

TEM 8 Self-Assessment

英语八级自测评估

● 王黎云 编著

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杭州大学出版社

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Preface

TEM 8 (Test for English Majors, Grade 8) is intended to check the implementation of syllabus for senior English majors in the fourth year before graduation. The students are given the test to demonstrate their listening, reading, writing, and translating abilities. For this purpose, TEM 8 covers these sections: listening comprehension, listening and note-taking, proofreading, reading comprehension, skimming and scanning, translation (from English to Chinese and vice versa) and composition.

Many students find TEM 8 a frustrating test. Even excellent students who usually achieve high marks discover that TEM 8 is difficult and challenging. When they are asked how well they have done the test, they invariably give a wry smile or an uncertain answer. The common complaint by the students is that they are lacking in thorough preparation, especially for such sections as note-taking and proofreading. Even the familiar reading comprehension section, they say, needs to be practiced.

With this in mind, the TEM 8 Self-Assessment is designed to provide students with exercise materials on the five most difficult sections: note-taking, proofreading, reading comprehension, skimming and scanning, and writing. The materials, techniques, and strategies presented here have been carefully researched, tested and evaluated. This book is not meant to substitute for comprehensive courses, but if students study this systematically, they will receive the best TEM 8 preparation possible. There are two tapes for this book. To buy them, please contact Hangzhou University Press (Zip code: 310028).

Format of TEM 8

Items	Minutes	Number of Questions	Scores
Listening Comprehension	30 (Including Note-Taking)	15	15
Proofreading and Error Correction	15	10	10
Gap-Filling	15	10	10
Reading Comprehension	30	15	15
Skimming and Scanning	10	10	10
Translation	60		20
Writing	60		20

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Note-Taking and Gap-Filling

When you read, you not only recognize word; you understand, connect and evaluate ideas. Similarly, listening and note-taking are not simply a process of hearing words. They are a comprehension process in which you grasp ideas, assess their importance and connect them to other ideas. You may use the following suggestions to train your skills.

1. Listen carefully to the speaker's opening comments. They are always most important, since the speaker may then identify his/her purpose or describe the subject matter of the speech.
2. Focus on identifying main ideas. Speakers frequently give clues (such as details, explanations, or examples) to what is important in the speech. Here are a few ways that speakers may adopt.
 - a. Repetition of the same words or phrases
 - b. Listing and numbering words such as "first", "second," or "finally"
 - c. Direct announcement, such as "one important factor." "particularly," "the important thing," "before," "after," "between," "and"
3. Use abbreviations. To save time, do not write long or frequently used words. You can develop also your own set of abbreviations.

e. g. psy — psychology	imp — important
w/ — with	+ — and
4. Use both memory and logic in filling in the blanks when you are doing the gap-filling section. It is most probable for students to miss some information and then be unable to record as many details or examples as they would have liked. Your mental notes and logical reasoning may then well lead you to the correct information for a blank.

Now you will have ten mini-lectures. You will hear each lecture once only. While listening to each of the lectures, take notes on the important points. Your notes will not be marked, but you'll need them to complete a gap-filling task. Use the blank paper for note-taking. Now listen to the mini-lectures one by one.

Fill in each of the gaps with one suitable word. You may refer to your notes. Make sure the word you fill in is both grammatically and semantically acceptable. For each gap-filling exercise, limit your time in 20 minutes.

1

Like writing, discussion is a learned activity. Learning how to participate in 1 discussion could be one of the most important skills you can acquire in college. The following 2 will help you improve your discussion techniques:

1. Be willing to speak in 3. Many students are afraid to speak 4 in a group. To take an active role in your education, you must learn to overcome "speech 5."

2. Be willing to 6. Attentive listening is not 7 hearing, the sort of one-way receptivity we habitually experience when we 8 in to our radio, cassette 9, and television sets. Perhaps a good discussion depends on good 10.

3. Be willing to examine all 11 of a topic. Complex topics are multifaceted; we should see them from a variety of 12. Discussion is an excellent way to broaden our 13 and deepen our insight into 14 ideas and issues.

4. Be willing to 15 judgment. To explore ideas in a free and 16 manner, you will need to develop a receptivity to the opinions of others even when they 17 your own. Discussion is not debate. Its primary purpose is 18, not competition.

5. Be willing to prepare. Effective discussion is not merely impromptu 19. It demands a certain degree of 20.

2

Cosmetics are now more popular than ever before. The agency responsible for regulating the 1 of cosmetics is the Food and Drug Administration. A cosmetic is expected to cleanse, 2, promote attractiveness, or change 3. For action to be 4 against a cosmetic, it must be proven 5 in a court of law. But before a cosmetic is 6 to the public, the FDA does not have 7 to review the safety of cosmetics or its 8. Cosmetics are tested constantly by the FDA for 9. Generally, customers' 10 carry some weight. Among the types of products which cause 10 are deodorants, anti-perspirants and hair 11. Some cosmetics firms guarantee that cosmetics are safe and 12 labeled. They test their products in 13.

Recently, the first step in the CTFA program assuring cosmetic safety is the 14 listing of cosmetic firms with the 15. The second step is calling for the 16 to list the ingredients in their 17. The third step is providing the FDA with 18 on all consumer complaints they receive. These 19 should assure that tighter controls are being placed on the 20 industry.

3

Generally speaking, boys do well in 1 and girls show better ability in 2. In one recent study, young babies have been tested to discover how different abilities are 3. In Act 1 of the show, a colored block is lifted from a 4 and returned to it. This is repeated 5 times. In Act 2, this is done in the same way except that the block is 6. Baby boys do not seem to notice the 7, but girls start to make 8.

There is a 9 reason why baby girls talk earlier. The 10 endings in the 11 side of the brain develop faster in girls than in boys. And this part strongly 12 one's ability to use words.

Before starting school boys are always encouraged to develop something called 13. Scientists think it is caused by male 14. But they also believe that the 15 of baby boys by their mothers explains why boys have courage and 16.

Girls in primary schools may perform such tasks as vocabulary, spelling and 17 better than boys. But while little girls bring home high marks, little boys are learning to think in more 18 way. Consequently, males who are trained in this way at an earlier age are usually given 19 jobs in the adult world. It seems that girls should also have an early training like boys. Then they will be rewarded for 20, as boys are.

4

Most students use a video of a novel instead of 1 it before writing papers. It is a(n) 2 way out for them. But some academicians think it is a form of 3. They are afraid that if it is socially 4, people would cease learning how to 5. Some professors say 6 cheating isn't surprising. One says he is more interested in the students' 7 to say things about the narrative 8.

In fact, teachers have used videos for some time as 9 tools. They think videos can get students 10 in a book. One parent 11 a tape of Tess for his daughter. He did it to 12 his daughter to read Thomas Hardy's novel; she 13 did read the book.

Nevertheless, the use of videos has mainly 14 as students continue looking for short 15, especially in classes where 16 is required,

Some students even use both videos and Cliffs 17 so they can tell if the ending is 18 in the movie. Of course videos aren't 19 to all kinds of required reading. For example, a teacher teaches 20 poetry. There are no movies of "Childe Harold" and others.

5

Americans think 1 is an offensive word, which means placing a high value on material 2. Nevertheless, Americans do attach great importance to their acquisition.

The main reason is that material wealth is the accepted measure of 3 and social status. Americans rejected the 4 system of hereditary aristocracy and had to find a 5 for judging social status.

For their material wealth, they have to 6 hard. When the first settlers went to the North America, the continent was 7 in natural resources but these resources were 8. Hard work could 9 natural resources into wealth. Because of this, they have regarded material wealth as the 10 for their hard work. They even think wealth reflected a person's 11.

There is considerable social 12 to maintain a good standard of living. The 13 of keeping up with Joneses expresses an urge to 14 what others have. Americans want to appear as 15 as everyone else around them.

But it is important to distinguish between what Americans believe and how they live, in other words, between idealism and 16. They value equality of opportunity and 17, but these are ideals. Ideals are not always put into 18. In real life, those who are born into rich families have a 19 chance for success than others. So American ideals are only 20 carried out in real life even though Americans think their ideals important.

6

Sports in the United States are glorified by many. But an excessive desire to 1 can corrupt American values. Some other things are also important, such as 2 play, following the 3 of the game, and behaving with dignity when one is 4.

There is a tradition of 5 defeat in American sports. If the idea of winning in sports is carried to 6, competition can turn into disorder and 7. In one game two angry baseball teams turned into a big 8. But both coaches thought that it was helpful in increasing the winning 9 of their players.

In recent years, more and more people have directed criticisms toward football, America's 10 sport. The rough play of the game often results in many 11. Some critics believe that sports should be replaced by noncompetitive kinds of 12. They tend to abolish 13 sports. But most Americans think the criticism too 14. They believe competition strengthens the national 15 and that eliminating competition in sports would lead to 16. One school 17 said that the criticism of competitive sports was the attempt to 18 down the basic foundation upon which the society is 19. The comment of this sort shows how strong the idea of 20 is in the United States.

7

What does the American consumer like? Max Lerner thinks that the American love for 1 is the result of the frontier experience. The 2 had a rough life, so they had a strong desire for 3 that would make life more sufficient.

4 is also valued by Americans. This practice is perhaps out of 5 heritage. These people stressed the need to rid the body of dirt and 6 tendencies. Some time ago an advertiser invented the letters B. O. for body 7 in order to sell his commodities. Commercials usually imply that it is necessary for the people to use deodorant, mouthwash or 8 if they want to prevent bad 9.

The third thing that American consumers like most is 10. They love to have new and 11 things. Perhaps this love comes from their pride in their 12. For example, they are always tempted to buy new 13 of cars. The American economy seems to encourage consumption, not 14.

In addition to the above three qualities, there is a fourth quality: 15. In 1980s automatic clothes washers and 16 became quite common in most American homes. The purpose of these 17 devices is to reduce the amount of housework. With the help of these devices, many American housewives are able to hold 18 outside the home. 19 restaurants and 20 foods are two modern creations to save the American consumer time. They allow Americans to busy themselves with other forms of work which they

find more rewarding.

8

Here is an account of Sam's first project as an industrial 1. After his graduation, he returned home to a small town in 2. A friend of his father's owned a small 3 factory. In the past 5 years, it had grown from 20 to 4 workers. The owner was worried that his plant was 5, so he asked Sam to come in as a short-term 6.

Sam spent about a 7 looking around and making notes. Then he made the 8 report of his findings. He proposed:

1. Have a 9 control inspection to improve the plant's 10 product.
2. Redesign the 11 line to achieve a smooth 12 flow.
3. Decrease the 13 of the worktables to enable the machine operators work more 14.
4. Provide pleasant 15 and beautify the drab 16.
5. Have a 15-minute 17 break in the morning and afternoon to 18 the monotony and boredom.
6. Have frequent 19 increase or promotion for efficient workers. Sam was given a check with the owner's 20.

9

Twice a week, Helen works at the WBZ 1 office in 2. The office's only equipment is several 3 and a huge 4 listing almost all the 5 in the country. Her office is a social 6 agency with about 40 7. People can call them on weekdays between 8 and 12 AM when their lines are open. If they call at other hours, their messages are taken by a 9. By law every 10 station is required to give a certain amount of 11 public service to its listeners. That's why their office is housed there. Helens' work is to answer the phones of the people who have frustrating 12 and manage to help them. Generally, they don't 13 the problems themselves. They only refer the callers to those 14 that can.

Some calls can be listed under the heading of 15 problems. For example, a woman called to complain about the unrepaired 16 in an apartment with 17 stories.

Sometimes they also get a lot of 18 complaints. One call about the delayed 19 of the refrigerator is the example.

Most calls are about social 20: abortion, drug addiction and child abuse... Helen has learned a lot from this job.

10

Violence hits home. Women are at risk of being killed by a 1. The men who kill often function 2 in the real world. They do not punch their 3 or jump in cops' faces. But they committed crimes in the 4.

Researchers have distinguished two 5 among the men most likely to kill their

wives; those with 6 problems and those who are calculated and 7. The latter may be the more 8, because those men who calm down 9 are the most aggressive during 10.

Some researchers believe that the men who involve in marital violence 11 alcohol or drugs. Some may have histories of 12 injuries, or suffer from personality 13. Some studies also indicate that violence is 14 behavior. Usually they saw or were victims of 15, sexual or other abuse in the past.

Usually people are 16 to ask "why didn't she leave?" when a women is murdered. The question reflects a 17 assumption that women bear primary 18 for the abuse in a relationship. But the problem is that the abused women don't have high 19 for themselves. Some even think they 20 the abuse. That is most tragical.

Transcripts for Note-Taking and Gap-Filling

1

Like writing, discussion is a learned activity. Learning how to participate in group discussion could be one of the most important skills you can acquire in college. It will be an asset in nearly every course and make youngsters prepared for a professional career. To be adept at any kind of serious group discussion you must develop a variety of skills — in speaking, listening, thinking, and reading. The following will help you improve your discussion techniques:

1. *Be willing to speak in public.* Good discussion depends on the lively participation of all group members, not (as so often happens) on the participation of a vocal few. Many students, however, do not join discussions because they are afraid to speak extemporaneously in a group. This fear is quite common — so common, in fact, that according to a leading communication consultant, Michael T. Motley, psychological surveys “show that what Americans fear most — more than snakes, heights, disease, financial problems, or even death — is speaking before a group.” To take an active role in your education you must learn to overcome “speech anxiety.” Professor Motley offers the following advice to those who are terrified of speaking before a group: Stop thinking of public speaking as a performance and start thinking of it as communication. He believes that people choke up or feel butterflies in their stomachs when starting to speak because they worry more about how people will respond than about what they themselves have to say. “Most audiences,” he reminds us, “are more interested in hearing what we have to say than in evaluating our speech skills.”

2. *Be willing to listen.* No one can participate in group discussion who doesn't listen attentively. Attentive listening, however, is not passive hearing, the sort of one-way receptivity we habitually experience when we tune in to our radios, cassette players, and television sets. A good listener knows it is important not only to attend closely to what someone is saying but to understand why he or she is saying it. Attentive listening also requires that we understand a statement's connection to previous statements and its relation to the discussion as a whole. Perhaps the most valuable result of attentive listening is that it leads to the one element that open and lively group discussion depends on: good questions. An expert on group dynamics claims that most ineffective discussions “are characterized by a large number of answers looking for questions.” When the interesting questions start popping up, group discussion has truly begun.

3. *Be willing to examine all sides of a topic.* Good discussion techniques require that we be patient with complexity. Difficult problems rarely have obvious solutions that can be conveniently summarized in popular slogans. Complex topics are multifaceted; they demand to be turned over in our minds so that we can see them from a variety of angles. Group discussion, because it provokes a number of divergent viewpoints, is an excellent way to broaden

our perspectives and deepen our insight into complex ideas and issues.

4. *Be willing to suspend judgment.* Class discussion is best conducted in an open-minded and tolerant spirit. To explore ideas and issues in a free and open manner, you will need to develop a receptivity to the opinions of others even when they contradict your own. Discussion, remember, is not debate. Its primary purpose is communication, not competition. The goal of group discussion should be to open up a topic so that everyone in the group can hear a wide range of attitudes and opinions. This does not mean that you shouldn't form a strong opinion about an issue; rather, it encourages you to be aware of rival opinions. An opinion formed without awareness of other points of view — that has not been tested against contrary opinions—is not a strong opinion but merely a stubborn one.

5. *Be willing to prepare.* Effective discussion is not merely impromptu conversation. It demands a certain degree of preparation. To participate in class discussion, you must consider assigned topics beforehand and read whatever material is required. You should develop the habit of reading with pen in hand, underlining, noting key points, asking questions of your material, jotting impressions and ideas down in a notebook. The notes you bring to class will be an invaluable aid in group discussion.

To get the most out of your reading and discussion, take careful notes during class. You will want to jot down points that have given you new insights, information that has changed your opinions, positions you take exception to, questions you need to answer, ideas you want to consider more fully. You should think of class discussion as the first step toward your paper, where you can brainstorm ideas, form an approach, discover a purpose. When you sit down to write, you will not be starting from scratch. If you've taken careful notes, you've already begun to write.

2

Never before have so many cosmetics been available to make men and women more attractive, more desirable, and more socially acceptable. Never before have Americans used such a wide variety and large volume of cosmetic products.

Most of these products are safe for use, but it is very important that you observe some common-sense safety rules. The Food and Drug Administration is the federal agency which has been assigned by the Congress to assure the safety of the American cosmetics supply. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act defines a cosmetic as an article which is to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled, or sprayed onto the body to cleanse, beautify, promote attractiveness, or change appearance.

The law gives the FDA authority to take legal action against a cosmetic only after its dangers can be proved in a court of law. The FDA does not have authority to review the safety of cosmetics or their ingredients before they are sold to the public.

To fulfill its duty under the law, the FDA constantly tests cosmetic products for unsafe substances or harmful bacteria. The priority for this testing is based on consumer complaints about specific cosmetic products. Whenever a trend seems to be developing in consumer complaints, the FDA gives its attention to the group of cosmetics causing these complaints.

Among the types of products which cause most complaints are deodorants and antiperspirants, hair preparations, and makeup for the eyes. Often the adverse effect, reported by

the consumer, is not serious and disappears when use of the particular product is discontinued. But improper use of some cosmetics can cause serious and permanent injury.

In the past few years, the cosmetics industry has come a long way in providing further guarantees that cosmetics are safe and properly labeled. Cosmetics companies test their products, either in their own laboratories or through other laboratories.

Recently, the cosmetics industry trade association, the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association (CTFA), developed with the FDA a voluntary program which should assist the FDA's efforts in assuring that cosmetics are harmless. The first step of the program is the voluntary listing of cosmetic firms with the FDA. The second step calls for the manufacturers to list with the FDA the ingredients in their products, except for flavors and fragrances. The third step requires companies to provide the FDA with information on all consumer complaints they receive.

These programs should contribute toward even greater assurances that cosmetics will be safe.

3

Do you believe that only boys do well in science? Does it seem to you that girls have better vocabularies than boys? In your opinion, are boys better at building things? If your answer to each of those questions is "Yes," you are right, according to an article in *Current Science*. There are exceptions, but here are the facts.

On the average, males score higher on tests that measure mathematical reasoning, mechanical ability, and problem-solving skills. Females show superior ability in tests measuring vocabulary, spelling, and memory. But these differences will probably not always exist. In the future, a person's abilities may not be determined by sex. As one scientist says, "Nothing is impossible for a person to be or do."

In several recent studies, young babies have been observed and tested to discover how different abilities are developed. A scientific team headed by Jerome Kagan, a psychologist at Harvard University, is studying the thinking ability of children 11½ months old. The test is a simple one. The baby, while seated on its mother's lap, watches a "show" on a small theater stage.

In act 1 of the show, an orange-colored block is lifted from a blue box and moved slowly across the stage. Then it is returned to the box. This is repeated six times. Act 2 is similar, except that the orange block is smaller. Baby boys do not seem to notice the difference in the size of the block, but girls immediately become excited and begin to make noises that sound like language. They seem to be trying to talk.

It is known that bones, muscles, and nerves develop faster in baby girls. Usually, too, baby girls talk at an earlier age than boys do. Scientists think there is a physical reason for this. They believe that the nerve endings in the left side of the brain develop faster in girls than in boys. And it is this side of the brain that strongly influences an individual's ability to use words, to spell, and to remember things.

By the time they start to school, therefore, little girls have an advantage that boys do not have. Girls are physically more ready to remember facts, to spell, and to read. These, of course, are skills that are important in elementary school.

But what have the boys been doing in the years before starting school? They have been developing something called *aggression*. An aggressive person has courage and energy. He feels strong and independent. He is often the first one to start a fight.

What produces aggression in little boys? It has long been assumed that aggression is caused by male hormones. Scientists today believe that male hormones are only part of the explanation, however. They say aggressiveness in boys is also caused by mothers.

A team of psychologists discovered this by placing mothers and their one-year-old babies in a room filled with toys. The room had a wall through which the scientists could observe what happened without being seen. They took notes on everything the mothers and babies did.

Here is a sample of those notes, taken during the observation of a baby boy and his mother:

"Baby leans against mother. Looks up at her. She speaks to him. She turns him around. He walks away, picks up toy cat. Goes to mother, drops cat, and leans against her. Looks up at her. She turns him around."

From such observations and from conversations with mothers, the scientists learned something about the treatment of baby boys and baby girls. While the mother keeps her daughter close to her, she unconsciously trains her son to move away from her, to develop independence, and to explore his surroundings. She trains him to become aggressive and to be a problem solver.

Consequently, it is easy to understand why little girls often perform school tasks more satisfactorily than boys, especially if the task requires sitting still, obeying commands, and accepting the teacher's ideas. A girl may pass easily through the first few grades. While boys of her age bring home low marks, the girl may easily get good grades. Girls seem to have "better brains" in school. Why, then, do so few girls become great scientists? Why is the most important thinking in adult society done by men?

According to scientists, the answer is *aggression*. Because boys are aggressive, they refuse to accept other people's solutions; they insist upon solving problems for themselves. Thus, while little girls are getting high marks in school for remembering what the teacher has told them, little boys are learning to think in more independent ways.

In the adult world, the aggressive person is usually the one who gets the big salary, the great responsibility, the powerful job. And since males are trained at an early age to be aggressive, males are more often chosen for key positions.

Many people believe this situation is wrong. They think women could be successful in science and industry if their early training included some "aggression lessons," — if they were rewarded for independence and problem-solving, as boys are.

Furthermore, some psychologists believe that boys may get too much training in aggression. Perhaps little boys should be permitted to lean more on their mothers. It might make them more gentle. The world needs gentleness as much as aggressive strength.

In their latest and perhaps most diabolical assault on reading to date, America's high school and college students have added a new weapon to their arsenal: home video.

Instead of reading, say, *The Grapes of Wrath*, or even using a Cliffs Notes summary of the John Steinbeck novel, enterprising students these days are renting the 1940 film version on tape.

Video store managers around the country say other tapes popular with students include *Silas Marner*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Little Women*, *David Copperfield*, *The Great Gatsby*, and anything by Shakespeare, who at least wrote works meant to be performed.

"It's an easy way out for the kids," says Darrin Barber, who has witnessed the phenomenon at the big Video Factory store he manages in Buffalo, N. Y.

Most students who admit having used a video of a novel instead of reading the book say they began the habit in high school. Tom Hail, a student of the University of California Los Angeles, says he watched *To Kill a Mockingbird*, instead of reading the book, and "I got an A on the test." But Anthony Miranti, who watched a movie version of *A Separate Peace*, says he didn't fare as well.

The trend doesn't sit well with most academicians. "If it's socially institutionalized and approved, the consequences would be appalling," says Eric Rothstein, chairman of the English department at the University of Wisconsin. "People would cease learning how to read."

"It's a form of cheating," says David DeLaura, chairman of the English Department at the University of Pennsylvania, who adds that more professors these days are giving quizzes to make sure students have done the reading — "even at places like Penn."

Alice Kelley, an English professor at Penn, counterattacks with exams that ask students to name the author of a passage from another book by a writer covered in the course. Students who've done the reading should be able to identify the author by style and theme, she notes.

But even when they're appalled, most professors say video cheating isn't surprising. In fact, some are reminded of Classic Comics, which were comic-book versions of works like *Hamlet* that were popular thirty years ago.

Jim Kincaid, an English professor at the University of Southern California, says he's not even sure he cares whether students watch the video of a novel instead of reading the book. "They'd just be responding to a different version of the same myth," he says. "I'm much more interested in their ability to say things about the narrative structure."

Ironically, teachers have used videos for some time as legitimate educational tools, to illustrate written lessons, for instance. Moreover, some parents and teachers say videos are a way to get students interested in a book.

Erwin Okun, for example, a vice president at Walt Disney Co., says he rented a tape of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* for his high school daughter. "We did it to inspire her to read" the Thomas Hardy novel, he says. His daughter Hilary says she ultimately did read the book.

Nevertheless, the use of videos has mainly flourished as students continue looking for short cuts, "especially in classes where literature is required," says Audra Hartmann, a USC senior.

Some students even use both videos and Cliffs Notes so they can tell if the ending was changed in the movie. In John Ford's film version of *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example, the novel's remorseless ending was softened for movie audiences.

Some teachers have noticed video cheating even among elite high school students seek-

ing advanced credit for college. "There have been occasions when we sat there in Princeton reading Advanced Placement exams where accounts of the plot were from a movie than the book," complains Peter Manning, chairman of USC's English department. He says this is particularly so with *The Color Purple*, a novel by Alice Walker that was also a hit film.

Of course, videos aren't suited to all kinds of required reading, and some professors take comfort in that.

"I teach English Romantic poetry," says USC's Professor Manning. "There are no movies of 'Childe Harold.'"

5

Placing a high value on material possessions is called "materialism," but this is a word that most Americans find offensive. To say that a person is "materialistic" is an insult. To an American, this means that this person values material possessions above all else. Americans do not like to be called materialistic because they feel that this unfairly accuses them of loving only material things and of having no religious values. In fact, Americans do have other values and ideals. Nevertheless, acquiring and maintaining a large number of material possessions is of very great importance to most Americans. Why is this so?

Probably the main reason is that material wealth is the most widely accepted measure of social status in the United States. Because Americans rejected the European system of hereditary aristocracy and titles of nobility, they had to find a substitute for judging social status. The quality and quantity of an individual's material possessions became the accepted measure of success and social status.

Americans pay a price, however, for their material wealth: hard work. The North American continent was rich in natural resources when the first settlers arrived, but all these resources were undeveloped. Only by hard work could these natural resources be converted into material possessions and a comfortable standard of living. Hard work has been both necessary and rewarding for most Americans throughout their history. Because of this, they have come to see material possessions as the natural reward for their hard work. In some ways, material possessions are seen not only as tangible evidence of people's work, but also of their abilities. In the late 1700s James Madison, the father of the American Constitution, stated that the difference in material possessions reflected a difference in personal abilities.

More recently, Barry Goldwater, a candidate for the presidency in 1964, said that most poor people are poor because they deserve to be. Most Americans would find this a harsh statement, but many might think there was some truth in it. Most Americans believe that if a person works hard, it is possible to have a good standard of living. In a study of teenagers conducted 1981, researchers found that over 90 percent of young Americans "think they will achieve what they want in life, and almost eight out of ten think they can get what they want through hard work." There is, however, considerable social pressure not only to maintain a good standard of living but to improve it.

Since people's status in society is frequently measured by how much they own, Americans often feel pressured to buy more than they need. The saying that someone is "keeping up with the Joneses" expresses this urge to buy possessions that are equal to or better than what others have. If Mr. and Mrs. Jones buy a new car, their neighbors may begin to