

【双语】

阅读经典名著能锻炼大脑

He wrote that the ‘human mind is capable of excitement without the application of gross and violent stimulants’. And it appears that simply reading those words by William Wordsworth prove his point.

英国诗人威廉·华兹华斯曾写道：“人的心灵，不用巨大猛烈的刺激，也能够兴奋起来。”要说明这一点，看上去似乎单是读一下这句话就够了。

Researchers at the University of Liverpool found the prose of Shakespeare and Wordsworth and the like had a beneficial effect on the mind, providing a ‘rocket-boost’ to morale by catching the reader’s attention and triggering moments of self-reflection.

利物浦大学的研究人员发现，莎士比亚和华兹华斯以及其他类似作家的作品对思维大有裨益，能够吸引读者的注意力，让读者自我反省，像“火箭助推器”一样提升人的精神状态。

Using scanners, they monitored the brain activity of volunteers as they read pieces of classical English literature both in their original form and in a more dumbed-down, modern translation.

研究员们使用扫描仪，监测志愿者

们阅读经典英国文学作品时的大脑活动。他们阅读的既有原作，又有简化的现代版译文。

And, according to the Sunday Telegraph, the experiment showed the more ‘challenging’ prose and poetry set off far more electrical activity in the brain than the pedestrian versions.

根据《星期日电讯报》的报道，这个实验还表明：比起那些平淡的版本，散文和诗作更具有挑战性，脑电波活动也活跃得多。

The research also found poetry, in particular, increased activity in the right hemisphere of the brain, an area concerned with ‘autobiographical memory’, which helped the reader to reflect on and reappraise their own experiences in light of what they had read. The academics said this meant the classics were more useful than self-help books.

研究也发现，诗作尤其能够增加人右脑的活动，而右脑和“自传式记忆”有关，能够让读者根据读到的内容回想到他们自己的经历，并且对之重新评价。学者说这就意味着经典作品比励志图书更有用。

The brain responses of 30 volunteers was monitored in the first part of the research as they read Shakespeare in its original and ‘modern’ form.

实验的第一部分，30名志愿者阅读了莎士比亚作品的原版和“现代版”，与此同时研究者们监测了他们大脑的反应。

In one example, volunteers read a line from King Lear, ‘A father and a gracious aged man: him have you maddened,’ before reading the simpler. ‘A father and a gracious aged man: him you have enraged.’

其中一个例子是志愿者阅读《李尔王》中的一句台词，“A father and a gracious aged man: him have you maddened,”接下来他们又阅读了一句简单一点的版本，“A father and a gracious aged man: him you have enraged.”

Shakespeare’s use of the adjective ‘mad’ as a verb caused a higher level of brain activity than the straightforward prose.

比起直白的现代版诗句，莎士比亚把形容词“mad”用作动词形式，这让大脑的活跃度更高。

The next phase of the research is looking at the extent to which poetry

can affect psychology and provide therapeutic benefit. Volunteers’ brains were scanned while reading four lines by Wordsworth, and four ‘translated’ lines were also provided.

第二个阶段是研究诗作可以影响心理状态到什么程度，给健康带来多少益处。研究者在志愿者阅读华兹华斯的四句诗作原文和“译文”时扫描了他们的大脑。

The first version caused a greater degree of brain activity, lighting up not only the left part of the brain concerned with language, but also the right hemisphere that relates to autobiographical memory and emotion.

前者能够让大脑的活跃程度更高，不仅让控制语言的左脑变得更活跃，同时也能让控制自传式记忆以及情感的右脑更活跃。

‘Poetry is not just a matter of style. It is a matter of deep versions of experience that add the emotional and biographical to the cognitive.’ said Prof Davis.

“诗歌不单单是一种文体。诗歌是一种深层次的经验，这种经验是在认知经验的基础上加上情感经验和生平经历而形成的。”戴维斯教授如是说。

【流行词汇】

Dear John letter

Dear John letter是个很具迷惑性的短语。第一次看到它的时候，还以为它是情书。结果恰好相反，Dear John letter专指女方写给男方的分手信。

这个短语是美国人在第二次世界大战期间发明的。当时有很多士兵需要长期驻扎海外，他们的妻子往往在一段时间后因为无法继续忍受一个人的生活而提出分手。那个时候还没有互联网，打越洋电话也不是很方便，所以妻子们都会以书信的形式将分手的决定告

知丈夫。信的开头必定是“Dear...”，所以Dear John letter的叫法就流行了起来。

至于用John的理由，主要是因为它是很普遍的男子名，所以被拿来作代表。这跟中文里的“张三李四”是一个道理。

时至今日，Dear John letter早已不限于士兵妻子写的分手信。只要是女人写给男人（无论是丈夫还是男朋友）的分手信，都叫Dear John letter。男人写给女人的分手信，都叫Dear Jane letter。

John和Jane在其他场合也经常用来泛指男人和女人。比如，在美国打官司，男当事人叫John Doe，女当事人叫Jane Doe（Doe是虚构的姓，John/Jane是虚构的名）。在这个基础上，John Doe和Jane Doe还引申出“普通男人”和“普通女人”的意思。美剧CSI（Crime Scene Investigation《犯罪现场调查》）就分别用John Doe和Jane Doe来表示“无名男尸”和“无名女尸”。