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解读十八位英美小说家

A Closer Look at Eighteen British and American Novelists

尤广杰：编著



中央编译出版社
Central Compilation & Translation Press

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前 言

十九世纪至二十世纪中叶,英国文学经历了浪漫主义时期,维多利亚时期和现代主义时期;美国文学经历了浪漫主义时期、现实主义时期和现代主义时期。其间英美两国涌现许多杰出的浪漫主义、现实主义、自然主义和现代主义小说家。通过学习这些小说家和他们的代表作,可以增进对英美文学史和英美文学中主要流派的认识和了解。

本书介绍了十八位十九世纪至二十世纪中叶最具代表性的小说家,解读了他们的创作生涯、文学作品的主题思想、写作风格和文学创作技巧以及主要文学成就。本书还介绍了这十八位小说家各自一部代表作的故事梗概和主题思想。这十八部著作都是在英语国家家喻户晓,在其他国家所有英语和文学爱好者不可不读的作品。编者摘录了这十八部作品的经典段落,精心设计了各种题型,包括词汇理解、篇章理解和根据节选段落判断对错。通过对本书的阅读和学习,可以使读者对十九世纪至二十世纪中叶的英美文学史及其代表作家的写作风格和文学创作技巧有清晰和明确的了解,对他们的小说有一个大致的印象。同时,编者也希望本书能帮助读者提高英语阅读理解能力,提升读者对英文作品的鉴赏力,激发读者阅读整部原著乃至其他原著的兴趣,帮助读者掌握地道英语的精髓并深入了解英语国家的社会历史文化背景。

本书适合高等学校英语专业和高年级非英语专业学生学习,也适合英美文学爱好者阅读。

由于编者的水平和能力有限,错误和不当之处在所难免,欢迎有识之士批评和指正。

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Part One

British Novelists

Chapter I Jane Austen (1775 ~ 1817)

Life and the Literary Career

Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 into the rural professional middle class. Her father, George Austen, was a country clergyman at Steventon, a small village in the southern English country of Hampshire. Her mother was from a higher social rank, minor gentry related distantly to titled people, but once she married the Reverend Austen in 1764 she entered wholeheartedly and with humor into the domestic life and responsibilities of managing a household economy by no means luxurious, bearing eight children—six sons and two daughters. Austen's brothers, apart from Edward, went in for genteel but demanding professions. Her eldest brother, James (1765 ~ 1819), who had literary tastes and intellectual interests, followed his father's path to St. John's College, Oxford, and eventually became his father's successor as rector of Steventon. Her second brother, George (1766 ~ 1838), was born handicapped and did not play a part in the family life. The third son was Edward (1767 ~ 1852), who was adopted by the Knights and took over the Knight estates in Kent and Hampshire in 1797. The fourth child, Henry (1771 ~ 1850), was the liveliest, the most adventurous and the most speculative of the Austens. Like James, he went to St. John's College, Oxford, but instead of taking orders upon graduation he joined the army, gave that up for the relatively ungentle line of banking, and married his glamorous widowed cousin, Eliza de Feuillide. When his bank failed in 1816 during the economic crisis following the Napoleonic Wars, he fell back on his father's profession and became a clergyman. The next child, Cassandra (1773 ~ 1845), was Jane's closest friend throughout her life and was known in the family for her steady character

and sound judgment. The two youngest Austen boys, Francis (1774 ~ 1865) and Charles (1779 ~ 1852), were trained at the Royal Naval Academy at Portsmouth, became officers, served in the French wars, and rose to the rank of admiral. The family members were readers, though more in literature of the day than abstruse learning. There was also a great deal of reading aloud in the Austen household. It was not surprising in such a family for Jane Austen to take to writing before she was even in her teens, and for her to amuse her family throughout her adolescence with burlesques of various kinds of literature.

The education of Austen and her sister was not nearly as thorough and systematic as that offered their brothers. While the men would have to prepare for a profession and therefore spend their formative years accumulating intellectual and moral capital for the future, the only career open to women of the Austens' class was that of wife and mother. After two unsuccessful attempts to find a good boarding school, they returned home to educate themselves with extensive reading. Through a wide reading of books available in her father's library, Austen acquired a thorough knowledge of eighteenth-century English literature, including the moral philosophy of Samuel Johnson, the poetry of William Cowper, as well as the novels by Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. Most accounts agree that the sisters were pretty and enjoyed the slightly limited but interesting round of country parties. Several sources suggest that both Jane and Cassandra fell in love, but nothing came of it. Neither sister married. During this Steventon period, Austen wrote *Northanger Abbey* (1818), *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), but none was published until later. *Sense and Sensibility* tells a story about two sisters and their love affairs; *Pride and Prejudice*, the most popular of her novels, deals with the five Bennet sisters and their search for suitable husbands; and *Northanger Abbey* satirizes those popular Gothic romances of the late 18th century.

In January 1805, Austen's father died. Since his clerical income ended with his death, his widow and daughters were faced with relative penury, but the Austen brothers pooled resources to maintain their mother and sisters, joined by their friend Martha Lloyd, in solid middle-class comfort at Bath. Although Austen had enjoyed the varied social scene at first, she eventually grew to dislike the place and its people. She continued to follow the career, both at sea and ashore, of her brother Francis. Francis married in 1806 and invited his mother and sisters to share his house at Southampton. They joined him there. When Francis was again away at sea the Austen women were left to a quiet and retired existence, gardening, visiting Edward Austen and his large family in Kent and Henry Austen in London, and following news of the war in Spain. Austen became especially close to Edward's daughter Fanny, then in her teens; it was a lifelong friendship. When Edward's wife died in late 1808, his

mother and sisters comforted the family. Edward offered them the choice of a comfortable house on one of his estates, in Kent and Hampshire, so that they would be closer. They chose a house at Chawton, in Kent not far from their early home at Steventon. In summer 1809 they moved to Chawton, where Austen would live until her final illness. Life at Chawton was simple and neither mean nor grand. At this house, Austen was to revise her manuscripts that became *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Northanger Abbey* and to write *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), and *Persuasion* (1818). *Mansfield Park* presents the antithesis of worldliness and unworldliness; *Emma* gives the thought over self—deceptive vanity; and *Persuasion* contrasts the true love with the prudential calculations. Austen wanted to avoid the notoriety of authorship. Thus none of the book carried her name. Evading all attention was impossible after their success, however, and Austen dedicated *Emma* to the Prince Regent at his request.

As a novelist Jane Austen deliberately restricted what she wrote about, and her work gains intensity and beauty from its narrow focus. The subject matter, the character range, the social setting, and plots are all restricted to the provincial life of the late 18th century England, concerning three or four landed gentry families with their daily routine life: relationships with members of their own family and with their friends, dancing parties, tea parties, picnics, and gossips. In her novels, there is little reflection on the events that stirred the whole Europe at the time—the French Revolution of 1789 ~ 94 and of the Napoleonic Wars that followed. Everything in her novels results in an observation of a quiet, uneventful and contented life of the English country. Austen's life was also limited to family and a few close friends, and she prized being thought a warm and loving aunt as much as being thought a successful novelist. In 1817, it became evident that she was ill with a serious complaint whose symptoms seem to have been those of Addison's disease. It made her stop work on the novel *Sanditon* (1925). To be near medical help, she and Cassandra moved to lodgings in Winchester in May, 1817. Austen died there less than two months later.

Major Themes in Austen's Literary Works

Austen's main literary concern is about human beings in their personal relationships. Because of this, her novels have a universal significance. As for her interest in the study of human beings in their relationships with other people in daily life, Austen is particularly preoccupied with the relationship between men and women in love. Stories of love and marriage provide the major themes in all her novels, in which female characters are always playing an active part.

Behind the seemingly disinterested exterior of innocent love—makings and mar-