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1 UNIT

The Pleasure of Reading



Reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. People read to learn language, to communicate and to share information and ideas. Readers get pleasure out of reading when they figure out what things mean and how texts have been constructed to convey meanings and produce effects.

In this unit, Text A shows Benjamin Franklin's passionate love for reading. It was reading that gave him the urge to write books, and also helped him become part of the five-member committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence. Text B sets out advice from the English writer William Somerset Maugham. According to Maugham, the best books are those that one needs to read to live a full life and those that one judges to mean a great deal to oneself. So if you hope to develop a love for reading, what books would you choose?



Exploring the Topic

- 1** Read the following statements about reading and choose the numbers that best express your opinions.

(1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree)

1. People tend to read books for fun.



2. Reading will help you prepare for tests.



3. Reading will help you become a better writer.



4. Reading can make you a smart person.



5. Reading paper books is better than reading electronic books.



6. People should read best-sellers.



7. People should read classics.



- 2** Work in pairs. Compare your ideas in Task 1 with your partner's and give reasons for your answer.

Text A



Reading

Benjamin Franklin

- 1 From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with *The Pilgrim's Progress*, my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's *Historical Collections*; they were small chapmen's books, and cheap, 40 or 50 in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman. *Plutarch's Lives* there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of Defoe's, called *An Essay on Projects*, and another of Dr. Mather's, called *Essays to Do Good*, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life. This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession. In 1717 my brother James returned from

England with a press and letters to set up his business in Boston. I liked it much better than that of my father, but still had a hankering for the sea. To prevent the apprehended effect of such an inclination, my father was impatient to have me bound to my brother. I stood out some time, but at last was persuaded, and signed the indentures when I was yet but twelve years old. I was to serve as an apprentice till I was twenty-one years of age, only I was to be allowed journeyman's wages during the last year. In a little time I made great proficiency in the business, and became a useful hand to my brother. I now had access to better books. An acquaintance with the apprentices of booksellers enabled me sometimes to borrow a small one, which I was careful to return soon and clean. Often I sat up in my room reading the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed in the evening and to be returned early in the morning, lest it should be missed or wanted.

- 2 And after some time an ingenious tradesman, Mr. Matthew Adams, who had a pretty collection of books, and who frequented our printing-house, took notice of me, invited me to his library, and very kindly lent me such books as I chose to read. I now took a fancy to poetry, and made some little pieces; my brother, thinking it might turn to account, encouraged me, and put me on composing occasional ballads. One was called *The Lighthouse Tragedy*, and contained an account of the drowning of Captain Worthilake, with his two daughters; the other was a sailor's song, on the taking of Teach (or Blackbeard) the pirate. They were wretched stuff, in the Grub-street-ballad style; and when they were printed he sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise. This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances, and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars. So I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one; but as prose writing had been of great use to me in the course of my life, and was a principal means of my advancement, I shall tell you how, in such a situation, I acquired what little ability I have in that way.
- 3 There was another bookish lad in the town, John Collins by name, with whom I was intimately acquainted. We sometimes disputed, and very fond we were of argument, and very desirous of confuting one another, which disputatious turn, by the way, is apt to become a very bad habit, making people often extremely disagreeable in company by the contradiction that is necessary to bring it into practice; and thence, besides souring and spoiling the conversation, is productive of disgusts and, perhaps enmities where you may have occasion for friendship. I had caught it by reading my father's books of dispute about religion. Persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and men of all sorts that have been bred at Edinburgh.

- 4 A question was once, somehow or other, started between Collins and me, of the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary side, perhaps a little for dispute's sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words; and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. As we parted without settling the point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my arguments in writing, which I copied fair and sent to him. He answered, and I replied. Three or four letters of a side had passed, when my father happened to find my papers and read them. Without entering into the discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the manner of my writing; observed that, though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which I owed to the printing-house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remark, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to endeavor at improvement.
- 5 About this time I met with an odd volume of *The Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work afterward with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious. My time for these exercises and for reading was at night, after work or before it began in the morning,

or on Sundays, when I contrived to be in the printing-house alone, evading as much as I could the common attendance on public worship which my father used to exact on me when I was under his care, and which indeed I still thought a duty, though I could not, as it seemed to me, afford time to practice it.

(1,409 words)

Notes

1. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), American author, inventor, scientist, and diplomat. He is best known for helping to draft the Declaration of Independence. His *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* records his life. It is composed of four parts and this text is an excerpt from the first part. This part is addressed to his son William, where Franklin starts with some anecdotes of his grandfather, uncles, father, and mother and deals with his childhood, his fondness for reading, and his service as an apprentice.
2. John Bunyan (1628-1688), English writer. His best-known work is *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a collection of stories of the good Christian men's journeys to the holy place. It is regarded as one of the most significant works of religious, theological fiction in English literature.
3. Grub Street, until the early 19th century, was a street in London inhabited by writers who did a lot of low-quality work. In the text, Franklin uses the phrase "Grub-street-ballad style" to indicate that his ballads were not well-written.
4. *The Spectator* is a weekly British magazine on politics, culture, and current affairs, featuring the best British journalists, authors, critics, and cartoonists. It is one of the top British news magazines and publications. Franklin loved it and imitated its language to improve his writing ability.

Words and Expressions

lay out sth.

to spend money, especially a lot of money

chapman /'tʃæpmən/ *n.*

a trader

polemic /pə'lemɪk/ *adj.*

using strong arguments to criticize or defend a particular idea, opinion, or person

divinity /də'vɪnəti/ *n.*

the study of God and religious beliefs

a thirst for knowledge

a strong desire for knowledge

clergyman /'klɜːdʒɪmən/ *n.*

a male priest, minister, or religious leader, especially a Christian one

abundantly /ə'bʌndəntli/ *adv.*

in large quantities

principal /'prɪnsəpəl/ *adj.*

most important

bookish /'bʊkɪʃ/ *adj.*

interested in reading and studying, rather than in more active or practical things

inclination /,ɪŋklə'neɪʃən/ *n.*

a feeling that makes you want to do something

at length

after a long time; for a long time or in great detail

hankering /'hæŋkərɪŋ/ *n.*

a strong wish to have or do something

apprehend /,æprɪ'hend/ *v.*

to await with fear or anxiety

bind /baɪnd/ *v.*

to form a strong emotional or economic connection between two people, countries, etc.

indenture /ɪn'dentʃə/ *n.*

a formal contract, especially in the past, between an apprentice and his employer, or the act of arranging this

apprentice /ə'prentɪs/ *n.*

someone who works for an employer for a fixed period of time in order to learn a particular skill or job

journeyman /'dʒɜːnɪmən/ *n.*

an experienced worker whose work is acceptable but not excellent

proficiency /prə'fɪʃənsi/ *n.*

a good standard of ability and skill

sit up

to stay up very late

lest /lest/ *conj.*

in order to make sure that something will not happen

ingenious /ɪn'dʒiːniəs/ *adj.*

(of a person) having a lot of clever new ideas and being good at inventing things

ballad /'bæləd/ *n.*

a short story in the form of a poem or song

drown /draʊn/ *v.*

to die from being under water for too long, or to kill someone in this way

pirate /'paɪərət/ *n.*

someone who sails on the seas, attacking other boats and stealing things from them

wretched /'retʃɪd/ *adj.*

extremely bad or unpleasant

ridicule /'rɪdəkjuːl/ *v.*

to laugh at a person, idea, etc. and say that they are stupid

beggar /'begə/ *n.*

someone who lives by asking people for food and money

prose /prəʊz/ *n.*

written language in its usual form, as opposed to poetry

lad /læd/ *n.*

a boy or young man

intimately /'ɪntəmətli/ *adv.*

in a very close and friendly way

dispute /dɪ'spju:t/

v. to argue or disagree with someone

n. a serious argument or disagreement

desirous /dɪ'zaɪərəs/ *adj.*

wanting something very much

confute /kən'fju:t/ *v.*

to prove that a person or an argument is completely wrong

disputatious /,dɪspjə'teɪʃəs/ *adj.*

tending to argue

apt /æpt/ *adj.*

having a natural tendency to do something

disagreeable /,dɪsə'grɪ:əbəl/ *adj.*

not at all enjoyable or pleasant

thence /ðens/ *adv.*

from there or following that

sour /saʊə/ *v.*

(of relationships, attitudes, people, etc.) to change so that they become less pleasant or friendly than before

spoil /spɔɪl/ *v.*

to have a bad effect on something so that it is no longer attractive, enjoyable, useful, etc.

enmity /'enməti/ *n.*

a feeling of hatred toward someone

breed /bri:d/ *v.*

to educate someone in a particular way as they are growing up

propriety /prə'praɪəti/ *n.*

correctness of social or moral behavior

for sb.'s/sth.'s sake

in order to help, improve, or please someone or something

eloquent /'eləkwənt/ *adj.*

able to express your ideas and opinions well, especially in a way that influences people

bear down

to behave in a threatening or controlling way toward a person or group

perspicuity /,pɜ:spɪ'kju:ɪti/ *n.*

the quality of being clearly expressed and easily understood

remark /rɪ'mɑ:k/ *n.*

something that you say when you express an opinion or say what you have noticed

endeavor /ɪn'devə/ *v.*

to try very hard

delighted /dɪ'lartɪd/ *adj.*

very pleased and happy

come to hand

if something comes to hand, it is there for you to use—used especially about something that is there by chance

stock /stɒk/ *n.*

a supply of something that you keep and can use when you need to

recollect /,rekə'lekt/ *v.*

to be able to remember something

verse /vɜ:s/ *n.*

words arranged in the form of poetry

import /'ɪmpɔ:t/ *n.*

importance or meaning

jumble /'dʒʌmbəl/ *v.*

to mix things together in an untidy way,
without any order

amend /ə'mend/ *v.*

to correct or make small changes to something
that is written or spoken

tolerable /'tɒlərəbəl/ *adj.*

fairly good, but not of the best quality

contrive /kən'traɪv/ *v.*

to succeed in doing something in spite of
difficulties

evade /ɪ'veɪd/ *v.*

to not do or not deal with something that
you should do

attendance /ə'tendəns/ *n.*

the act of being present at a place, for
example at school

worship /'wɜ:ʃɪp/ *n.*

the activity of praying or singing in a
religious building in order to show respect
and love for a god

exact /ɪg'zækt/ *v.*

to demand and get something from someone
by using threats, force, etc.

Analytical Reading

- 1** The following outline presents an overview of the text. Fill in the blanks to complete the outline.



Para.	How did Franklin get books?
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Franklin used his own money to buy books and sold the books he finished reading to buy more books. _____ _____
2	



Para(s).	How did Franklin develop his writing?
2	He wrote little pieces of poetry and occasional ballads.
3-4	
5	

- 2** Choose the correct answer to each question according to the text.

- _____ gave Franklin a way of thinking that influenced the major events of his life.
 - The Pilgrim's Progress*
 - Historical Collections*
 - The Lighthouse Tragedy*
 - An Essay on Projects and Essays to Do Good*
- Why did Franklin go to work in his brother's business?
 - Because he liked his brother better than his father.
 - Because he could be paid well.
 - Because his brother wanted to help him earn money to buy more books.
 - Because his father was determined to make him a printer.
- Why did Franklin's father discourage him when his poems sold well?
 - Because Franklin was too proud of himself.
 - Because Franklin's brother encouraged him to write instead of asking him to work hard.
 - Because Franklin's father thought poetry could not earn him a living.
 - Because Franklin was too addicted to poetry.

4. According to Franklin, _____ are easy to get into an argument even though they are of good sense.
 - A. lawyers
 - B. university researchers
 - C. those who have been bred at Edinburgh
 - D. all of the above
5. What bore Franklin down when he and John Collins had different opinions toward female education?
 - A. Collins was more fluent and eloquent.
 - B. Collins used words more appropriately.
 - C. Collins was better in spelling.
 - D. Collins had better perspicuity.
6. When couldn't Franklin read and write?
 - A. At night.
 - B. Before work or after work.
 - C. When he was at work.
 - D. On Sundays.

3 Answer the following questions.

1. What was Franklin's attitude toward his father's books on divinity?
2. What can you infer about Franklin's attitude toward working for his brother? Justify your answer.
3. Why did Franklin sit up late in his room reading?
4. Why did Franklin think the desire to confute others tend to be a bad habit? Do you agree with him?
5. What was Franklin's attitude about educating the female sex?
6. Why did Franklin choose to imitate *The Spectator*? What did he get from it?
7. How did Franklin improve his writing ability in the arrangement of thoughts?
8. What can be inferred from the text about Franklin's gift for writing?

Language Focus

Vocabulary

Conversion

Conversion is a word formation process. It refers to the creation of a new word from an existing word without any change in form. Words are new only in grammatical sense. That's to say, the same word just converts from one part of speech into another part of speech. The most productive conversion takes place between nouns and verbs. Take the word "hint" as an example.

- o With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand.

The first "hint" is used as a noun, meaning "a very small amount or sign of something." The second "hint" is used as a verb, meaning "to suggest or imply indirectly." The word "hint" experiences a process of conversion, from a noun to a verb.

1 Read the sentences and explain the meaning of the words in bold in different contexts.

access

1. I now had **access** to better books.
2. Many kinds of locks are available to prevent people from **accessing** your computer hard drive.

endeavor

3. I saw the justice of his remark, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to **endeavor** at improvement.
4. Despite our best **endeavors**, we couldn't start the car.

worship

5. I contrived to be in the printing-house alone, evading as much as I could the common attendance on public **worship** which my father used to exact on me when I was under his care.
6. The ancient Egyptians **worshipped** many gods.

2 Paraphrase the following sentences, paying attention to the words or expressions in bold.

1. This **bookish inclination at length** determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession.

2. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having **made a great noise**.

3. We sometimes **disputed**, and very fond we were of argument, and very desirous of confuting one another, which **disputatious** turn, by the way, is apt to become a very bad habit, making people often extremely disagreeable in company by the **contradiction** that is necessary to bring it into practice.

4. Persons of **good sense**, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and men of all sorts that have been bred at Edinburgh.

5. He was naturally more **eloquent**, had a ready plenty of words; and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his **fluency** than by the strength of his reasons.

6. But I found I wanted a **stock of** words, or a **readiness** in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses.

7. My time for these exercises and for reading was at night, after work or before it began in the morning, or on Sundays, when I **contrived** to be in the printing-house alone, evading as much as I could the common attendance on public worship which my father used to **exact** on me when I was under his care.

3 Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the words in brackets.

1. Sometimes _____ arise between the seller and the buyer. (*disputatious*)
2. The building was _____ used as a prison. (*original*)
3. On _____ of the library building, they will make a final inspection. Then the _____ works of Shakespeare will be displayed. (*complete*)
4. It was her natural _____ that struck me. (*elegance*)
5. She wanted to do her own thing, but was afraid of _____ Christmas for the rest of the family. (*spoil*)



语法讲解

Subjunctive Mood in If-Clauses and Lest-Clauses

The subjunctive mood is the verb form used especially in subordinate clauses to talk about “unreal” situations: things which are possible, desirable or imaginary.

In clauses introduced by “if”

- To talk about unreal situations now or in the future, we use a past tense in the if-clause (even though the meaning is present or future), and “would/should+infinitive” form in the other part of the sentence.
 - If I were you, I would go to the seaside to relax.
- To talk about past situations that did not happen, we use a past perfect tense in the if-clause, and “would/should+have done” form in the other part of the sentence.
 - But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses.

In clauses introduced by “lest”

- The conjunction “lest” means “for fear that” or “in order to avoid.” It is followed by something that the speaker thinks should be avoided. Clauses introduced by “lest” are usually in the subjunctive mood, and the verb is in “(should) do” form.
 - Often I sat up in my room reading the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed in the evening and to be returned early in the morning, lest it should be missed or wanted.

1 Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the words in brackets.

The dinosaurs probably became extinct after a giant asteroid hit the Earth about 66 million years ago. But what (1) _____ (happen) if this asteroid (2) _____ (miss) the Earth? Scientists believe that in this case, dinosaurs would continue to dominate the Earth, and that modern animals probably would not exist. Some scientists have even suggested that dinosaurs (3) _____ (develop) along the same lines as human beings, but this is a minority view. The general view is that perhaps dinosaur brains (4) _____ (grow) larger, but if they (5) _____ (exist) today, dinosaurs (6) _____ (not change) very much in general and (7) _____ (look) much the same. The prospects for human beings (8) _____ (not be) so good, however. If the asteroid (9) _____ (not collide) with the Earth, there probably (10) _____ (not be) any humans alive today.

2 Rewrite the following sentences using "lest."

1. Many girls avoid eating sweets so that they don't put on weight.

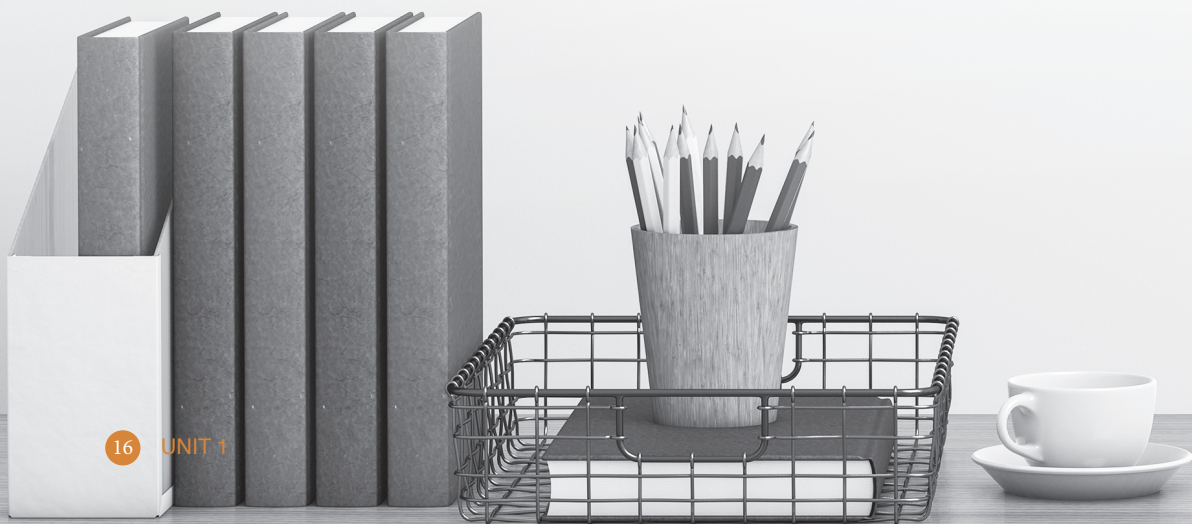
2. I wrote down the phone number for fear that I might forget it.

3. He told the truth in case he should get a more severe punishment.

4. I ran very quickly to avoid being bitten by the dog.

5. They were afraid to make a noise, thinking that they might annoy the neighbors.

6. Quietly we sat on the river bank in order to prevent the fish swimming away.



V+NP1+by+NP2/-ing

In this pattern, the verb or verb phrase is followed by a noun or noun phrase (NP1), the preposition “by,” and another noun or noun phrase (NP2), or a gerund. The pattern is used to suggest the means or method someone uses to do something.

- He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons.
- I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances.
- My father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances, and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars.

3 Complete the following sentences with words or expressions given in the box below by using the above pattern. Change the form where necessary.

make	teach	deal with
understand	build up	find

1. The scientists _____ the solution to the problem _____ testing hundreds of times.
2. He _____ philosophy _____ asking questions that can help students clarify the terms.
3. Complaints about the coffee bar _____ adding shelves and tables near the Borough Road entrance.
4. Lip reading is a technique that is used to _____ a speech _____ visually interpreting the movements of the lips, face, and tongue when normal sound is not available.
5. Self-esteem can be _____ more easily _____ setting the targets within one's reach.
6. My mother _____ us middle class by reservation standards _____ finding some minimum-wage jobs.

Practice Your Translation

4 Translate the following sentences into Chinese.

1. I was to serve as an apprentice till I was twenty-one years of age, only I was to be allowed journeyman's wages during the last year. (Para. 1)

2. An acquaintance with the apprentices of booksellers enabled me sometimes to borrow a small one, which I was careful to return soon and clean. (Para. 1)

3. I now took a fancy to poetry, and made some little pieces; my brother, thinking it might turn to account, encouraged me, and put me on composing occasional ballads. (Para. 2)

4. ...I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. (Para. 4)

5. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. (Para. 5)

5 Translate the following passage, using the words and expressions in brackets.

富兰克林从小就喜欢读书，把手里的钱都拿去买书。他也会有意识地结交（be acquainted with）一些热爱藏书或者读书的朋友。如果有人能与他讨论或者辩论（dispute）书中提出的问题，他会与这些人保持更亲密、更持久的关系。富兰克林的哥哥曾鼓励他创作诗歌（compose ballads），爸爸曾提醒他写作中应注重文笔优雅（elegance of expression）和章法严谨。为了提高写作水平，富兰克林曾有很长一段时间模仿英国著名杂志《旁观者》的语言。他先从中挑选几篇文章，写出每句话隐含的意思（hinted sentiment），然后不看原书，试着用自己能想到的（come to hand）最贴切的字眼进行表达，再把自己的文章与原文进行对比，发现错误，改正并牢记，以备以后使用。

Critical Thinking



Categorization

Categorization is the process through which ideas and objects are recognized, differentiated, classified, and understood. The word “categorization” implies that objects are sorted into categories, usually for some specific purposes. Categorizing is vital to cognition. It helps us understand the world around us. When we categorize, one of the most important things to consider is the criteria we employ. For example, we can use different criteria to classify books.

- According to subject: history, geography, economics, etc.
- According to level: elementary, intermediate, advanced, etc.
- According to genre: fiction, drama, poetry, etc.

When reading Text A, we can try to categorize the books read by Benjamin Franklin from his childhood to his adulthood. For instance, the books he read can be categorized into religious books and non-religious ones. Franklin’s attitude toward books influenced his later career. It seems that Franklin read many religious books when he was a child since he didn’t have much choice in the matter. However, he took little interest in them. Later, when he was able to access other types of books, he took a fancy to poetry and books like *The Spectator*, and finally found things he had a passion for.

Apply Your Skill

1. Read Text B carefully and find out William Somerset Maugham’s criteria for classifying books.

2. Classify the books you’ve read according to the criteria from Text A, Text B, or your own, and think about how each category of books influences you.

Text B



- 1 One isn't always as careful of what one says as one should be. When I stated in a book of mine called *The Summing Up* that young people often came to me for advice on the books they would do well to read, I did not reckon with the consequences. I received a multitude of letters from all manner of persons, asking me what the advice was that I gave. I answered them as best I could, but it is not possible to deal fully with such a matter in a private letter; and as many people seem to desire such guidance as I can offer, it has occurred to me that they might like to have a brief account of what suggestions I have to make from my own experience for pleasant and profitable reading.



Books and You

— William Somerset Maugham

- 2 The first thing I want to insist on is that reading should be enjoyable. Of course, there are many books that we all have to read, either to pass examinations or to acquire information, from which it is impossible to extract enjoyment. We are reading them for instruction, and the best we can hope is that our need for it will enable us to get through them without tedium. Such books we read with resignation rather than with alacrity. But that is not the sort of reading I have in mind. The books I shall mention in due course will help you neither to get a degree nor to earn your living, they will not teach you to sail a boat or get a stalled motor to run, but they will help you to live more fully. That, however, they cannot do unless you enjoy reading them.
- 3 The “you” I address is the adult whose avocations give him a certain leisure and who would like to read the books which cannot without loss be left unread. I do not address the bookworm. He can find his own way. His curiosity leads him along many unfrequented paths and he gathers delight in the discovery of half-forgotten excellence. I wish to deal only with the masterpieces which the consensus of opinion for a long time has accepted as supreme. We are all supposed to have read them; it is a pity that so few of us have. But there are masterpieces which are acknowledged to be such by all the best critics and to which the historians of literature devote considerable space, yet which no ordinary person can now read with enjoyment. They are important to the student, but changing times and changing tastes have robbed them of their savour and it is hard to read them now without an effort of will. Let me give one instance: I have read George Eliot’s *Adam Bede*, but I cannot put my hand on my heart and say that it was with pleasure. I read it from a sense of duty: I finished it with a sigh of relief.

- 4 Now of such books as this I mean to say nothing. Every man is his own best critic. Whatever the learned say about a book, however unanimous they are in their praise of it, unless it interests you, it is no business of yours. Don't forget that critics often make mistakes, the history of criticism is full of the blunders the most eminent of them have made, and you who read are the final judge of the value to you of the book you are reading. This, of course, applies to the books I am going to recommend to your attention. We are none of us exactly like everyone else, only rather like, and it would be unreasonable to suppose that the books that have meant a great deal to me should be precisely those that will mean a great deal to you. But they are books that I feel the richer for having read, and I think I should not be quite the man I am if I had not read them. And so I beg of you, if any of you who read these pages are tempted to read the books I suggest and cannot get on with them, just put them down; they will be of no service to you if you do not enjoy them. No one is under an obligation to read poetry or fiction or the miscellaneous literature which is classed as *belles-lettres*. (I wish I knew the English term for this, but I don't think there is one.) He must read them for pleasure, and who can claim that what pleases one man must necessarily please another?
- 5 But let no one think that pleasure is immoral. Pleasure in itself is a great good, all pleasure, but its consequences may be such that the sensible person eschews certain varieties of it. Nor need pleasure be gross and sensual. They are wise in their generation who have discovered that intellectual pleasure is the most satisfying and the most enduring. It is well to acquire the habit of reading. There are few sports in which you can engage to your own satisfaction after you have passed the prime of life; there are no games except patience, chess problems and crossword puzzles that you can play without someone to play them with you. Reading suffers from no such disadvantages; there is no occupation—except perhaps needlework, but that leaves the restless spirit at liberty—which you can more easily take up at any moment, for any period, and more easily put aside when other calls press upon you; there is no other amusement that can be obtained in these happy days of public libraries and cheap editions at so small a cost. To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life. Almost all, I say, for I would not go so far as to pretend that to read a book will assuage the pangs of hunger or still the pain of unrequited love; but half a dozen good detective stories and a hot-water bottle will enable anyone to snap his fingers at the worst cold in the head. But who is going to acquire the habit of reading for reading's sake, if he is bidden to read books that bore him?
- 6 It is more convenient to take the books of which I am now going to speak in chronological order, but I can see no reason why, if you make up your mind to read them, you should do so in that order. I think you would be much better advised to read them according to your fancy; nor do I see even why you should read them one by one. For my own part, I find it

more agreeable to read four or five books together. After all, you aren't in the same mood on one day as on another, nor have you the same eagerness to read a certain book at all hours of the day. We must suit ourselves in these matters, and I have naturally adopted the plan that best suits me. In the morning before I start work I read for a while a book, either of science or philosophy, that requires a fresh and attentive brain. It sets me off for the day. Later on, when my work is done and I feel at ease, but not inclined for mental exercise of a strenuous character, I read history, essays, criticism or biography; and in the evening I read a novel. Besides these, I keep on hand a volume of poetry in case I feel in the mood for that, and by my bedside I have one of those books, too rarely to be found, alas, which you can dip into at any place and stop reading with equanimity at the end of any paragraph.

(1,308 words)

Words and Expressions

not reckon with sb./sth.

to not consider a possible problem when you are making plans

multitude /'mʌltɪtju:d/ *n.*

a very large number of people or things

extract /ɪk'strækt/ *v.*

to get an advantage or good thing from a situation

tedium /'ti:diəm/ *n.*

the feeling of being bored because the things you are doing are not interesting and continue for a long time without changing

resignation /,rezɪg'neɪʃən/ *n.*

the quality of being willing to accept a difficult or unpleasant situation that you cannot change

alacrity /ə'lækrəti/ *n.*

quickness and eagerness

in due course

at some time in the future when it is the right time, but not before

avocation /,ævə'keɪʃən/ *n.*

a hobby or other activity that you do for interest and pleasure

masterpiece /'mɑ:stəpi:s/ *n.*

a work of art, a piece of writing or music, etc. that is of very high quality or that is the best that a particular artist, writer, etc. has produced

consensus /kən'sensəs/ *n.*

an opinion that everyone in a group agrees with or accepts

critic /'krɪtɪk/ *n.*

someone whose job is to make judgments about the good and bad qualities of art, music, films, etc.

rob sb./sth. of sth.

to take away an important quality, ability, etc. from someone or something

savour /'seɪvə/ *n.*

interest and enjoyment

sigh /saɪ/ *n.*

an act or sound of sighing

unanimous /ju:'nænɪməs/ *adj.*

agreeing completely about something

blunder /'blʌndə/ *n.*

a careless or stupid mistake

eminent /'emɪnənt/ *adj.*

(of people) famous and respected, especially in a particular profession

tempt /tempt/ *v.*

to make someone want to have or do something, even though they know they really should not

miscellaneous /,mɪsə'leɪniəs/ *adj.*

made up of many different things or people that are not connected with each other

belles-lettres /,bel 'letrə/ *n.*

studies or writings on the subject of literature or art, rather than those on technical or scientific subjects

sensible /'sensəbəl/ *adj.*

reasonable, practical, and showing good judgment

eschew /ɪs'tʃu: / *v.*

to deliberately avoid doing or using something

gross /grəʊs/ *adj.*

very unpleasant to look or think about

sensual /'sensʃuəl/ *adj.*

relating to the feelings of your body rather than your mind

enduring /ɪn'dʒʊəriŋ/ *adj.*

continuing for a very long time

prime /praɪm/ *n.*

the time in your life when you are strongest and most active

crossword /'krɒswɜːd/ *n.*

a word game in which you write the answers to questions in a pattern of numbered boxes

restless /'restləs/ *adj.*

unwilling to keep still or stay where you are, especially because you are nervous or bored

edition /ɪ'diʃən/ *n.*

the form that a book, newspaper, magazine, etc. is produced in

refuge /'refjuːdʒ/ *n.*

a place that provides shelter, or protection from danger

assuage /ə'sweɪdʒ/ *v.*

to make an unpleasant feeling less painful or severe

pang /pæŋ/ *n.*

a sudden feeling of pain, sadness, etc.

unrequited /ˌʌnrɪ'kwɑɪtɪd/ *adj.*

(of love) not returned by the person that you love

bid /bɪd/ *v.*

to order or tell someone what to do

chronological /ˌkrɒnə'lɒdʒɪkəl/ *adj.*

arranged according to when things happened or were made

set sb. off

to make someone start laughing, crying, or talking about something

inclined /ɪn'klaɪnd/ *adj.*

wanting to do something

strenuous /'strenjuəs/ *adj.*

needing a lot of effort or strength

biography /baɪ'ɒgrəfi/ *n.*

literature that consists of books that tell what has happened in someone's life, written by someone else

alas /ə'læs/ *interj.*

used to express sadness, shame, or fear

dip into sth.

to read short parts of a book, magazine, etc., but not the whole thing

equanimity /ˌiːkwə'nɪməti/ *n.*

calmness in the way that you react to things, which means that you do not become upset or annoyed

Independent Learning

1 Find more information on the Internet or in the library about the terms and names related to the text you have just read. Share what you have learned with your classmates.

1. William Somerset Maugham
2. *Books and You*
3. *The Summing Up*
4. George Eliot and *Adam Bede*

Analytical Reading

1 The following outline presents an overview of the text. Fill in the blanks to complete the outline.

Part	Para(s).	Main idea
I	1	
II	2-5	
III	6	

2 Answer the following questions.

1. What prompted Maugham to write this text?
2. According to the text, why do we need to read? What are the benefits of reading?
3. According to Maugham, should students read masterpieces first? Why or why not?
4. What is Maugham's attitude toward the books that the best critics have acknowledged valuable?
5. According to Maugham, should poetry, fiction, and miscellaneous literature be included in the reading list of young people? Why or why not?
6. According to Para. 5, what benefits can we get from acquiring the habit of reading?
7. According to Maugham, in what order should books be read?
8. How might you change your own reading habits after reading this text?

Guided Writing

Passion for Reading

Among the most famous quotations of the American author Christopher Paolini is the following: "Books are my friends, my companions. They make me laugh and cry and find meaning in life." In the light of this quotation and on the basis of the texts you have read in this unit, write an essay of 150-200 words to describe what categories of books you read most often and how books have influenced you. The following questions may help you.

- How do you categorize the books you read?
- What category of books do you enjoy the most?
- Is there a book which has profoundly influenced you or reshaped your thinking?

Further Reading

○ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin is regarded as one of the most famous and influential autobiographies ever written. Read the book and think about how the habit of reading helped Benjamin Franklin become one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, a leading writer, and a successful scientist.

○ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*

In this book, Arthur Conan Doyle portrays Sherlock Holmes, a famous detective, and his faithful friend Dr. John H. Watson. From his home 221B Baker Street in London, Holmes becomes famous worldwide by solving complex and gruesome cases with the help of his friend. Read the book and think about why detective stories are appealing to readers.

○ Francis Bacon, *Selected Essays of Francis Bacon*

Francis Bacon is an English philosopher, statesman, and scientist, who is also noted for his excellent collection of thought-provoking and fascinating essays. Varied topics from public issues and private life are explored in his work, such as death, truth, and so on. Read the book and consider how his philosophy can help us live a happier life.