

ADVANCED COLLEGE
READING

大学
高级
英语
阅读

教师用书
下册

编著 李燕姝 V. G. Myer 北京语言学院出版社

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Valerie G. Myer 编著

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1

Those Crazy Ideas

Detailed notes on the text

1. *Time and time again*: repeatedly. (para 1)
2. *sunk*: gone down, diminished, deteriorated. (para 2)
3. *engaged in*: working on. (para 3)
4. *a sophisticated space-age project*: a highly complex undertaking about exploration of the outer space. (para 3)
5. *to bring their project into a successful conclusion*: to complete it successfully. (para 4)
6. *novel*: new. (para 4)
7. *conceptual breakthroughs*: new and original ideas. The image is of breaking through a barrier. (para 4)
8. *to put it into the nutshell*: to express an idea as briefly and succinctly as possible. The idiom is actually ‘to put it in a nutshell’. (para 4)
9. *a well-turned phrase*: an elegant expression. (para 4)
10. *in essence*: basically, to put it as simply as possible. (para 5)
11. *speculation is my profession*: science fiction is also called ‘speculative fiction’, in which the writer imagines new worlds, asking ‘what if...?’ (para 6)

12. *The question before the house*: an image from parliamentary democracy, where questions are debated in public. (para 7)
13. *dreaming up*: imagining. (para 7)
14. *stumbling over*: a physical image used here metaphorically. If somebody finds, or 'hits on', a new idea by accident, he is said to 'stumble over it', as if it were something that lay unobserved at his feet until he fell over it. (para 7)
15. *glimmerings*: faint and rudimentary ideas. (para 10)
16. *accumulated*: added together, a little at a time. (para 17)
17. *methodical perfectionist*: somebody who works carefully and in an organized manner, and is not satisfied until he has achieved his best work. (para 18)
18. *beat him to the punch*: an American expression in a boxing match which means to hit your opponent before he has time to hit you. (para 18)
19. *hackneyed*: stale, unoriginal. A 'hackney carriage' was a horse and carriage for hire, a taxi. The word therefore means 'well used'. (para 20)
20. *forestalled 'with a vengeance'*: well anticipated. 'With a vengeance' has nothing to do with revenge; it means 'powerfully' or 'definitely'. (para 23)
21. *highest integrity*: perfect honesty. (para 24)
22. *baseball players' batting averages*: 'batting average' represents the number of safe hits in proportion to the number of times the player goes to bat. (para 28)
23. *criterion*: test, necessary condition. (para 34)
24. *abysmally*: wretchedly. (para 36)

25. *greater facility*: more ease and skill. (para 40)
26. *dredging*: literally fishing in deep waters for drowned bodies or buried objects. Here the unconscious is implicitly compared to a pool, and so it means to search the unconscious so as to obtain something. (para 40)
27. *on hand*: readily available. (para 42)
28. *There is no question but that a person who cannot tell them apart must labor under a terrible disadvantage*: undoubtedly a person who cannot tell which combinations are important and which are trivial will be working in a disadvantageous situation. (para 45)
29. *plods*: to plod is to walk slowly and heavily. A famous line of English poetry, from Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, goes 'The ploughman homeward plods his weary way'. The ploughman 'plods' because he is tired after his day's work, but the verb 'to plod' is also used to mean diligent, but uninspired, study. Shakespeare wrote in *Love's Labour's Lost*, 'Small have continual plodders ever won, but base authority from others' books'. Shakespeare, of course, was supremely creative in the sense that Asimov discusses. Though Shakspeare was not a scientist, he combined into new wholes all the known ideas and literature of his day, drawing on a retentive memory as it were at white heat. (para 45)
30. *inductive*: reasoning which draws on known facts to produce geneal theories. Deductive reasoning, however, moves from general ideas or facts to particular ones. (para 50)
31. *Othewise, it will be made quickly and be considered but a*

corollary of some previous idea which will then be considered the 'breakthrough'; the chances of combinations of less related bits are small. Or the combination may be the deduction of some previous idea. In such a case, this deduction is called a breakthrough. (para 54)

32. *It would hamper creativity, in other words, to emphasize intensity of education at the expense of broadness*; to educate people too narrowly and intensively instead of broadly would obstruct people's creativity. (para 57)
33. *brain-busting*; a term no longer in use. We now call such a group or committee of high-power people a 'think-tank'. (para 60)
34. *cross-fertilize*; a metaphor for stimulating each other's thoughts. (para 60)
35. *It is more likely that none of the group will be intuitive than that none will be intelligent or none educated*; it is comparatively less likely that in a group of people, none is educated or intelligent. It is quite possible, however, that nobody in the group has the intuitive power. (para 64)
36. *to fly in the face of reason*; to defy reasons, to do stupid things. (para 70)
37. *stock character*; a fixed, stereotyped character (in a play or an opera). (para 73)
38. ... *failure to recognize that the proposition cannot be so reversed is the cause of a great deal of trouble*; the reverse proposition — all crazy people are geniuses — is not true. Failure to recognize this is the cause of a great deal of trouble. (para 75)

39. *by increasing the incidence of the various criteria among the general population; by increasing, among the people, the number of people who are broadly educated, intelligent, intuitive and courageous.* (para 81)
40. *It would be equally effective to make it sufficient to be less courageous; it would be just as easy to make people less courageous.* (para 85)

Key to the exercises

4. Paraphrase sentences

- (1) to express it briefly and succinctly in a familiar phrase.
- (2) Darwin argued that by a mechanism known as ‘the survival of the fittest’, the creatures most adapted to the environment lived long enough to breed, and their characteristics were eventually transmitted. Thus new species developed while the unsuccessful forms died out. (However, the dinosaurs are sometimes spoken of as evolutionary failures — yet they ruled the earth for forty million years, compared with man’s estimated ten million.)
- (3) He had quite definitely anticipated that Wallace would send his essay to him.
- (4) It is the principle by which ideas are associated by means of arbitrary signs (e. g. , tying a knot in one’s handkerchief as a reminder to do something).
- (5) Some people are better at searching their unconscious minds and associating ideas, which later swim up to the surface of the mind and become conscious motions.

- (6) To certain imaginative people who can take 'leaps' in thinking a few necessary 'bits' of information can lead to a new theory. (note: 'bits' and 'bytes' have come into general use from computer language; compare 'user-friendly'.)
- (7) Discrete pieces of information may be similar and obviously connected, or may have nothing apparently in common.
- (8) A new and original scientific theory will combine elements so disparate than nobody else's mind is likely to have combined them by chance.
- (9) If people are educated too narrowly and intensively, they may lack the breadth to be imaginative. If we limit the kinds of information available, we may extinguish creativity to the extent that the mind becomes intolerant of and inhospitable to information of any kind it is not used to.
- (10) 'Think-tanks' are becoming increasingly used: the idea of gathering able people into groups in the hope they will stimulate one another into producing new ideas.
- (11) We can only increase creativity by increasing the qualities previously mentioned among the young people we educate.
- (12) 'The "lucky" person is the one who is intelligent enough to seize his opportunities, who has thought about the problem and is ready to recognize the solution when it presents itself.'

(13) Society must change its attitude so that it gives permission to creative people to think and act in the way natural to them, without fear of mockery and criticism. It is equally easy to make people more courageous and less courageous.

5. True or false

(1) false, (2) false, (3) true, (4) false, (5) true,
(6) false, (7) true, (8) false, (9) false, (10) true,
(11) true, (12) true.

6. Multiple choice

(1) c, (2) a, (3) d, (4) d, (5) a, (6) d,
(7) a, (8) d, (9) b, (10) a, (11) d.

9. Advanced grammar practice

Consult *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* or any dictionary published in Britain for explanations and examples.

2

A Modest Proposal

About the author and the article

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was one of the greatest writers of English prose. He defined good style in writing as ‘proper words in proper places’, though this definition does not take us very far. His parents were English, but he was born in Dublin and identified with the Irish cause. He is still considered a national hero in Ireland, because in his writings he defended the oppressed Irish against the English colonialists. Ireland has been cruelly misgoverned by England for a thousand years.

This background is essential for understanding *A Modest Proposal*. In it, Swift characteristically uses his gifts of irony and satire to criticise the way England treated the Irish people, esp. the poor. As the Irish were exploited economically and socially, it would be a logical step, says Swift, to farm their babies for food, as we farm cows and sheep. Swift always satirised the misuse of ‘reason’, or ‘logic’ because he saw that it could be used to justify cruelty.

Detailed notes on the text

1. *melancholy object*: dismal sight. (para 1)

2. *cabin*: the poor shacks or hovels in which the poverty-stricken Irish lived. (para 1)
3. *importuning... for an alms*: begging. (para 1)
4. *honest livelihood*: honestly earned money. (para 1)
5. *I think it is agreed...*: note the smoothness of Swift's appalling argument: as everybody agrees, he says that these beggar children are superfluous, then... (para 2)
6. *prodigious*: astonishing. (para 2)
7. *the present deplorable state of the kingdom*: the terribly bad state of the country. (para 2)
8. *a very great additional grievance*: a cause for complaint. The implied question here is: complaint by whom? The poor parents of those ragged children, or the comfortable observer? Swift's pervasive irony is already at work. (para 2)
9. *whoever... nation*: anybody who could invent a just, cheap and easy way of making the children useful to society would deserve to have a statue put up to him. 'Preserver', one who maintains life. As we shall see, this 'Preservation' is neither just nor cheap, but hideously costly and inhumane. (para 2)
10. *But... streets*: I don't only refer to beggar children, but the children of all poor parents. (para 3)
11. *As to my own part*: in my opinion. (para 4)
12. *turned my thoughts*: considered, pondered. (para 4)
13. *maturely weighed*: thought carefully and wisely. (para 4)
14. *projectors*: planners. (para 4)
15. *computation*: calculation. (para 4)

16. *dropped from its dam*: born. Here Swift is using a phrase used of foals and lambs, young animals, not of human babies. His choice of words degrades the children of the unfortunate poor to the status of beasts. (para 4)
17. *a solar year*: a year. One revolution of the earth round the sun. The interpolation of 'solar' gives a spurious scientific air to the argument, again ironically. (para 4)
18. *not above the value of two shillings*: mother's milk is not normally expressed in money terms. Here Swift (or his implied 'scientific' persona) calculates the cost of a year of mother's milk at two shillings, but what it costs to feed the mother well enough to produce it? (para 4)
19. *or the value in scraps*: if nobody gives the mother cash, she will beg discarded remnants of food, to the value of two shillings. (para 4)
20. *I propose to provide for them*: means 'see they are properly cared for'; here 'provide for' has sinister undertones. (para 4)
21. *charge*: expense. (para 4)
22. *the parish*: Britain is divided into small local units or 'parishes'. A local tax is levied and until recently all householders had to pay a 'poor rate' which helped feed the indigent, who were said to be 'on the parish'. This was before the Welfare State, initiated by the Labour Government in 1945. (para 4)
23. *Instead of... wanting food and raiment*: needing to be fed and clothed. (para 4)
24. *that horrid practice*: many girls giving birth to illegitimate

children murdered them to avoid disgrace. Here Swift pretends to be moved to 'tears and pity' at the thought.

(para 5)

25. *breeders*; a word more usually applied to farm animals than to women. (para 6)

26. *I subtract... kingdom*; I do not count those who can afford to maintain their children, but thought probably this number is reduced in the present bad economic situation.

(para 6)

27. *They can... towardly parts*; the children cannot maintain themselves by stealing until they are aged six, unless they are gifted with intelligence. The writer pretends to look on child thieves with equanimity. (para 6)

28. *although I confess... art*; until they are about six, they are not fully trained thieves, even in Cavan, where thieves are skilled. (para 6)

29. *I am assured... value*; until they are about twelve, they are not worth selling, and even then they only fetch about three pounds; whereas it has cost their parents four times that sum to keep them in food and clothes (but they have not had decent clothes—they have only rags). (para 7)

30. *well-nursed*; fed on breast-milk. (para 9)

31. *fricassee*; meat cooked and served in a thick sauce. (para 8)

32. *ragout*; like 'fricassee', a French word, meaning a stew, or meat boiled with vegetables. (para 9)

33. Paragraph 10 proposes to treat the children of the poor like farm animals, allowing one sixth to survive for breeding in

the ratio of one male to four females, while the rest are to be slaughtered as meat for rich people's tables.

34. *one male will be sufficient to serve four females*; to 'serve' is the word used of farm animals. The male 'serves' or impregnates the female. As the Christian religion imposes strict monogamy, the suggestion of multiple sexual connection is as offensive as the idea of killing babies for food. (para 10)
35. *persons of quality and fortune*; an obsolete phrase, meaning people of high social class and wealth. (para 10)
36. *seasoned with a little pepper or salt*; we are meant to be shocked at the idea of eating human babies with 'seasoning'. The point of Swift's irony, of course, is that society takes care of its cattle, while neglecting its poor people. (para 10)
37. *I have reckoned... twenty-eight pounds*; twelve pounds is an unusually high birth-weight; before the metric system was introduced to England, babies were weighed by imperial measure. An average birth-weight was seven or eight pounds; a six-pound baby, or lighter, was at risk; a baby as heavy as ten pounds was a risk to its mother. Here the calm discussion of weights demonstrates what Swift saw as the current misuse of science; abstract calculation without sensitivity to the social or moral implications. As in *Gulliver's Travels* he satirises the use of reason divorced from decency and sanity. In a world which has seen the rise of Hitler and the successful implementation of a genocidal programme based on 'reason', and in today's destruction of

the environment in the interest of profit, we may have something to learn from Swift. (para 11)

38. *I grant... children*: the political nub of Swift's irony. The landlords have 'devoured', that is, ruined and brought to beggary, the parents—so they might as well eat the children. (para 12)
39. *Infant's flesh... among us*: Swift pretends that a diet of fish makes people fertile. Roman Catholics eat no meat in Lent (the period of scarcity before the spring festival of Easter), only fish. Therefore, baby-meat will be plentiful every spring, because Roman Catholics (who form the majority in Ireland) will bear children at this time. Swift, tongue in cheek, suggests the reduction in the number of Catholics would be a good thing. Swift was himself a priest of the Anglican church, but he was not hostile to Catholic individuals, though he satirised their doctrines in *The Tale of a Tub*, together with those of extreme Protestantism. (para 13)
40. *repine*: be grieved or annoyed. (para 14)
41. *a good landlord*: strange idea of being a good landlord, to buy the children off the estate to eat! (para 14)
42. *flay the carcass*: skin the baby before eating the meat. Swift pretends that this economy is required by hard times, and rich women could wear gloves made of baby-skin, while rich men would use the delicate skin for summer boots. 'Thrifty' means economical. (para 15)
43. *shambles*: slaughterhouses (obsolete word). (para 16)
44. *dressing them hot from the knife*: cooking (old meaning of