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ENGLISH MAJOR

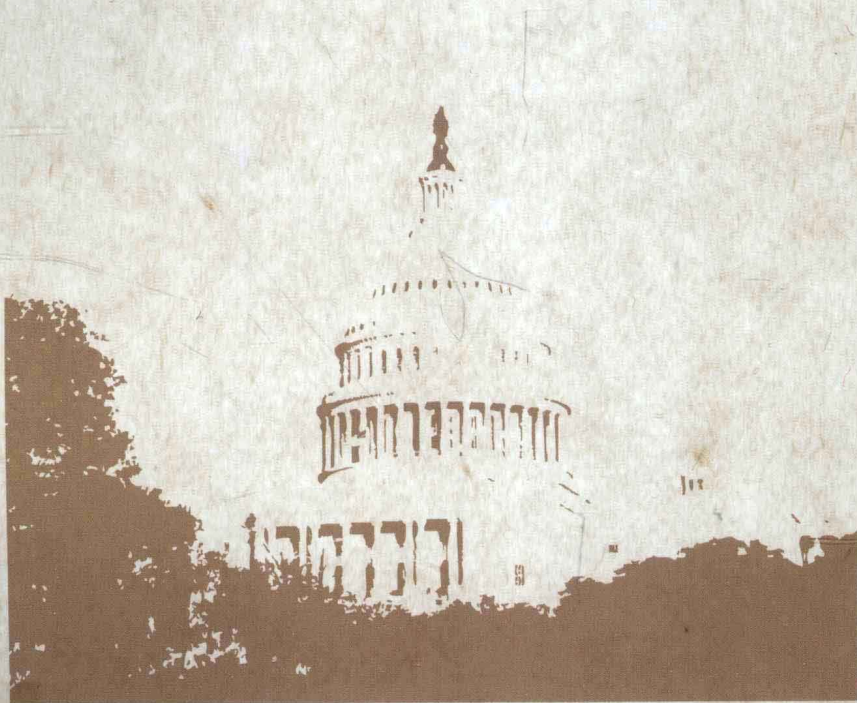
高等学校英语专业系列教材

美国文学新编

胡荫桐 主编

American Literature

(修订版)



外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

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副主编：段晓英 张志华 郑 华

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修订版前言

至今已有三百多年历史的美国文学在世界文学的舞台上已然异军突起，成为其不可忽视的组成部分。它所表现出来的民族性、时代性、社会性和独特的风格，对世界文学产生了一定的影响。众所周知，美国浪漫主义诗人埃德加·爱伦·坡被19世纪法国象征派诗人波德莱尔、马拉梅、瓦莱里奉为至圣；而19世纪美国诗人惠特曼奔放不羁的自由体诗歌是20世纪初叶意象派诗歌的源头，对现代英语诗歌以及我国的新诗运动都产生过深远的影响。另外，马克·吐温、海明威、福克纳的小说，庞德、弗罗斯特的诗歌，奥尼尔的戏剧都是广大读者熟悉的作品。我国《高等院校英语专业教学大纲》也把“美国文学”作为英语专业高年级专业知识的必修课程，由此可见其重要性。也正是基于以上考虑，我们着手编写了《美国文学新编》。本书严格依照《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》的要求编写，主要面向我国英语专业本科生或具有英语大学专科水平、继而进行专升本学习的广大读者以及具有一定英语语言基础的美国文学爱好者。

在内容设计上，本书将文学发展史介绍与经典作品选读融为一体。以史带文，文史结合，二者相辅相成。简明扼要、重点突出是本书的编写特色；每部分包括该时期的文学史、作家介绍、作品简介、代表作品选、注释以及部分选文的评论六个部分。修订版还根据教学需要以及学生在学习美国文学中遇到的实际困难，增加了“文学术语”和“参考书目”；同时每一章节之后均增设“练习”，并在书末附有参考答案。本书在编写过程中注意汲取近年来国内外有关美国文学的教学与研究成果，力求观点客观全面、论述深入浅出、文字浅显流畅。如有欠缺之处，恳请广大读者不吝指正。

胡荫桐

2009年11月

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PART I

THE EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE (1620-1770)

Chapter 1 | The Seventeenth Century Literature

Puritanism in American Literature

American literature may be among the youngest national literatures in the world. Although the continent of North America was discovered about 500 years ago, its real history, if calculated roughly from the end of the Independence War (October 1781), is only about 230 years. Within such a short period, American literature swiftly developed and well matured, began to receive international recognition, and has exerted a marked effect upon world literature. In fact, American writers have brought out some of the world's best literature.

The first settlers in America were known as the ancestors of American Indians or Native Americans. The discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, however, led to the rush of European immigrants into this fascinating and strange continent and brought the rise of the New World. The English settlement in America emerged especially after the arrival of the ship *Mayflower* in 1620. The early settlers were called Separatists or Puritans, who managed to escape to the New World to avoid the religious persecution of the Church of England. They at first wished to reform or “purify” their religious beliefs and practices. To them religion should be a matter of personal faith rather than of ritual.

The 17th-century American Puritans included two parts: one were the creators of the Plymouth colony, called “Separatists.” They were so suppressed by the Church of England that they sought escape. Those Separatists first went into exile to Holland, then were aboard *Mayflower* in 1620 and settled down in Plymouth. America, therefore, as an infant was born. They considered that the Church of England had become hopeless and advocated to separate from it since general reform would be useless. The other part were the Englishmen in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Though they came later than those who settled in Plymouth colony, they were richer and better-educated. They devoted themselves to the reform of the Church of England and meant to clear away the rituals of the Roman Catholic Church in it. In reality, only this part were true Puritans. They accepted the doctrine of original sin, total depravity, predestination, and limited atonement through a special infusion of grace from God.

The main doctrine of Calvinism Puritans believed in was first shown in “total depravity.” They believed in the “original sin” in which Adam the first man God created sinned and which led to the conclusion that “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.” They considered that man was born sinful, was a sinner and could not redeem his original sinfulness. Moreover, they could not save themselves. Secondly, Puritans believed that man would be chosen by God unconditionally. They thought that God occupied a dominant position. He could save some people willfully, made them rise to the Heaven after death, and could also destroy some other people wantonly, made them fall into the Hell after death. Therefore, determinism took firm root in their minds. They believed in man’s destiny; everything of man was disposed in the hands of God, and only God knew who were the “chosen people”. Man himself was predestined and could not master his own destiny. They thought that God willfully granted people the favor that man could neither strive to gain, nor refuse to accept. The obtaining of God’s special kindness or God’s providence for him meant his “rebirth” or “being sainted.” In this sense, they strived to be saints while they were still alive. Man did not know whether they could be God’s chosen people, but should live a saint-like life in ordinary times according to God’s will. The Holy Bible was the guidebook to man’s behavior.

In New England where Puritanism was popular, one’s life was only the course of moral training and that of his struggle between God and devils. People had an austere and rigid way of life governed by the church. Therefore, clergymen were the dominant authorities. Puritans tended to suspect joy and laughter as symptoms of sin. They did not dance, did not go to theater, but sang chant in church and listened to the music. However, they allowed drinking, smoking and beautiful clothes. Puritanism encouraged people to struggle in their careers. If one’s business was booming, it proved that he was chosen by God.

In such a cultural background, the purpose of the literary creation could only be “pragmatic.” Over the years Puritans built a way of life that was in harmony with their somber religion, one that stressed hard work, thrift, piety, and sobriety. In people’s daily life, religious activities were a matter of first importance and all others should serve the religion. Their lives were disciplined and hard.

It was Puritanism that was most influential in the intellectual and economic life of the settlers. The early American literature started at the beginning of the 17th century, marked by that those headed by William Bradford on board of *Mayflower* reached the new continent and set up the colony of Plymouth. The first of American literature was not written by an American, but by John Smith, a British captain, who thus became the first American writer. *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as Hath Happened in Virginia* was a long report recording what he saw and heard in the New World, which he sent back to England and was printed in 1608 without his knowledge.

Literature of this period, which is also called “Colonial Literature,” is first of all characterized by that most of the writers were born in Britain. Some were explorers, some immigrants, some colonialists. As their circumstances were hard and their life was difficult, the newcomers were very busy. Relying mainly on physical labor, they were not professional writers and did not mean to create a national literature. Only the life of the new world was inspiring and encouraged them to write. Secondly, the time when American literature was born was just the period when the Modern English took shape and developed. The early American literary works, therefore, were not so difficult to understand as the early English literary works. Certainly, it had some distinctions from present-day English, particularly in the spelling and pronunciation of some words, such as the article “ye” and the suffix “eth” in “maketh, holdth.” English of this period had long and loose sentences and a lot of conversions, such as verbs used as nouns, adjectives as adverbs, and in many cases “double negative” was used to emphasize negation. Thirdly, the principal ideological trend of this period was Puritanism besides the ideological influence of the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, etc. Moreover, in early Puritan writers’ works, English literary traditions

were faithfully imitated and transplanted. The American poets of the 17th century adopted the style of established European poets. In addition, regarding the genres of the literary works, there were “travel writing,” “diary,” and “poem,” etc., among which the poetry and prose gained most achievements in this period. The important literary figures were the first American writer John Smith, the first American woman poet Anne Bradstreet, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, and Edward Taylor.

Reference Books

- Chang, Yaixin. *A Survey of American Literature*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1990.
- Perkins, George, *et al.* eds. *The American Tradition in Literature*. New York: Random House, 1985.
- Wu, Fuheng, *et al.* eds. *On American Writers*. Jinan: Shandong Education Press, 1999.

Exercises

I. Make the proper choice or choices according to the context.

- Although the continent of North America was discovered about 500 years ago, the real history of American literature is only more than ____ years.
A. 500
B. 400
C. 300
D. 200
- The Puritans believed in man's destiny, and in that everything of man was disposed in the hands of ____.
A. God
B. Jesus
C. himself
D. mystic forces
- The early settlers in America were so-called Separatists or Puritans to avoid the religious persecution of the ____.
A. Roman Catholic Church
B. Church of England

- C. Christianity
D. Protestants
4. The first American writer is _____.
A. Cotton Mather
B. Jonathan Edwards
C. John Smith
D. Edward Taylor
5. The Puritans of the New World regarded joy and laughter as symbols of _____.
A. happiness
B. craziness
C. easiness
D. sin
6. According to the Puritans, _____ was the guidebook to man's behaviors.
A. *A True Sight of Sin*
B. *A Model of Christian Charity*
C. The Holy Bible
D. *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America*

II. Check the statements true (T) or false (F).

- ☐ T ☐ F 1. To the Puritans of the New World, religion should be a matter of personal faith rather than of ritual.
- ☐ T ☐ F 2. The 17th-century American Puritans included two parts: one part of them who were suppressed by the Church of England were aboard *Mayflower* and settled down in Plymouth; the other part who came later were the Englishmen in Massachusetts Bay Colony. They devoted themselves to the reform of the Church of England. In reality, only the former part of them were true Puritans.
- ☐ T ☐ F 3. Nowadays colonial religious writing is of no great value.
- ☐ T ☐ F 4. The first American woman poet is Anne Bradstreet.
- ☐ T ☐ F 5. In the American colonial period, the Puritans believed they could save themselves and dispose everything in their own hands although they considered that man was born sinful due to the original sin.

- T F** 6. In early American literature of Puritanism, English literary traditions were faithfully imitated and transplanted. Moreover, some American professional writers adopted the style of established European writers and wrote about Europe.
- T F** 7. The first of American literature was not written by an American, but by a British captain. It was a long report recording what he saw and heard in the New World and was printed in England without his knowledge.

III. Answer the following questions.

1. What is the characteristics of the 17th-century American literature?
2. What types of literary works were popular in the 17th-century American literature?

Chapter 2 | The Eighteenth Century Literature

Enlightenment in American Literature

The 18th-century American history witnessed two great revolutions: one was American Revolution which led eventually to the independence of the nation and the other was Enlightenment, an intellectual movement whose rationalistic spirit inspired American men of letters and brought them to a new horizon beyond the limitation of prevailing Puritanism. The two revolutions produced a number of outstanding political and literary figures, such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson, whose literary talent enabled them to be political leaders and even made literature part of the revolutions.

Enlightenment as an intellectual revolution originated in the European continent, and then its impact found expression in America through the efforts of such progressive and patriotic thinkers as Franklin. At the initial period, the spread of ideas of the Enlightenment was largely by way of journalism. The American reading public at the time displayed great interest in the works of English scientists, philosophers and writers such as Newton and Swift. The writers of the French Enlightenment, particularly Voltaire, were widely read in America. With an unshakable belief in the power of reason, the Enlighteners regarded “enlightenment” or “education” as the principal means for the development of a society. Moreover, they showed larger concerns for civil rights, a more comprehensive democracy in government, and general toleration rather than earlier religious mysticism. The Enlighteners began to reconsider from the rationalistic conception of man, the relations among man, Nature and God, suggesting an extension of the principles of equality and social justice.

The Enlighteners advocated publicly to study “man” instead of “God,” and pointed out that the “evils” in human civilization stemmed

from the social injustice, not from “original sin.” They emphasized “reason,” required people to pay attention to the social reality, advocated education and scientific research, and believed that man could “perfect himself” and decide his own destiny. Meanwhile, they energetically propagated the views of the social progress, humanism and the ideas of equality.

When rationalism was applied to theology, it led to the appearance of Deism, the belief in natural religion, but the degrees of Deism ranged widely. Deists held that first only one god was worth worshipping; secondly man could keep making progress by making use of his own moral sense, intelligence and wisdom; thirdly man should love truth and do good; fourthly education and science was an important means to create man’s happiness; fifthly the freedom of citizen’s speech, action, and faith embodied man’s basic rights; and lastly to serve God best was to do good for the mankind.

Although the Enlighteners thought that social problems could not be solved by any religious doctrine or by the hand of God, most of them did not reject Deism but confined their logic to practical affairs, or, like such enlightened rationalists as Franklin and Jefferson, entertained a mild Deism.

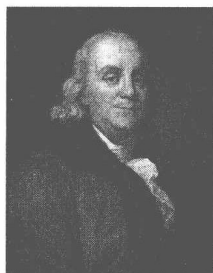
Compared with Puritanism, Deism made a great leap forward. In the past, God governed man and all things on earth. Now, Deists considered that “the movement of the universe dates from God,” that all things in the nature were the embodiments of gods, and that man lived in the world not to suffer so as to exchange for the rebirth of the next generation, but to eliminate the inequality of race, sex, and faith and to build up his own “paradise” in the human world. This ideology promoted American revolution and its final success, i.e. the American people launched the armed Independence War, freed themselves from the English Colonial rule, and founded their own independent country—the “Earthly Paradise.”

By the time of the American Revolution there were some poets who often published their poems in various periodicals. The prose of the great philosopher-statesmen makes up a prominent part of the 18th-century American literature. The political events of the Revolution are of great concern because the literature of the time is largely political. Most of the writers in this period were active supporters or participants of the

American Revolution. Literarily American writers such as Franklin and Jefferson modeled themselves on Addison and other 18th-century English writers for a “plain and firm” style, adding to it a polish and rhythmical balance of phrase which gave it literary distinction. The categories of the literary works were mainly history, diary, political essay, and articles about religion, besides poetry, satiric literature, and stories of morality. At the end of the 18th-century in America appeared fiction and drama. Besides Philip Freneau’s and Phillis Wheatley’s poems, the significant prose works that come most often to mind include Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, and Thomas Jefferson’s *The Declaration of Independence*. Particularly *The Declaration of Independence*, adopted on July 4, 1776 and announcing the birth of a new nation, can be regarded as a typical embodiment of the literary preoccupation of the age with common sense as well as a clear, direct, and forceful expression. The author of this masterpiece, Thomas Jefferson, once wrote “Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind.” These great works mentioned above served effectively for the philosophical or political purposes of their authors, and possessed such arresting literary values that some of them have been considered as the landmarks of American literature of the age.

Benjamin Franklin

Biographical Note



Benjamin Franklin
(1706-1790)

Perhaps one of the most important American thinkers during the revolutionary period was Benjamin Franklin. He stood as the epitome of the Enlightenment and as the versatile, practical embodiment of rational man of the period.

Franklin was born in Boston, where he spent his early years. His father was a candlemaker and owner of a tallow shop, whose poverty failed to afford young Franklin an opportunity for regular school