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A New Anthology of English Literature: Volume I  
Edited & Annotated by Luo Jingguo

第三版

# 新编英国文学选读 (上)

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ENGLISH LITERATURE**

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## FOREWORD

This textbook, composed of two volumes, is intended for the teaching of English literature to both English and non-English majors in higher educational institutions as well as for those who learn English in their spare time and whose English has reached such a level that guidance for further study seems necessary. The main aim of this textbook is to cultivate in the reader an interest in English literature and a sense of the development of English literature.

In editing this textbook, I paid particular attention to the following points:

1. All materials here-in are fragments or full texts of well known literary works written by the best English authors, and they have stood the test of the time, as many of them are time and again collected in selected readings or anthologies both at home and abroad. They are not only the quintessence of English masterpieces, but also the best of English writings, which are worth memorizing by heart, and which will be beneficial to students in their learning of the English language.

2. As literature takes its root in social life and is inseparable from the economic, political, religious, and intellectual factors of a given historical period, a brief summary of the period is given at the beginning of each chapter. Thus, the questions of why Shakespeare's great tragedies were all written during the first decade of the 17th century, why romanticism became prevalent in the beginning of the 19th century, and why there appeared a galaxy of novelists in the Victorian age—all these need to be considered from a historical perspective. It is hoped that the brief introduction of each historical period will help to answer these questions.

3. Special effort has been made to guide students to appreciate the aesthetic value of the selected pieces. The Notes serve not only to interpret the meanings of difficult words or passages, but also to call students' attention to the stylistic characteristics and rhetorical devices of the excerpts. Suggestive questions concerning the artistic techniques

of the selected pieces are asked to arouse students' interest.

4. As the emphasis of the book is on the interpretation and appreciation of the selected readings, the biographies of most writers are reduced to the minimum. It is meaningless and boring to give students the detailed biographies of writers, a long list of their works, and the synopses of their representative works, without offering them first-hand materials. Regrettably, such a style of teaching foreign literature is still practised in some institutions. Students who want the above information can easily find them in any history of English literature or in an encyclopaedia.

5. Literature in the twentieth century is very complex. Various trends and schools come and go. Few writers are generally accepted as representative writers of the modern age. No consensus has been reached as to which novels, poems, or prose selections represent the characteristic features of a particular writer. Attempts are made in this textbook to introduce students to T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, John Osborne, Samuel Beckett, William Golding, Iris Murdoch, V. S. Naipaul, Martin Amis and Seamus Heaney as major writers, representing the different trends of twentieth century English literature.

6. As the total teaching hours for English literature course vary widely in different higher institutions, this textbook provides sufficient materials for a year course of 4 hours per week. Teachers in various institutions can choose texts from the book at their own will according to the teaching hours of their institutions.

I have to express my thanks to all my colleagues and friends who encouraged me in my writing, especially to my wife, Professor Li Shu (李淑), who has been supporting and helping me throughout my forty years' teaching career. Special thanks should also be given to Professor Liu Yi-qing (刘意青), who, being an expert in 18th century English literature, generously helped me in formulating my discussion of four writers; Edmund Spenser, Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, and Henry Fielding. I also owe my gratitude to Professor Ruan Wei (阮炜) for his selections of Golding, Murdoch, Naipaul, and Amis, and to Professor Xu Wenbo (徐文博) for his selection of Heaney. Finally I have to thank my Canadian friend Sean MacDonald, who read over the manuscripts of the first five chapters of Volume I, my American friend Joshua Goldstein, who read over the manuscripts of the rest of Volume I, and

my American colleague Professor Iris Maurer, who read over the manuscripts of Volume II. They offered many valuable suggestions.

Luo Jingguo  
Peking University  
March, 2005

### *ABOUT THE THIRD EDITION*

There is some reorganization of texts in this edition.

In the first volume “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, and Robert Herrick’s “To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time” are deleted, and thanks to Dr Su Yong, an excerpt from Tobias Smollet’s “The Expedition of Humphry Clinker” is added.

Luo Jingguo  
Peking University  
January, 2011

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*The Norton Anthology of English Literature*

Wang Zuoliang, et al. : *An Anthology of English Literature* Annotated in Chinese

Chen Jia: *A History of English Literature*

Chen Jia: *Selected Readings in English Literature*

William Long: *English Literature*

Paul Harvey: *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*

Christopher Gillie: *Longman Companion to English Literature*

Albert C. Baugh: *A Literary History of England*

Cleanth Brooks, Jr. and Robert Penn Warren: *Understanding Poetry*

*The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, edited by Alfred Harbrace

*Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare*, edited by George Lyman Kittredge

Encyclopaedia and dictionaries:

*The Everyman Encyclopaedia*

*Oxford American Dictionary*

*The Scribner-Bantam English Dictionary*

*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

*The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*

*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*

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## Chapter One

### THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD(450—1066)

#### 1. Historical background

The earliest settlers of the British Isles were the Celts, who originally lived in the upper Rhineland and migrated to the British Isles about 600 B. C. . About 400 to 300 B. C. , the Brythons, a branch of the Celts, came to the British Isles and from them came the name Britain. The culture of the Celts belonged to an early stage of the Iron Age. They knew how to make iron swords and grow crops. Very little is known about their beliefs, but we know about their religious ceremonies of May Day and the cult of mistletoe, which have become part of the national tradition of the English people.

From 55 B. C. to 407 A. D. the British Isles were under the rule of the Roman Empire. At that time the Roman Empire was a slave society. It ruled over Europe and had a high level of civilization. The Romans defeated the Celts and became the masters of the British Isles. It was during the Roman occupation that London was founded.

The first Roman general who came to Britain was the famous Julius Caesar (102—44 B. C. ) who crossed the Dover Strait in 55 B. C. with a force of 10,000 men after his victory over the Gauls. But he stayed there only for a few weeks, and although he came back again in the following year, he did not station Roman troops on the isles as he was busily engaged in suppressing rebellions on the Continent and fighting the civil war at home. Almost a century elapsed before the Romans extended their conquest of Britain.

The Romans ruled over Britain for three and a half centuries. They built temples, roads, walls, and military camps, but made little influence on the cultural life of the Celts. They built forty or fifty walled towns and whenever a town today has a name ending in “chester” or “caster”, we may be sure that it is on the site of a Roman military settlement, because the word is derived from Latin “castra”, which means “fort”. Most of our knowledge of the Roman Britain comes from

*De Bello Gallico*, a book written by Caesar, and *Germania* by Publius Cornelius Tacitus (55—120 A. D.).

About 450 A. D., waves of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded the British Isles. They settled in England, and drove the Celts into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The Angles and Saxons were Germanic tribes occupying parts of the coast of modern Denmark and modern Germany on both sides of the Elbe and the difference between their languages was very slight. From the very names of these tribes we can know that they are seafaring people and brave in their action. The old Saxon word “angul” means a hook, from which we can surmise that they lived by the sea and their lives were related to fishing. The name Saxon is from “seax”, that is, a short sword, and from that name we can judge that they were hardy fighters. The Anglo-Saxons defeated the Celts, although the latter resisted bravely. They became the new masters of the British Isles and were the ancestors of the present English people.

It was around 500 A. D., in the struggle against Cerdic, the founder of the kingdom of Wessex, that the Celtic King Arthur, a legendary figure, is said to have acquired his fame. At Camelot in Somersetshire, which was his capital, he gathered around him the bravest of his followers, who were known as the Knights of the Round Table and for twenty four years he fought bravely for his kingdom against the Anglo-Saxon invaders, and about whom many English romances were composed.

Before their migration from the Continent the Anglo-Saxons were apparently still in the later stage of tribal society. After their settlement in Britain, their tribal society gradually disintegrated and feudal society came into being. At the close of the 6th century there were seven prominent Saxon kingdoms in England.

Beginning from the later part of the 8th century, the Danes, or the Vikings, came to invade England, at first along the eastern coast, but later they threatened to overrun the whole country. In the second half of the 9th century King Alfred, the Great of Wessex (849—899) led the Anglo-Saxon kings to defeat the invaders by uniting their forces. However, it was not until the reign of his great grandson Edgar (ca. 94—975) that England was united under one king.

In the early 11th century all England was conquered by the Danes

for 23 years. Then the Danes were expelled, but in 1066 the Normans came from Normandy in northern France to attack England under the leadership of the Duke of Normandy who claimed the English throne. For the last Saxon king, Harold, had promised that he would give his kingdom to William, Duke of Normandy, as an expression of his gratitude for protecting his kingdom during the invasion by the Danes. This is known as the Norman Conquest.

The Anglo-Saxons were heathens upon their arrival in Britain. In 597 Pope Gregory the Great sent St. Augustine to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons. The first converted king was King Ethelbert of Kent, and then within a century all England was Christianized. Churches were established and monks became the most learned in the country. Heathen mythology was gradually replaced by Christian religion.

## 2. Northumbrian School and Wessex literature

There were two highlights in the development of the Anglo-Saxon literature.

The first was the Northumbrian School. Its center was the monasteries and abbeys in the kingdom of Northumbria. Related with this school was Caedmon who lived in the 7th century and who turned the stories in the *Bible* into verse form. The title of the work is *Paraphrase*. It was said that Caedmon at first did not know how to sing and then one night he heard voice from God: "Caedmon, Sing me something." Caedmon answered that he could not sing. Then God told him: "Sing me the Creation." Then all at once Caedmon could sing and became the first Anglo-Saxon poet.

Another well known figure of the Northumbrian School was the Venerable Bede (673 — 735), a monk who wrote in Latin and whose work *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* earned for him the title of "Father of English History". The book covers the whole length of early English history from the invasion by Julius Caesar to the year 731, four years before the author's death. The book is full of strange religious stories and miracles. It was Bede who told about the story of Caedmon.

The second highlight of the Anglo-Saxon literature happened during the reign of King Alfred. The period of his reign was 871—899.



While in the 7th and 8th centuries English culture and learning flourished in the north, the center of learning shifted to the south, to the kingdom of Wessex in the 9th and 10th centuries, with King Alfred as the guiding spirit.

In 871 Alfred became king of Wessex. He won decisive battles against the Danes and the country enjoyed a period of peace. But Alfred was more celebrated for his literary contributions. Before his time all education had been in Latin. He set himself the task of teaching the English people to read and write in their own language. He gathered around him a group of scholars, founded a palace school, and demanded that his officials should try to educate themselves.

Alfred's contributions to English literature are threefold. First, a number of Latin books of educative value were translated into West Saxon dialect. It is said that King Alfred himself translated the history by Bede. Secondly, Alfred was responsible for the launching of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It began with the story of Caesar's conquest and annually recorded important events until 1154. It is an important history book as well as a piece of literary work. Alfred's third contribution is that he created a style of Anglo-Saxon prose which was not obscure.

### 3. Anglo-Saxon poetry

Some 30,000 lines of Anglo-Saxon poetry have survived. There are a long epic poetry *Beowulf*, a number of religious poems and heroic poems, and some elegies. The earliest is *Widsith* and the last is *Maldon*, a poem about the battle of Maldon, which was fought a few years before 1,000 A. D.