

Reader Level
Breakthrough

Unique Characters
150

花马

Huā Mǎ

In Search of Hua Ma

John Pasden and Jared Turner



**Mandarin
Companion**

Chinese Graded Readers

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What Graded Readers can do for you

Welcome to Mandarin Companion!

We've worked hard to create enjoyable stories that can help you build confidence and competence and get better at Chinese—at the right level for you.

Our graded readers have controlled and simplified language that allows you to bring together the language you've learned so far and absorb how words work naturally together. Research suggests that learners need to “encounter” a word 10-30 times before truly learning it. Graded readers provide the repetition that you need to develop fluency NOW at your level.

In the next section, you can take an assessment and discover if this is the right level for you. We also explain how it won't just improve your Chinese skills but will have a wide range of benefits, from better test scores to increased confidence.

We hope you enjoy our books, and best of luck with your studies.
Jared and John

Frequently Asked Questions

Do you have versions with pinyin over the characters?

No. Although this method is common for native Chinese learners, research and experience show it distracts a second language learner and slows down their ability to learn the characters. If you require pinyin to read most of the characters at this level, you should read something easier.

Is there an English translation of the story?

No. Research and experience show that an English translation will slow down the development of your Chinese language learning skills.

Is this the right level for me?

Let's find out. Open to a story page with characters and start reading. Keep track of the number of characters you *don't* know but don't count any key words you don't know. If there are more than 5 unknown characters on that page, you may want to consider working on your basic character recognition before attempting a graded reader. If the unknown characters are fewer than 5, then this book is likely at your level! If you find that you know all the characters, you may be ready for a higher level. However, even if you know all the characters but are reading slowly, you should consider building reading speed before moving up a level.

How do you decide which characters to include at each level?

Each level includes a core set of characters based on our extensive analysis of the most common characters and words taught to and used by those learning Chinese as a second language. All books at each level are based on the same core set and they can be read in any order.

What to expect in a Breakthrough book?

It's important that you read at the level that is right for you. Check out the next page to learn more about Extensive Reading and how we use that in graded readers to support the learning of Chinese by just enjoying a good story.

Books in our Breakthrough Level like this one:

- Include a core set of 150 Chinese words and characters learners are most likely to know.
- Are about 5,000 characters in length
- Use level appropriate grammar

- Include pinyin and a translation of words and characters you are not expected to know at this level
- Include a glossary at the back of book
- Include proper nouns that are underlined

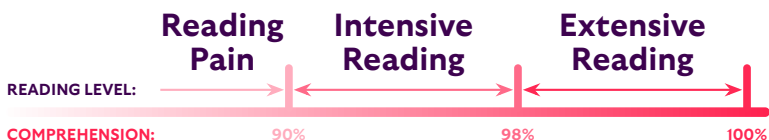
What is Extensive Reading?

It will improve test scores, your reading speed and comprehension, speaking, listening and writing skills. You'll pick up grammar naturally, you'll begin understanding in Chinese, your confidence will improve, and you'll enjoy learning the language.

Graded Readers are based on science that is backed by mountains of research and proven by learners all over the world. They are founded on the theories of Extensive Reading and Comprehensible Input.

Extensive Reading is reading at a level where you can understand almost all of what you are reading (ideally 98%) at a comfortable speed, as opposed to stumbling through dense paragraphs word by word.

When you read extensively, you'll understand most of the words and find yourself fully engaged with the story.



Reading at 98% comprehension is the sweet spot to max out your learning gains. You do still learn at the Intensive Reading level (90–98%), but the closer you are to the Extensive level, the faster your progress.

No one should be reading below a 90% comprehension level.

It's called Reading Pain for a reason. You spend so much time in a dictionary and after 30 painful minutes on ONE paragraph, you're not even sure what you've just read!

If you want to know more, check out our website

www.mandarincompanion.com



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Story Notes

The Mandarin Companion 150-character Breakthrough Level empowers Chinese learners to begin with positive and enjoyable experiences reading Chinese. For learners at this level, reading a book in Chinese provides both a boost in fluency and a sense of accomplishment. Differing from higher level stories in the series, these are original stories co-written by John Pasden and Jared Turner, specifically designed to engage readers despite the limitations.

Stories at the Breakthrough Level are unique, with all books limited to the same small set of 150 characters comprising nouns, verbs and adjectives repeated throughout the books. Keywords are selectively borrowed from within the Mandarin Companion Level 1 standard. Those who can read this book at an enjoyable pace are already well on their way towards reading Mandarin Companion Level 1 stories.

In Search of Hua Ma is one of our more fantastical stories, partly inspired by books like *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. However, this story also ties into the larger “Mandarin Companion Universe.” Continue reading other Mandarin Companion stories and you’ll find a character from this story in *The 60-Year Dream*, a Mandarin Companion Level 1 story.

Character Adaptations

The following is a list of the characters from this Chinese story followed by their corresponding English names from John Pasden and Jared Turner's original story. The names below are not translations; they are new Chinese names used for the Chinese versions of the original characters. Think of them as all-new characters in a Chinese story.

南南 (Nánnán) – Nannan
妈妈 (Nánnán Māma) – Nannan's Mom
老太太 (Lǎo Tàitai) – Old Woman
老头 (Lǎotóu) – Old Man
花马 (Huā Mǎ) – Hua Ma

Cast of Characters



南南
(Nánnán)



妈妈
(Nánnán Māma)



老太太
(Lǎo Tàitai)



老头
(Lǎotóu)



花马
(Huā Mǎ)

A map of China is shown in the background, with Russia to the north and Myanmar to the south. A white text box with a black border is overlaid on the left side of the map. The box contains the title 'Locations' and two entries: '山西 (Shānxī)' and '海南 (Hǎinán)'. The map shows the outline of China, with a thick black line representing the border with Russia. A blue lake is visible in the north, and the South China Sea is shown in blue at the bottom. The city of Urumqi is marked with a black dot in the northwest, and Lhasa is marked with a black dot in the southwest. The text 'RUSSIA' is in the top right, and 'MYANMAR' is in the bottom right.

RUSSIA

Locations

山西 (Shānxī)

Shanxi Province in northern China (not to be confused with Shaanxi 陕西), meaning “West of the Mountains”, is characterized by arid plateaus surrounded by mountain ranges.

海南 (Hǎinán)

The southernmost province of China, Hainan is a large tropical island off the southern coast of mainland China. Today it is known as a popular tourist destination for its clear water and white sandy beaches.

• Urumqi

• Lhasa

MYANMAR



One

去山上找花

山西有很多山，很多山西人都住在₁
山上。₂南南和他的爸爸妈妈也住在山₁
西的一个山上。₂

南南每天都去山上玩，因为山上有₂₃₂
很多很好玩的地方。₄₅山上也有一些花，₂₆
可是都很小，也不是很好看。₇₈

- 1 住在 (zhù zài) *vc.* to live (in/at)
2 山上 (shānshàng) *phrase* on the mountain(s)
3 因为 (yīnwèi) *conj.* because
4 好玩 (hǎowán) *adj.* fun

- 5 地方 (dìfang) *n.* place
6 一些 (yīxiē) *n.* some
7 可是 (kěshì) *conj.* but
8 好看 (hǎokàn) *adj.* good-looking



山上的人没有很多钱，可是，大家

还是很开心。

一天早上，南南听爸爸说，妈妈

的生日快到了。他很开心，他要在妈

9 大家 (dàjiā) *n.* everyone

10 还是 (háishi) *conj., adv.* still

11 开心 (kāixīn) *adj.* happy

12 早上 (zǎoshang) *m.* morning

13 听 (tīng) *v.* to listen (to)

14 生日 (shēngri) *n.* birthday

妈生日那天给她一个东西。因为每年

南南生日的时候，妈妈都有东西给他。

那些东西都不用花很多钱，可是，南

南很开心。

南南想：“我给妈妈什么东西呢？”

他没有钱。他要的东西，爸爸妈妈会

给他。可是，他们不会给他钱。

“怎么做呢？什么东西又好看，又

不花钱？”南南在山上一边走，一边看。

15 那天 (nà tiān) *tn.* that day

16 东西 (dōngxi) *n.* thing(s), stuff

17 每年 (měi nián) *phrase* every year

18 的时候 (de shíhòu) *phrase* when...

19 怎么 (zěnnme) *adv.* how

20 又 (yòu) *adv.* again

21 花钱 (huā qián) *vo.* to spend money

22 一边 (yībiān) *conj.* while doing... (two things)



“有了！”南南开心地说。

23

回到家，妈妈问：“南南，你怎么

24

19

这么开心？”

25

11

“这个还不能说。可是，你会知道

26

7

的。”南南开心地说。

23

23 开心地 (kāixīn de) *phrase* happily

24 家 (jiā) *n.* home

25 这么 (zhème) *adv.* so...

26 还 (hái) *adv.* still

27 第二天 (dì-èr tiān) *phrase* the next day

第二天,南南一个人去山上找花。山

上的花不多,南南一个人找了很长时

间,还是没找到很好看的花。

不知道走了多长时间,南南看到了一个小房子。这个地方他没来过。

“这个房子这么老,谁会住在这个地方呢?”

28 一个人 (yī gè rén) *phrase* alone

29 找 (zhǎo) *v.* to look for

30 时间 (shíjiān) *n.* time

31 多长时间 (duō cháng shíjiān) *phrase* how long (of a time)

32 看到 (kàndào) *v.c.* to see

33 房子 (fángzi) *n.* house

Two

看见了一个老太太

南南走到门边问：“里面有人吗？”

没有人给他开门。南南看到门没有

关，开门走了进去。

“你找谁？”一个很老的老太太走

出来对南南说。

“老太太，你好，我叫南南。我在山

34 门边 (mén biān) *phrase* by the door

35 里面 (lǐmiàn) *n.* inside

36 开门 (kāimén) *vo.* to open the door

37 进去 (jìnqu) *vc.* to go in

38 老太太 (lǎotàitai) *n.* old lady

39 走出来 (zǒu chūlai) *vc.* to walk out (from)

40 叫 (jiào) *v.* to be called, to call; to tell (someone to do something)



上走了很长时间，不知道怎么走到了

这里，也不知道要怎么回家。”

“你为什么在山上走很长时间？你

要找什么？”老太太问。

“又大又好看的花。明天是妈妈

的生日，可是，我没有钱。只能来山上找花。”南南看看老太太，又说：“我每天都去山上玩，我知道山上有一些小花，可是，我找不到又大又好看的花。”

“南南，你说你每天都去山上玩。你在山上有没有见过‘花马’？”老太太问。

“什么‘马’？”南南问。

“‘花马’。”老太太又说了一次。

42 只能 (zhǐnéng) *adv.* can only

43 看看 (kànkàn) *v.* to take a look

44 找不到 (zhǎo bu dào) *vc.* to be unable to find

45 见过 (jiàn guo) *phrase* have met before

46 一次 (yí cì) *phrase* one time

“我不知道你说的是什么马。” 南
南说，“可是，我在山上没见过马。”

“我要你去找 ‘花马’。”

“可是，我都说了，山上什么马都
 没有。” 南南想 老太太没听见。

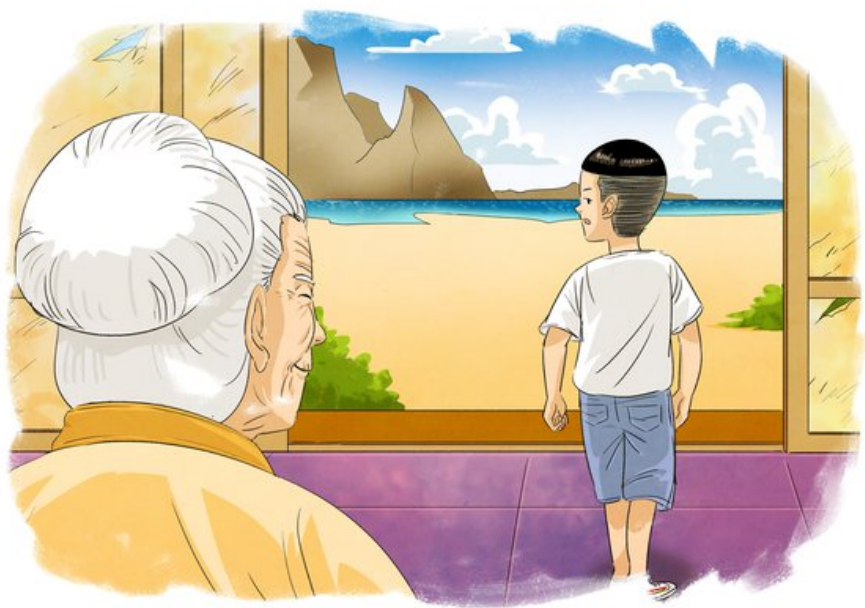
“南南，要是找不到 ‘花马’，你不
 能回家。” 老太太笑了笑，“要是你找
 到了，你可以回家，我也会给你又
 大又好看的花。”

“我要回家！因为明天是我妈妈

47 听见 (tīngjiàn) *vc.* to hear

48 要是 (yàoshi) *conj.* if

49 笑 (xiào) *v.* to laugh, to smile



的生日，我没有时间找你的马。” 南

南一边说，一边走出老太太的家。

Three

到海南了？

Four

找花马

Five

头上有花的马



老人

Seven

老人知道了

Eight

真的花马

Nine

回山西

Ten

妈妈很开心



Key Words 关键词 (Guānjiàncí)

1. 住在 zhù zài *vc.* to live (in/at)
2. 山上 shānshàng *phrase* on the mountain(s)
3. 因为 yīnwèi *conj.* because
4. 好玩 hǎowán *adj.* fun
5. 地方 dìfang *n.* place
6. 一些 yīxiē *n.* some
7. 可是 kěshì *conj.* but
8. 好看 hǎokàn *adj.* good-looking
9. 大家 dàjiā *n.* everyone
10. 还是 hái shì *conj., adv.* still
11. 开心 kāixīn *adj.* happy
12. 早上 zǎoshang *tn.* morning
13. 听 tīng *v.* to listen (to)
14. 生日 shēngri *n.* birthday
15. 那天 nà tiān *tn.* that day
16. 东西 dōngxi *n.* thing(s), stuff
17. 每年 měi nián *phrase* every year
18. 的时候 de shíhou *phrase* when...
19. 怎么 zěnmē *adv.* how
20. 又 yòu *adv.* again
21. 花钱 huā qián *vo.* to spend money
22. 一边 yībiān *conj.* while doing... (two things)
23. 开心地 kāixīn de *phrase* happily
24. 家 jiā *n.* home
25. 这么 zhème *adv.* so...
26. 还 hái *adv.* still

27. 第二天 *dì-èr tiān* *phrase* the next day
28. 一个人 *yī gè rén* *phrase* alone
29. 找 *zhǎo* *v.* to look for
30. 时间 *shíjiān* *n.* time
31. 多长时间 *duō cháng shíjiān* *phrase* how long (of a time)
32. 看到 *kàndào* *vc.* to see
33. 房子 *fángzi* *n.* house
34. 门边 *mén biān* *phrase* by the door
35. 里面 *lǐmiàn* *n.* inside
36. 开门 *kāimén* *vo.* to open the door
37. 进去 *jìnqu* *vc.* to go in
38. 老太太 *lǎotàitai* *n.* old lady
39. 走出来 *zǒu chūlai* *vc.* to walk out (from)
40. 叫 *jiào* *v.* to be called, to call; to tell (someone to do something)
41. 回家 *huíjiā* *vo.* to go home
42. 只能 *zhǐnéng* *adv.* can only
43. 看看 *kànkàn* *v.* to take a look
44. 找不到 *zhǎo bu dào* *vc.* to be unable to find
45. 见过 *jiàn guo* *phrase* have met before
46. 一次 *yīcì* *phrase* one time
47. 听见 *tīngjiàn* *vc.* to hear
48. 要是 *yàoshi* *conj.* if
49. 笑 *xiào* *v.* to laugh, to smile
50. 走出 *zǒuchū* *vc.* to walk out
51. 出门 *chūmén* *vo.* to go out the door, to go outside
52. 以后 *yǐhòu* *adv.* after; later, in the future
53. 大海 *dàhǎi* *n.* the ocean
54. 怎么会 *zěnmé huì* *phrase* how could
55. 看不到 *kàn bu dào* *vc.* to be unable to see
56. 真的 *zhēn de* *adj., adv.* real; really
57. 回头 *huítóu* *vo.* to turn one's head
58. 不见了 *bùjiàn le* *phrase* disappeared
59. 这样 *zhèyàng* *pr.* like this
60. 怕 *pà* *v.* to be afraid (of)
61. 海边 *hǎibiān* *n.* seaside

62. 地上 dìshang *n.* on the ground
63. 第一次 dì-yī cì *phrase* first time
64. 从小到大 cóng xiǎo dào dà *phrase* from a young age until adulthood
65. 外面 wàimian *n.* outside
66. 名字 míngzi *n.* name
67. 一会儿 yíhuìr *tn.* a little while
68. 大叫 dà jiào *v.* to call out loudly
69. 出来 chūlai *vc.* to come out
70. 可能 kěnéng *adv.; aux* maybe, possibly; possible
71. 这时候 zhè shíhou *phrase* at this time
72. 听到 tīngdào *vc.* to hear
73. 说话 shuōhuà *vo.* to speak (words), to talk
74. 看起来 kàn qilai *vc.* to look...
75. 工人 gōngrén *n.* worker
76. 那边 nàbiān *n.* over there
77. 一下 yíxià *adv.* briefly, for a second
78. 听说 tīngshuō *v.* to hear tell, to hear said (that)
79. 说完 shuō wán *vc.* to finish speaking
80. 有一点 yǒu yídiǎn *phrase* to be a little (too)
81. 生气 shēngqì *vo., adj.* to get angry; angry
82. 生气地 shēngqì de *phrase* angrily
83. 海马 hǎimǎ *n.* seahorse
84. 好心的 hǎoxīn de *adj.* kind-hearted
85. 小心地 xiǎoxīn de *phrase* carefully
86. 过去 guòqu *vc.* to go over
87. 点了一下头 diǎn le yíxià tóu *phrase* to nod briefly
88. 一起 yìqǐ *adv.* together
89. 怎么了 zěnmé le *phrase* what happened, what's the matter
90. 点头 diǎntóu *vo.* to nod one's head
91. 想了想 xiǎng le xiǎng *phrase* thought about it for a second
92. 老头 lǎotóu *n.* old man
93. 老先生 lǎo xiānsheng *phrase* elderly gentleman
94. 老人 lǎorén *n.* old person, old man
95. 家人 jiārén *n.* family member(s)
96. 问得好 wèn de hǎo *phrase* good question (lit. "well asked")

97. 关门 guānmén *vo.* to close a door
 98. 进来 jìnlai *v.* to come in
 99. 一样 yíyàng *n.* the same
 100. 再 zài *adv.* again (in the future)
 101. 回去 huíqu *vc.* to go back
 102. 见面 jiànmiàn *vo.* to meet
 103. 回来 huílai *vc.* to come back
 104. 走过来 zǒu guòlai *vc.* to walk over
 105. 对不起 duìbuqǐ *phrase* I'm sorry
 106. 一百年 yībǎi nián *phrase* 100 years
 107. 手里 shǒu lǐ *phrase* in one's hand
 108. 过来 guòlai *vc.* to come over
 109. 儿子 érzi *n.* son

Part of Speech Key

<i>adj.</i> Adjective	<i>prep.</i> Preposition
<i>adv.</i> Adverb	<i>pr.</i> Pronoun
<i>aux.</i> Auxiliary Verb	<i>pn.</i> Proper noun
<i>conj.</i> Conjunction	<i>tn.</i> Time Noun
<i>cov.</i> Coverb	<i>v.</i> Verb
<i>mzw.</i> Measure word	<i>vc.</i> Verb plus complement
<i>n.</i> Noun	<i>vo.</i> Verb plus object
<i>on.</i> Onomatopoeia	
<i>part.</i> Particle	



Grammar Points

For learners new to reading Chinese, an understanding of grammar points can be extremely helpful for learners and teachers. The following is a list of the most challenging grammar points used in this graded reader.

These grammar points correspond to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level A2 or above. The full list with explanations and examples of each grammar point can be found on the Chinese Grammar Wiki, the definitive source of information on Chinese grammar online.

ENGLISH	CHINESE
CHAPTER 1	
Special cases of “zai” following verbs	Verb + 在 + Place
The “also” adverb “ye”	也 + Verb / Adj.
Cause and effect with “yinwei” and “suoyi”	因为……所以……
Expressing “when” with “de shihou”	……的时候
Expressing “together” with “yiqi”	一起 + Verb
Two words for “but”	……，可是 / 但是……
Degree complement	Verb + 得……
Questions with “ne”	……呢?
Expressing “both A and B” with “you”	又……又……
Simultaneous tasks with “yibian”	一边 + Verb 1 (,) 一边 + Verb 2
Ordinal numbers with “di”	第 + Number (+ Measure Word)

Asking why with “zenme”	怎么……?
Adjectives with “name” and “zheme”	那么 / 这么 + Adj.
Indicating a number in excess	Number + 多
Expressing experiences with “guo”	Verb + 过

CHAPTER 2

A softer “but” with “buguo”	……, 不过……
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CHAPTER 3

After a specific time with “yihou”	Time / Verb + 以后
Expressing “from…to…” with “cong…dao…”	从……到……
Expressing “really” with “zhen”	真 + Adj.
Reduplication of verbs	Verb + Verb
How to do something with “zenme”	怎么 + Verb ?
Direction complement	Verb (+ Direction) + 来 / 去

CHAPTER 4

Causative verbs	Subj. + 让 / 叫 / 请 / 使 + Person + Predicate
Verbing briefly with “yixia”	Verb + 一下
Result complement “-wan” for finishing	Verb + 完 (+ 了)
Expressing “a little too” with “you yidian”	有一点 (儿) + Adj.
Conceding with “ba”	……吧

CHAPTER 5

Tag questions with “bu”	……是不是 / 对不对 / 好不好?
Result complements “-dao” and “-jian”	Verb + 到 / 见
Expressing actions in progress with “zai”	(正) 在 + Verb

CHAPTER 6

Direction complement “-qilai”	Verb / Adj. + 起来
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Expressing “everything” with “shenme dou”	什么 + 都 / 也……
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CHAPTER 7

Basic comparisons with “yiyang”	Noun 1 + 跟 / 和 + Noun 2 + 一样 + Adj.
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CHAPTER 8

Expressing “excessively” with “tai”	太 + Adj. + 了
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CHAPTER 9

Expressing “will” with “hui”	会 + Verb
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Credits

Story Authors : John Pasden, Jared Turner

Editor-in-Chief : John Pasden

Content Editor : Chen Shishuang

Editors : Li Jiong, Ma Lihua

Illustrator : Hu Sheng

Producer : Jared Turner

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About Mandarin Companion

Mandarin Companion was started by Jared Turner and John Pasden, who met one fateful day on a bus in Shanghai when the only remaining seats forced them to sit next to each other.

John majored in Japanese in college in the US and later learned Mandarin before moving to China, where he was admitted into an all-Chinese masters program in applied linguistics at East China Normal University in Shanghai. John lives in Shanghai with his wife and children. John is the editor-in-chief at Mandarin Companion and ensures each story is written at the appropriate level.

Jared decided to move to China with his young family in search of career opportunities, despite having no Chinese language skills. When he learned about Extensive Reading and started using graded readers, his language skills exploded. In 3 months, he had read 10 graded readers and quickly became conversational in Chinese. Jared lives in the US with his wife and children. Jared runs the business operations and focuses on bringing stories to life.

John and Jared work with Chinese learners and teachers all over the world. They host a podcast, You Can Learn Chinese, where they discuss the struggles and joys of learning to speak the language. They are active on social media, where they share memes and stories about learning Chinese.

You can connect with them through the website

www.mandarincompanion.com



Other Stories from Mandarin Companion

Breakthrough Readers: 150 Characters

The Misadventures of Zhou

Haisheng

《周海生》

by John Pasden, Jared Turner

My Teacher Is a Martian

《我的老师是火星人》

by John Pasden, Jared Turner

Xiao Ming, Boy Sherlock

《小明》

by John Pasden, Jared Turner

Just Friends?

《我们是朋友吗?》

by John Pasden, Jared Turner

Level 1 Readers: 300 Characters

The Secret Garden

《秘密花园》

by Frances Hodgson Burnett

The Sixty Year Dream

《六十年的梦》

by Washington Irving

The Monkey's Paw

《猴爪》

by W. W. Jacobs

The Country of the Blind

《盲人国》

by H. G. Wells

*Sherlock Holmes and the Case of
the Curly-Haired Company*

《卷发公司的案子》

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Prince and the Pauper

《王子和穷孩子》

by Mark Twain

Emma

《安末》

by Jane Austen

The Ransom of Red Chief

《红猴的价格》

by O. Henry

Level 2 Readers: 450 Characters

Great Expectations: Part 1

《美好的前途（上）》

by Charles Dickens

Great Expectations: Part 2

《美好的前途（下）》

by Charles Dickens

Journey to the Center of the Earth

《地心游记》

by Jules Verne

Jekyll and Hyde

《江可和黑德》

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a growing library of graded readers
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