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语现代散文选



中级英语读物丛书

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*Selected Readings in
Modern English Prose*

英语现代散文选

李汝仪 章福德 选注

江苏人民出版社

中级英语读物丛书

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编 者 的 话

为了帮助高中学生以及具有同等英语程度的读者较快地学好英语，我们特编辑《中级英语读物》丛书，由江苏人民出版社分辑出版。内容包括：《世界优秀故事选》、《英语幽默及语言游戏》、《英美名诗选》、《英语现代散文选》、《国外英语课文选》、《外国寓言童话选》、《外国神话与传说》、《英语科普小品选》以及《英语国家概况》等。选材不求系统、全面，主要是向读者提供一些英语注释读物，作为学习英语的辅助材料。

本辑《英语现代散文选》根据国外较新的散文选集、教材和各类读本精选了散文二十七篇。其中，有的介绍英美两国的文学、语言、历史和社会习俗，有的是作者对往事的回忆和怀念，有的是名作家的演说辞，有的是生动幽默的小品文，题材丰富，风格多样，读来趣味盎然。入选文章大多出自当代英美作者之手笔，短小精悍，语言规范，文风简洁，比较口语化，有助于读者了解英美两国的历史和现状，有助于读者学习当代英语，提高英语阅读能力。为了便于读者了解作品内容，我们对文中出现的难句及某些语言现象加了必要的注释，并对作品内容作了扼要的提示。

我们水平有限，本书注释中可能有欠妥或错讹之处，希望读者批评指正。

编 者

一九八二年十二月

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A Day to Remember

We have all experienced days when everything goes wrong¹. A day may begin well enough, but suddenly everything seems to get out of control². What invariably happens is that a great number of things choose to go wrong at precisely the same moment. It is as if a single unimportant event set up a chain of reactions.³ Let us suppose that you are preparing a meal and keeping an eye on the baby⁴ at the same time. The telephone rings and this marks the prelude to an unforeseen series of catastrophes⁵. While you are on the phone⁶, the baby pulls the table-cloth off the table, smashing half your best crockery and cutting himself in the process⁷. You hang up⁸ hurriedly and attend to baby, crockery, etc. Meanwhile, the meal gets burnt⁹. As if this were not enough to reduce you to tears¹⁰, your husband arrives, unexpectedly bringing three guests to dinner.

Things can go wrong on a big scale¹¹ as a number of people recently discovered in Parramatta, a suburb of Sydney¹². During the rush hour¹³ one evening two cars collided and both drivers began to argue. The woman immediately behind the two cars happened to be a learner¹⁴. She suddenly got into a panic¹⁵ and stopped her car. This made the driver following her brake hard. His wife was

sitting beside him holding a large cake. As she was thrown forward, the cake went right through the windscreen and landed on the road. Seeing a cake flying through the air, a lorry-driver who was drawing up alongside the car¹⁶, pulled up all of a sudden¹⁷. The lorry was loaded with empty beer bottles and hundreds of them slid off the back of the vehicle and on to the road¹⁸. This led to yet another¹⁹ angry argument. Meanwhile, the traffic piled up²⁰ behind. It took the police nearly an hour to get the traffic on the move²¹ again. In the meantime, the lorrydriver had to sweep up hundreds of broken bottles. Only two stray dogs benefited from all this confusion²², for they greedily devoured what was left of the cake.²³ It was just one of those days!

【注 释】

1. goes wrong: 出毛病, 发生问题。
2. get out of control: 乱了套, 失去控制。
3. It is as if...of reactions: 仿佛一件微不足道的小事引起一连串的反应。as if 在句中引导表语从句。set up: 惹起, 引起, 在句中为过去时。
4. keeping an eye on the baby: 照看孩子。
5. the prelude to an unforeseen series of catastrophes: 一连串无妄之灾的前奏。
6. on the phone: 在听电话。
7. in the process: 在此期间。
8. hang up: 挂断电话。
9. Meanwhile, the meal gets burnt: 正在这时候, 食物又烧糊(焦)了。
10. As if this were not enough to reduce you to tears: 好象这一切还不足以使你急得掉泪。As if 在句中引导状语从句。

11. on a big scale: 大规模地,广泛地。
12. Sydney: 悉尼, 澳大利亚的最大港市, 新南威尔士州的首府, 全国经济、交通、贸易的最大中心, 有全国最早的博物馆(1836年), 植物园、动物园也很多。1788年英国流放罪犯于此, 是英国在澳大利亚最早建立的殖民地。
13. the rush hour: (交通)拥挤时间, 高峰时间。
14. happened to be a learner: 碰巧是个初学开车者。
15. got into a panic: 变得惊慌失措。
16. a lorry-driver...the car: 正挨着小汽车把车停下来的卡车司机。
17. pulled up all of a sudden: 突然刹车。短语动词“pull up”作“停住(车等)”解。
18. slid off the back of the vehicle and on to the road: 从卡车后部滑到路面上。
19. yet another: 又一次。
20. piled up: (车辆)挤在一起。
21. get the traffic on the move: 使交通恢复正常; 使道路畅通无阻。
on the move: 在活动中, 在进展中。
22. Only two stray dogs benefited from all this confusion: 只有两只野狗在这一场混乱中捞到了好处。stray: 迷路的; 离群的。
23. what was left of the cake: 余下的蛋糕。of the cake 修饰连接代词 what。

【内容提要】

本文以简洁的文字,诙谐的笔调,细腻地描写了日常生活中的小事所引起的意想不到的反应。全文妙趣横生,具有浓厚的生活气息,读来亲切可人。

New Year Resolutions

The New Year is a time for resolutions. Mentally, at least,¹ most of us could compile formidable lists of 'do's' and 'don'ts'.² The same old favourites recur year in year out³ with monotonous regularity. We resolve to get up earlier each morning, eat less, find more time to play with the children, do a thousand and one jobs about the house,⁴ be nice to people we don't like, drive carefully, and take the dog for a walk every day. Past experience has taught us that certain accomplishments are beyond attainment⁵. If we remain inveterate smokers⁶, it is only because we have so often experienced the frustration that results from failure.⁷ Most of us fail in our efforts at self-improvement⁸ because our schemes are too ambitious and we never have time to carry them out⁹. We also make the fundamental error of announcing our resolutions to everybody so that we look even more foolish when we slip back into our bad old ways¹⁰. Aware of these pitfalls,¹¹ this year I attempted to keep my resolutions to myself¹². I limited myself to two modest ambitions:¹³ to do physical exercises every morning and to read more of an evening¹⁴. An all-night party on New Year's Eve provided me with a good excuse for not carrying out either of these new resolutions on the first day of

the year,¹⁵ but on the second, I applied myself assiduously to the task.¹⁶

The daily exercises lasted only eleven minutes and I proposed to do them early in the morning before anyone had got up. The self-discipline required to drag myself out of bed eleven minutes earlier than usual was considerable.¹⁷ Nevertheless, I managed to creep down into the living-room¹⁸ for two days before anyone found me out¹⁹. After jumping about on the carpet and twisting the human frame into uncomfortable positions,²⁰ I sat down at the breakfast table in an exhausted condition. It was this that betrayed me.²¹ The next morning the whole family trooped in to watch the performance. That was really unsettling but I fended off the taunts and jibes of the family good-humouredly²² and soon everybody got used to the idea²³. However, my enthusiasm waned.²⁴ The time I spent at exercises gradually diminished.²⁵ Little by little²⁶ the eleven minutes fell to zero. By January 10th, I was back to where I had started from. I argued that if I spent less time exhausting myself at exercises in the morning I would keep my mind fresh for reading²⁷ when I got home from work. Resisting the hypnotizing effect of television,²⁸ I sat in my room for a few evenings with my eyes glued to a book.²⁹ One night, however, feeling cold and lonely, I went downstairs and sat in front of the television pretending to read. That proved to be my undoing,³⁰ for I soon got back to my

old bad habit of dozing off³¹ in front of the screen. I still haven't given up my resolution to do more reading.³² In fact, I have just bought a book entitled 'How to Read a Thousand Words a Minute'³³. Perhaps it will solve my problem, but I just haven't had time to read it!

【注 释】

1. at least: 至少。
2. formidable lists of 'do's' and 'don'ts': 令人望而生畏的一连串 “该做” 和 “不该做” 的事项。
3. year in year out: 年复一年。
4. do a thousand and one jobs about the house: 做许许多多家务。
a thousand and one: 这里不表示具体数目, 意为 “许多”。
5. certain accomplishments are beyond attainment: 某些成绩是无法取得的。
6. inveterate smokers: 嗜烟成癖的人。
7. it is only...from failure: 这恰恰是我们因接二连三地戒烟失败而感到灰心丧气的缘故。 result from: 产生于。
8. fail in our efforts at self-improvement: 自我完善的努力没有成功。
fail in: 在...方面失败。
9. carry them out: 将计划付诸行动。
10. so that we...old ways: 结果当我们故态复萌时, 就显得更加愚蠢可笑。该句为结果状语从句。
11. Aware of these pitfalls: 由于意识到这些隐患。形容词短语在句中作原因状语。be aware of: 知道, 意识到。
12. keep my resolutions to myself: 不对人透露自己决心要做的事。
keep to oneself: 保守秘密。
13. I limited myself to two modest ambitions: 我只准备实现两项微不足道的抱负。
14. of an evening: 在晚上 (= in the evening)。

15. An all-night party...of the year: 除夕晚会通宵达旦,使我有充分理由在新年的第一天不把两项新决定中的任何一项付诸行动。
16. I applied myself assiduously to the task: 我全力以赴去做那两件事。apply oneself to: 集中精力于,致力于。文中的“the task”指上文提及的“two modest ambitions”。
17. The self-discipline...considerable: 需要约束自己比平时早起十一分钟是一件非同寻常的事(意为他懒得这样做)。过去分词 required 作 the self-discipline 的后置定语。
18. creep down into the living-room: 偷偷地下楼溜进起居室。
19. found me out: 发现我的行动。find out: 找出;发现;查明真相。
20. twisting the human frame into uncomfortable positions: 把身子扭曲成很不舒服的姿势。
21. It was this that betrayed me: 正是这种精疲力竭的状态暴露了我的秘密。这是一个强调句型。
22. but I...good-humouredly: 但是我用一笑了之的办法对付他们的奚落和嘲笑。fend off: 抵御,挡开。
23. got used to the idea: 对这种古怪想法慢慢习惯了。get used to: 逐渐习惯于……, used 作表语。
24. my enthusiasm waned: 我的热情逐渐消失了。
25. The time...diminished: 我花在锻炼上的时间逐渐减少。英语中通常用 spend on sth. 或 in doing sth. 较少用 spend at sth.。
26. Little by little: 慢慢地。
27. keep my mind fresh for reading: 使我阅读时保持头脑清醒。
28. the hypnotizing effect of television: 电视的催眠作用。
29. with my eyes glued to a book: 我的双眼盯着一本书。介词短语在句中作行为方式状语。
30. That proved to be my undoing: 这种做法证明是我失败的原因。
31. dozing off: 打盹。
32. I still...more reading: 我还没有放弃多读一些书的决心。give up: 放弃,停止。
33. 'How to Read a Thousand Words a Minute': “如何能每分钟读一千个单词”。

【内容提要】

本文是一个意志薄弱者对自己胸无大志，虽有洗心革面的愿望，但无自强不息的恒心的自嘲。从另一面说明了一个人既要下得决心，还要持之以恒，才能有所作为的道理。

Meet Samuel Pepys

We know quite a lot about living in London in the 1660s because of Samuel Pepys.¹ Sam², who worked for the government at the Navy Office³, kept a diary. Each day, before he went to bed, he wrote an account of what he had done and what he had seen during the day. As he was a lively, curious man⁴, he did a great deal, and noticed many interesting things, all of which he recorded in his diary⁵. Being a Civil Servant, he had a good deal more money than most people living in London.⁶ He had his own house, and he and his wife, whom he had married when he was twenty-two and she fifteen, had two or three servants to look after them.

His working hours varied a good deal.⁷ Usually he started pretty early, sometimes at six in the morning. He generally travelled by boat⁸, because the narrow streets made it difficult to get about by road⁹. His work was tiring, and in the evening he liked to relax. Sometimes he went out with his friends to a tavern for a glass or two of wine¹⁰. Occasionally he drank too much, and then regretted it next morning. Quite often he went to the theatre, sometimes as often as three or four times a week. He usually went to see new, fashionable plays about court life¹¹, but sometimes saw one

of Shakespeare's plays. One great change he had noticed in the theatre since it had started up again after the Restoration was that boys were no longer playing all the female parts.¹² There were now actresses, and Pepys thought this was a great improvement.

Of course, he had other amusements too. He enjoyed the various fairs which came to London, with their acrobats and animals, at set times of the year.¹³ Sometimes he went to watch a public execution; once he paid a shilling to stand on a cartwheel to get a better view of the man being hanged.¹⁴ He was a great lover of music and often joined with a few friends to sing and play. Also he was fond of books, and spent a lot of time and money in St Paul's Churchyard¹⁵, a great centre for booksellers. Finally, he loved good food and liked to impress his friends with the dishes he offered them¹⁶.

Sam was careful about his health¹⁷. But one thing he could not do anything about was his eyesight which gradually got worse from about 1664 onwards, and made him give up his diary in 1669.¹⁸ Before he gave up, however, he had written details of the two great disasters which struck London between 1660 and 1670, the Plague of 1665¹⁹, and the Fire of 1666²⁰. Plague, the Pest, or the Black Death²¹, as it was variously called, was nothing new. It had come to Britain first in the Middle Ages²² and had returned from time to time, especially to London. In the seventeenth century, there had been outbreaks in 1603, 1625 and 1640, but none