

吴芬 编注

# 现代英语 杂文选读

English Essays  
with  
Annotations



创于1897

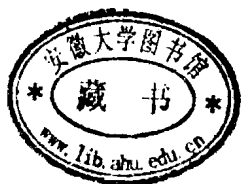
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# 序

自20世纪80年代初到本世纪初，我在对外经贸大学教英语专业本科三年级的精读课。二十年间课程名称经历了从《高级英语》到《阅读与欣赏》再到《散文分析》的变化，而最初采用的教材是北外张汉熙教授编的《高级英语》。80年代后期担任此课的有沐海、张力和我，我们自己寻找文章拿到课堂试用。在此后的十几年中材料的来源拓宽，先后试用过的文章达几十篇。

本选集收入的均为议论文，内容与当代生活相关，其中6篇可以说是由学生选入的，因为自80年代首次使用，它们在多届学生眼中是有意义、值得下功夫的文章。选集的定位是读物，不是教材，因此文章的顺序并不体现难度的变化。当初课堂上与学生一起讨论问题的记忆犹新，成为现在决定何处需要注释及其繁简程度的重要参考。注释的内容大致有三类：背景信息，文章结构和对字词、句子、段落乃至整篇文章的解读。读者当然可以有自己的见解，但要注意避免忽略上下文、孤立地对待它们。根据课堂经验，解释、说明问题时中、英文并用的效果往往更好，既帮助学生理解，也训练他们用英语表达相对复杂、抽象的内容的能力，这就是我们的注释多处中英文并用的原因。为引起读者注意，注释中需要着重解释或强调的部分使用了斜体。在做注释的过程中我深感互联网给人类带来的平等机会和便利：以前只有在最好的图书馆耗费许多力气才能找到的资料，现在普通人坐在家搜索就可以获得。考虑到注释不宜过长，而有的读者可能希望更深入地了解问题，一些注释里加入了相关的网址。由于互联网信息更新极快，编者注释所引网址难免失效，也望读者能够谅解。

包倩怡和吴冰参与了选材；包倩怡通读注释，提出许多具体的修改意见；注释的体例则主要由吴冰设计；这个选读是我们三人通力合作的结果。在注释的内容和繁简程度方面，北京大学韩敏中教授的《北大英语精读》教材的教师用书也给了我们很多启发。在注释撰写的过程中则得到David L. Jeffrey教授和Dede Nickerson的帮助；此外还要感谢几位当年修过《散文分析》课的校友，他们拨冗阅读部分注释的草稿，提出了意见。现在我期待听到读者的意见和建议。

吴 芬

2011年6月

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*Education*





*Alan Simpson*

## **The Marks of an Educated Man**

1 Any education that matters is liberal.<sup>1</sup> All the saving truths and healing graces<sup>2</sup> that distinguish a good education from a bad one or a full education from a half-empty one are contained in that word. Whatever ups and downs the term “liberal” suffers in the political vocabulary, it soars above all controversy in the educational world.<sup>3</sup> In the blackest pits of pedagogy the squirming victim<sup>4</sup> has only to ask, “What’s liberal about this?” to shame his persecutors. In times past a liberal education set off a free man from a slave or a gentleman from laborers and artisans.<sup>5</sup> It now distinguishes whatever nourishes the mind and spirit from the training which is merely practical or professional or from the trivialities which are no training at all. Such an education involves a combination of knowledge, skills, and standards.

2 So far as knowledge is concerned,<sup>6</sup> the record is ambiguous. It is sufficiently confused for the fact-filled freak who excels in quiz shows to have passed himself off in some company as an educated man.<sup>7</sup> More respectable is the notion that there are some things which every educated man ought to know; but many highly educated men would cheerfully admit to a vast ignorance, and the framers of curriculums have differed greatly in the knowledge they prescribe. If there have been times when all the students at school or college studied the same things, as if it were obvious that without exposure to a common body of knowledge they would not be educated at all, there have been other times when specialization

ran so wild that it might almost seem as if educated men had abandoned the thought of never talking to each other once their education was completed.

3 If knowledge is one of our marks, we can hardly be dogmatic about the kind or the amount. A single fertile field tilled with care and imagination can probably develop all the instincts<sup>8</sup> of an educated man. However, if the framer of a curriculum wants to minimize his risks, he can invoke an ancient doctrine which holds that an educated man ought to know a little about everything and a lot about something.

4 The “little about everything” is best interpreted these days by those who have given most thought to the sort of general education an informed individual ought to have. More is required than a sampling of the introductory courses which specialists offer in their own disciplines. Courses are needed in each of the major divisions of knowledge—the humanities, the natural sciences, and social sciences<sup>9</sup>—which are organized with the breadth of view and the imaginative power of competent staffs who understand the needs of interested amateurs. But, over and above this exciting smattering of knowledge, students should bite deeply into at least one subject and taste its full flavor. It is not enough to be dilettantes in everything without striving also to be craftsmen in something.<sup>10</sup>

5 If there is some ambiguity about the knowledge an educated man should have, there is none at all about the skills.<sup>11</sup> The first is simply the training of the mind in the capacity to think clearly. This has always been the business of education,<sup>12</sup> but the way it is done varies enormously. Marshalling the notes<sup>13</sup> of a lecture is one experience; the opportunity to argue with a teacher is another. Thinking within an accepted tradition is one thing; to challenge the tradition itself is another. The best results are achieved when the idea of the examined life<sup>14</sup> is held firmly before the mind and when the examination is conducted with the zest, rigor, and freedom

which really stretches everyone's capacities.

6 The vital aid to clear thought is the habit of approaching everything we hear and everything we are taught to believe with a certain skepticism.<sup>15</sup> The method of using doubt as an examiner<sup>16</sup> is a familiar one among scholars and scientists, but it is also the best protection which a citizen has against the cant and humbug that surround us.

7 To be able to listen to a phony argument and to see its dishonesty is surely one of the marks of an educated man. We may not need to be educated to possess some of this quality. A shrewd peasant was always well enough protected against imposters in the market place, and we have all sorts of businessmen who have made themselves excellent judges of phoniness without the benefit of a high-school diploma; but this kind of shrewdness goes along with a great deal of credulity.<sup>17</sup> Outside the limited field within which experience has taught the peasant or the illiterate businessman his lessons, he is often hopelessly gullible. The educated man, by contrast, has tried to develop a critical faculty for general use,<sup>18</sup> and he likes to think that he is fortified against imposture in all its forms.

8 It does not matter for our purposes whether the imposter is a deliberate liar or not. Some are, but the commonest enemies of mankind are the unconscious frauds.<sup>19</sup> Most salesmen under the intoxication of their own exuberance seem to believe in what they say. Most experts whose *expertise* is only a pretentious sham behave as if they had been solemnly inducted into some kind of priesthood.<sup>20</sup> Very few demagogues<sup>21</sup> are so cynical as to remain undeceived by their own rhetoric, and some of the worst tyrants in history have been fatally sincere. We can leave the disentanglement of motives to the students of fraud and error,<sup>22</sup> but we cannot afford to be taken in by the shams.

9 We are, of course, surrounded by shams. Until recently the

schools were full of them—the notion that education can be had without tears, that puffed rice is a better intellectual diet than oatmeal, that adjustment to the group is more important than knowing where the group is going, and that democracy has made it a sin to separate the sheep from the goats.<sup>23</sup> Mercifully, these are much less evident now than they were before Sputnik<sup>24</sup> startled us into our wits.

10 In front of the professor are the shams of the learned fraternity. There is the sham science of the social scientist who first invented a speech for fuddling thought and then proceeded to tell us in his lockjawed way what we already knew. There is the sham humanism of the humanist who wonders why civilization that once feasted at his table is repelled by the shredded and desiccated dishes that often lie on it today. There is the sham message of the physical scientist who feels that his mastery of nature has made him an expert in politics and morals, and there are all the other brands of hokum which have furnished material for satire since the first quacks established themselves in the first cloisters.<sup>25</sup>

11 If this is true of universities with their solemn vows and limited temptations, how much truer is it of the naughty world outside, where the prizes are far more dazzling and the only protection against humbug is the skepticism of the ordinary voter, customer, reader, listener, and viewer?<sup>26</sup> Of course, the follies of human nature are not going to be exorcised by anything that the educator can do, and I am not sure that they would want to exorcise them if he could. There is something irresistibly funny about the old Adam, and life would be duller without his antics.<sup>27</sup> But they ought to be kept within bounds. We are none the better for not recognizing a clown when we see one.

12 The other basic skill is simply the art of self-expression in speech and on paper.<sup>28</sup> A man is uneducated who has not mastered the elements of clean forcible prose and picked up some relish for

style.

13 It is a curious fact that we style everything in this country—our cars, our homes, our clothes—except our minds. They still chug along like a Model T<sup>29</sup>—rugged, persevering, but far from graceful.

14 No doubt this appeal for style, like the appeal for clear thinking, can be carried too far. There was once an American who said that the only important thing in life was “to set a chime of words ringing in a few fastidious minds.”<sup>30</sup> As far as can be learned, he left this country in a huff to tinkle his little bell in a foreign land. Most of us would think that he lacked a sense of proportion. After all, the political history of this country is full of good judgment expressed in bad prose, and the business history has smashed through to some of its grandest triumphs across acres of broken syntax. But we can discard some of these frontier manners without becoming absurdly precious.<sup>31</sup>

15 The road ahead bristles with obstacles. There is the reluctance of many people to use one word where they can get away with a half dozen or a word of one syllable if they can find a longer one. No one has ever told them about the first rule in English composition: every slaughtered syllable is a good deed.<sup>32</sup> The most persuasive teachers of this maxim are undoubtedly the commercial firms that offer a thousand dollars for the completion of a slogan in twenty-five words. They are the only people who are putting a handsome premium on economy of statement.

16 There is the decay of the habit of memorizing good prose and good poetry in the years when tastes are being formed. It is very difficult to write a bad sentence if the Bible has been a steady companion and very easy to imagine a well-turned phrase if the ear has been tuned on enough poetry.

17 There is the monstrous proliferation of gobbledy-gook in government, business, and the professions. Take this horrible example of verbal smog.<sup>33</sup>

It is inherent to motivational phenomena that there is a drive for more gratification than is realistically possible, on any level or in any type of personality organization. Likewise it is inherent to the world of objects that not all potentially desirable opportunities can be realized within a human life span. Therefore, any personality must involve an organization that allocates opportunities for gratification, that systematizes precedence relative to the limited possibilities. The possibilities of gratification, simultaneously or sequentially, of all need-dispositions are severely limited by the structure of the object system and by the intra-systemic incompatibility of the consequences of gratifying them all.

What this smothered soul<sup>34</sup> is trying to say is simply, "We must pick and choose, because we cannot have everything we want."

18 Finally, there is the universal employment of the objective test<sup>35</sup> as part of the price which has to be paid for mass education. Nothing but the difficulty of finding enough readers to mark essays can condone a system which reduces a literate student to the ignoble necessity of "blackening the answer space" when he might be giving his mind and pen free play. Though we have managed to get some benefits from these examinations, the simple fact remains that the shapely prose of the Declaration of Independence or the "Gettysburg Address"<sup>36</sup> was never learned under an educational system which employed objective tests. It was mastered by people who took writing seriously, who had good models in front of them, good critics to judge them, and an endless capacity for taking pains.<sup>37</sup> Without that sort of discipline, the arts of self-expression will remain as mutilated as they are now.

19 The standards which mark an educated man can be expressed in terms of three tests:<sup>38</sup>

20 The first is a matter of sophistication. Emerson put it nicely when he talked about getting rid of "the nonsense of our wigwams."<sup>39</sup> The wigwam may be an uncultivated home, a suburban conformity,<sup>40</sup> a crass patriotism,<sup>41</sup> or a cramped dogma.<sup>42</sup>

Some of this nonsense withers in the classroom. More of it rubs off by simply mixing with people, provided they are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and exposed within a good college to a civilized tradition. An educated man can be judged by the quality of his prejudices. There is a refined nonsense which survives the raw nonsense<sup>43</sup> which Emerson was talking about.

21 The second test is a matter of moral values.<sup>44</sup> Though we all know individuals who have contrived to be both highly educated and highly immoral, and though we have all heard of periods in history when the subtlest resources of wit and sophistication were employed to make a mockery of simple values,<sup>45</sup> we do not really believe that a college is doing its job when it is simply multiplying the number of educated scoundrels, hucksters, and triflers.

22 The health of society depends on simple virtues like honesty, decency, courage, and public spirit. There are forces in human nature which constantly tend to corrupt them, and every age has its own vices.<sup>46</sup> The worst feature of ours is probably the obsession with violence. Up to some such time as 1914, it was possible to believe in a kind of moral progress.<sup>47</sup> The quality which distinguished the Victorian from the Elizabethan was a sensitivity to suffering and a revulsion from cruelty which greatly enlarged the idea of human dignity.<sup>48</sup> Since 1914 we have steadily brutalized ourselves.<sup>49</sup> The horrors of modern war, the bestialities of modern political creeds, the uncontrollable vices of modern cities, the favorite themes of modern novelists—all have conspired to degrade us.<sup>50</sup> Some of the corruption is blatant. The authors of the best sellers, after exhausting all the possibilities of sex in its normal and abnormal forms and all the variations of alcoholism and drug addiction, are about to invade the recesses of the hospitals.<sup>51</sup> A clinical study of a hero undergoing the irrigation of his colon is about all there is left to gratify a morbid appetite.

23 Some of the corruption is insidious. A national columnist

recently wrote an article in praise of cockfighting. He had visited a cockfight in the company of Ernest Hemingway. After pointing out that Hemingway had made bullfighting respectable,<sup>52</sup> he proceeded to describe the terrible beauty of fierce indomitable birds trained to kill each other for the excitement of the spectators. Needless to say, there used to be a terrible beauty about Christians defending themselves against lions or about heretics being burned at the stake,<sup>53</sup> and there are still parts of the world where a public execution is regarded as a richly satisfying feast. But for three or four centuries the West taught itself to resist these excitements in the interest of a moral idea.<sup>54</sup>

24 Educators are needlessly squeamish about their duty to uphold moral values and needlessly perplexed about how to implant them. The corruptions of our times are a sufficient warning that we cannot afford to abandon the duty to the home and the churches, and the capacity which many institutions have shown to do their duty in a liberal spirit is a sufficient guaranty against bigotry.<sup>55</sup>

25 Finally, there is the test imposed by the unique challenge of our own times. We are not unique in suffering from moral confusion—these crises are a familiar story—but we are unique in the tremendous acceleration of the rate of social change and in the tremendous risk of a catastrophic end to all our hopes. We cannot afford educated men who have every grace except the gift for survival. An indispensable mark of the modern educated man is the kind of versatile, flexible mind that can deal with new and explosive conditions.<sup>56</sup>

26 With this reserve, there is little in this profile which has not been familiar for centuries.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, the description which once sufficed to suggest its personality has been debased in journalistic currency.<sup>58</sup> The “well-rounded man”<sup>59</sup> has become the organization man,<sup>60</sup> or the man who is so well rounded that he rolls wherever he is pushed. The humanists who invented the idea and



preached it for centuries would recoil in contempt from any such notion. They understood the possibilities of the whole man and wanted an educational system which would give the many sides of his nature some chance to develop in harmony. They thought it a good idea to mix the wisdom of the world with the learning of the cloister, to develop the body as well as the mind, to pay a great deal of attention to character, and to neglect no art<sup>61</sup> which could add to the enjoyment of living. It was a spacious idea which offered every hospitality to creative energy.<sup>62</sup> Anyone who is seriously interested in liberal education must begin by rediscovering it.