

Reading Short
Stories in English

英文短篇小说阅读

张立芹 主编



 复旦大学出版社

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前言

短篇小说因其篇幅短小、内容精悍而吸引众多的作家和读者，可谓是文坛上最活跃的体裁之一。如何将短篇小说这一文体有效地介绍给学生读者呢？本书将从四个方面入手：一、介绍要素，如视角、人物、环境；二、纵览历史，如美国短篇小说；三、着手性别，如女性短篇小说家及作品；四、聚焦题材，如战争、科幻短篇小说。

在阅读文学作品时，一些学生读者会觉得每个单词似都相识，但是对整个句子和段落却不解其意。因此，编者舍弃历史梳理，致力于文本分析，旨在帮助学生真正理解文学作品，体会文学语言的力与美，严肃思考人生意义。本书的编写选择以人生主题为经，同一主题下男性和女性作家作品的对照为纬，并且从主题探索的角度和辩证对位的节奏来介绍不同作家对生命、生活的书写和理解。如此编写的理念实为文本细读。

本书依主题分八个单元：期望与挫败，顺从与反抗，生命与死亡，单纯与经验，疏远与交流，偏见与超越，爱情与痛苦，虚构与真实。每个单元的小说从不同的视角审视同一主题。如从女性之于男性，孩子之于成人，个人之于政府的关系考察“顺从与反抗”；从女孩和男孩成长的不同视角探索“单纯与经验”。人生经验的微妙复杂使得主题的变奏在不同作品中得以实现。有的作

品反映人生的孤独和异化;有的作品则努力尝试爱的交流;有的作品反映偏见;有的作品超越偏见。

本书选材遵循男女作家并重的原则,试图为读者提供比较的视野,探索男性和女性作家对同一主题处理方式的异同。因收入的作品取材广、内容新,亦为学生提供了从女性主义、(后)殖民主义和后现代主义的阅读视角。本书使用对象为英语专业及非英语专业高年级学生,希望在帮助学生优化语言技能的同时,提高文学素养。

本书编者深深感谢复旦大学出版社唐敏老师关于设计问题的建议;复旦大学出版社翟象俊教授的支持与鼓励;上海交通大学外国语学院索宇环教授对本书主题思路的肯定;爱荷华大学英语系 Claire Fox 教授开设的北美短篇小说课程;爱荷华大学 Susan Lohafer 教授百忙之中对样本单元的修订和建议。感谢复旦大学出版社的大力支持,上海交通大学对本教材的出版资助,使本书得以顺利出版。因编者水平有限,书中浅陋之处有待读者鉴别指正。

编 者

2010年5月

使用说明

作为英语短篇小说教材,本书遵循语言教学与文学教学相结合的原则,以细读文学作品为前提和基础,旨在深入理解主题,提高人文素养。本书依主题分为八个单元,每个单元四篇文章,分两部分——前两篇为精读作品,后两篇为泛读作品。

精读作品的内容设计如下:

1. 提供两个阅读前问题,以期引发学生对故事内容或主题的兴趣和思考,为文本阅读搭建一个简单的认知框架。教师可鼓励学生不拘一格,各抒己见。

2. 提供作家和作品简介。介绍作家生平,重要著作,及文坛地位;介绍所选作品的创作背景。在授课过程中,教师应不断提醒学生文本与背景,作家与作品的关系。此部分在一定程度上补偿以主题组织作品所带来的历史性欠缺。教师不妨布置任务,要求学生进一步查阅网络或图书资料以加强对课文的理解。

3. 提供文本中单词中文注释和专有名词注解。此部分针对非英语专业学生语言障碍,试图在一定程度上帮助学生顺利阅读。

4. 本教材最大的特色为精读作品设有或针对细节,或纵览全局的问题,帮助学生从语言修辞、小说要素、文体风格、主题探索等各个角度细致阅读,多方位比较和深入思考。如从语言修辞

的角度分析人物心理,从小说要素的角度深入作品主题,比较男女作家对同一主题的写作。这些问题如脚手架,帮助学生步步深入阅读,为课堂讨论和课后写作提供资源。编者提供的问题答案在本书配套的 PPT 文件中,供教师学生参考使用。

5. 提供一个有关作家作品的网址。

泛读作品的内容设计:

每个单元后两篇的泛读作品从相似或相异的视角叩问主题,可望丰富教学内容,加深主题理解。教师可依据兴趣和学生的水平进行选择使用。

本书收入较多当代作家的作品,为理解同一主题提供不同的视角和广阔的视野,也可供文学爱好者自学使用。

编 者

2010 年 5 月

table of content

Unit 1	Expectation and Frustration	1
Text A	Eleven — Sandra Cisneros	1
Text B	Salvation — Langston Hughes	7
Text C	Ten Indians — Ernest Hemingway	13
Text D	Crickets — Robert Olen Butler	18
Unit 2	Repression and Rebellion	24
Text A	The Story of an Hour — Kate Chopin	24
Text B	Sredni Vashtar — Hector Hugh Munro	32
Text C	Gertrude Talks Back — Margaret Atwood	41
Text D	Saboteur — Ha Jin	43
Unit 3	Life and Death	55
Text A	Indian Camp — Ernest Hemingway	55
Text B	A Sunrise on the Veld — Doris Lessing	63
Text C	The Masque of the Red Death — Edgar Allen Poe	78
Text D	Death in the Woods — Sherwood Anderson	84
Unit 4	Innocence and Experience	97
Text A	The Grave — Katherine Anne Porter	98

Text B	Araby — James Joyce	108
Text C	One Holy Night — Sandra Cisneros	121
Text D	Wild Swans — Alice Munro	128

Unit 5 Alienation and Communication

139

Text A	A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud. — Carson McCullers	140
Text B	Hands — Sherwood Anderson	156
Text C	Gaston — William Saroyan	167
Text D	Present — Ali Smith	174

Unit 6 Prejudice and Transcendence

183

Text A	Cathedral — Raymond Carver	184
Text B	Everything That Rises Must Converge — Flannery O'Connor	207
Text C	All He Need Is Feet — Chester Himes	233
Text D	Dry September — William Faulkner	236

Unit 7 Love and Suffering

249

Text A	The Lady with the Dog — Anton Chekhov	249
Text B	A Rose for Emily — William Faulkner	276
Text C	The Nightingale and the Rose — Oscar Wilde	293
Text D	Bliss — Katherine Mansfield	299

Unit 8 Fiction and Reality

313

Text A	How to Tell a True War Story — Tim O'Brien	313
Text B	The Garden of Forking Paths — Jorge Luis Borges	336
Text C	Happy Endings — Margaret Atwood	355
Text D	The Swimmer — John Cheever	358

Unit 1 Expectation and Frustration

The two stories in this unit can be approached by the theme “expectation and frustration”.

In “Eleven”, Rachel is forced by her teacher to put on an ugly sweater which is not hers, on her eleventh birthday. This experience is frustrating, totally destroying her birthday. Young Langston in “Salvation” tells how he expects to see Jesus during a revival meeting, but fails. He feels even more frustrated and guilty because he has to tell lies to please the congregation.

The two stories are about the conflict between children and adults. Children's innocence and sensitivity are ruined by the adults, who are overwhelmed by sheer authority and power.

Both stories are told from the first person point of view. One advantage of using a first person narrator is that the experiences this narrator relates sound immediate and personal. Pay attention to the language style employed in these two stories which helps convey the effect that the narrators are innocent children and their agony and frustration is real and big.

Text A

Pre-reading questions:

- 1) Did you wish that you could grow up fast when you were a child? Why or why not?
- 2) Have you ever been wronged by either your parents or your teachers? How did you feel at that time? And how did you react?

Eleven

Sandra Cisneros (1954 -)



About the author:

Sandra Cisneros is an American short-story writer and poet best known for her groundbreaking evocation of Mexican American life in Chicago.

She was born in Chicago in 1954, the daughter of a Mexican father and a Chicana mother. She grew up in ghetto neighborhood in Chicago and began writing poetry when she was ten. Her six brothers so dominated the household that she remembers that she felt she had “seven fathers”. She studied at Loyola University of Chicago (B. A. English 1976) and the University of Iowa (M. F. A. Creative Writing 1978). At Iowa she developed what was to be the theme of most of her writing, her unique experiences as a Hispanic woman in a largely alien culture.

Cisneros' first book was *Bad Boys* (1980), a volume of poetry. She gained international attention with her first book of fiction, *The House on Mango Street* (1983), written in a defiant youthful voice that reflected her own memories of a girlhood spent trying to be a creative writer in an antagonistic environment. More poetry — including *The Rodrigo Poems* (1985), *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* (1987), and *Loose Woman* (1994) — followed. Her collection of short stories, *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991), contains tales of beleaguered girls and women who nonetheless feel that they have power over their destinies. She returned to long fiction with *Caramelo; o, puro cuento* (2002), a semiautobiographical work that echoes her own peripatetic childhood in a large family.

She is currently active in writing.

About the story:

“Eleven” is one of the short stories in *Woman Hollering Creek and Other*

Stories (1991). Focusing on the conditions of women, and narrated from a woman's vantage point, these stories reflect Cisneros' experience of being surrounded by American influences while still being bound to her Mexican heritage as she grew-up north of the Mexico-US border. This collection is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the innocence of the characters during childhood. The following section highlights the troublesome adolescent years of its characters. The final section concentrates on characters during their tumultuous adulthood. As the stories progress the narrators grow more self-aware, more experienced, more exposed to the difficulties of coming-of-age as a Latina in a white, male-dominated society. Bittersweet stories of childhood, such as "Eleven", give way to darker tales of adulthood, such as the title story, "Woman Hollering Creek".

Cisneros once commented that of all the stories in *Woman Hollering Creek* "the one that everyone — man, woman, white, brown, old, young — tells me, 'oh, that happened to me.'" is "Eleven". In this piece, the birthday of Rachel, the narrator, is ruined by a heartless teacher who forces her to claim responsibility for an ugly, stretched-out sweater abandoned in the coatroom. Despite Rachel's protests that it is not hers, the teacher gets angry and forces her to wear it. This incident is humiliating and traumatic for the child whose expectation to grow up and be respected is frustrated.

1 What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are — underneath the year that makes you eleven.

2 Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe

Who are "they"?

Who are "you"?

What concrete images are used to describe the abstract idea of growing up? What are the similarities between the images?

What simile is used to describe her eleven years? How does the narrator feel about being eleven?

some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

3 Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

4 You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.

5 Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box.

Today I wish I was one hundred and two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

6 "Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a month."

7 "Not mine," says everybody. "Not me."

8 "It has to belong to somebody," Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody can remember. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't say so.

9 Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldivar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly sweater like that, all raggedy^① and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out.

10 "That's not, I don't, you're not ... Not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

11 "Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "I remember you wearing it once." Because she's older and the teacher, she's right and I'm not.)

12 (Not mine, not mine, not mine,) but Mrs. Price is already turning to page thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don't know why but all of a sudden I'm feeling sick inside, like the part of me that's three wants to come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven, eleven. Mama is making a cake for me tonight, and when Papa comes home everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.

13 But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine, not mine, not mine.

14 In my head I'm thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the school yard fence, or even leave it hanging on

What effect is achieved by repeating "not mine"? What difference would it make if the sentence were "It's not mine"?

① raggedy: a. 褴褛的, 破烂的

What is your
impression of Mrs.
Price the teacher?

Read this long
sentence loud. What
effect is achieved by
the length? Compare
what the narrator
thinks with what she
actually says.

a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the alley. Except when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in front of everybody, "Now Rachel, that's enough," because she sees I've shoved the red sweater to the tippy-tip-corner of my desk and it's hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

15 "Rachel," Mrs. Price says. She says it like she's getting mad. "You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense."

16 "But it's not —"

17 ["Now!" Mrs. Price says.]

18 This is when I wish I wasn't eleven, because all the years inside of me — ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two and one — are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine.

19 That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I'm not. I'm eleven and it's my birthday today and I'm crying like I'm three in front of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid clown-sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth because I can't stop the little animal noises from coming out of me, until there aren't any more tears left in my eyes, and it's just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.

20 But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Sylvia Saldivar, says she remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything's okay.

21 Today I'm eleven. There's a cake Mama's making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we'll eat it. There'll be candles and presents and everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you, Rachel, only it's too late.

22 I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny o in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it.

What feeling does the narrator want to express by comparing a day to a runaway balloon?

Questions:

1. What figure of speech does the narrator use to express her frustration?
2. Examine the language of the narrator. How does the narrator convey the effect that she is a little girl?
3. The story is told in the first person and in the present tense. What effect is achieved by this choice?
4. Without knowing it, what is Mrs. Price teaching her students about the nature of power?

Recommended website: <http://www.sandracisneros.com/>

Text B

Pre-reading questions:

- 1) Have you ever heard of Jesus? Share what you know about Jesus with

the class.

2) Have you ever had to lie to save your face? How did you feel about that?

Salvation ^①

Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967)

About the author:



Langston Hughes was one of the most important Afro-American poets and writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the African artistic movement in the 1920s that celebrated Afro-American life and culture.

He was born in Missouri on February 1, 1902 to parents who soon separated. Langston's childhood was spent in the care of friends and relatives throughout the midwest and northeast. He moved frequently and felt abandoned. In an attempt to deal with his loneliness, Langston began to write. Among his most well known works are *The Weary Blues*, a 1926 collection of poetry; *The Ways of White Folks*, a 1934 collection of short stories; *The Big Sea*, an autobiography of his early life, published in 1940; and the 1956 *A Pictorial History of the Negro in America*. His writing is largely concerned with depicting Afro-American life, particularly the experience of the urban Afro-Americans.

About the story:

This story is taken from *The Big Sea*. It records a painful experience which happens to the author during his childhood. His yearning to see Jesus in the church failed. The more frustrating thing is that he has to tell a lie to save himself from the trouble.

① salvation: *n.* 救赎, 指耶稣基督钉十字架将世人从原罪中拯救出来