

大学英语精读第六册UnitFour PDF转换可能丢失图片或格式
， 建议阅读原文

https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/227/2021_2022__E5_A4_A7_

E5_AD_A6_E8_8B_B1_E8_c82_227631.htm TextAs a black boy growing up in America in the early 1900s, Richard Wright knew well the meaning of racial prejudice. He was not allowed to play in a park or borrow books from a library. While working as an office boy in a bank, though, he found a way into the library and discovered the power of the written word. In the following story, Richard Wright tells us how his thirst for books grew with each passing day and what changes took place in him as he did more and more reading.

THE LIBRARY CARD
Richard Wright
One morning I arrived early at work and went into the bank lobby where the Negro porter was mopping. I stood at a counter and picked up the Memphis Commercial Appeal and began my free reading of the press. I came finally to the editorial page and saw an article dealing with one H. L. Mencken. I knew by hearsay that he was the editor of the American Mercury, but aside from that I knew nothing about him. The article was a furious denunciation of Mencken, concluding with one, hot, short sentence: Mencken is a fool. I wondered what on earth this Mencken had done to call down upon him the scorn of the South. The only people I had ever heard denounced in the South were Negroes, and this man was not a Negro. Then what ideas did Mencken hold that made a newspaper like the Commercial Appeal castigate him publicly? Undoubtedly he must be advocating ideas that the South did not like. Now, how could I find out about this

Mencken? There was a huge library near the riverfront, but I knew that Negroes were not allowed to patronize its shelves any more than they were the parks and playgrounds of the city. I had gone into the library several times to get books for the white men on the job. Which of them would now help me to get books? I weighed the personalities of the men on the job. There was Don, a Jew. but I distrusted him. His position was not much better than mine and I knew that he was uneasy and insecure. he had always treated me in an offhand, bantering way that barely concealed his contempt. I was afraid to ask him to help me to get books. his frantic desire to demonstrate a racial solidarity with the whites against Negroes might make him betray me. Then how about the boss? No, he was a Baptist and I had the suspicion that he would not be quite able to comprehend why a black boy would want to read Mencken. There were other white men on the job whose attitudes showed clearly that they were Kluxers or sympathizers, and they were out of the question. There remained only one man whose attitude did not fit into an anti-Negro category, for I had heard the white men refer to him as "Pope lover". He was an Irish Catholic and was hated by the white Southerners. I knew that he read books, because I had got him volumes from the library several times. Since he, too, was an object of hatred, I felt that he might refuse me but would hardly betray me. I hesitated, weighing and balancing the imponderable realities. One morning I paused before the Catholic fellows desk. "I want to ask you a favor," I whispered to him. "What is it?" "I want to read. I cant get books from the library. I wonder if youd let me use your card?" He

looked at me suspiciously. "My card is full most of the time," he said. "I see," I said and waited, posing my question silently. "You're not trying to get me into trouble, are you, boy?" he asked, staring at me. "Oh, no, sir." "What book do you want?" "A book by H. L. Mencken." "Which one?" "I don't know. Has he written more than one?" "He has written several." "I didn't know that." "What makes you want to read Mencken?" "Oh, I just saw his name in the newspaper," I said. "It's good of you to want to read," he said. "But you ought to read the right things." I said nothing. Would he want to supervise my reading? "Let me think," he said. "I'll figure out something." I turned from him and he called me back. He stared at me quizzically. "Richard, don't mention his to the other white men," he said. "I understand," I said. "I won't say a word." A few days later he called me to him. "I've got a card in my wife's name," he said. "Here's mine." "Thank you, sir." "Do you think you can manage it?" "I'll manage fine," I said. "If they suspect you, you'll get in trouble," he said. "I'll write the same kind of notes to the library that you wrote when you sent me for books," I told him. "I'll sign your name." He laughed. "Go ahead. Let me see what you get," he said. That afternoon I addressed myself to forging a note. Now, what were the names of books written by H. L. Mencken? I did not know any of them. I finally wrote what I thought would be a foolproof note: Dear Madam: Will you please let this nigger boy -- I used the word "nigger" to make the librarian feel that I could not possibly be the author of the note -- have some books by H.L. Mecken? I forged the white man's name. I entered the library as I had always done when on

errands for whites, but I felt that I would somehow slip up and betray myself. I doffed my hat, stood a respectful distance from the desk, looked as unbookish as possible, and waited for the white patrons to be taken care of. When the desk was clear of people, I still waited. The white librarian looked at me. "What do you want, boy?" As though I did not possess the power of speech, I stepped forward and simply handed her the forged note, not parting my lips. "What books by Mencken does he want?" She asked. "I dont know, maam," I said, avoiding her eyes. "Who gave you this card?" "Mr. Falk," I said. "Where is he?" "Hes at work, at M -- Optical Company," I said. "Ive been in here for him before." "I remember," the woman said. "But he never wrote notes like this." Oh, God, shes suspicious. Perhaps she would not let me have the books? If she had turned her back at that moment, I would have ducked out the door and never gone back. Then I thought of a bold idea. "You can call him up, maam," I said, my heart pounding. "Youre not using these books, are you?" she asked pointedly. "Oh, no, maam. I cant read." "I dont know what he wants by Mencken," she said under her breath. I knew now that I had non. she was thinking of other things and the race question had gone out of her mind. She went to the shelves. Once or twice she looked over her shoulder at me, as though she was still doubtful. Finally she came forward with two books in her hand. "Im sending him two books," she said. "But tell Mr. Falk to come in next time, or send me the names of the books he wants. I dont know what he wants to read." I said nothing. She stamped the card and handed me the books. Not daring to glance at them. I went out of the library,

fearing that the woman would call me back for further questioning. A block away from the library I opened one of the books and read a title: A Book of Prefaces. I was nearing my nineteenth birthday and I did not know how to pronounce the word "preface". I thumbed the pages and saw strange words and strange names. I shook my head, disappointed. I looked at the other book. it was called Prejudices, I knew what that word meant. I had heard it all my life. And right off I was on guard against Menckens books. Why would a man want to call a book Prejudices? The word was so stained with all my memories of racial hate that I cold not conceive of anybody using it for a title. Perhaps I had made a mistake about Mencken? A man who had prejudices must be wrong. When I showed the books to Mr. Falk, he looked at me and frowned. "That librarian might telephone you," I warned him. "Thats all right," he said. "But when youre through reading those books, I want you to tell me what you get out of them." That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened A Book of Preface and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could

words be weapons? Well, yes, for there they were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it. I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different. I forget more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewiss Main Street. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his golf bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt. I read Dreisers Jennie Gerhardt and Sister Carrie and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mothers suffering. I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering

about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them. Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write. but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

New Words
lobby n. entrance hall 门廊, 门厅
porter n. an employee who sweeps, cleans, does errands, etc. as in a bank, store, or restaurant
勤杂工
mop vt. wash or wipe up. clean with a mop 擦; 用拖把擦洗
commercial a. having to do with business
hearsay n. information or new heard from another person
传闻
furious a. extremely angry.
violent denunciation n. the act of denouncing.
condemnation 谴责, 痛斥
scorn n. strong disrespect. contempt 鄙视, 轻蔑
denounce vt. criticize severely and publicly

100Test 下载
频道开通, 各类考试题目直接下载。详细请访问
www.100test.com