



高等学校英语专业系列教材

美国文学史

A History of American Literature

童明(美) 著



[增订版]

外语教学与研究出版社

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北京 BEIJING

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国文学史 / (美)童明著. — 北京: 外语教学与研究出版社, 2008.1
(高等学校英语专业系列教材)
ISBN 978-7-5600-7332-3

I. 美… II. 童… III. ①英语—阅读教学—高等学校—教材 ②文学史—美国 IV. H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2008) 第 023406 号

出 版 人: 于春迟

策划编辑: 段长城

责任编辑: 孙雪晶

封面设计: 牛茜茜

出版发行: 外语教学与研究出版社

社 址: 北京市西三环北路 19 号 (100089)

网 址: <http://www.fltrp.com>

印 刷: 北京京师印务有限公司

开 本: 650×980 1/16

印 张: 30

版 次: 2008 年 6 月第 1 版 2009 年 7 月第 2 次印刷

书 号: ISBN 978-7-5600-7332-3

定 价: 39.90 元

* * *

如有印刷、装订质量问题出版社负责调换

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版权保护办公室举报电话: (010)88817519

物料号: 173320001

前言

(增订版)

《美国文学史》是为中国的学者、学生写的一部学术专著。2002年由南京译林出版社出版之后，颇得读者厚爱，增印多次。这一次我对原书做了全面修订和勘校，又增添了不少新内容。例如，为每一章编写了详尽的提问练习并提供参考书目（全部纳入 Appendix 1），增补了若干新的作者和作品，对前版已有的作品分析做了必要的补充。此增订版是一部具有充分教材功能的专著，既可作为英语专业高年级本科生和研究生的教材，也可为学者的研究、自学者的学习提供参考，为所有对美国文学和文化有兴趣的读者提供对美国文学史的一个完整和准确的叙述。所谓“完整”，指本书的叙述没有止于二十世纪六、七十年代，而是把美国文学史一直延展到二十一世纪“当下”的现状和趋势，因此，本书首尾呼应，有始有终。

由外语教学与研究出版社出版的《美国文学史》增订版具有以下特点，提请读者在使用时注意：

一、按照历史时期和文学发展的大趋势，全书分为五部分：第一部分，Early American Literature: Colonial Period to 1815；第二部分，American Romanticism: 1815—1865；第三部分，American Realism: 1865—1914；第四部分，American Modernism: 1914—1945；第五部分，American Literature Diversified: 1945 to the New Millennium。第一部分的第一章旨在提出美国文学的两大特点：其多元文化特征和起源、其探索 and 发现精神。除第一部

分之外，其余各部分的第一章都是针对某个历史时期文学发展的概述，包括对那个时期文学流派和社会、文化、哲学、美学趋势的解释。比如，第五部分第一章的概述分为四个小标题：Two Halves of a 50-Year Period；The Influence of Existentialism；Postmodernism(s)；“Theory and Deconstruction”。这些小标题之下的叙述汇集在一起，就是对引起这个时期美国文学多样化的文化、历史、哲学思潮的分析。简言之，第二部分至第五部分的首章可视为对美国浪漫主义、美国现实主义、美国现代主义、1945 年以来的美国文学多样化等各个专题的专论。

二、《美国文学史》意欲涵盖六百年历史而不失其精神脉络，必须详略得当。本书的重点是为每个时期提供宏观概念的叙述，为重要作家和重要作品提供翔实的介绍和分析，针对重要作品的美学、文化和历史价值提出准确的评论。为此，我在写作和增订时，采纳美国学术界的普遍看法，并参考在加州州立大学多年教授美国文学的心得笔记，力求兼顾准确、好用、有学术新意。若能通读全书，可收掌握全貌、拓展视野之效。不过，使用这本《美国文学史》时，教师可以根据教学的需要，读者可以根据学习的需要，在一段时间内选用本书的某一部分、某一章节。由于本书的规模有限，对某些作家和作品只能一笔带过，甚至您所熟悉的某个作家可能也没有收进来。对此，我向读者表示歉意。不过，每个被收进来的重要作家，本书都提供了相关的生平介绍、对作家风格和成就的评论、作家自己看重的观念、作家的风格特征，以及对该作家主要作品的分析。

三、遵循教学规律，教师应该从 Appendix 1 里选择一些问题，供组织课堂讨论之用，亦可布置作业，由学生完成短文或较长篇幅的研究论文。有些问题只需要简短的回答，而另一些问题则需要相当的篇章。提问是为了开拓思路、言路，让大家在回顾已经掌握的知识之际，意识到尚未涉及的领地，进而为新的探索而兴奋。我猜想，对于研究生和学者，Appendix 1 最珍贵的部分是本书提供的参考资料。我为写这本书所参考的文献，也列在本书的最后部分。

四、《美国文学史》力求在资料和叙述上符合学术界的普遍标准。在稳妥的基础上，本书又有视角上的“新”。对于美国的思想史、文化史、文学史，我因长期的专业研究而熟知。身为中国人，我又兼有亚洲学者对美国文化、文学所特有的视角。由于双重身份和视角，这本书对美国文学发展过程中的某些现象格外敏感。比如，美国文化的多文化根源和特质。对那些从亚洲文化传统中借鉴的美国作者——如哥伦布、富兰克林、爱默森、庞德、惠特曼、米勒等——本书给予了特别的注意。作为亚洲学者，我从全球的、跨民族的范畴（而不是美国边界之内的视角）观察美国文学的发展。本书第27章对美国文学中的“飞散”意识的论述即为一例。此外，有些版本的美国文学史，很少涉及1960年以后的文学，而本书对过去三十年的美国文学发展，有相当充实的介绍，收入不少成就斐然、生气勃勃的当代作家。

五、书后的 Chronology of Historical Events 似乎和书中讨论的文学现象没有直接的关联。事实上，文学文本中隐隐约约透露的信息，有心的读者会到文学以外的世界中去寻找线索。所以，Chronology 是提供给读者的又一个工具。

了解美国的文学史像一次出海旅行，一本《美国文学史》好比旅途中的伴侣和向导。祝您旅途愉快！Bon voyage!

童 明

2007年11月

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PART 1

EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE: COLONIAL PERIOD TO 1815

Chapter 1

The Literature of the New World

DISCOVERIES OF AMERICA

“America,” as a broader term, refers to “the New World” which is inclusive of North and South Americas. But “American literature” in this book means largely the body of literature created in the United States, which is in North America. While the founding of the United States as a nation may be traced to the American Revolution in the 18th century, its multi-cultural heritages are rooted in the various explorations of the New World that had started several hundred years before the American Revolution. Thus, we begin our narrative of American literary history by first looking at exploration writings related to the *discoveries* of America.

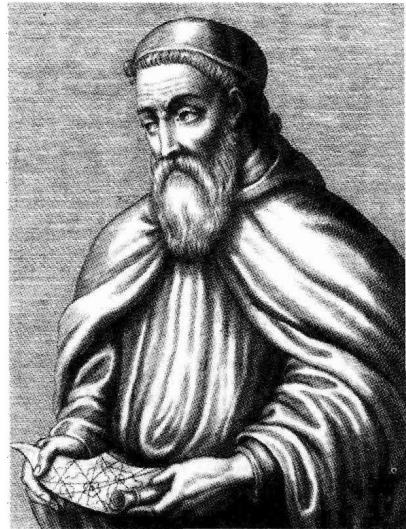


The picture of Christopher Columbus.

Who discovered America? The credit is often attributed to Christopher Columbus. The moment when the new continent was “discovered” is even determined by some historians at the exact hour of 2:00 A.M., Friday, October 12, 1492 when Columbus recorded how he spotted the land. Yet Columbus’ reputation as *the* discoverer of the New World is controversial. It is quite ironic that Columbus who “discovered” America in fact thought that he had reached Asia. As it might be of interest to Chinese readers, Columbus’ “discovery” is not unrelated to the larger European myth of China.

When Columbus set sail from Spain on August 3, 1492, he was driven by the desire to find a convenient sea passage to the Orient, or, more specifically, a passage to the land of Kublai Khan as Marco Polo had described it in his 13th century travelogues. He was so convinced that he had reached the land of the great Khan that in his four voyages between 1492 and 1502, he interpreted everything he saw according to his pre-established view of what Asia or Asians should look like.

Another noteworthy discoverer of America as *a distinctly new region* is the Florentine navigator Amerigo Vespucci. It is because of Vespucci's story that the New World was named "America." Vespucci sailed to Brazil in 1501 under the Portuguese flag and he noted: "we arrived at a new land which ... we observed to be a continent." In 1503 his book *Mundus Novus* (*The New World*) was printed and was more widely circulated than anything written by Columbus. A German geographer, Martin Waldseemuller, found Vespucci's work when he was preparing a new edition of the world's map. It was Waldseemuller who decided that the new land should be named after its finder: Amerigo. On his 1507 world map, this German geographer marked the new territory—what he called the "fourth part" of the world following Europe, Africa, and Asia—as "America." Vespucci as an explorer is also controversial in that he fabricated the tale that he had made a 1497 voyage during which he found the Southern American continent. It is quite possible that he made up the story to beat Columbus as the first discoverer.



Amerigo Vespucci, Italian merchant, explorer and cartographer.

At any rate, it was Vespucci's writings and Waldseemuller's map that made Europeans aware of the "fourth part" of the world. The Europeans then understood that Columbus's description of the New World as a string of Asian islands was quite misleading. At any rate, to the New World called "America" European settlers came in incessant waves.

As long as we are considering the "origin" of America, we cannot forget that those who first discovered America were not Europeans but the indigenous

people. According to one theory, the indigenous people, some 12, 000 years ago, were Asian hunters who crossed the land-bridge that is now called the Bering Strait to America. But at least some of the indigenous people must have *always* lived in America, as we might surmise from their creation narratives. Since much of the European exploration literature is inspired and informed by the Judeo-Christian account of creation in the Bible, it is important that we compare their narratives to the creation narratives from the indigenous people.

It is necessary to begin the history of American literature with these (and other) discoveries for the following reasons.

First, the discoveries are so diverse in their cultural and historical situations that we are reminded that what is “American” culture—a question which is repeatedly raised and debated—cannot be defined from the perspective of a single culture. Cultural pluralism in the United States today is rooted in the diverse origins of America and it grew more vigorous with succeeding waves of immigrants from different continents of the world. There is, of course, the position that insofar as English has become the predominant American language, American literature must be defined in terms of its British sources of origin. We counter-argue that American English is not solely British in its origin or substance. American English consists of many cultural strains; it evolved as people of different national and cultural backgrounds came to America, discovered America in their own terms, and added their own linguistic and cultural attributes to it.

Even if we only focused on the European colonial experiences in the New World, we would still question the conventional view that Captain John Smith (1580—1631), an Englishman, was the first *American* writer. We know that at least the Spanish had preceded the English in arriving in the New World and in creating a New World literature. By the mid-18th century, Spain’s influence extended to all areas west of Mississippi and south of Oregon as well as Florida and territories south of Tennessee. The French influence was evident in the Northeast, the Midwest and throughout Canada. The Dutch were also involved in the colonization of the New World. They controlled Manhattan Island along with the fertile Hudson Valley.¹

Another reason why we begin American literary history with discoveries

1 The Dutch cultural presence as part of the American life is evident in many American texts. In Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925), for instance, Nick Carraway the narrator finally links the tragic story of Gatsby with the American dream by reflecting on “Dutch sailors’ eyes” on “a fresh, green breast of the New World.”

is that discovery or exploration has become part of the American spirit. Thoreau, a 19th century writer, said in *The Maine Woods* that America is *always* in the process of being discovered. After the Age of Exploration, many American writers continued the spirit of discovery in that they pursued a world that is always new and exciting. Thus, the discovery of America denotes not only the exploration of the New World but also the exploration of the new in America.

NATIVE AMERICAN ORAL LITERATURE

The term “Indian” (“los Indios”) is, in fact, a misnomer. Columbus used the word at first to refer to the peoples he encountered in the Bahamas in October 1492, because, until his death, Columbus thought he had discovered Asia. Ethnographers today call the peoples who were in North America before the European settlement “Native Americans,” although many Native Americans today call themselves “American Indians.”

The native peoples had traditions antedating Christianity and European social organizations. Two highly developed civilizations—the Maya and the Aztec—had once been great empires. By the time the Spanish arrived in America, the Maya civilization, already in the decline, had invented systems of writing, mathematics and a calendar. The majority of native cultures were sustained through the oral tradition. Historical records indicate that the destruction of the ancient civilizations in the hands of the Spanish was severe; that natives in areas taken over by the English, French and Dutch fared somewhat better although the changes imposed on them by the European settlers were no less traumatic.

When Native Americans first became aware of the European civilization through their “contact” (a neutralized word employed sometimes by historians) with the Europeans, they had a population of more than ten million and they represented a wide variety of cultures with different ancestries, different structures for distributing authority and responsibility, and different economic systems. These tribal cultures spoke more than 350 languages and they had developed genre systems such as speech, chant, and song. Today, two million of their descendants live in the United States, and in regions north of America, and approximately 200 languages are still in use. For students of American literature, some knowledge of the native oral literature is

indispensable in that this oral tradition is the very foundation of native written literature in the 20th century.

Since most Native American stories were *orally* passed on, these tales then have a *performative* dimension: they are not only “told,” they are also “sung” as chants and songs, and dramatized in ritual dances. Ritual dances are often based on tribal tales that tell of places far off or of geographical locations only the tribal audience would know. Many of these are cycle stories in connection with tribal life experiences such as planting, hunting and fishing, or birth, puberty and death. Of particular significance to scholars of culture and literature are those stories that explain the natives’ view of the origin of the world and those that relate historical events crucial to Native Americans.

Origin stories are those dramatizing tribal interpretations of how the earth originated or of how people established relationships with plants, animals and the cosmos. A characteristic origin story is the Earth-Diver story that typically tells of a great flood which once covered the earth. Earth beings who floated on the huge expanse of water made several attempts, in vain, to find land until an animal brought mud from under the water to create, magically, the earth. The Earth-Diver story resembles the biblical tale of Noah and the flood. A major difference between them is that the “creator” in the Earth-Diver story takes the animal form.

Another type of origin story is the emergence story common among the agricultural tribes. This often tells of how people originated in the womb of the Earth Mother and were then called out into the light by their Sun Father. Life typically evolved from darkness to light, from chaos to order, from vague forms to distinct human forms. Among the Zuni Indians who live in the southwest of the United States, the story concerning the “First Beginning” starts like this:

“Yes, indeed. In this world there was no one at all. Always the sun came up; always he went in. No one in the morning gave him sacred meal; no one gave him prayer sticks; it was very lonely. He said to his two children, the Ahaiyute the War God Hero Twins: “You will go into the fourth womb. Your fathers, your mothers, all the society priests, ... you will bring out yonder into the light of your Sun Father.”

Yet another type of origin story explains the world as an emanation of the creator's thoughts. Often, this creator is a Thought Woman whose thoughts become words and things. Sometimes, the creator seems to be a male. As in the origin myth of the Zuni who live in New Mexico: the (male) creator "thought outward in space, whereby mists of increase, steams potent of growth, were evolved and up-lifted." That thinking is sacred and precedes words is the reason why silence, if indicating the presence of thoughts, is believed by Native Americans to be a sign of the sacred.

Trickster tales are humorous tales featuring trickster characters. Trickster figures are people in the form of animals such as Coyote, Raven, Blue Jay, Mink, or Rabbit. One might also say that they are half animal and half human. A good Chinese analogy for the "trickster" would be Sun Wukong the Monkey King, although the Chinese do not use the word "trickster" and the Monkey only bears some resemblance to the Indian trickster.

In the oral traditions of Native Americans, trickster characters often exist on the margins of the social world; they travel; they are resourceful and clever; in one moment they are human and in the next they are in the form of animal; they make attempts to violate established rules and customs or engage in socially unacceptable acts; they also have an enormous appetite for food and sex. In some tales, a trickster's cleverness is emphasized: he would lure ducks into dancing blindfold so that he can kill them; or he would pretend to be lame in order to win a race. But the same trickster would be a buffoon on other occasions. Whatever a trickster does, his tale is always the expression of humor.

Historical narratives are diverse in kinds. Some of them are tribal records of historical events. Many other narratives feature legendary figures that move in recognizable historical settings. In such tales, the line between an actual event and tribal belief is blurred. Of this vast historical literature, many stories recount European colonization from the perspective of Native Americans. For instance, to the Yuchis, a tribe in the Southeast, white people emerged from the sea foam of the Atlantic. The Yuchi tale "Creation of the Whites" reveals so much of the emotions associated with the first encounters between the Europeans and the natives.

It was out upon the ocean. Some sea-foam formed against a big log floating there. Then a person emerged from the sea-foam

and crawled upon the log. He was seen sitting there. Another person crawled up, on the other side of the log. It was a woman. They were whites. Soon the Indians saw them, and at first thought that they were sea-gulls, and they said among themselves, "Are they not white people?" Then they made a boat and went to look at the strangers more closely.

Later on the whites were seen in their house-boat. Then they disappeared.

In about a year they returned, and there were a great many of them. The Indians talked to them but they could not understand each other. Then the whites left.

But they came back in another year with a great many ships. They approached the Indians and asked if they could come ashore. They said, "Yes." So the whites landed, but they seem to be afraid to walk much on the water. They went away again over the sea.

This time they were gone a shorter time; only three months passed and they came again. They had a box with them and asked the Indians for some earth to fill it. It was given to them as they desired. The first time they asked they had a square box, and when that was filled they brought a big shallow box. They filled this one too. Earth was put in them and when they were carried aboard the ship the white men planted seed in them and many things were raised. After they had taken away the shallow box, the whites came back and told the Indians that their land was very strong and fertile. So they asked the Indians to give them a portion of it so that they might live on it. The Indians agreed to do it, the whites came to the shore, and they have lived there ever since.

This Yuchi tale offers a meaningful contrast to the writings by European explorers.