

AMERICAN

美国文学

LITERATURE

张 颖/主编



东北师范大学出版社

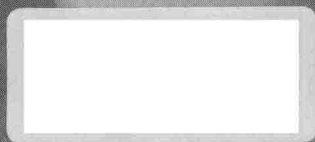
Northeast Normal University Press

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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

美国文学/张颖主编. —2 版. —长春: 东北师范大学出版社, 2015. 3

ISBN 978 - 7 - 5681 - 0369 - 5

I. 美… II. 张… III. 文学研究—美国 IV. I712.06

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2015) 第 280861 号

☐责任编辑: 张小磊 ☐封面设计: 宋 超

☐责任校对: 刘小军 ☐责任印制: 刘兆辉

东北师范大学出版社出版发行
长春净月经济开发区金宝街 118 号 (邮政编码: 130117)

网址: <http://www.nenup.com>

东北师范大学出版社激光照排中心制版

河北省廊坊市永清县鼎盛亚胶印有限公司

河北省廊坊市永清县燃气工业园榕花路 3 号 (065600)

2015 年 3 月第 2 版 2015 年 3 月第 1 次印刷

幅面尺寸: 170 mm×227 mm 印张: 21.75 字数: 397 千

定价: 63.00 元

如发现印装质量问题, 影响阅读, 可直接与承印厂联系调换

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第一章

早期及浪漫主义时期文学

第一节 早期文学



每节导读

本节简要介绍美国的早期文学及其发展的脉络。

美国文学的历史不长，它几乎和美国自由资本主义同时出现，较少受到封建贵族文化的束缚。美国早期人口稀少，有大片未开发的土地，为个人理想的实现提供了很大的可能性。美国人民富于民主自由精神，个人主义、个性解放的观念较为强烈，这在文学中有突出的反映。美国又是一个多民族的国家，移民不断涌入，各自带来了本民族的文化，这决定了美国文学风格的多样性和庞杂性。美国早期文学的发展过程受欧洲文学影响较深。美国早期文学的题材多以歌颂新兴国家和边疆开拓精神为主。

At the beginning of the 17th century, the vast continental area that was to become the United States had been probed only slightly by English and European explorers. At last early in the 17th century, the English settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts began the main stream of what we recognize as the American national history.

The forms of early American literature:

1) Early American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales, and lyrics of Indian cultures.

2) There was no written literature among the more than 500 different Indian languages and tribal cultures that existed in North America before the first Europeans arrived. However, American literature was not based on native Indian culture. It was a descendant of European literature.

I . The Literature of Exploration

In the 17th century, pirates, adventurers, and explorers opened the way of permanent colonists, bringing their wives, children, farm implements, and craftsmen's tools. The early literature of exploration, made up of diaries, letters, travel journals, ships' logs, and reports to the explorers' financial backers—European rulers or, in England and Holland, joint stock companies—gradually was supplanted by records of the settled colonies. Because England eventually took possession of the North American colonies, the best-known and most-anthologized colonial literature is English. As American minority literature continues to flower in the 20th century and American life becomes increasingly multicultural, scholars are rediscovering the importance of the continent's mixed ethnic heritage. Although the story of literature now turns to the English accounts, it is important to recognize its richly cosmopolitan beginnings.

II . New England Literature

1. An Introduction of New England Literature

It is likely that no other colonists in the history of the world were as intellectual as the Puritans. Between 1630 and 1690, there were as many university graduates in the northeastern section of the United States, known as New England, as in the mother country—an astounding fact when one considers that most educated people of the time were aristocrats who were unwilling to risk their lives in wilderness conditions. The self-made and often self-educated Puritans were notable exceptions. They wanted education to understand and execute God's will as they established their colonies throughout New England.

The Puritan definition of good writing was that which brought home a full awareness of the importance of worshipping God and of the spiritual dangers that the soul faced on Earth. American Puritanism was a dominant factor in American life. It was one of the most enduring shaping influences in American thought and American literature. It has become so much a state of mind and a part of the national cultural atmosphere that the American breathes, that we may state with a degree of safety that, without some understanding of Puritanism, there can be no real understanding of America and its literature.

The American Puritans believed that the Church should be restored to the “purity” of the first-century Church as established by Jesus Christ. To them religion was a matter of primary importance. They made it their chief business to see that man lived and thought and acted in a way which tended to the glory of God. They accepted the doctrine of predestination, original sin and total depravity, and the salvation of a selected few through a special infusion of grace from God.

To sum up, American Puritanism could be defined as following:

1) It is originally used to refer to the theology advocated by a party within the Church of England.

2) It is also used in a broader sense to refer to attitudes and values held by Puritans.

3) As a cultural heritage, American Puritanism exerted great influences over American moral values and literature.

4) Puritans holds three concepts: original sin; predestination and the salvation of selected few.

American Puritanism influences early American literature on the following aspects:

1) idealism; American literature is in good measure a literary expression of the pious idealism of the American Puritan bequest.

2) symbolism; American Puritan's metaphorical mode of perception was chiefly instrumental in calling into being a literary symbolism which is distinctly American. Puritan doctrine and literary practice contributed to no small extent to the development of an indigenous symbolism. To the pious Puritan the physical, phenomenal world is nothing but a symbol of God. It is impossible to overlook the very symbolizing process that was constantly at work in Puritan minds. This process became, in time, part of the intellectual tradition in which American authors were brought up along with their people.

3) plain style; With regard to technique one naturally thinks of the simplicity, which characterizes the Puritan style of writing. With regard to their writing, the style is fresh, simple and direct; the rhetoric is plain and honest, not without a touch of nobility often traceable to the direct influence of the Bible. All this has left an indelible imprint on American writing.

Thus American Puritanism has been, by and large, a healthy legacy to the Americans.

American literature grew out of humble origins. As previously we discussed, diaries, histories, journals, letters, common books, travel books, sermons, poems and personal literature in its various forms, occupy a major position in the literature of the early colonial period. Among them, sermon and poetry were two major genres. In content these early writings served either God or colonial expansion or both. In form, English traditions were faithfully imitated and transplanted.

2. Some New England Writers

1) Anne Bradstreet (1612—1672)

The first published book of poems by an American was also the first American book to be published by a woman—Anne Bradstreet. It is not surprising that the book was published in England, given the lack of printing presses in the early years of the first American colonies. Born and educated in England, Anne Bradstreet was the daughter of an earl's estate manager. She emigrated with her family when she was 18. Her husband eventually became governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which later grew into the great city of Boston. She preferred her long, religious poems on conventional subjects such as the seasons, but contemporary readers mostly enjoy the witty poems on subjects from daily life and her warm and loving poems to her husband and children. She was inspired by English metaphysical poetry, and her book *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* (1650) shows the influence of Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, and other English poets as well.

2) Edward Taylor (1644—1729)

Like Anne Bradstreet, and, in fact, all of New England's first writers, the intense, brilliant poet and minister, Edward Taylor was born in England. The son of a yeoman farmer—an independent farmer who owned his own land—Taylor was a teacher who sailed to New England in 1668 rather than took an oath of loyalty to the Church of England. He studied at Harvard College, and, like most Harvard-trained ministers, he knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. A selfless and pious man, Taylor acted as a missionary to the settlers when he accepted his lifelong job as a minister in the frontier town of Westfield, Massachusetts, 160 kilometers into the thickly forested, wild interior. Taylor

was the best-educated man in the area, and he put his knowledge to use, working as the town minister, doctor, and civic leader.

Modest, pious, and hard working, Taylor never published his poetry, which was discovered only in the 1930s. He would, no doubt, have seen his work's discovery as divine providence; today's readers should be grateful to have his poems—the finest examples of 17th century poetry in North America.

Taylor wrote a variety of verse: funeral elegies, lyrics, a medieval “debate”, and a 500-page *Metrical History of Christianity* (mainly a history of martyrs). His best works, according to modern critics, are the series of short *Preparatory Meditations*.

3) Jonathan Edwards (1703—1758)

Jonathan Edwards was born on October 5, 1703, in East Windsor, Connecticut, into a Puritan household. From 1726 to 1750 Edwards served as the pastor of Northampton, Massachusetts, the largest and most influential church outside of Boston, succeeding his grandfather, the famous revivalist Solomon Stoddard. Turning his attention from theoretical to practical divinity, Edwards himself gained international fame as a revivalist.

The widespread revivals of the early 1740s, known to historians as the “Great Awakening”, stimulated one of the two most fruitful periods for Edwards' writings. Edwards furthered his renown as a revivalist preacher who subscribed to an experiential interpretation of Reformed Theology that emphasized the sovereignty of God, the depravity of humankind, the reality of hell, and the necessity of a “New Birth” conversion. While critics assailed the convictions of many supposed converts as illusory and even the work of the devil, Edwards became a brilliant apologist for the revivals. *In the Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival* (1742), *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746), and *The Life of David Brainerd* (1749), he sought to isolate the signs of true sainthood from false belief. The intellectual framework for revivalism he constructed in these works pioneered a new psychology and philosophy of affections, later invoked by William James in his classic *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

Edward's published writings at Northampton also reflect strong millenarian and prophetic interests. In "A History of the Work of Redemption", originally preached as a sermon series in 1739 but not published until after his death, Edwards cast theology into "a method entirely new" by showing God's work as a history structured around God's scriptural promises and periods of the outpouring of the Spirit. "*An Humble Attempt to Promote...Extraordinary Prayer*" (1747) was part of a larger movement towards Anglo-American "concerts of prayer" and was an important contribution to millennial thought. Scholars such as Alan Heimert have recognized the signal importance of these works in American history, particularly their contribution to revolutionary ideology. Both of these works have already been published in the *Yale Edition* (1989).

In late 1757, he accepted the presidency of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University). However, he did not live to leave a permanent mark on the college. After only a few months there he died on March 22, 1758, following complications from a smallpox inoculation. He is buried in the Princeton Cemetery (The Grave of Jonathan Edwards in the Princeton Cemetery, Princeton, New Jersey).

Edward's reputation grew rapidly after his death. At the end of the twentieth century, as both the American scholarly community and the nation at large are rediscovering religion's role in the formation of the country and are grappling with the issues of religion and society, the name of Jonathan Edwards continues to be invoked.

As Edwards has been studied over the generations, he has come to emerge as a quintessential "representative man", not in the usual sense but because in some profound sense he marked the culmination of one era and prefigured a subsequent one. While other colonial figures exerted comparable influence on their own age, none, with the possible exception of William Penn and Benjamin Franklin, so completely anticipated the subsequent shape of an American culture, at once material and spiritual, piously secular and pragmatically sacred, as did Edwards. It is due to the intersection of Edwards' colonial times with an ever-changing American "present" that he enjoys a uniquely representative

status in American thought and letters.

III. The Literature of Reason and Revolution

1. An Introduction to the Literature of Reason and Revolution

In 1770s the English colonies in North America rose in arms against their mother country. The War for Independence lasted for eight years (1776—1783) and ended in the formation of a Federative bourgeois democratic republic—the United States of America.

This event of epoch-making significance had been predetermined by the whole course of historical development of the colonial America ever since the beginning of the 18th century. The spiritual life in the colonies during that period was to a great degree moulded by the bourgeois Enlightenment—a movement supported by all progressive forces of the country which opposed themselves to the old colonial order and religious obscurantism. The representatives of the Enlightenment set themselves the task of disseminating knowledge among the people and advocating revolutionary ideas. They also actively participated in the War for Independence.

In 1783, the year the United States achieved its independence, Noah Webster declared, “America must be as independent in literature as she is in politics, as famous for the arts as for arms.” The beginnings of literary independence were evident in such celebrations of the American scene as Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), and *Bartram’s Travels* (1791). Yet American literature throughout the century was largely patterned on the writing of eighteenth century Englishmen. Philip Freneau, the most important poet of the period, derived his power and style, his sentiments and regular couplets from English models. Franklin shaped his writing after *The Spectator Papers* (1711—1712) of the English essayists Addison and Steele.

However, while imaginative literature in America remained derivative and dependent, the heroic and revolutionary ambitions of the age had created great political pamphleteering and state papers. Essayists and journalists had shaped the nation’s beliefs with reason dressed in clear and forceful prose. Out of the tumult of the age came the inspired writing of Jefferson in the Declaration of

Independence, of T. Paine in *Common Sense* (1776), which stirred the world and helped form the American republic.

The best writings of the age were done by the founding fathers of the country and the popular literary forms then were as follows:

1) Speech: Patrick Henry (1736—1799) was the representative of the genre. His revolutionary speeches were marked by force and sincerity as in his famous phrases “I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”

2) Pamphlet: Thomas Paine (1737—1809) is considered the best writer of the genre. His pamphlets are characterized with clear thinking and exciting language. His best-known work is *Common Sense*, the most historically important pamphlet in American history.

3) Essay: Thomas Jefferson's (1743—1826) Declaration of Independence was regarded the best example. The characteristics of Jefferson's essays are logical statement and freedom from emotional appeal.

4) Poetry: Philip Freneau (1752—1832) was nicknamed the poet of revolution. The characteristics of his poetry are lyric quality, sensuous images and fresh perception of nature and “noble savagery”.

2. Some Important Writers

1) Thomas Paine (1737—1809)

The life of Thomas Paine was one of the revolutionary fighters for the rights of man. He wrote a number of works of such a revolutionary and inflammatory character, with which he helped to spur and inspire the greatest revolutions that his age had witnessed. His *Common Sense*, declaring as it did that “government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one”, not only attacked British monarchy, but also helped in uniting the feelings of the colonial people in fighting against the British ruler in order to gain their independence. Paine declared that the crisis with which the North American colonies were then faced could only be solved by an appeal to man's instincts and common sense and to “the clear, uniform and irresistibly obeyed” impulses of conscience. The booklet was warmly received in the colonies both as a justification for their cause of independence and as an encouragement to the

painfully fighting people. Paine became a major influence in the American Revolution. Another important work of his to mention here is his *American Crisis* series of pamphlets, the first of which came out at one of the darkest moments of the revolution when Washington's troops had just suffered one of the worst defeats in the war and were in the process of retreating. "These are the times that try men's souls," it declared. "The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph." The words turned out to be the inspiration to the soldiers and encouraged them with hope and confidence. Paine was highly praised by the Congress of the United States for his distinguished service to the country. Later he participated in the French Revolution, and wrote *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*, spreading the ideals of the French Revolution among the people. He was imprisoned during the "Reign of Terror" and escaped the guillotine only narrowly. He returned to America and died in poverty.

2) Philip Freneau (1752—1832)

Philip Freneau was important in American literary history in a number of ways. First of all, he used his poetic talents in the service of a nation struggling for independence, writing verses for the righteous cause of his people and exposing British colonial savageries, and for this he was called the poet of revolution in American literature. Secondly, he was also a notable representative of dawning nationalism in American literature. While still an undergraduate, he wrote, with one of his friends, a poem entitled "The Rising Glory of America", the national spirit of which pointed forward to the intellectual and literary independence which achieved its maturity first in the writings of men like Emerson and Whitman and other pre-eminent writers of the nineteenth century. Almost alone of his generation, he managed to peer through the pervasive atmosphere of imitativeness, to see life around directly, to appreciate the natural scenes on the new continent and the native Indian civilization. Some of his most famous works are distinctly American with unique features. Poems such as "The Wild Honey Suckle", "The Indian Burying Ground" are among the best-known.

In 18th century America, Freneau was certainly the most significant poet whose themes and images anticipated the works of such 19th century American Romantic writers as Cooper, Emerson, Poe and Melville.

The period of some two centuries from the arrival of the Mayflower through the end of the 18th century was, from a literary point of view, one in which the national experience of the American settlers building the wilderness into a habitable place searched and struggled for literary expression. It represents a process in which colonial literature strove for a higher degree of excellence and evolved slowly but steadily toward the native literature. If the 18th century literary scene looked still barren and bleak, there appeared at least certain figures who had more or less influenced the later development of American literature. Benjamin Franklin is one of these.

3) Benjamin Franklin (1706—1790)

America has never forgotten Benjamin Franklin because of his greatness in American history. He lived these words of wisdom by writing as much as he possibly could and by doing even more. He became famous as a printer and publisher, a scientist and inventor, a diplomat and statesman, last but not least, a writer.

Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts on January 6 from a very large family. He was the tenth son in the family. Franklin did have a bit more education than his brothers, but it was impossible for him to continue because they were not a rich family. His father was a soap boiler and candle maker. At the age of 12, Franklin was apprenticed to his half-brother, James Franklin, who was a newspaper printer in Boston. In 1722, when Franklin was only 16, he ran the paper on his own for a short time. One year later, he went to Philadelphia almost penniless. There he worked as a newspaper printer. He attracted the notice of the governor of Pennsylvania and then Franklin went to London through his influence. He stayed in London for two years. In 1726, he began to work industriously to set up his own press. In 1729, he already owned his own printing shop and published the newspaper *Pennsylvania Gazette*. In 1732 he offered his *Poor Richard's Almanac* for sale. By 1748, at the age of 42, Franklin had earned enough money so that he retired. Then he became so active in civic and scientific activities.

Franklin was a rare genius in human history. He became almost everything: a printer, postmaster, almanac maker, essayist, scientist, orator, statesman, philosopher, political economist, ambassador and parlor man—Jack of all

trades.

Franklin's claim to a place in literature rests chiefly on his *Autobiography*. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* was probably the first of its kind in literature. It is the simple yet immensely fascinating record of a man rising to wealth and fame from a state of poverty and obscurity into which he was born, the faithful account of the colorful career of America's first self-made man. The book is in four parts, written at different times.

The Autobiography is important in several aspects. First of all, it is a Puritan document. It is Puritan because it is a record of self-examination and self-improvement. *The Autobiography* is also a reflection of his age because of the fact that Franklin was spokesman for the new order of 18th-century enlightenment, and that he represented in America all its ideas, that man is basically good and free, by nature endowed by God with certain inalienable rights of liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Thirdly, it is an illustration of American dream of which Franklin himself is an embodiment since he rose to success from a very humble beginning. Fourthly, the book has the features of plainness of its style, the homeliness of imagery, the simplicity of diction and the syntax and expression are salient, therefore, it is a good example of Puritan plain style.

第二节 浪漫主义文学简介



每节导读

本节简要介绍美国浪漫主义文学的背景及主要特点。

1781 年美国独立战争结束。1783 年,英美签订凡尔赛合约,英国承认美国独立。随着美利坚合众国的成立,美国从政治上摆脱了英国的统治,但同时也迫切需要在文化上摆脱对英国的依附。从取得国家独立到内战不到一百年的时间里,美国社会面貌发生了根本的变化,也出现了美国历史上第一次文学艺术的繁荣,形成了在世界文学史占有一席之地的美国 19 世纪浪漫主义文学运动,也被称为美国文学第一次文艺复兴。美国浪漫主义的产生,一方面是谋求民族文化独立的结果,另一方面是受英国浪漫主义文学影响的结果。

美国早期浪漫主义文学以欧文、库柏等作家为代表。他们写出了具有民族风格的作品,

可以说是美国民族文学的先驱。从 30 年代开始形成后期浪漫主义文学，以超验主义为基础，以爱默生、梭罗等作家为代表。19 世纪 50 年代惠特曼《草叶集》发表，美国浪漫主义进入高峰时期。1892 年，随着惠特曼的去世，美国浪漫主义走向衰落，随之而来的是现实主义的繁荣。

I. American Romanticism (the New England Renaissance)

The Romantic Movement, which originated in Germany but quickly spread to England, France, and beyond, reached America around the year 1820, some 20 years after William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge had revolutionized English poetry by publishing *Lyrical Ballads*. In America as in Europe, fresh new vision inspired artistic and intellectual circles. Yet there was an important difference: Romanticism in America coincided with the period of national expansion and the discovery of a distinctive American voice. The consolidation of a national identity and the surging idealism and passion of Romanticism nurtured the masterpieces of “the American Renaissance” which is also known as the “New England Renaissance”.

Romantic ideas centered on art as inspiration, the spiritual and aesthetic dimension of nature, and metaphors of organic growth. Art, rather than science, Romantics argued, could best express universal truth. The Romantics underscored the importance of expressive art for the individual and society. In his essay “The Poet” (1844), Ralph Waldo Emerson, perhaps the most influential writer of the Romantic era, asserts:

“For all men live by truth, and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression.”

The development of the self became a major theme; self-awareness a primary method. If, according to Romantic theory, self and nature were one, self-awareness was not a selfish dead end but a mode of knowledge opening up the universe. If one's self were one with all humanity, then the individual had a moral duty to reform social inequalities and relieve human suffering. The idea of “self”, which suggested selfishness to earlier generations was redefined. New compound words with positive meanings emerged: “self-realization”, “self-expression”, “self-reliance”.