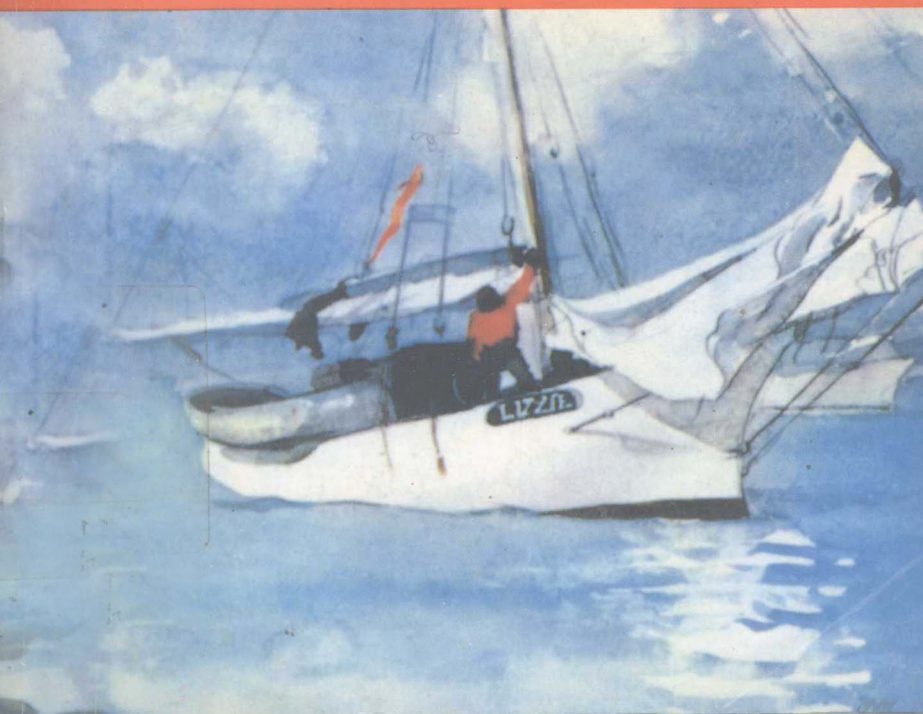


3 大学英语阶梯阅读



薛琛 主编
南开大学出版社

Graded College English Reading BOOK THREE



大学英语阶梯阅读

第三册

(4 级)

Graded College English Reading

薛琛 白莉 编

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前 言

本系列读物以提高学生的阅读能力为目的,从而促进他们在听、说、写各方面的发展。读者对象为高等院校本科生、研究生、专科生以及英语自学者。本读物共分四册,与目前大学英语分级教学密切配合。

国家教委颁发的《大学英语教学大纲》指出:大学英语教学的目的是培养学生具有较强的阅读能力、一定的听的能力以及初步的写和说的能力。显然,“培养学生具有较强的阅读能力”是第一层次的要求。在英语教学的实践中,我们也深感要培养学生听说读写四方面的技能,提高学生的阅读能力是关键。

从目前大学生英语学习的情况来看,普遍存在的问题是词汇量小,阅读速度慢,阅读理解能力不够理想,写作方面的困难也就更加突出。在全国大学英语四级、六级统考中,也再次反映了这些问题。我们认为,切实可行的解决办法就是让学生大量地阅读,通过阅读,丰富学生的文化背景知识,扩大他们的知识面,增加词汇量,以此提高阅读速度和理解力。“读书破万卷,下笔如有神”。我们相信,通过大量的阅读,学生的写作能力也一定会相应地提高。

本系列读物与高等院校学生从大学英语一级到六级的学习相呼应,在各级的学习阶段中,为他们提供内容新颖、体裁

多样、具有现代语言规范和特点的课外读物。将英语的阅读部分从“习题集”这类书籍中分离出来，将它独立成书，并与英语一至六级的教学程序互相承接，相得益彰；同时避免一般英语读物文艺性过强的倾向，代之以更加广博的内容，增补大量当代世界各个领域的新知识，是我们一次认真的尝试，也是广大学生热切的呼声。为帮助学生更好地对课文进行理解、消化和吸收，我们适当地对每篇读物加以注释，并密切结合各级学生的学习要求，配备了多种形式的练习。为便于学生的自学，我们在书后附了练习的答案。

《大学英语阶梯阅读》的编写安排如下：

册次	级别	词汇量	对应年级
1	1、2	2500-3000	大学一年级
2	3	3000-3500	大学二年级第一学期
3	4	3500-4500	大学二年级第二学期
4	5、6	4500-6000	大学高年级及研究生

本系列读物由南开大学外文系英语教研室徐齐平教授审定。

鉴于编者水平有限，在选材、注释、练习编写等方面难免存在不少缺点和问题，请读者批评指正。

编者

一九九〇年十月

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1. CULTURE LEARNING(PART I)

I . U. S. Culture

- 1 What is culture? Culture is knowledge, beliefs, and behavior shared by a group of people. People use cultural knowledge and beliefs to understand their own experience and to guide their own actions and behavior. When people share a culture, this generally means that they have a shared language and communication style as well as shared customs, beliefs, attitudes, and values. This shared knowledge is learned and is passed on from generation to generation.
- 2 A culture of cultures. It is not possible to say that all Americans share the same culture. It is more accurate to speak about the many cultures of Americans. If you know the percent of population of the U. S. , you can see why the U. S. is often described as a "culture of cultures. "
- 3 It is clear that not all Americans are blonde and blue-eyed. Yet, even though it is not possible to speak of a single American culture, Americans themselves do talk about a "mainstream" U. S. culture¹ that is shared by a majority of Americans.
- 4 "Submerged" culture. As you know that culture is like an iceberg in that much of it is hidden from sight. As with people in most cultures, most Americans are not fully aware of their cultures. That is, their cultural knowledge is "submerged. "They may not be fully conscious of their beliefs and their ways of thinking and communicating. They may not realize how their culture influences them.
- 5 Culture learning is a challenge. Learning American culture is a challenge. The U. S. is made up of many kinds of people.

People are not completely aware of their own culture and won't always be able to explain it to you. Culture learning takes time and patience, just as language learning does. When you first started learning English, you probably didn't expect to become fluent in a few weeks or months. Likewise, culture learning takes months and even years. Understanding how different groups of people think and behave is a challenging task.

II . Learning American Culture

6 Cultural clues. Every person is influenced by his or her own culture, and every person has a unique personality. That is, not everything a person does is cultural. When you observe Americans and want to understand their behavior, you may sometimes have to ask yourself, "Is this personal behavior, or is it cultural? Is this just the way this person usually acts, or is this typical American behavior?" It is often very difficult to answer these questions. You will usually need to meet several Americans before answering. Look for cultural clues which will help you to decide if the specific behavior you observed is an example of typical American behavior. For example, your teacher jokes with you and sometimes sits on his or her desk during class. You think, "Americans are often informal." Before you decide that this is true, look for other clues. Maybe you will observe Americans acting in the following cultural ways:

- In a conversation, speakers use one another's first name, even when they don't know each other well.
- In a business meeting, the boss doesn't always sit in the same place; a seat isn't always reserved for the most important person.
- In some parts of the U. S. , people tend to touch one another on the shoulder or arm while speaking.

- At a party, someone might tell his or her employee, "Hey, it's after working hours. Don't treat me like your boss!"

By looking for everyday clues such as these, you can decide if your first observation was of typical American behavior, or just of personal behavior not necessarily typical of most Americans. Then you can safely say, "Americans are often informal."

- 7 Learning from miscommunication. Careful observation can give you valuable cultural clues. A second way to learn American culture is through miscommunication or misunderstanding. That is, if you feel that *something has gone wrong*² in an interaction with an American, you may have found an opportunity for culture learning. The following is an example of learning from cultural miscommunication.

Minh is a young Vietnamese man living in California. Jim, an American friend, is going to meet Minh in the evening at Minh's house. They have decided to meet after dinner, at eight o'clock. When Jim arrives at Minh's house, Minh greets him at the door with, "Hi, Jim. Have you eaten yet?" Jim appears to be confused and a little uncomfortable. He doesn't directly answer Minh's question.

- 8 In this situation, Minh noticed Jim's discomfort, but he didn't understand it. This was an opportunity for learning something about American culture. For Minh, as a Vietnamese, "Have you eaten yet?" is a common way to greet someone. For Jim, and for many Americans, this is not a greeting and sounds unusual. Jim was especially confused since he and Minh had decided to meet after dinner.

- 9 Minh and Jim discussed what had happened and both laughed about it. The misunderstanding wasn't serious at all, but sometimes it can be. When you suspect that there is mis-

communication or a misunderstanding with an American, you can ask yourself these questions;

- “Is this miscommunication or confusion due to a cultural difference or is it something personal?”
- “Who can I ask to help me understand what happened?”
- “Can I do anything to avoid it in the future?”

III . Is This Really American Culture?

- 10 In learning American culture, your goal should be to learn the real culture, that is, what really exists. When Americans describe their culture, they may describe an ideal and not a real culture. For example, the following are often given as values of mainstream American culture:

- independence
- equality of all persons
- hard work
- directness in communication
- honesty

While many Americans do show these values in their actions, there are also times when they do not. That is, such values often describe an ideal way of living. They may describe what people think their culture should be like, and not what it is always like. An example of this can be seen in the important American value of the equality of all persons. The history of the United States shows Americans trying to change this value from an ideal to a real value. Today, Americans are continuing these efforts in the areas of racial equality and women's and men's rights.

- 11 How can you learn the real culture of Americans? First of all, don't accept a cultural explanation from just one person. Ask several people the same question. Second, remember that a cultural description is rarely true for all people of a culture.

For example, one person may tell you that Americans are frank, open, and direct in communication. Yet is this always true? Is it true for all the cultural groups in the United States? For women as well as men? For older people as well as younger people?

- 12 Cross-cultural *perspective*.³ When you ask about culture, a person will probably answer you from a particular point of view. For instance, an American will probably try to give you information about the way Americans interact with other Americans. Sometimes, however, you may be more interested in how you can best interact with Americans. This is the cross-cultural perspective. Many Americans may not be able to give you very clear or helpful answers to questions about cross-cultural interactions. It is helpful, when you ask questions, to give specific information about the situation you are thinking about. For example, you might say "Why can't my boss explain things to me so that I can understand?" Better questions are, "How can I ask my boss to speak more slowly?" or "How can I ask my boss to use simpler words?" Although you are probably interested in American interaction with other Americans, you also want to know how Americans interact with people from other cultures.

Notes

1. mainstream U. S. culture; customs, beliefs, and values shared by a majority of Americans. Mainstream U. S. culture is somewhat based on Northern European culture.
2. something has gone wrong; something has happened that makes people uncomfortable or confused.
3. perspective; understanding; point of view

Exercises

I. Reading Comprehension

Circle the letter next to the best answer.

1. The U. S. can be called "a culture of cultures" because
 - a. Americans are very interested in cultures.
 - b. there are many different cultures in America.
 - c. all Americans share the same culture.
2. Values are like the lower part of an iceberg because
 - a. values are easily seen.
 - b. values are not as important as the other aspects of culture.
 - c. values are hidden; people are not always aware of their values.
3. It is important to understand the difference between personal behavior and typical cultural behavior because
 - a. everyone in a culture likes to do things the same way.
 - b. sometimes what one person in a culture does is not the same as what most people in that culture would do.
 - c. you need to know many different kinds of Americans.
4. Independence, hard work, honesty, equality, and directness in communication are
 - a. examples of ideal culture for all people.
 - b. examples of ideal American culture.
 - c. examples of real American culture.
5. A cross-cultural perspective on American culture is important because
 - a. each person you talk to will answer you from his or her own point of view.
 - b. it is important to understand how Americans interact with people from other cultures.
 - c. you need to know how people from the different American cultures interact with each other.

II . Comprehension Check

Read the statements and decide whether it is true or false.

1. It is possible to speak of a single American culture.

2. Most people are not fully aware of their own beliefs and values.
3. All behavior that you observe can help you understand cultures.
4. Miscommunication can help you understand cultural differences.
5. Honesty and directness of communication are described as American values or characteristics.
6. Any American you talk to can tell you about real American culture, because all Americans agree about American cultural values.

III . Cloze

According to people who saw it, (1) (a. a large, bright b. a brightly, large c. a bright, large d. a largely, bright) object "exploded" over a Siberian forest in 1908, making a very loud noise and causing (2) (a. the spectacular b. spectacular c. a spectacular d. spectacularly) "cloud of fire." Surprisingly, scientists (3) (a. did visit b. visited c. did not visit d. had not visited) the area until 1927. If anything, they were (4) (a. desiring b. expecting c. wanting d. wishing) to find a large hole and fragments of rock that would indicate the impact of a meteor. (5) (a. However b. Instead c. Anyhow d. Then) they found an area with fallen trees radiating out from a central point, and largely destroyed by fire. Recent Soviet studies concluded that an object exploded about three miles (6) (a. over b. on c. about d. up) the ground. If this destruction was not caused by a meteor, (7) (a. then b. but c. so d. or) what did cause it? Some scientists think that a small comet exploded just before colliding (8) (a. on b. down c. at d. with) the earth and ignited the forest. Recently a few scientists have noticed that

the area looks (9) (a. like b. as c. such like d. as if) an atomic explosion took place, but they have no explanations of how or why. There is (10) (a. just b. even c. only d. likely) a theory that a space ship from another planet exploded while trying to land on earth.

IV . Writing

Write a description of an object which is well known to you but is not well known to your classmates. For example, you can describe a traditional stove, musical instrument or boat used in your home town. You may add a drawing to complete your description.

2. CULTURE LEARNING(PART II)

IV . Avoiding Cultural Stereotypes¹

- 13 In culture learning, it is necessary to make general observations about groups of people. Let's say that you observe a few Americans doing something. For example, you have heard a few Americans saying "Sir" or "Ma'am" when speaking to someone older than they are. Then you ask yourself, "Is there something cultural about this behavior?" You decide that there is, and so you conclude, "All Americans act like this." Yet what you observed in this example is an aspect of regional culture. In the southern U. S. "Sir" and "Ma'am" are used more frequently than in other regions of the country. If you decide that something is "American" on the basis of what only a few people do, you may be making overgeneralizations. Some overgeneralizations can be completely incorrect. Others may not consider individual differences at all. They can prevent you from looking at people as individuals. These overgeneralizations, called stereotypes, often create a false view of another culture. Some stereotypes are positive, such as, "Americans are honest and hardworking." Other stereotypes are negative, such as "Americans appear friendly, but don't really want to have deep friendships." A stereotype, whether positive or negative, describes a group of people, but does not point out differences among individuals in that group.
- 14 In talking about different cultures, we tend to look for general descriptions. Especially when one is new to a culture, it is easy to observe the actions of a few people and conclude that all people of the culture act in the same way. There are always differences among people in any group. For this reason,

the authors stated in the first chapter of this book :

Remember that the information presented in this book about culture and communication in the U. S. is general. There are many kinds of Americans, and many ways of doing things. The information that follows is usually true for many Americans, but not for all Americans.

It is rarely possible to describe Americans with expressions such as, "All Americans. . .," or "No Americans. . ."; or "Americans always. . .," or "Americans never. . ." Descriptions of Americans are more accurate if they begin, "Many Americans. . .," "Some Americans. . .," or "Americans sometimes. . ." Each American is different, just as each person in every other culture is. However, some general descriptions can be made.

V . Culture Fatigue

15 As you are learning a language and culture, it is a good idea to stop from time to time and ask yourself, "How am I doing?" Your answer won't always be a positive one. One day your answer to this question might be, "Not well. I'm tired of trying to do things the way Americans do them. I'm tired of trying to adapt to American culture. I want to do things my own way! And I'm tired of speaking English!" Culture learning, like language learning, is hard work. It can be tiring. This tired feeling, or culture fatigue, is a normal part of adapting to a different language and culture. If you are experiencing culture fatigue you may find yourself needing exact answers and losing patience when you don't get them.

16 In our own cultures, we are often sure of what to do or how to act. However, when we are trying to adapt to another

culture, we are sometimes not sure how to act. Even Americans will sometimes be unable to tell you exactly how to act in a certain situation. You may find that, in answer to questions about U. S. culture, Americans often answer, "Well, it depends," or "It's hard to say." For example, let's say that you ask, "Should I shake hands with a woman?" You could get several answers, such as:

- "Well, it depends. If she's a young woman, you should probably shake her hand. If she's an older woman. . . well, it depends on the situation. "
- "If it's a business situation, yes, always shake hands. But if it's not business, it's hard to say. "
- "That's a hard question. Personally, I wait to see if the woman puts out her hand. If she does, I shake hands. But if she doesn't. . . I don't know. It depends. "

Your reaction to such answers might be, "I need to know exactly what to do and what not to do." For someone learning a culture, an answer such as "It depends" can be frustrating. The situation is like trying to put together a *jigsaw puzzle*² and discovering that you don't have all the pieces!

17 With culture learning questions, there is rarely one answer except "It depends." It is rarely possible to answer with, "Do this" or "Don't do that." Why? Because "Do this," for example, means, "Act this way in all situations with all Americans." As we have seen, all Americans are not the same and therefore all situations cannot be the same. "It depends" is sometimes the best answer.

18 One result of culture fatigue is that the person who is trying to adapt to a new culture may start asking for clear, definite answers to all questions. Another result of culture fatigue may be that the person begins to criticize many things about the new culture. In learning another culture, you may observe