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前言

Preface

在各类高级英语考试中，阅读理解是测试考生获取书面语言信息能力的常见题型。在全国大学英语四级考试中阅读理解也是占分最多，题量最大的一部分，而且阅读文章内容繁杂，文理兼有，考生往往想提高阅读能力却又无从下手，《大学英语四级分类阅读200篇》正是为了解决考生们的这一困难并严格按照《大学英语四级考试大纲》的要求而编写的。

为了让考生能有的放矢地进行应试准备，考出自己的最佳水平，本书按大学英语四级考试样题阅读理解部分的形式，精选了200篇阅读理解文章，并按科目对材料进行分类，设计了20个学习单元，每个单元有6至15篇文章组成，每篇短文约250~350个单词，文章的难易程度与四级考试中阅读理解部分相近，通过训练，考生可以熟悉、了解各个学科的词汇，从而达到强化训练的目的。

本书具有以下主要特点：

1. 针对性强：考生可以针对自己的薄弱环节或结合所学专业选择重点单元做练习。
2. 循序渐进：本书每一科目类型的练习都按词汇量及问题的难度由浅入深、由易到难进行了编排，可读性强。
3. 涉及面广、体裁多样：有记叙文、说明文、议论文等；内容包括人文、地理、医学、科技、经贸等，日常生活知识、社会、文化教育、人物传略、英语语言国家的风土人情等方面的内容。考生在练习的同时，可以逐步掌握各种类型的知识内容。
4. 巩固性强：分类阅读有利于对同一题材词汇的积累和应用，大量的阅读也是巩固所学词汇的重要方法。

本书旨在提高考生的阅读能力，并帮助他们通过阶段性训练，正确理解语言难度中等、题材一般的文章。在阅读过程中，考生既要把握文章的中心大意，又会辨别说明中心大意的事实和细节，同时还要根据所读材料进行一定的推理、分析和判断，了解作者的观点和态度。阅读速度应达到每分钟70词。在阅读篇幅较长、难度略低、生词不超过总词数3%的材料时，能正确理解中心大意，抓住主要事实和有关细节，阅读速度达到每分钟100词。

本书的语言材料均为英语考试的常考内容，书后附有答案，可供各院校学生自测，也可供英语工作者和自学者参考之用。

由于编者水平有限，编写时间较为仓促，谬误疏漏之处在所难免，祈望广大读者及同行专家们不吝赐教。

编者

2003年7月

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第1章 气象、天文、地理



1

美国地理

The United States is a varied land of forests, deserts, mountains, high flat lands and fertile plains. Almost every kind of climate may be found, but the country lies mostly in the temperate zone. The continental United States stretches 4,500 kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean on the east to the Pacific on the west. It borders Canada on the north, and reaches south to Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico. A railroad train traveling 96 kilometers an hour takes more than 48 hours to cross the country.

A jet plane crosses the continental United States from the east to west in about five hours. Taking off from an Atlantic coast airport, the plane is soon flying over the gentle slopes of the Appalachian Mountains. Then, for hundreds of kilometers it crosses the fertile fields of the farm belt of the great Middle West. To the north, on clear days, passengers may see the five Great Lakes located between the United States and Canada. Continuing into the West, the plane flies over vast prairies^① and rough cattle-raising country. Soon the snow-topped Rocky Mountains appear in the distance. After crossing these high ranges, the plane can almost glide down into the rich valleys of California and, finally, to a landing not far from the beaches of the Pacific Ocean.

Including the states of Alaska and Hawaii, the United States covers an area of 9,363,123 square kilometers. Alaska borders on northwestern Canada; Hawaii lies in the Pacific 3,857 kilometers from the San Francisco. Alaska is the largest area of the 50 states, and Texas, in the southern part of the country, is second in size. Texas alone is larger than France, and Alaska is twice as big as Texas.

注释

① prairies 大草原

1. The United States lies mostly in _____.

A. the arctic zone

B. the tropic zone

moderate with rather mild winters and relatively cool summer. The south-west enjoys the celebrated Californian climate with no winters and dreary and warm summers.

Precipitation, commonly referred to as rainfall, is a measure of the quantity of water in the form of either rain, hail, or snow which reaches the ground. The average annual precipitation over the whole of the United States is thirty-six inches. It should be understood however, that a foot of snow is not equal to a foot of precipitation. A general formula for computing the precipitation of snowfall is that thirty-eight inches of snow is equal to one inch of precipitation. In New York State, for example, seventy-six inches of snow in one year would be recorded as only two inches of precipitation. Forty inches of rain would be recorded as forty inches of precipitation. The total annual precipitation would be recorded as forty-two inches.

注释

① latitude 纬度

② fluctuations 波动, 起伏

1. According to the passage, one cannot speak of an American climate because _____.
 A. it is a boring topic for conversation
 B. there are 50 states in the nation
 C. the country covers a vast area
 D. it is always the same every year
2. Which state mentioned in the passage has a mild climate?
 A. Alaska. B. Florida. C. California. D. Oregon.
3. The term "precipitation" includes _____.
 A. only rainfall B. rain, snow, and humidity
 C. rain, hail and snow D. rain, hail and humidity
4. If a state has 114 inches of snow in a year, by how much does this increase the annual precipitation?
 A. By 57 feet. B. By three inches.
 C. By three feet. D. By 114 inches.
5. Another word which is often used in place of "precipitation" is _____.
 A. rainfall B. humidity C. wetness D. rain-snow

3

天气

Tornadoes, whirlwinds, and waterspouts are rotating funnel cloud air masses of small diameter. They are differentiated by the intensity of their rotation and by the surfaces that they traverse. Though tornadoes and whirlwinds both travel over land masses, whirlwinds are atmospheric systems smaller than tornadoes. Waterspouts are tornadoes that form or pass over a water surface.

A tornado is a powerful vortex^① or “twister” whose rotational speeds are estimated to be near 300 miles per hour. The first visible indication of tornado development is usually a funnel cloud. As this funnel dips earthward, it becomes darker because of the debris^② that is forced into its intensifying vortex. Some tornadoes give no visible warning until their destruction strikes the unsuspecting victim. Tornadoes often occur in groups, and several twisters sometimes descend from the same cloud base. The forward speed of a tornado is normally 30 to 40 miles per hour. In the short time that it takes to pass, a tornado can cause fantastic destruction. There have been cases reported in which blades of straw were embedded in fence posts.

注释

① vortex 旋风

② debris 岩屑

- How are tornadoes distinguished from whirlwinds?
 - Tornadoes are larger than whirlwinds.
 - Only tornadoes are funnel-shaped.
 - Whirlwinds rotate in a different direction than tornadoes do.
 - Tornadoes travel over land and whirlwinds over water.
- Why do tornadoes appear to be dark?
 - They pick up scraps from the ground.
 - They occur only at night.

- C.* They are funnel-shaped.
D. They are water-laden.
3. Which of the following behavior is frequently characteristic of funnel clouds ?
A. Lasting a long time.
B. Occurring in isolated areas.
C. Occurring in groups.
D. Descending from different cloud bases.
4. Some tornadoes take people unawares because they _____.
A. produce a sound similar to thunder
B. cannot be seen until it is too late
C. look so much like other clouds
D. carry many large pieces of debris
5. The author refers to straw embedded in fence posts in order to show _____.
A. who makes reports about tornadoes
B. where tornadoes occur
C. how tornadoes affect physical objects
D. when tornadoes take form

4

降 雨

What makes it rain? Rain falls from clouds for the same reason anything falls to earth. The Earth's gravity pulls it. But every cloud is made of water droplets or ice crystals. Why doesn't rain or snow fall constantly from all clouds?

The droplets or ice crystals in clouds are exceedingly small. The effect of gravity on them is minute. Air currents move and lift droplets so that the net downward displacement is zero, even though the droplets are in constant motion. Droplets and ice crystals behave somewhat like dust in the air made visible in a shaft of sunlight. To the casual observer, dust seems to act in a totally random fashion, moving about chaotically without fixed direction. But in fact dust particles are much larger than water droplets and they finally fall.

The average size of a cloud droplet is only 0.0004 inch in diameter. It is so small that it would take sixteen hours to fall half a mile in perfectly still air, and it does not fall out of moving air at all. Only when the droplet grows to a diameter of 0.008 inch or larger can it fall from the cloud. The average raindrop contains a million times as much water as a tiny cloud droplet. The growth of a cloud droplet to a size large enough to fall out is the cause of rain and other forms of precipitation. This important growth process is called "coalescence".

1. Why does rain fall from clouds to earth?
 - A. Because the cloud cannot keep water droplets.
 - B. Because the ice crystals in clouds are too small.
 - C. Because of the process of coalescence.
 - D. Because of the force of gravity.
2. Ice crystals do not immediately fall to Earth because they _____.
 - A. are mostly evaporate
 - B. are kept aloft by air currents
 - C. are drawn by electrical charges
 - D. combine with other chemicals in the atmosphere
3. According to the passage, drops of water larger than 0.008 inch in diameter _____.
 - A. would never occur
 - B. would fall to earth
 - C. fall at a very high speed
 - D. are not affected by gravity
4. The last word of this passage "coalescence" refers to _____.
 - A. the growth of droplets
 - B. the growth of clouds
 - C. the movement of raindrop
 - D. the effect of the earth's gravity
5. What is the main theme of the passage?
 - A. Types of clouds.
 - B. The movement of raindrops.
 - C. The power of gravity.
 - D. The mechanics of rain.

5

海洋学

Oceanography has been defined as “the application of all sciences to the study of the sea”. Before the nineteenth century, scientists with an interest in the sea were few and *far-between*. Certainly Newton considered some theoretical aspects of it in his writings, but he was reluctant to go to sea to further his work.

For most people the sea was remote, and with the exception of early intercontinental travelers or others who earned a living from the sea, there was little reason to ask many questions about it, let alone to ask what lay beneath the surface. The first time that the question “What is at the bottom of the oceans?” had to be answered with any commercial consequence was when the laying of a telegraph cable from Europe to America was proposed. The engineers had to know the depth profile (起伏形状) of the route to estimate the length of cable that had to be manufactured.

It was to Maury of the US Navy that the Atlantic Telegraph Company turned, in 1853, for information on this matter. In the 1840s, Maury had been responsible for encouraging voyages during which soundings (测深) were taken to investigate the depths of the North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Later, some of his findings aroused much popular interest in his book *The Physical Geography of the Sea*.

The cable was laid, but not until 1866 was the connection made permanent and reliable. At the early attempts, the cable failed and when it was taken out for repairs it was found to be covered in living growths, a fact which defied contemporary scientific opinion that there was no life in the deeper parts of the sea. Within a few years oceanography was under way. In 1872, Thomson led a scientific expedition, which lasted for four years and brought home thousands of samples from the sea. Their classification and analysis occupied scientists for years and led to a five-volume report, the last volume being published in 1895.

1. The topic of this passage is _____.
 - A. the investigation of life in the ocean
 - B. the laying of the first undersea cable
 - C. the beginnings of oceanography
 - D. the early period of communication
2. The word “far-between” in the 2nd paragraph probably means _____.
 - A. indifferent
 - B. rare
 - C. remote
 - D. distant
3. The passage implies that the telegraph cable was built mainly _____.
 - A. for business’ concern
 - B. for military purposes
 - C. for investigation of the sea
 - D. for tourism consideration
4. Who asked Maury for help in oceanographic studies?
 - A. Those who earned a living from the sea.
 - B. Some intercontinental travelers who are curious about the ocean.
 - C. The American Navy.
 - D. The company which proposed to lay a cable at the bottom of the sea.
5. Maury encouraged voyages in the 1840s _____.
 - A. to make some sound experiments in the oceans
 - B. to collect samples of sea plants and animals
 - C. to estimate the length of cable that was to be made
 - D. to measure the depths of two oceans

6

大峡谷

Standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon , grazing across this giant wound in the earth’s surface , a visitor might assume that the canyon had been caused by some ancient convulsion. In fact , the events that produced the canyon , far from being sudden and cataclysmic , simply add up to the slow and orderly process of erosion^①.

Many millions of years ago the Colorado Plateau^② in the Grand Canyon area contained 10,000 more feet of rock than it does today and was relatively level. The additional material consisted of some 14-layered formations of rock. In the Grand Canyon region these layers were largely worn away over the

course of millions of years.

Approximately 65 million years ago the plateau's flat surface in the Grand Canyon area bulged upward from internal pressure ; geologists refer to this bulging action as upwarping ; it was followed by a general elevation of the whole Colorado Plateau , a process that is still going on. As the plateau gradually rose , shallow rivers that meandered across it began to run more swiftly and cut more definite courses. One of these rivers , located east of the upwarp , was the ancestor of the Colorado. Another river system called the Hualapai , flowing west of the upwarp , extended itself eastward by cutting back into the upwarp ; it eventually connected with the ancient Colorado and captured its waters. The new river then began to carve out the 277-mile-long trench that eventually became the Grand Canyon. Geologists estimate that this initial cutting action began no earlier than 10 million years ago.

Since then the canyon forming has been cumulative^③. To the corrosive force of the river itself have been added other factors. Heat and cold , rain and snow , along with the varying resistance of the rocks , increasing the opportunities for erosion. The canyon walls crumble ; the river acquires a cutting tool , tons of debris ; rainfall running off the high plateau creates feeder streams that carve side canyons. Pushing slowly backward into the plateau , the side canyons expose new rocks , and the pattern of erosion continues.

注释

- ① erosion 腐蚀
② Plateau 高原
③ cumulative 累积的

- Which of the following statements can be inferred from the passage ?
 - The outline of the Grand Canyon is constantly changing.
 - Pattern of erosion varies in different mountain ranges.
 - Increasing pollutants are the forces that made the Canyon.
 - The eruptions of the Canyon have increased in recent years.
- In the description of the Grand Canyon , the phrase "giant wound" seems to indicate that _____.
 - the visitor is embarrassed by the presence of the Canyon
 - the Canyon exists as a result of some ancient convulsion