



普通高等教育“十五”国家级规划教材

新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材

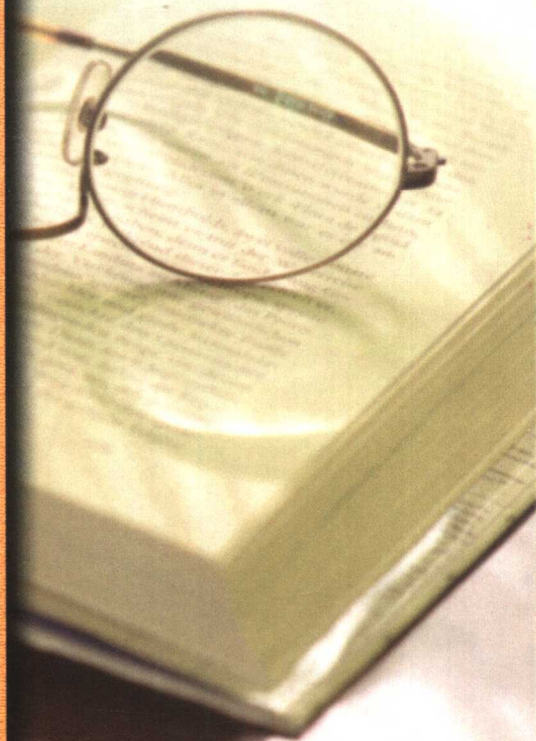
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英美小说要素解析

AN APPROACH TO FICTION

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总 序

随着改革开放的日趋深入,社会各界对外语人才的需求持续增长,我国英语专业的招生规模逐年扩大,教学质量不断提高。英语专业本科生教育的改革、学科建设及教材的出版亦取得了巨大的成绩,先后出版了一系列在全国有影响的精品教材。21世纪的到来对英语人才的培养提出了更高的标准,同时也为学科建设和教材编写提出了新的要求。随着中国加入世界贸易组织,社会需要的不是仅仅懂英语的毕业生,而是思维科学、心理健康、知识面广博、综合能力强、并能熟练运用英语的高素质专门人才。由于中学新的课程标准的颁布,中学生英语水平逐年提升,英语专业本科生入学时的基础和综合素质也相应提高。此外,大学英语(公外)教育的迅猛发展,学生英语能力的提高,也为英语专业学生的培养提出了严峻的挑战和更新更高的要求。这就规定了21世纪的英语教学不是单纯的英语培训,而是英语教育,是以英语为主体,全面培养高素质的复合型人才。教材的编写和出版也应顺随这种潮流。

为了迎接时代的挑战,作为我国最大的外语教材和图书出版基地之一的上海外语教育出版社(外教社)理应成为外语教材出版的领头羊。在充分调研的基础上,外教社及时抓住机遇,于新世纪之初约请了全国25所主要外语院校和教育部重点综合大学英语院系的50多位英语教育家,在上海召开了“全国高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材编写委员会会议”。代表们一致认同了编写面向新世纪教材的必要性、可行性和紧迫性,并对编写思想、教材构建、编写程序等提出了建议和要求。而后,外教社又多次召开全国和上海地区的专家、学者会议,撰写编写大纲、确定教材类别、选定教材项目、讨论审核样稿。经过一年多的努力,终于迎来了第一批书稿。

这套系列教材共分语言知识和语言技能、语言学与文学、语言与文化、人文科学、测试与教学法等几个板块,总数将超过150余种,可以说几乎涵盖了当前我国高校英语专业所开设的全部课程。编写内容深入浅出,反映了各个学科领域的最新研究成果;编写体例采用国家最新有关标准,力求科学、严谨,满足各门课程的具体要求;编写思想上,除了帮助学生打下扎实的语言基本功外,还着力培养学生分析问题、解决问题的能

力,提高学生的人文、科学素养,培养健康向上的人生观,使学生真正成为我国 21 世纪所需要的外语专门人才。

本套教材编写委员会由我国英语界的知名人士组成,其中多数是在各个领域颇有建树的专家,不少是高等学校外语专业教学指导委员会的委员。教材作者均由编写委员会的专家在仔细审阅样稿后商定,有的是从数名候选人中遴选,总体上代表了中国英语教育的发展方向和水平。

鉴于该套教材编写理念新颖、特色明显、体系宏大、作者权威,国家教育部已经将其列入了“十五”重点教材规划项目。我们相信,继“高等院校英语语言文学专业研究生系列教材”之后,外教社该套教材的编写和出版,不仅会满足 21 世纪英语人才的培养需要,其前瞻性、先进性和创新性也将为外语乃至其他学科教材的编写开辟一条新的思路,拓展一片新的视野。

戴炜栋

上海外国语大学校长

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1

LOT: A SEQUENCE OF INTERRELATED ACTIONS OR EVENTS

Like the people or characters in fiction, who are moulded out of reality, the actions or events in fiction are also derived from life. Therefore, as we can observe in daily life, they will usually occur in sequence. or in a chronological order in fiction. That is to say, to a writer, once the narrative or sequential order has been established, the next thing to consider is **plot**, or the plan of development of the actions.

What Is Plot?

Without a plot, we do not have a story. *A plot is a plan or groundwork for a story, based on conflicting human motivations, with the actions resulting from believable and realistic human response.* In a well-plotted story, nothing is irrelevant; everything is related. The British novelist E. M. Forster, in *Aspects of the Novel*, presented a memorable illustration of plot. As a bare minimum narration of actions, in contrast to a story with a plot, he used the following: "The king died, and then the queen died." This sentence describes a sequence, a chronological order, but it is no more. To have a plot, a sequence must be integrated with human motivation. Thus the following sentence qualifies as fiction with a plot: "The king died, and then the queen died of grief." Once the narrative introduces the operative element "of grief," which shows that one thing (grief over the king's death) produces or overcomes another (the death of the queen), there is a plot. Thus in a story time is important not only simply because one thing happens after another but because one thing happens because of

another. It is response, interaction, opposition, and causation that make a plot out of a simple series of actions.

Conflict in Plot

Fictional human responses are brought out to their highest degree in the development of a conflict. In its most elemental form, a conflict is the opposition of two people. They may fight, argue, enlist help against each other, and otherwise carry on their opposition. Conflicts may also exist between larger groups of people, although in fiction conflicts between individuals are more identifiable and therefore often more interesting. Conflicts may also exist between an individual and larger forces, such as natural objects, ideas, modes of behavior, public opinion, and the like. The existence of difficult choices within an individual's mind may also be presented as conflict, or dilemma. In addition, the conflict may be presented not as direct opposition, but rather as a set of comparative or contrastive ideas or values. In short, there are many ways to bring out a conflict in fiction.

Types of Conflict

External Conflict

External conflict may take the form of a basic opposition between *man and nature* (as it does in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* or Jack London's *To Build a Fire* cf. P. 65), or between *man and society* (as it does in Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* or Richard Wright's *The Man Who Was Almost a Man*). It may also take the form of an opposition between *man and man* (between the protagonist and a human adversary, the antagonist), as, for example, in most detective stories, in which a Sherlock Holmes (the detective created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) or a C. Auguste Dupin (the one created by Edgar Allan Poe) is asked to match wits with a cunning criminal.

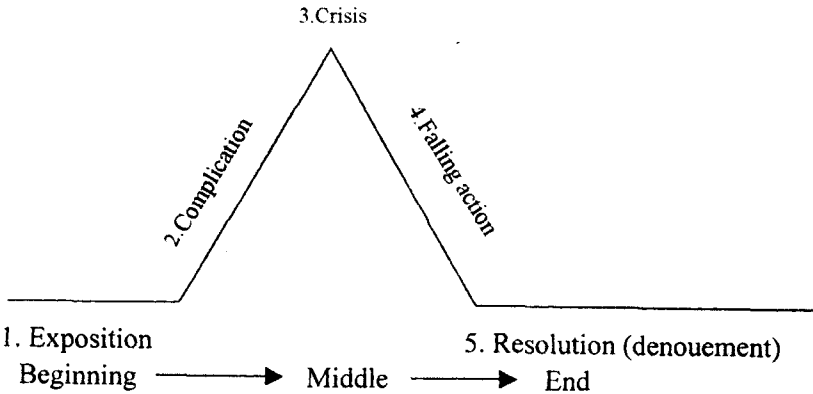
Internal Conflict

Internal conflict, on the other hand, focuses on two or more elements contesting within the protagonist's own character, as in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where Kurtz struggles and fails to subdue the savage instincts concealed beneath his civilized veneer.

Some conflicts, in fact, are never made explicit and must be inferred by the reader from what the characters do or say as the plot unfolds, as is the case in Earnest Hemingway's *Hills like White Elephants*.

Five Stages of Plot

The plot of a traditional story is often conceived of as moving through five distinct sections or stages, as the following diagram shows:



1. **Exposition:** The exposition is the beginning section in which the author provides the necessary background information, sets the scene, establishes the situation, and dates the action. It usually introduces the characters and the conflict, or at least the potential for conflict.
2. **Complication:** The complication, which is sometimes referred to as the rising action, develops and intensifies the conflict.
3. **Crisis:** The crisis (also referred to as the climax) is that moment at which the plot reaches its point of greatest emotional intensity; it is the turning point of the plot, directly precipitating the reso-

lution.

4. **Falling action:** Once the crisis, or turning point, has been reached, the tension subsides and the plot moves toward its conclusion.
5. **Resolution:** It is the final section of the plot which records the outcome of the conflict and establishes some new equilibrium. The resolution is also referred to as the conclusion or the denouement, the latter a French word meaning “unknotting” or “untying”.

The Ordering of Plot

The customary way of ordering the episodes or events in a plot is to present them chronologically, i. e. , in the order of their occurrence in time. **Chronological plotting** can be handled in various ways. It can be tightly controlled so that each episode logically and inevitably unfolds from the one that preceded it. It can also be loose, relaxed, and episodic, taking the form of a series of separate and largely self-contained episodes, resembling so many beads on a string. The former is likely to be found, however, in a novel rather than a short story, simply because of the space required for its execution.

It is important to recognize that, even within plots that are mainly chronological, the temporal sequence is often deliberately broken and the chronological parts rearranged for the sake of emphasis and effect. In some stories, we may encounter the characters in the middle of their “story” and must infer what has happened up to “now”, while in others we may meet them at the end of things. It doesn’t matter either way; after having intrigued and captured us, the author must work backward to the beginning, and then forward again to the middle or to the end of the story. In still other cases, the chronology of the plot may shift backward and forward in time, as, for example, in William Faulkner’s *A Rose for Emily*, where the author deliberately sets aside the chronological ordering of events and their cause-effect relationship in order to establish an atmosphere of unreality, build mystery and suspense, and underscore Emily Grierson’s own attempt to deny the passage of time itself.

Perhaps the most frequently and conventionally used device for

interrupting the flow of a chronologically ordered plot is the *flash-back*, a summary or fully dramatized episode framed by the author in such a way as to make it clear that the time being discussed or dramatized took place at some earlier period of time. Flashbacks, such as young Robin's thoughts of home as he stands beside the dark church building in Hawthorne's *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* (cf. P. 217), introduce us to information that would otherwise be unavailable and thus increase our knowledge and understanding of present events.

Analyzing Plot

1. What is the conflict (or conflicts) on which the plot turns? Is it external, internal, or some combination of the two?
2. What are the chief episodes or incidents that make up the plot? Is its development strictly chronological, or is the chronology rearranged in some way?
3. Compare the plot's beginning and end. What essential changes have taken place?
4. Describe the plot in terms of its exposition, complication, crisis, falling action, and resolution.
5. Is the plot unified? Do the individual episodes logically relate to one another?
6. Is the ending appropriate to and consistent with the rest of the plot?
7. Is the plot plausible? What role, if any, do chance and coincidence play?

Sample Reading

The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky

By *Stephen Crane*

I

The great Pullman¹ was whirling onward with such dignity of motion that a glance from the window seemed simply to prove that plains of

Texas were pouring eastward. Vast flats of green grass, dull-hued spaces of mesquit² and cactus³, little groups of frame houses, woods of light and tender trees, all were sweeping into the east, sweeping over the horizon, a precipice⁴.

A newly married pair had boarded this coach at San Antonio⁵. The man's face was reddened from many days in the wind and sun, and a direct result of his new black clothes was that his brick-colored hands were constantly performing in a most conscious fashion. From time to time he looked down respectfully at his attire. He sat with a hand on each knee, like a man waiting in a barber's shop. The glances he devoted to other passengers were furtive and shy.

The bride was not pretty, nor was she very young. She wore a dress of blue cashmere⁶, with small reservations of velvet here and there, and with steel buttons abounding. She continually twisted her head to regard her puff sleeves, very stiff, straight, and high. They embarrassed her. It was quite apparent that she had cooked, and that she expected to cook, dutifully. The blushes caused by the careless scrutiny of some passengers as she had entered the car were strange to see upon this plain, under-class countenance, which was drawn in placid, almost emotionless lines.

They were evidently very happy. "Ever been in a parlor-car before?" he asked, smiling with delight.

"No," she answered; "I never was. It's fine, ain't it?"

"Great! And then after a while we'll go forward to the dinner, and get a big lay-out. Finest meal in the world. Charge a dollar."

"Oh, do they?" cried the bride. "Charge a dollar? Why, that's too much — for us — ain't it, Jack?"

"Not this trip, anyhow," he answered bravely. "We're going to go the whole thing."

Later he explained to her about the trains. "You see, it's a thousand miles from one end of Texas to the other; and this runs right across it, and never stops but four times." He had the pride of an owner. He pointed out to her the dazzling fittings of the coach; and in truth her eyes opened wider and she contemplated the sea-green figured velvet, the shining brass, silver, and glass, the wood that gleamed as darkly brilliant as the surface of a pool of oil. At one end a

bronze figure sturdily held a support for a separated chamber, and at convenient places on the ceiling were frescos in olive and silver.

To the minds of the pair, their surroundings reflected the glory of their marriage that morning in San Antonio; this was the environment of their new estate; and the man's face in particular beamed with an elation that made him appear ridiculous to the negro porter. This individual at times surveyed them from afar with an amused and superior grin. On other occasions he bullied them with skill in ways that did not make it exactly plain to them that they were being bullied. He subtly used all the manners of the most unconquerable kind of snobbery. He oppressed them; but of this oppression they had small knowledge, and they speedily forgot that infrequently a number of travelers covered them with stares of derisive enjoyment. Historically there was supposed to be something infinitely humorous in their situation.

"We are due in Yellow Sky at 3:42," he said, looking tenderly into her eyes.

"Oh, are we?" she said, as if she had not been aware of it. To evince surprise at her husband's statement was part of her wifely amiability. She took from a pocket a little silver watch; and as she held it before her, and stared at it with a frown of attention, the new husband's face shone.

"I bought it in San Anton' from a friend of mine," he told her gleefully.

"It's seventeen minutes past twelve," she said, looking up at him with a kind of shy and clumsy coquetry. A passenger, noting this play, grew excessively sardonic, and winked at himself in one of the numerous mirrors.

At last they went to the dining-car. Two rows of Negro waiters, in glowing white suits, surveyed their entrance with the interest, and also the equanimity, of men who had been forewarned. The pair fell to the lot of a waiter who happened to feel pleasure in steering them through their meal. He viewed them with the manner of a fatherly pilot, his countenance radiant with benevolence. The patronage, entwined with the ordinary deference, was not plain to them. And yet, as they returned to their coach, they showed in their faces a sense of

escape.

To the left, miles down a long purple slope, was a little ribbon of mist where moved the keening Rio Grande⁷. The train was approaching it at an angle, and the apex was Yellow Sky. Presently it was apparent that, as the distance from Yellow Sky grew shorter, the husband became commensurately restless. His brick-red hands were more insistent in their prominence. Occasionally he was even rather absent-minded and far-away when the bride leaned forward and addressed him.

As a matter of truth, Jack Potter was beginning to find the shadow of a deed weigh upon him like a leaden slab. He, the town marshal of Yellow Sky, a man known, liked, and feared in his corner, a prominent person, had gone to San Antonio to meet a girl he believed he loved, and there, after the usual prayers, had actually induced her to marry him, without consulting Yellow Sky for any part of the transaction. He was now bringing his bride before an innocent and unsuspecting community.

Of course people in Yellow Sky married as it pleased them, in accordance with a general custom; but such was Potter's thought of his duty to his friends, or of their idea of his duty, or of an unspoken form which does not control men in these matters, that he felt he was heinous. He had committed an extraordinary crime. Face to face with this girl in San Antonio, and spurred by his sharp impulse, he had gone headlong over all the social hedges. At San Antonio he was like a man hidden in the dark. A knife to sever any friendly duty, any form, was easy to his hand in that remote city. But the hour of Yellow Sky — the hour of daylight — was approaching.

He knew full well that his marriage was an important thing to his town. It could only be exceeded by the burning of the new hotel. His friends could not forgive him. Frequently he had reflected on the advisability of telling them by telegraph, but a new cowardice had been upon him. He feared to do it. And now the train was hurrying him toward a scene of amazement, glee, and reproach. He glanced out of the window at the line of haze swinging slowly in toward the train.

Yellow Sky had a kind of brass band, which played painfully, to the delight of the populace. He laughed without heart as he thought of it. If the citizens could dream of his prospective arrival with his bride,