

英语文学系列教材

美国文学选读新编·20世纪卷

罗良功 李汝成 主编

 华中师范大学出版社



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罗良功 李汝成 主编

曹曼 郭晶晶 张生珍 副主编



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前 言

《美国文学选读新编·20世纪卷》是一部在新的社会文化历史语境下编写的英语专业高年级本科生或研究生的教材,也是一部文学研究者的参考书。当历史进入国家十二五规划时期,我国社会和高校对文学以及高校英语专业文学教育的观念发生了很大变化,对英语专业文学课程的教学时数、内容、手段和方法、教材编写与使用等都提出了新的要求。随着时代的发展和文学观念的更新,国内外对于20世纪美国文学的认识也发生了变化。

为了适应新时代高校文学教学的要求和文学史观的特点,也为了更充分地体现教材在文学教学和学术研究中的意义和价值,我们根据下列原则编写了本书:第一,力求体现新形势下研究型教学的要求和探究式学习的特点。本书以作品选读为主,兼顾文学史的梳理,强调基于作品研读的问题探究,注重学生的课外学习与课堂研讨相结合,适度引导学生进行深度的阅读和研究。第二,注重教材内容的时代性。本书在作家作品的选择上兼顾学界关于文学经典的传统的和当下的观点,在内容的分布上则强调现当代部分,兼及21世纪美国文学。第三,适度打破文学史的时间框架,按照文学流派和文学体裁建构章节,帮助学生更好地把握作家作品的共性与个性。第四,教材性与资料性并重。本书选材丰富、内容系统、体系完整,既是教材也是文集,适度超过教学时数的限制,供教师根据实际选择使用和供学生进行拓展学习,同时也可供文学研究者参考使用。

全书共分为九章:1945年以前的美国现实主义文学、“迷惘的一代”文学、南方文学、1945年之后的现实主义文学、后现代主义小说和先锋俗文艺、美国族裔文学、诗歌(二战前后各一章)、戏剧,较全面、系统地反映了20世纪美国文学的精髓。本书各章分为概述和作家作品选读两大部分。概述部分注重历史梳理和文学概念厘清;作家作品部分则主要是针对重要文学流派及其代表作家作品选材,分为预习问题、作品选读与问题、补充阅读材料等三个板块,补充阅读材料一般为作家本人或其他学者撰

写的学术性文章,便于本书的使用者进行深入研究。

本书由来自国内近10所高校的专业教师共同编写而成。第一、二章由曹蔓、张俊、刘晖负责,第三章由邓小红、丁艳雯负责,第四章由刘芳负责,第五章由张海霞、赵晶负责,第六章由刘东霞负责,第七章由王卓负责,第八章由罗良功负责,第九章由张生珍负责。此外,李漫萍、丁玫、易立君、黄晓燕、彭家海、李汝成等老师也参加了编写。本书统稿工作由罗良功、李汝成共同完成,华中师范大学的李淑春老师和硕士生朱方芳、马媛、王琨、蔡萍、何乙壘、沈慧、丁春笋参与了部分稿件的编辑和统筹工作。本书的编辑出版得到了华中师范大学出版社范军社长、段维总编、曾巍副社长以及高校教材编辑室刘晓嘉主任、李郭倩编辑等的大力支持,我们在此一并致谢。

文学选读的编写的难度远比看上去的大。我们在学习国内外同类教材和相关著作的经验和优点的同时,也力图在视角、结构、体系、作家作品选择、问题设计等方面都能体现新时代的特点和我们自己的学术观点。但是由于时间仓促、资料难寻、编者学养有限,不足之处在所难免,敬请广大师生和学者批评指正。

编者

2010年6月

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Chapter 1 Realistic Literature Before 1945

1. Introduction

The era between the Civil War (1861—1865) and World War I is variously labeled as the Gilded Age, the Age of Realism, the Age of Energy, the Age of Darwin, and the Age of Colonialism and Empire. It was a time of great change in America. The country began to move from a southern, farming, wealthy, Protestant group of colonies to an industrialized nation which pushed its boundary west, and it was struggling with the implications of Darwinism, and saw huge numbers of poor immigrants working in factories in the cities (even imperialist expansion in the Spanish-American War). By the 1870s New England Renaissance had waned. Hawthorne and Thoreau were dead, Emerson, Longfellow and other New England celebrities, though still writing, were old and feeble. The age of Romanticism and Transcendentalism was by and large over. Boston and New England ceased to be the cultural center of the country. Meanwhile, younger writers appeared on the scene. Mark Twain (1835—1910) and a good number of “local colorists” began to publish their works. The age of realism had arrived.

The Local Color movement which followed the war and frontier humor tales are often considered contributing factors to American realism. Regionalism and the desire to preserve expressions of modes of life before industrialization became an important impulse in American writing. Focusing on specific regions within the nation, writers such as Mark Twain, and Kate Chopin (1851—1904) captured the sensibilities of particular places. Women writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811—1896) offered the additional perspective of women’s experiences. They drew upon the sometimes grim realities of everyday life, showing the breakdown of traditional values and the growing plight of the new urban poor. American realists

built their plots and characters around people's ordinary, everyday lives. Additionally, their works contained regional dialects and extensive dialogue which connected well with the public. Conversely, the public had little patience for the slow paced narratives, allegory and symbolism of the romantic writers, but they had interest in life in contemporary cities and small towns, and the aspirations and struggles of people like themselves in an era of mobility and social dislocation. The realists thus had a moral and social role; to hold up a mirror to ordinary life, and help an emerging society understand itself and achieve its own voice. Local Color fiction reached its peak of popularity in the 1880s, but by the turn of the century it had begun to decline due to its limited resources.

Regionalism was followed by a deeper, wider and more insightful trend—realism. According to William Dean Howells (1837—1920), “Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material”^①. It is to offer an objective rather than an idealized view of human nature and experience. William Dean Howells, Mark Twain and Henry James (1843—1916) are the three representatives of American Realism. Their realistic works helped the development of American realism which replaced the earlier romantic writing. William Dean Howells was a literary critic and writer. He was the advocator of realism. Howells' major works are *A Modern Instance* (1882), and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885). Mark Twain was a social critic and the first great American satirist. He portrayed the lives of the common people and dealt with social problems at that time. In one of his most important works *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1883), Mark Twain used a distinctively American idiom which reflected the way Americans actually talked. He wrote in the vernacular of different classes and ethnic groups. His creative writing had great influence in the development of American literature. Ernest Hemingway once said that “All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn* ... it's the best book we've had ... There has been nothing so good since”^②. Henry James' major writing concerned the international theme—the drama of Americans (young

① William Dean Howells. Editor's Study. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 1889 (11). p. 966.

② George McMichael. *Concise Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1974. p. 1063.

culture) encountering Europe (old culture). His major works are *Daisy Miller* (1878), *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904). He was famous for his psychological realism.

The leading spokesman of 19th century literary realism was William Dean Howells who had argued for the treatment of the "smiling aspects of life" as being the more "American." But by the end of the 19th century, a generation of writers arose "whose ideas of the workings of the universe and whose perception of society's disorders led them to a new and harsher realism, a naturalism that attempted to achieve extreme objectivity and frankness. America's literary naturalists portrayed characters of low social and economic orders who were shaped by their environment and heredity and moved by animal passions"^①. Their writings dealt with cities like Chicago and San Francisco as well as Boston, with working class characters as well as middle-class intellectuals. The mood was documentary and the language was deliberately blunt and unliterary. Realism and naturalism were products of the events and ideals of the 19th century which witnessed their final triumph at the early part of the 20th century.

With the opening of the 20th century, the exposure of injustice and abuses of national life became a popular literary subject. In politics the 1900s were the era of Theodore Roosevelt's progressivism and "trust-busting" which was reflected in literature as the era of "muckrakers," those who were accused of raking up the much of life for all to see. The American realistic writers depicted life around them and they tried to work out new techniques to fit their new ideas. Edith Wharton (1862—1937), in her stories and novels, was concerned about the upper-class, the world of aristocracy in which she had grown up. One of her finest books, *The Age of Innocence* (1920), probed the moral values and the conflict between the social conformity and personal fulfillment. The decent people were the major characters. At about the same time, some other authors such as Theodore Dreiser (1871—1945), Stephen Crane (1871—1900), Hamlin Garland (1860—1940) and Frank Norris (1870—1902) showed their sympathy toward ordinary people. They wrote

^① George McMichael. *Concise Anthology of American Literature*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1974. p. 875.

about political corruption, economic inequality, business deception and the exploitation of labor. Stephen Crane, best known for his Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), depicted the life of New York prostitutes in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). He was highly praised for his realistic treatment of the sordidness of city life in *Maggie*. Theodore Dreiser, who came from lower class of society, portrayed a country girl who moved to Chicago and became a kept woman in *Sister Carrie* (1900). Dreiser's other important novels are *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), *The "Genius"* (1915), and *An American Tragedy* (1925). Greatly impressed by scientific thought, Dreiser aimed to give his fiction the precision of a scientific statement. Its view of society or of people would be true and completely objective. As one of the great realists and naturalists, Dreiser showed sympathy for the oppressed and he criticized the debased American values. Frank Norris and Hamlin Garland wrote about the problems of American farmers and other social issues from a naturalist perspective. Frank Norris' best work *McTeague* (1899) and *The Octopus* (1901) dealt with the lower classes, with coarse and usually inarticulate people. His narrative style is as simple and direct as his subject. Hamlin Garland was from the Midwest. His important books are *Main-Traveled Roads* (1891) and *Prairie Folks* (1893).

Between the two world wars, the United States became a modern nation, fraught with internal fractures. Literature of the period struggled to understand the new and diverse responses to the advent of modernity. Some writers celebrated the changes, others lamented the loss of old ways of being; some imagined future utopias, others searched for new forms to speak of the new realities. World War I was followed by two decades which were distinctly different from one another and clearly defined. The first, the "Twenties," lasted from the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 until the collapse of the Stock Market in New York at the end of 1929. The second decade, the "Thirties," lasted from 1929, through the Depression years, until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. The 1920s was a period marked by rampant social and economic change. It was the Roaring Twenties and the Jazz Age. During World War I, 4 million Americans were involved in the war. Many young men were killed and wounded. They were shocked by the way of the war. The innocence, naivety and optimism of the intellectuals were changed. To many writers, the war seemed to be a senseless

slaughter. The American dream of a better world was shattered. The writers such as Ernest Hemingway (1899—1961), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896—1940), Thomas Wolfe (1900—1938) and John Dos Passos (1896—1970) voluntarily moved to Paris. Gertrude Stein told the young Ernest Hemingway: “You are all a lost generation.” They were “lost” because they were cut off from the life of their own country, and the continuity of their culture. At the same time they were searching for the meaning of life. They observed the American life objectively as outsiders. In the following ten years after the World War I, the writers wrote about the typical extravagant life of the 1920s, about the disillusionment of the war and the American Dream. They criticized the American life as a whole, and they depicted the failure of American society, the failure of communication among the people.

Ernest Hemingway has been considered as the spokesman of the Lost Generation. His best novels are *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). His subjects and themes of war, hunting, bullfighting that deal with courage and endurance spoke for his generation. F. Scott Fitzgerald remained both as an insider and an outsider of the life of the 1920s. The novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is considered his best work. His other important works are: *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and *Tender is the Night* (1934). John Dos Passos wrote about the war and also *The USA* (1937)—a trilogy consisting of three parts: *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), *Nineteen Nineteen* (1932), *The Big Money* (1936) that which extended into the Depression. Thomas Wolfe was famous for his novel *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929). During the 1920s, writers such as Sinclair Lewis (1885—1951) and Sherwood Anderson (1876—1941) also wrote novels with critical depictions of American life. Sinclair Lewis is the author of *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922). He wrote about the life of small town people in Midwest. He exposed and ridiculed the pretentiousness of the middle-class businessmen as selfish and hypocritical. Sherwood Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio. He wrote *Windy Mcpherson's Son* (1916) and *Marching Men* (1917), novels about successful men who abandoned their own selfish aims to become Populist heroes, helping the “little people.” In 1919 he published *Winesburg, Ohio*, his masterpiece, a collection of tales of the “grotesque” characters he had known during his youth in Ohio. Anderson's successful volumes of short stories, *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921), *Horses and*