服

Government and Bureaucracy

Antony Miall

The English like to believe they are ruled by consent. They have a well-developed sense of personal freedom and, whatever the realities of the situation, have to feel that they are the masters of their own fate. They do not take kindly to¹ control of any sort and insist on the fiction that they do so only on a voluntary basis.

When it comes to bureaucracy², the English view it as a necessary evil. Their innate³ concern that "things are done properly" inclines them to accept yards and yards of red tape⁴ whilst⁵ their natural instinct for directness as well as their love of complaining incline them to reject it.

English bureaucracy and English red tape, like everything else English, are perceived as being the best of their kind in the world and definitely boulevards⁶ ahead of anything Europe has to offer.

(142 words)

注释

1. take to 喜欢
2. bureaucracy *n.* 官僚
3. innate *adj.* 天生的
4. red tape 官样文章
5. whilst *conj.* 同时
6. boulevard *n.* 林荫大道