

Reader Level
Breakthrough

Unique Characters
150

我的老师是火星星人

Wǒ de Lǎoshī Shì Huǒxīngrén

My Teacher Is a Martian

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

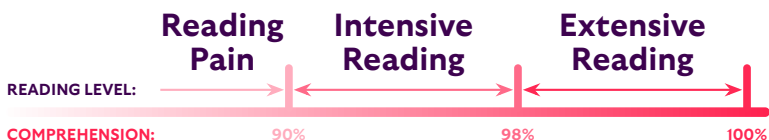
What is Extensive Reading?

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

When John and Jared were generating story ideas at the Break-through Level, the character for “fire,” 火 (huǒ), and for “star,” 星 (xīng), were on a sheet of possible characters to be used. Together, these characters form the Chinese word for Mars: 火星 (Huǒxīng), which ignited an ambition to create a sci-fi story using the Chinese name for the fourth planet in our solar system.

A favorite book from Jared’s youth was *My Teacher is an Alien*, which provided the inspiration for a story about two Chinese elementary school students who suspect their teacher is, in fact, from Mars. From this spark of an idea, Mandarin Companion’s *My Teacher is a Martian* was born.

P.S. There are two sci-fi and two “Mandarin Companion Universe” easter eggs hidden in the illustrations of this book. Can you find them?

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.

谢心月 (Xiè Xīnyuè) – Xie Xinyue

马天明 (Mǎ Tiānmíng) – Ma Tianming

车老师 (Chē Lǎoshī) – Mr. Che

方老师 (Fāng Lǎoshī) – Ms. Fang

水老师 (Shuǐ Lǎoshī) – Mr. Shui

Cast of Characters



谢心月

(Xiè Xīnyuè)



马天明

(Mǎ Tiānmíng)



车老师

(Chē Lǎoshī)



方老师

(Fāng Lǎoshī)



水老师

(Shuǐ Lǎoshī)



RUSSIA

• Urumqi

Locations

山东 (Shāndōng)

Although not explicitly stated, this story takes place in a smallish city in Shandong, China's second largest province.

• Lhasa

MYANMAR



One

外星人

谢心月今年十岁¹，她是一个小学
生²。她有一个新朋友³，叫⁴“马天明”，
马天明今年也是十岁¹。他们每天都一
起去上学。^{5 6}

马天明的爸爸今年已经四十岁⁷了¹，

-
- 1 岁 (suì) *num.* years old
2 小学生 (xiǎoxuéshēng) *n.* elementary school student
3 新 (xīn) *adj.* new
4 叫 (jiào) *v.* to be called, to call; to tell (someone to do something)

- 5 一起 (yìqǐ) *adv.* together
6 上学 (shàngxué) *v.* to start school, to go to school
7 已经 (yǐjīng) *adv.* already



他写过很多书，他的新书里有外星人，

马天明和谢心月都会看他写的书。有

时候，两个爸爸会和他们一起去山上

看星星。

8 外星人 (wàixīng rén) *n.* alien

9 有时候 (yǒu shíhòu) *phrase* sometimes

10 山上 (shānshàng) *phrase* on the mountain(s)

11 星星 (xīngxīng) *n.* star, stars

“有很多星星, 可是 星星太小了, 星
星上有外星人吗?” 马天明问谢心月。

“我也不知道。我很想见见外星
人!” 谢心月说。

“你不怕外星人吗?” 马天明问。

“我不怕, 你呢?” 谢心月说。

马天明说: “我也不怕。我爸爸
说, 外星人在天上可以看见我们, 可
是, 我们不能看见他们。”

“我看了你爸爸写的新书, 书里说

12 可是 (kěshì) conj. but

13 怕 (pà) v. to be afraid (of)

14 天上 (tiānshàng) n. in the sky

15 看见 (kànjian) v. to see

了外星人的样子。他是不是已经见过

外星人了?” 谢心月问。

马天明笑了：“他没有见过外星人。”

“你说，外星人会说中文吗?” 谢心

月问。“要是他们不会说中文，我们怎

么和他们说话?”

马天明想了想说：“我不知道，可

能他们可以。”

“要是你见了一个会说中文的外

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

17 笑 (xiào) *v.* to laugh, to smile

18 要是 (yàoshì) *conj.* if

19 怎么 (zěnmě) *adv.* how

20 说话 (shuōhuà) *v.* to speak (words), to talk

21 想了想 (xiǎng le xiǎng) *phrase* thought about it for a second

22 可能 (kěnéng) *adv.; aux* maybe, possibly; possible

星人，你会跟他说什么？”谢心月又₂₃

问。

马天明有很多话想问外星人₈，说：“我
……我要问他们，他们的家₂₄在什么地方₂₅，他们那里和我们这里有什么不一样₂₆，他们为什么要来我们这里……”

马爸爸听完以后就笑了。

“明天星期一₃₀，又要₂₃上学₆了。不知道₈外星人小朋友₃₁是不是也都要₆上学？”

23 又 (yòu) *adv.* again

24 家 (jiā) *mw., n.* measure word for shops; home

25 地方 (dìfang) *n.* place

26 不一样 (bù yíyàng) *phrase* not the same

27 听 (tīng) *v.* to listen (to)

28 以后 (yǐhòu) *adv.* after; later, in the future

29 就 (jiù) *adv.* just

30 星期一 (Xīngqīyī) *m.* Monday

31 小朋友 (xiǎopéngyou) *n.* kid



谢心月说。

“见到外星人的时候，你就问他们

吧。”马爸爸笑了笑。

Two

车老师

第二天³³，来了一个小学老师³⁴，是男老师。“大家好³⁵，我是你们的新³老师，你们可以叫我⁴车老师，我今年三十岁。”¹

“车？我没有听过。”²⁷ 谢心月说。

“我也没听过。”²⁷ 马天明说，“车老师，你是哪里人？”

33 第二天 (dì-èr tiān) phrase the second day

35 大家 (dàjiā) n. everyone

34 小学 (xiǎoxué) n. elementary school



“我去过很多地方，你问我是哪里
人，我不知道怎么说。”

老师的话有一点好笑，学生们都笑了。

36 有一点 (yǒu yídiǎn) *phrase to be a little (too)*

37 好笑 (hǎoxiào) *adj. funny*

车老师看过很多星星和火星的书，
 每次说到火星，他就能说很多：知
 道火星在哪里，火星上没有水，也没
 有人……听车老师说火星的时候，马
天明和谢心月都很开心。

“老师，你的家不在火星上，怎么
 知道这么多？”谢心月问。

“我爸爸的新书里也没写过这么
 多。”马天明也说。

车老师没说话，对他们笑笑。

38 火星 (Huǒxīng) *pn.* Mars

39 每次 (měi cì) *phrase* every time

40 开心 (kāixīn) *adj.* happy

41 这么 (zhème) *adv.* so...

42 有一天 (yǒu yī tiān) *phrase* one day...

有一天，学生和老师已经都走了，
马天明和谢心月回来拿东西。到门边
 的时候，他们看到车老师在里面。他一
边用左手写字，一边用右手写字，一
边看书！

“快看，车老师！怎么可能……”马
天明对谢心月说。

谢心月说：“我看到了，这不是我第一
次看到他这样了。”

43 回来 (huílai) *vc.* to come back

44 拿 (ná) *v.* to get, to hold

45 东西 (dōngxi) *n.* thing(s), stuff

46 门边 (mén biān) *phrase* by the door

47 看到 (kàndào) *vc.* to see

48 里面 (lǐmiàn) *n.* inside

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

50 看书 (kànshū) *vo.* to read, to study

51 第一次 (dì-yī cì) *phrase* first time

52 这样 (zhèyàng) *pr.* like this



马天明²³又说：“车老师是……是个什么人？”

“他会⁵³听到的！我们⁵⁴回家说吧。”谢心月说。

53 听到 (tīngdào) *vc.* to hear

54 回家 (huíjiā) *va.* to go home

第二天中午吃饭的时候,马天明对谢

心月说:“我们快去问问他吧。他是我们的老师,他是一个好老师。”

“你去问吧,我不想去。”谢心月说。

马天明笑笑:“快去吧!车老师是很好的人。”

谢心月想了想:“好吧,车老师一个人在那儿吃饭。我们过去吧。”

55 中午 (zhōngwǔ) *n.* noon

56 一个人 (yī gè rén) *phrase* alone

57 过去 (guòqu) *v.c.* to go over

Three

他是人吗？

Four

车老师的家

Five

很大的星星

Six

方老师

Seven

本子

Eight

不认识的字

Nine

车老师走了

Ten

水老师



Key Words 关键词 (Guānjiàncí)

1. 岁 suì *mv.* years old
2. 小学生 xiǎoxuéshēng *n.* elementary school student
3. 新 xīn *adj.* new
4. 叫 jiào *v.* to be called, to call; to tell (someone to do something)
5. 一起 yìqǐ *adv.* together
6. 上学 shàngxué *vo.* to start school, to go to school
7. 已经 yǐjīng *adv.* already
8. 外星人 wàixīngrén *n.* alien
9. 有时候 yǒu shíhòu *phrase* sometimes
10. 山上 shānshàng *phrase* on the mountain(s)
11. 星星 xīngxīng *n.* star, stars
12. 可是 kěshì *conj.* but
13. 怕 pà *v.* to be afraid (of)
14. 天上 tiānshàng *n.* in the sky
15. 看见 kànjian *vc.* to see
16. 见过 jiàn guo *phrase* have met before
17. 笑 xiào *v.* to laugh, to smile
18. 要是 yàoshi *conj.* if
19. 怎么 zěnmē *adv.* how
20. 说话 shuōhuà *vo.* to speak (words), to talk
21. 想了想 xiǎng le xiǎng *phrase* thought about it for a second
22. 可能 kěnéng *adv.; aux* maybe, possibly; possible
23. 又 yòu *adv.* again
24. 家 jiā *mv., n.* measure word for shops; home
25. 地方 dìfāng *n.* place

26. 不一样 bù yíyàng *phrase* not the same
27. 听 tīng *v.* to listen (to)
28. 以后 yǐhòu *adv.* after; later, in the future
29. 就 jiù *adv.* just
30. 星期一 xīngqīyī *tn.* Monday
31. 小朋友 xiǎopéngyou *n.* kid
32. 的时候 de shíhou *phrase* when...
33. 第二天 dì-èr tiān *phrase* the second day
34. 小学 xiǎoxué *n.* elementary school
35. 大家 dàjiā *n.* everyone
36. 有一点 yǒu yídiǎn *phrase* to be a little (too)
37. 好笑 hǎoxiào *adj.* funny
38. 火星 Huǒxīng *pn.* Mars
39. 每次 měi cì *phrase* every time
40. 开心 kāixīn *adj.* happy
41. 这么 zhème *adv.* so...
42. 有一天 yǒu yī tiān *phrase* one day...
43. 回来 huílai *vc.* to come back
44. 拿 ná *v.* to get, to hold
45. 东西 dōngxi *n.* thing(s), stuff
46. 门边 mén biān *phrase* by the door
47. 看到 kàndào *vc.* to see
48. 里面 lǐmiàn *n.* inside
49. 一边 yībiān *conj.* while doing... (two things)
50. 看书 kànshū *vo.* to read, to study
51. 第一次 dì-yī cì *phrase* first time
52. 这样 zhèyàng *pr.* like this
53. 听到 tīngdào *vc.* to hear
54. 回家 huíjiā *vo.* to go home
55. 中午 zhōngwǔ *n.* noon
56. 一个人 yī gè rén *phrase* alone
57. 过去 guòqu *vc.* to go over
58. 后面 hòumian *n.* behind
59. 还 hái *adv.* still
60. 好吃 hǎochī *adj.* tasty
61. 回头 huítóu *vo.* to turn one's head

62. 说完 shuō wán *vc.* to finish speaking
63. 吃完 chī wán *vc.* to finish eating
64. 这时候 zhè shíhòu *phrase* at this time
65. 手里 shǒu lǐ *phrase* in one's hand
66. 那么 nàme *adv.* so...
67. 一下子 yíxià *adv.* all of a sudden; all at once
68. 一样 yíyàng *n.* the same
69. 看看 kànkàn *v.* to take a look
70. 小心 xiǎoxīn *v.* to be careful
71. 小时 xiǎoshí *n.* hour
72. 不见了 bùjiàn le *phrase* disappeared
73. 听起来 tīng qǐlái *vc.* to sound...
74. 不开心 bù kāixīn *phrase* not happy, to be unhappy
75. 不可能 bù kěnéng *phrase* impossible (to)
76. 再 zài *adv.* again (in the future)
77. 路上 lùshang *n.* on the road, on the way
78. 小心地 xiǎoxīn de *phrase* carefully
79. 怎么了 zěnmē le *phrase* what happened, what's the matter
80. 次 cì *mw.* time(s)
81. 一个多星期 yí gè duō xīngqī *phrase* over a week
82. 马上 mǎshàng *adv.* right away
83. 怎么会 zěnmē huì *phrase* how could
84. 上面 shàngmian *n.* on, on top, above
85. 下面 xiàmiàn *n.* below, under
86. 开门 kāimén *vo.* to open the door
87. 再说 zàishuō *conj.* furthermore, besides
88. 一下 yíxià *adv.* briefly, for a second
89. 听见 tīngjiàn *vc.* to hear
90. 生气 shēngqì *vo., adj.* to get angry; angry
91. 不小心 bù xiǎoxīn *phrase* to not be careful; accidentally
92. 好了 hǎo le *phrase* done
93. 火星 huǒxīng-rén *pn.* Martian
94. 那天 nà tiān *tn.* that day
95. 本子 běnzi *n.* notebook
96. 一次 yí cì *phrase* one time
97. 拿到 ná dào *vc.* to get, to manage to get

98. 听说 *tīngshuō* *v.* to hear tell, to hear said (that)
 99. 出去 *chūqu* *vc.* to go out
 100. 认识 *rènshi* *v.* to recognize
 101. 点点头 *diǎndian tóu* *phrase* to (briefly) nod one's head
 102. 一会儿 *yīhuìr* *tn.* a little while
 103. 好看 *hǎokàn* *adj.* good-looking
 104. 看起来 *kàn qǐlai* *vc.* to look...
 105. 出来 *chūlai* *vc.* to come out
 106. 几个月 *jǐ gè yuè* *phrase* several months
 107. 开心地 *kāixīn de* *phrase* happily
 108. 第二年 *dì-èr nián* *phrase* second year
 109. 男生 *nánshēng* *n.* boy, male student
 110. 下一个 *xià yī ge* *phrase* next (one)
 111. 没想到 *méi xiǎngdào* *phrase* to never have imagined
 112. 喜欢 *xǐhuan* *v.* to like

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>mw.</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	
The “all” adverb “dou”	都 + Verb / Adj.
Tag questions with “ma”	……是吗 / 对吗 / 好吗?
Reduplication of verbs	Verb + Verb
After a specific time with “yihou”	Time / Verb + 以后
Expressing “if…then…” with “yaoshi”	要是……, 就……
Expressing a learned skill with “hui”	会 + Verb
The “also” adverb “ye”	也 + Verb / Adj.
Expressing “will” with “hui”	会 + Verb
How to do something with “zenme”	怎么 + Verb ?
Expressing “when” with “de shihou”	……的时候
Two words for “but”	……, 可是 / 但是……

CHAPTER 2

Suggestions with “ba”	Command + 吧
Expressing location with “zai... shang / xia / li”	在 + Place + 上 / 下 / 里 / 旁边
Simultaneous tasks with “yibian”	一边 + Verb 1 (,) 一边 + Verb 2
Using “dui” with verbs	Subj. + 对 + Person + Verb

CHAPTER 3

Expressing “all at once” with “yixiazi”	Subj. + 一下子 + Verb + 了
Expressing “and” with “he”	Noun 1 + 和 + Noun 2
Expressing ability or possibility with “neng”	能 + Verb
Basic comparisons with “yiyang”	Noun 1 + 跟 / 和 + Noun 2 + 一样 + Adj.

CHAPTER 4

Expressing “again” in the future with “zai”	再 + Verb
Expressing “then…” with “name”	那么……
Expressing duration with “le”	Verb + 了 + Duration
Sequencing past events with “houlai”	……, 后来……

CHAPTER 5

Expressing “everything” with “shenme dou”	什么 + 都 / 也……
Expressing “in addition” with “zaishuo”	……, 再说, ……
Expressing “with” with “gen”	跟……+ Verb
Causative verbs	Subj. + 让 / 叫 / 请 / 使 + Person + Predicate



Credits

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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

Xiao Ming, Boy Sherlock

《小明》

by John Pasden, Jared Turner

In Search of Hua Ma

《花马》

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》

by Robert Louis Stevenson

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a growing library of graded readers
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