

通俗英语听读

# 这是一个小世界

高文志 编



It's a Small World

北京语言学院出版社

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# 前 言

本书供具有初级英语水平的读者练习听、读用。全书由正文，练习，注释三部分组成。正文有录音。

正文共三十一篇文章，约三千词汇。文章选编的标准是篇幅短小；内容生动，既有知识性，又有趣味性；文字通俗，是清晰明快的现代英语。三十一篇文章按由易到难，循序渐进的原则编织成一个整体。

本书每篇文章后都编排了相当数量的理解性练习 (comprehension) 和词汇练习 (new words), 以帮助读者更好地理解内容, 掌握词语, 从而提高阅读能力。练习形式有快速问答、选择答案、判别是非、词义解释、填空、完成句子等。这些练习可以口头做, 也可以书面作。书后有练习答案供读者参考。

注释部分包括文化背景介绍及习语、难句、语法注解。主要是采取例释方法, 讲解力求简明。

书后附有词汇总表。

编写这种形式的听读材料是一种尝试, 不足之处, 望批评指正。

编 者

1986年12月

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# TEXTS

i.

## The Gift of Language

Can you see a rabbit's tail? When a rabbit sees something dangerous, it runs away. Its tail, which is white, moves up and down as it runs. The other rabbits see this white tail moving up and down, and they run too. They know that there is danger. The rabbit has told them something without making a sound. It has given them a signal.

Many other animals use this kind of language. When a cobra is angry, it raises its hood and makes itself look fierce. This warns other animals<sup>1</sup>. When a bee has found some food, it goes back to its home. It cannot tell the other bees where the food is by speaking to them<sup>2</sup>, but it does a little dance in the air. This tells the bees where the food is.

Some animals say things by making sounds. A dog barks, for instance, when a stranger comes near. A cat purrs when pleased<sup>3</sup>. Some birds make several different sounds each with its own meaning<sup>4</sup>. Sometimes we human beings speak in the same way. We make sounds like 'Oh!' or 'Ah!' when we are frightened or pleased or when we drop some-

thing on our toes!

But we have something that no animal has—a large number of words which have the meanings of things, actions, feelings or ideas. We are able to give each other information, to tell or inform other people what is in our mind or how we feel. By writing words down we can remember things that have happened, or send messages to people far away. No animal can do this. No animal has the wonderful power of language.

No one knows how man learned to make words. Perhaps he began by making sounds like those made by animals. Perhaps he grunted like a pig when he lifted something heavy. Perhaps he made sounds like those he heard all round him—water splashing, bees humming, a stone falling to the ground. Somehow he learned to make words. As the centuries went by, he made more and more new words. This is what we mean by language.

People living in different countries made different kinds of words. Today there are about fifteen hundred different languages in the world. Each contains four or five hundred thousand words. But we do not need all these. To read this book you need to know only about three thousand<sup>5</sup> words. Before you leave school you will learn only a few thousand more.

The words you know are called your vocabulary. You should try to make your vocabulary bigger<sup>6</sup>. Read as many books as you can. There are plenty of books written in easy



English for you to read. You will enjoy them. When you meet a new word, find it in your dictionary. Your dictionary is your most useful book.

### Comprehension

A Which of these sentences are true and which are untrue?

1. A rabbit is a very brave animal.
2. A rabbit can make a signal.
3. A cobra makes a signal when it feels angry.
4. A rabbit, a cobra and a bee all use sounds as signals.
5. Some animals can use words.
6. Some animals can write.
7. Only human beings have a vocabulary.
8. The author tells us how human beings learnt to make words.
9. All languages contain a great many words
10. A dictionary is an unimportant book.

B Choose the best answer:

1. A rabbit uses its tail to
  - A. warn other rabbits of danger.
  - B. tell other rabbits where there is food
  - C. make itself look fierce.
  - D. show how it feels.
  - E. help it to run fast.
2. When a cobra is angry it

- A. makes a loud noise.
  - B. raises its hood.
  - C. does a little dance.
  - D. moves up and down.
  - E. makes a humming sound.
3. Several different sounds can be made by a
- A. rabbit.
  - B. bee.
  - C. bird.
  - D. cobra.
  - E. pig.
4. A very large English dictionary might contain
- |            |   |        |
|------------|---|--------|
| A. 500     | } | words. |
| B. 1,500   |   |        |
| C. 2,000   |   |        |
| D. 5,000   |   |        |
| E. 400,000 |   |        |
5. The number of different languages spoken is about
- A. 150.
  - B. 1,500.
  - C. 5,000
  - D. 15,000.
  - E. 150,000.

### New Words

- A For each new word in List A, find its meaning in List B:

**A**

cobra  
hood  
warn  
purr  
human beings  
actions  
ideas  
feelings  
information  
mind  
grunt  
century  
vocabulary

**B**

A noise made by a cat.  
Things we do.  
People, not animals.  
When we think we have these  
A kind of snake.  
Covering for the head and neck.  
Tell someone about danger.  
News or knowledge.  
A noise made by a pig.  
What we feel.  
A hundred years.  
The words we know.  
Where our ideas are.

B Use the new words to finish these sentences. Make any changes in the words that may be necessary.

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a very dangerous snake. When it is angry it raises its \_\_\_\_\_. This \_\_\_\_\_ its enemy that it is going to strike. 2. When a dog is pleased, it wags its tail but a cat \_\_\_\_\_. 3. The Government has an \_\_\_\_\_ Department to tell people what is happening. 4. When we remember things, they stay in our \_\_\_\_\_. 5. Which \_\_\_\_\_ do we live in now? We live in the 20th \_\_\_\_\_. 6. Most children have a \_\_\_\_\_ of over 2,000 words when they enter the secondary school. 7. Animals can even use signals to give each other \_\_\_\_\_. like the bee which does a dance to tell other bees where food is. But human beings can tell

each other what is in their\_\_\_\_\_, and animals cannot do this. Human beings can decide whether or not to do something. They can control their\_\_\_\_\_. Animals cannot do this. Their actions are the result of their\_\_\_\_\_. A pig has to\_\_\_\_\_. It cannot stop itself. But a\_\_\_\_\_ can decide not to speak.

## 2

### The Story of Writing

In the previous lesson we talked about how men learned to speak to each other<sup>1</sup>. Sometimes, however, they wanted to send messages to others far away. One way was by beating drums which could be heard at a distance<sup>2</sup>. This is still done in some parts of Africa.

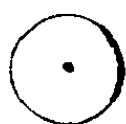
In many countries fires were lit at night<sup>3</sup> on hills. They could be seen at a great distance. They were called beacons and they gave a warning of danger from an enemy. The Indians<sup>4</sup> of North America sent smoke signals. They were made by moving a blanket over a fire.

The North American Indians also sent messages to each other by drawing pictures. These pictures were easy to understand. For example, a simple drawing of two men in a canoe meant that two men had gone on a journey by canoe. The next picture might be a man holding up five fingers. This meant that the journey lasted five days.

This is called 'picture writing'<sup>5</sup>. It was used in many countries, and is still used today in some parts of the world.

Men could send messages to each other. They could also keep a record of things that had happened.

Gradually picture writing changed. The pictures became easier to draw but harder to understand, unless<sup>6</sup> you knew what they meant. Here are some examples from ancient China.



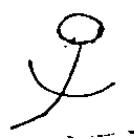
sun



mountain







rain




child



As more and more people wrote them, these changed and became even easier to write. The sign for child became 子 . sun 日 . and the character for mountain became 山 .

In ancient Egypt the sign  meant water and  stood for mouth. Writing the two together gave the idea of drinking .

Now they could use signs for ideas and not just things. Then came another big step forward. The signs began to mean sounds. When  was written it meant the sound *m*, which is what we call a letter.

In English we have twenty-six letters which we call 'the alphabet'. It would take too long to explain how each letter grew into its present shape<sup>7</sup>. But here is an example. The Egyptian word for door was *daleth*, which begins with our sound D. At first they drew a picture like this  . Later it

became simpler like this  , then this  , then this 

The Greeks wrote it like this  or this  . At last the Romans wrote it like this *D*, which is the letter we use to-day.

### Comprehension

A Choose the best answer:

1. Drums have been used for sending signals in
  - A. Africa.
  - B. India.
  - C. North America
  - D. China.
  - E. Egypt.
2. Beacons were used
  - A. to send messages.
  - B. for making smoke signals.
  - C. to tell others of an attack.
  - D. to keep a record.
  - E. to keep away the enemy.
3. A picture of five men in a canoe and a man holding up two fingers meant that
  - A. two men had gone on a journey lasting two days.
  - B. five men had gone on a journey lasting five days.
  - C. two men had gone on a journey lasting days.
  - D. five men had gone on a journey lasting two

days.

E. None of the above.

4. Picture writing was different from the earlier ways of sending messages because
- A. it was easier to do.
  - B. it was harder to do.
  - C. it was easier to understand.
  - D. it was harder to understand.
  - E. it could be used to remember things.

B Give 'Yes' or 'No' answers to these questions:

- 1. Are drums still used for sending messages anywhere in the world?
- 2. Could beacons be used to send different messages?
- 3. Could picture writing be used to send messages over a long distance?
- 4. Did picture writing become easier to read?
- 5. Was picture writing first used for ideas?
- 6. Do letters stand for sounds?
- 7. Did letters change their shapes?
- 8. Is it wrong to say 'alphabets' when we mean 'letters'?

### New Words

A For each new word in List A, find its meaning in List B.

## A

beacons

warning

canoes

record

gradually

journey

stand for

ancient

characters

alphabet

present

## B

News of danger.

Small boats with paddles.

Little by little.

Written account of something that  
has happened.

Distance travelled going to a place.

Warning lights.

Very old.

The letters of a language.

Now, at this time.

Signs used in writing.

Be a sign for something.

B Now use the new words to finish these sentences. You may use the words more than once.

1. At one time many hills in England had \_\_\_\_\_ which could be lit as a \_\_\_\_\_ of an attack by an enemy. Nowadays \_\_\_\_\_, or lighthouses, are still used to warn sailors of danger. 2. At one time in \_\_\_\_\_ China, Chinese \_\_\_\_\_ were pictures of things. \_\_\_\_\_ they changed and became easier to write. They also began to \_\_\_\_\_ ideas as well as things. 3. We use a diary to keep a \_\_\_\_\_ of what happens each day. 4. The English \_\_\_\_\_ has twenty-six letters. 5. At one time \_\_\_\_\_ were used in many parts of the world for travelling on water, especially on rivers. Nowadays most people who travel on the water use boats with engines. We still have an expression in English: 'to



paddle your own\_\_\_\_', which means to do your work without asking for help from anyone. 6. At\_\_\_\_ Hong Kong has only one cross-harbour tunnel but it may have more in the future.

### 3

## The Magic Ointment

There once lived in China a very foolish king and queen. One day the queen had a baby daughter. When they saw the baby, the king and queen both cried out, 'My goodness<sup>1</sup>! How very small it is!'

'And it hasn't any hair!' said the king. 'It's hairless<sup>2</sup>! It's bald!'

'And it hasn't any teeth!' said the queen. 'It's toothless!'

'It is a monster!' they both cried together.

They sent for all the doctors in the country.

'We have a baby daughter<sup>3</sup>,' the king said, 'but unfortunately she is a monster. You doctors must prepare<sup>4</sup> some medicine for her. When she drinks your medicine she must grow to the right size and have hair and teeth and everything else. If you don't do this you will have a beating.'

'But, sir,' said all the doctors, 'this is impossible. No doctor in the world can do this.'

'Nonsense!' said the king. 'How can it be impossible? I instruct you to begin at once. Either you will obey my instructions or<sup>5</sup> you will have a beating. You can choose.'