

中学英语拾级读物

GRADED
ENGLISH
READERS

第八级

**Science — Facts
and Fiction**

科学—史实与幻想

第 **1** 册

上海外语教育出版社

· 中学英语拾级读物 ·

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陈秋芳 编注

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上海外语教育出版社出版发行

(上海外国语学院内)

上海欧阳印刷厂印刷

新华书店上海发行所经销

开本 787×1092 1/32 8.25 印张 182 千字

1990 年 9 月第 1 版 1990 年 9 月第 1 次印刷

印数: 1—2,000 册

ISBN 7-81009-347-9/G·087

定价: 2.90 元

前 言

受国家教育委员会中学司委托,由上海外国语学院、北京外国语学院、北京师范大学、华东师范大学所属的四家大学出版社联合编辑、出版的《中学英语拾级读物》(简称《拾级读物》或《GE》)与读者见面了,这是我国中学英语教学的一项重要配套工程,旨在促进中学英语教学的改革。

取名《拾级读物》,不仅因为它有十个级别五十本书,而且还寓有“循序渐进,拾级而上”之意,中学生从初二开始阅读,逐级向上攀登,便可达到借助词典读懂浅近原著的水平。

《拾级读物》每册的词汇量、字数以及对应的年级大致如下:

级别	词汇量	每册大约字数	对应年级
一	500—700	10 万	初二
二	600—900	10 万	初二
三	800—1200	12 万	初三
四	1000—1500	12 万	初三
五	1400—1800	12 万	高一、高二
六	1700—2000	12 万	高二、高三
七	2000—2500	14 万	重点中学高三
八	2500—3000	16 万	外国语学校高三
九	3000—3500	18 万	高材生、中学教师
十	3000—3500	18 万	高材生、中学教师

阅读是学好任何一种语言的必由之路,也是获取信息的主要渠道。只做习题,不大量阅读,是学不好英语的。近年来不少学生为了应付考试,花费大量的精力和时间去做各种各样的复习题,模拟试题,但收效甚微,对外语能力的提高并无

多大益处,这是外语教学中的一种偏向。《拾级读物》的出版正是为了给中学英语教学提供一套可读性与系统性相结合的课外读物。

《拾级读物》主要供学生自己阅读,但教师可根据学生的实际水平帮助他们选择使用,并进行适当的辅导,特别在阅读方法上教师可作示范性的讲示,引导学生逐步摆脱语法和汉语的束缚。在此过程中,一是抓篇章大意和故事情节;二是注意学过语言现象的再现和在新环境下的发展。对不易理解之处,要启发学生先根据上下文去琢磨,实在影响阅读时再查阅词典。对不影响理解全文的语言难点则要舍得放过。只有这样,才能培养学生良好的阅读习惯,保持他们阅读的兴趣,提高他们阅读的速度。

《拾级读物》的级别是衡量中学生英语阅读水平的客观尺度,为了便于检查,我们还准备编写一套相应的测试材料和教学参考书。

《拾级读物》除供中学生使用外,还可作为中学英语教师培训、进修的教材。

本册读物是第八级第一册。本书包容的范围非常广泛,内容涉及到远古和未来,上至天文,下至地理。其中既谈到火箭的发明,又告诉我们刀、叉、匙的由来。空间、海洋、人间的奥秘令人遐想不已,而科幻小说中的奇妙境界更使人叹为观止。《间谍故事》把我们的思绪带到了未来的外星世界,《空间遇险记》则使我们看到了人心的凶险叵测,而在《创造奇迹的人》貌似荒诞的故事背后,作者似乎在暗示着什么。书中各类文章的内容或谐趣或肃穆,文字流畅、优雅,是高三学生理想的课外读物。

鉴于编者水平有限,读物在选材、注释等各方面肯定有不

少缺点,敬请广大师生、各界读者不吝指正,供我们再版时参考。

《中学英语拾级读物》编辑委员会

一九八八年十月

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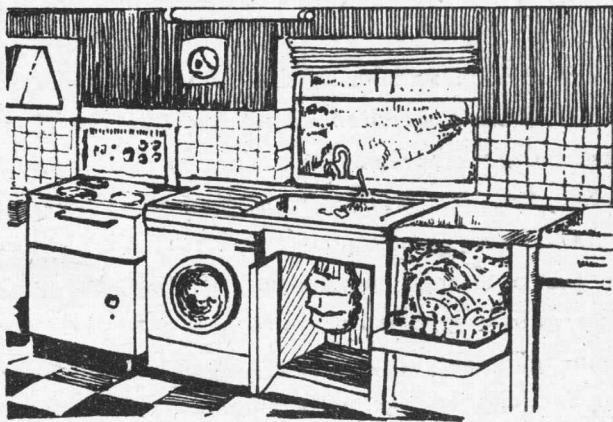
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Part I

SCIENCE AND CULTURE

科技与文化史话

Wonders in Our Homes



Thousands of years ago, some mother of a family of early Britons living in her draughty¹ cave thought that the fire was the greatest wonder of her home. Or perhaps she became very excited when her husband invented a new kind of tool called a needle, made from a fishbone.

The modern British housewife has so many wonders in her home that she takes many of them for granted. It is only a few hundred years since British housewives first had glass windows and a water supply as a matter of course². Now-

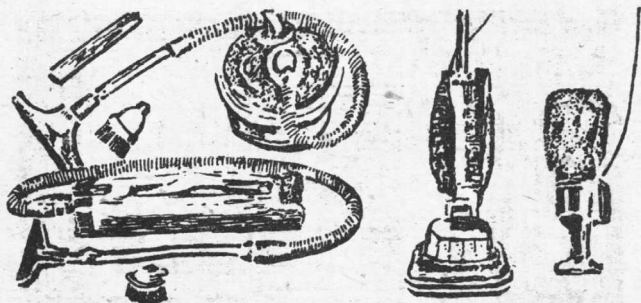
days there are even greater wonders in the home. The twentieth century housewife has washing machines, spin dryers³, dish washers, air-conditioning devices⁴ which keep the air pure, and machines for getting rid of all household waste. Yet many of these things are quite new inventions. For example, many kitchens now have what we call fluorescent lighting⁵, yet the first fluorescent lamp was not sold until the 1930's.

Let us look at some of these modern wonders in the home, and learn something about how they came to be invented and what they do.

Synthetic detergents⁶ are now in use in every home. "Synthetic" means made-up or artificial, and a "detergent" is some sort of cleaning material. Nearly every schoolboy and girl learns in science that water by itself is not very good at cleaning materials. For centuries soap has been used to help water to make contact with materials which have to be washed.

In the late nineteenth century a German scientist called Krafft found that certain non-soapy chemicals actually behaved like soap when used with water. Then, during the First World War, when Germany was very short of real soap, German scientists took up Krafft's discoveries and produced a "soapless soap"! Nowadays there are many different makes of detergent powder, but almost the same chemicals are used in all of them.

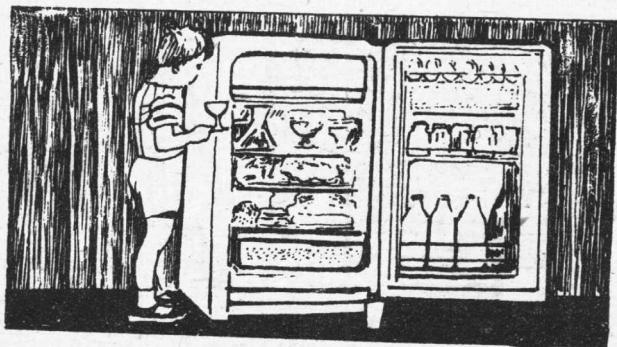
One of the commonest tools your mother uses is the



vacuum cleaner⁷, yet it is only in the last thirty years that it has become standard equipment in homes. The first really successful machine was made by a man called Booth in 1901. It was he who gave it the name of vacuum cleaner. The ordinary carpet sweeper only picked up loose pieces of fluff⁸, crumbs, pieces of paper. It would not pick up the deep-lying dirt in the carpet. The vacuum cleaner does this by suction⁹, and it can be used on furniture and curtains as well as carpets.

Many homes now have a refrigerator. Perhaps you have one in your own home. For centuries men knew that if you could keep food very cold it would not go bad so quickly. Three thousand years ago the Chinese were building snow-cellars in which to store food. For several hundred years in Europe ice-houses were built where great pieces of ice kept supplies fresh.

It was not until after the First World War that domestic¹⁰ refrigerators came into general use. A refrigerator keeps food from going bad, by reducing the temperature in

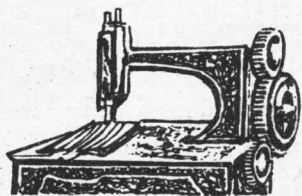


an enclosed space. A "deep-freezer" actually freezes the food, and the big household deep-freezes sold today will keep food for at least twelve months. Every fridge has however, an small freezing compartment¹¹ where ice cubes¹² and ice-cream can be made and frozen foods kept longer than if they were in the other part of the refrigerator. When these wonderful "cold cupboards" first became popular many people thought that frozen food was unfit to eat. Some clergymen even preached sermons¹³ against it!

Nearly every house has a sewing machine on which the housewife can sew new curtains and cushion covers, and also make clothes for her family. Until two hundred years ago sewing had to be done by hand with needles not so very different from those used by the cave-woman.

One of the earliest attempts at mechanical sewing was made by an Englishman called Thomas Saint in 1790. He invented a machine for stitching¹⁴ leather. Then a poor French tailor called Thimmonier made a very successful machine in

1830. Ignorant¹⁵ crowds wrecked¹⁶ the machine and almost killed the inventor. Thimmonier died a few years later,



unsuccessful and still poor. For years, no one seemed to be interested in the possibilities of such a machine. Then various enterpristin¹⁷ American

engineers took up the idea and interested people in it. A hundred years ago a man called Isaac Singer was the first really successful manufacturer¹⁸ of sewing machines. He lived and worked in America but he died in Torquay, England, in 1875. We now have Singer sewing machines in many countries.



Many people today use electric machines which are easier and quieter. There is even a new sewing machine which does not use thread at all. It uses high frequency

vibrations¹⁹ to “sew” pieces of material together. And it is quite silent!

Among the greatest scientific wonders of the age are man-made fibres²⁰ like Nylon, Rayon and Terylene.²¹ Animal-produced materials like wool and silk, and vegetable fibres like cotton are not so important as they were. Man-made materials are made from minerals²². Nylon, for example, is made from coal. Many things in the home are now made from these new materials—curtains, bed-clothes, hair brushes, even carpets, as well as the clothes we wear.

In making clothes for her children, the modern mother uses zip-fasteners.²³ They also are fairly new. In 1891 Whitcomb Judson, an American engineer, devised a zip-fastener to use on shoes. An acquaintance²⁴ of his, Colonel Lewis Walker, formed a company to manufacture Judson's fastener. Other people entered the field and improved on the original. The reliable modern zip-fastener is chiefly the work of a Swede called Gideon Sundback, who worked in the United States and improved Judson's device.

The telephone is one of the household wonders of our age. A wire carries sound to us from faraway places. Even more wonderful is the radio set. No wires are needed to carry the sound. The electric signals made from sound ride through the air on radio waves. We cannot see these waves, but they are all around us. A stone dropped in water cause waves or ripples.²⁵ Radio waves move in the same way. The