

Highlights of British and American Literature

英美文学佳作

· 大学英语学习系列教材 ·

Undergraduate English Series

□ 华中科技大学外国语学院英语系 编

赏

析

(第2版)

华中科技大学出版社

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(第2版)

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总 序

21 世纪是一个国际化的知识经济时代,社会主义市场经济的发展要求新世纪的人才除了具有扎实的专业知识、良好的创新能力、人文素养外,还必须具有优秀的外语能力。英语作为一种国际性的语言,已成为人们在国际交流中不可缺少的工具。新形势下,社会的发展对中国大学生英语能力提出了全新的要求,已从原来纯粹的语言技能的掌握,发展到语言应用能力及跨文化交际能力的提高、英语文化认知水平的扩大及人文综合素养的完善。

在这种形势下,许多高校进行了大学英语教学改革,除了进行英语听说读写的基础课程训练,还开设了一系列高级语言能力及文化、文学方面的专业课程供全校学生选修。此外,本着培养复合型人才的理念,许多高校英语专业面向非英语专业招收英语第二学位的学生,开设了一系列英语专业课程。与英语本科专业的教学相比,这一系列课程因教学对象、学生需求、教学学时等不同,其目标内涵与层次定位、教材选编、教学方法及教学要求等方面还是存在着一定的差异。为此,华中科技大学外国语学院英语系在长期开设英语公共选修课及开办英语第二学位、辅修学位的基础上,组织一批有丰富教学经验的老师,共同编写了《大学英语学习系列教材》。

本系列教材包括《高级英语阅读》、《英语写作教程》、《英汉互译——方法与实践》、《英美报刊选读》、《英美文学佳作赏析》等,具有以下特征。

1. 本系列教材的编写以国家教育部颁布的《大学英语教学大纲》和《英语专业教学大纲》为依据,充分考虑非英语专业学生的实际情况和对新世纪复合型人才外语能力的要求,既重视培养语言技能、提高语言交际能力,又注重扩大学生的知识面,提高人文素养。

2. 本系列教材的编写吸收了大学英语、专业英语、英语第二学位的教学及教材编写的丰富经验,充分采纳国内外先进的教学理论和方法,力求选材新颖实用、难度适中,具有鲜明的时代特征。

3. 本系列教材体系统一,既可全套使用,也可针对学生实际需要有选择地使用。

本系列教材可供非英语专业本科生英语选修课使用,也可供选修英语第二学位或辅修英语学位的学生使用,还可供具有相当于大学英语四级水平的英语自学者使用。

本系列教材在编写的过程中得到了华中科技大学外国语学院领导的指导和各位同仁的支持,华中科技大学出版社对本系列教材的编写和出版给予了鼎力支持,在此我们全体编写人员表示衷心的感谢。由于经验不足,水平有限,错误在所难免,恳请广大师生和读者提出批评和建议,以便在今后的修订中不断改进和完善。

华中科技大学外国语学院英语系

2006 年 6 月

本版前言

在中外交流日益频繁、全球一体化趋势不断加强的今天,学习英语、了解英美文化已成为中国大学生的共识。文学是文化精华的载体,通过赏析英美文学名篇,我们不仅能学习语言、了解文化,同时还能接受优秀英美作品精髓思想的熏陶,增强对社会生活的理解与感悟,加强自身的人文素质和修养。

华中科技大学外国语学院本着培养复合型素质人才的理念,面向本校及外校非英语专业学生开设英语第二学位,英美文学佳作赏析是其中一门重要的必修课。长期担任该课程教学的教师根据多年的教学实践,在自编讲义的基础上修订增补,精心编写本书,这其中既包含对学术同仁最新成果的借鉴,又凝结着教师自己教学实践的总结创新。考虑到非英语专业学生的知识背景和实际需求,编者在选材时力求既适当涵盖经典英美文学,又突出选文的时代性、趣味性和可读性。

该教材从最初的讲义到第一版成书经历了七八年教学实践的检验,取得了很好的成效。为了满足不断变化的教学需求,华中科技大学英语二学位的英美文学佳作赏析课程由原来的一学期延长为一学年,随之而来的教材修订也就势在必行。新版的《英美文学佳作赏析》主要分为“绪论”、“上篇”和“下篇”三大部分。“绪论”主要是关于诗歌、小说、散文、戏剧四种文学体裁的特点、文体要素的分析及赏析要点的介绍。“上篇”和“下篇”分别为英国文学选读和美国文学选读,主要包括有代表意义的作品节选、注释,引导学生鉴赏、思考的讨论题及作家作品简介。选材时力求兼顾四种体裁的文体要素和英美文学的各个发展时期。为了保持体例的一致,在编写过程中我们对原文作了适当修改。

本书部分编者曾担任华中科技大学公共人文选修课英美文学的教学工作,基于同样的非英语专业的教学对象,该书也是公共人文选修课英美文学教学成果的总结。所以,本书除了适用于英语第二学位学生的教学,也可作为高等学校面向全校开设英美文学公共选修课的教材,同时还可供具有一定英语水平的英美文学爱好者、自学者学习使用。

对本书的使用可视教学对象、教学学时等灵活处理。同时,不同体裁的作品也可穿插讲授,无须拘泥于集中编排的目录顺序。

本书在编写的过程中得到了华中科技大学外国语学院各级领导的支持和鼓励,外国语学院英语系教授胡泓博士在本书的编写设计、选材及审稿各个环节都提供了有益的指导并提出了宝贵的意见,华中科技大学出版社的同志们在编辑加工、提高书稿质量方面做了许多细致的工作,在此,我们谨致衷心的感谢!

由于编者的水平所限,书中难免有考虑不周之处,恳请批评指正。

编者

2009年7月于武汉

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Elements of Poetry

The close reading of a poem depends on observing the specific elements of the poem. Since all the elements of a poem work together harmoniously to convey feeling and embody meaning, we can learn to interpret and appreciate a poem by understanding these basic elements.

Voice, Speaker and Tone When we read or hear a poem, we hear a speaker's voice. It is this voice that conveys the poem's tone, its implied attitude toward its subject. When we listen to a poem's language and hear the voice of its speaker, we catch its tone and feeling and ultimately its meaning.

Introduction

Enjoying Poetry

Poetry is hard to define in exact words. However, it is instantly recognizable. Some of its qualities are special visual tips on the printed page: stanzas and forms, such as couplets, quatrains, sonnets, capitalized first lines and short lines. Some are special uses of language and rhythm: imagery, metaphor, symbol, repetition, onomatopoeia, rhyme and meter. Others are compression of language, tension, tone, seriousness of ideas or utter playfulness.

In some ways reading poetry is much like reading fiction, drama and the essay: we observe details of action and language, make connections and inferences, and draw conclusions. We also bring to poetry the same intellectual and emotional dispositions, the same general experience with life and literature that we draw on in reading drama, fiction and the essay. Yet there is something different about reading poems. We are supposed to be more attentive to the connotations of words, more receptive to the expressive qualities of sound and rhythm in line and stanza, more discerning about details of syntax and punctuation. This increased attention to linguistic detail is necessary because of the density and compression characteristic of poetry. More than fiction, drama and the essay, poetry is an art of condensation and implication; poems concentrate meaning and distill feeling.

There are generally two kinds of poems: the narrative and the lyric. Narrative poems, which tell stories and describe actions, include the epic, romance and ballad. Lyric poems, combining speech and song to express feelings in varying degrees of verbal music, include the elegy, epigraph, sonnet, sestina, villanelle and many other ones that contain strong personal emotions.

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Image An image is a verbal picture of an object, action or abstract idea or sensation (feeling). Images appeal directly to one of the senses: touch, sight, hearing, smell or taste. Poets make efforts to excite our responses through sensory experiences (what we see, hear, feel, smell, taste) rather than through abstract language, for it is through our senses that we perceive the world. Images trigger our memories, stimulate our feelings, and command our response. Imagery refers to a pattern of related details in a poem. When images cluster together to convey an idea or feeling beyond what the images literally describe, we call them metaphorical or symbolic.

Figurative Language Language can be classified as either literal or figurative. When we speak literally, we mean exactly what each word conveys; when we use figurative language, we mean something other than the actual meaning of the words. Poetry achieves many of its effects through this skill of language. Simile and metaphor, the two most commonly used rhetorical devices, are both making connections between normally unrelated things, seeing one thing in terms of another. However, simile establishes the comparison explicitly with the words “like” or “as”, while metaphor employs no such explicit verbal clue, and is then more subtle and implied. Other kinds of figurative language include personification, giving inanimate objects or abstract concepts animate characteristics or qualities; metonymy, substituting an attribute of a thing for the thing itself; pun, a play on words; hyperbole, or exaggeration; paradox, to name only a few.

Symbol and Allegory A symbol is any object or action that means more than itself, any object or action that represents something beyond itself. A rose, for example, can represent beauty or love or transience. A tree may represent a family’s roots and branches. A soaring bird might stand for freedom. Light might symbolize hope or knowledge or life. A symbol may be universal in its nature, as when we say that “sailing westward” usually symbolizes preparation for death. But a symbol can also be more private. Recognizing their use in poetry will help you see them in daily language, either spoken or written. Related to symbolism, allegory is a form of narrative in which people, places, and happenings have hidden or symbolic meaning. Allegory is thus a type of symbolism, but it differs from the former in establishing a strict system of correspondences between details of action and a pattern of meaning. Allegory is especially suitable as a vehicle for teaching.

Syntax Syntax refers to the grammatical structure of words in sentences and the deployment of sentences throughout the poem. It is an important element of a poem’s tone and a guide to a speaker’s state of mind. Speakers who repeat themselves or who break off abruptly in the midst of a thought, for example, reveal something about how they feel.

When reading poetry, we should pay attention to such syntactical features as sentence length, sentence type, word order, complexity and arrangement. Special attention should also go to some peculiarities like inversion, repetition, parallelism, omitting, adding, sentence fragments, rhetorical sentences (requiring no answer), exclamation sentences, coinage of new words and phrases, and even punctuation and capitalization. These are usually where special meaning lies.

Sound Effect Rhythm refers to the changing pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of a poem. It is the beat of music we feel in poetry that adds greatly to its aesthetic effect. The tempo of rhythm helps to express meaning and convey meaning. A certain combination of various syllables is called a foot or a meter. Rising meters like iambic and anapestic, falling meters like trochaic and dactylic, are most frequently employed in English verse. Rhyme, the matching of final vowel and consonant sounds in two or more words at regular intervals, usually at the end of lines (end rhyme), and sometimes within lines (internal rhyme or middle rhyme). Two other forms of sound play prevail in poetry: alliteration or the repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the beginning of words, and assonance or the repetition of vowel sounds. These sound devices, having the music effect of onomatopoeia, make poetry pleasant to read and sweet to hear. Working together with other elements of poetry, they contribute to the meaning of the poetry.

Form When we analyze the form, or the structure of a poem, we focus on its patterns of organization. Form exists in poems on many levels from patterns of sound and image to structures of syntax and of thought; it is as much a matter of phrase and line as of stanza and whole poem. Some poems are strictly constrained in closed or fixed form so we can recognize them by their patterns of rhyme, meter, repetition, the shapes of their stanzas and the patterns of their line lengths. Shakespearean Sonnets are the most typical poems of fixed form. But not all poems are written in fixed forms. Many poets, resisting the limitations inherent in using a consistent and specific metrical pattern or in rhyming lines in a prescribed manner, developed and discovered looser, more open and free forms. Open or free form does not imply formlessness. It suggests that poets can either create their own forms or use the traditional fixed forms in more flexible ways. Walt Whitman is regarded as a pioneer experimenting with free verses.

Theme Theme is defined as an abstraction or generalization drawn from the details of a literary work. It is an idea or meaning inherent and implicit in a work. In determining a poem's theme we should be careful neither to oversimplify the poem nor to distort its meaning, and we also should recognize that sometimes poems can have multiple themes. Focusing on a poem's theme enables us to see a poem's significance—what it says, what

it implies, and what it means.

Suggestions on Reading Poetry

1. Read the poem a few times slowly and deliberately. If possible read it aloud. Make sure you know the meaning of the words and the grammar so that you can follow what each sentence literally says.
2. Identify the speaker (who is speaking), subject (about what), situation and the tone (how does he feel).
3. Pay attention to special language phenomena, figure of speech, syntax features, symbols, etc.
4. Consider the poem's form and how its structure shapes its thought and its emotion.
5. Test the poem against your own experience (Do you have similar experiences and feelings) or try to view things in the poet's feet. If you cannot understand very much, don't be too upset. Read it at some other time or with a friend.
6. Identify the social, cultural and moral values that emerge in the poem. Consider how your own values influence your interpretation and evaluation of its worth.

Enjoying Drama

Drama, unlike the other literary genres, is a staged art. Plays are written to be performed by actors before an audience. We can easily tell a play from other texts of literature for such peculiarities as dialogues, stage directions and the arrangement of acts and scenes. And of all the literary forms, drama is the one in which the dramatist almost never speaks directly to the audience/reader. For the most part, dramatists convey ideas through their characters and the plot, rather than in a direct embodiment of themselves in the way novelists do with narrators.

As a literary genre, drama shares common qualities with fiction, poetry and the essay. Drama is most like fiction, possessing a narrative dimension: a play often narrates a story in the form of a plot. It shares features with poetry as well. Plays may be written in verse (Shakespeare wrote in blank verse), and are to be heard, as lyrical poems are, and on the other hand some poems contain dramatic elements. Also like essays, plays may be vehicles of persuasion. Drama is very often intended to discuss certain issues and convey ideas. With dramatic performance, however, we must read drama with special attention to its performance element. We can try to hear the voices of characters, and imagine tones and inflections. We can try to see mentally how characters look, where they stand in relation to one another, how they move and gesture. We can read, in short, as armchair directors and as aspiring actor and actresses considering the physical and practical realities of the performance.

Comedy Comic plays end happily, often with a celebration such as a marriage, success or good fortune. They celebrate (affirm) life, and are typically joyous and festival. Comic heroes are usually ordinary people, and are frequently one dimensional to the extent that many are stereotypes: the braggart, for example, or the hypocrite, the unfaithful wife, etc.

There are two major types of comedy: satiric and romantic. Satire exposes human folly, criticizes human conduct, and aims to correct it. Ridiculing the weakness of human nature, satiric comedy shows us the low level to which human behavior sink. Romantic comedy, on the other hand, portrays characters gently, even generously; its spirit is more tolerant and its tone more genial. The humor is more sympathetic than corrective, intending more to entertain than instruct, to delight than ridicule.

Tragedy In *Poetics*, Aristotle describes tragedy as “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete in itself, and has a certain magnitude”. This definition suggests that tragedies are solemn plays concerned with grave human actions and their consequences. Tragic plays end sorrowfully, often with the death of the hero. They highlight life’s sorrows and are typically brooding and solemn. Tragic heroes are usually grand, noble characters, men “of high estate”. Their tragic ends are often resulted from flaws (weakness) in character, errors of judgment (tragedy of character). The heroes may also be doomed by fate, coincidence or circumstances beyond control (tragedy of circumstances). Despite the suffering and catastrophe, tragedies are not depressing. Aristotle suggested that the pity and fear aroused in the audience are purged or released and the audience experiences a cleansing of those emotions and a sense of relief when the action is over.

Tragicomedy Many modern plays mix elements of comedy and tragedy. Some plays may begin like comedys but end more like tragedys. Some other plays, which may end with a brutal murder, have some very funny moments. They are not so easy to classify and are often designated tragicomedies to identify their mode. Some twentieth century dramatists have found that tragicomedy is more suitable for representing a complex, uncertain, and often irrational world than either tragedy or comedy alone.

Elements of Drama

Plot Plot is the unified arrangement of the incidents of the play. Traditionally plot structure consists of an exposition, presentation of background information necessary for the development of the plot; rising action or the complication, a set of conflicts and crises; climax, the turning point and the play’s most decisive crisis; falling action, a follow-up that moves toward the play’s resolution or denouement. Whether playwrights use a traditional plot structure or vary the formula, they control our expectations about what is

happening through plot; they decide when to present action and information, what to reveal and what to conceal. By arrangement of incidents, a dramatist may create suspense, evoke laughter, cause anxiety, or elicit surprise. Suspense is created by conflict. Drama is essentially the development and resolution of conflicts.

Characters When reading plays, we are soon absorbed in the characters: how they look and what their appearance tells us about them; what they say and what their manner of saying expresses; what they do and how their actions reveal who they are and what they represent. Though the characters in plays are not real people, their human qualities are the most engaging feature that attracts the audience. Drama lives in the encounter of characters, and its essence is human relationships, the things men and women say and do to each other. Dramatic characters come together and affect each other, making things happen by coming into conflict.

Dialogue Plays are stories told in dialogue, and drama are merely “persons moving about on a stage using words”(Ezra Pond), therefore the playwright’s choices for dialogue are critical to the success of the drama. Dialogue in plays typically has three major functions: to advance plot; to establish setting (the time and place of the action); and to reveal character. The last is the most important and consistent function. In some plays the dialogue is colloquial, resembling everyday speech, but in many poetic dramas, such as *Oedipus* and *Hamlet*, the dialogue avoids the conversational and aims at a more formal effect. Long passages of dialogue sometimes contain the philosophical parts of the play. Certain forms of dialogue are special to drama. The soliloquy is a speech delivered while no one else is on stage. Soliloquies are important because we may assume that anything said in total private is truthful and revealing. Another special form of dialogue is the aside, a brief comment meant to be heard only by the audience that reveals the character’s true feelings. Asides are not used very frequently because they break the spell of the drama, and they are usually included in the stage directions.

Staging By staging, we have in mind the spectacle a play presents in performance, its visual detail. This includes such things as the positions of actors onstage, their nonverbal gestures and movements, the scenic background, the props and costumes, lighting and sound effects. Some playwrights, like Shakespeare, provide only scant suggestions for action. Others provide details of movement, such as “picking up old newspapers and other trash from the floor”, which may precede or coincide with a piece of dialogue. Some directions suggest emotions: “hostile”; “strong”; “increasing anger”. Yet other directions are more complex and subtle, suggesting difficult actions for performance onstage. A playwright’s stage directions will sometimes help us see and hear things. But with or without stage directions, we have to use our aural and visual

imagination.

Theme From plot, character, dialogue and staging, we derive a sense of the play's meaning or significance. An abstraction of this meaning is its central idea or theme. When reading a play, we work back and forth between its details and our conception of its significance, letting the work modify and alter our notion of its theme, paying special attention to the dialogue of its characters who frequently represent conflicting ideas and viewpoints. It is very likely that a play will include more than one theme.

Suggestions on Reading Drama

1. Read the opening stage directions carefully. Try to set the scene mentally. Read the opening scene slowly, referring back to the cast of characters if you become confused about who is who.

2. Note the places in the action where conflicts develop most intensely. Consider what causes the conflict and how it might be resolved.

3. Decide what values the characters embody and believe in. Consider they may represent and examine their relationships with one another.

4. Listen carefully to the play's dialogue. Notice what the characters say and how they say things. Try to hear their tones of voice; consider what the characters' speeches reveal about them.

5. Try staging parts of the play in your mind. Try to visualize the play's setting from the dialogue and stage directions.

6. Try to sum up your sense of the play's central ideas. What point does it seem to make? What values emerge? What attitudes are taken toward these values by the playwright?

7. Consider the play's characters and action in relation to your own experience. Assess their values in the light of your own.

Enjoying Fiction

The literary genre of fiction, as we define today, roughly started in the 18th century. Judging by the length of writing, there are novels, novellas (short novels) and short stories. And with regard to the content of writing, we might figure out fairy tales and mystery stories, science fiction stories, and popular romance in this category. However, the earlier forms of fiction came into the world much earlier than we can accurately date. Those we might know include parables, fables and tales.

A parable is a brief story that teaches a lesson, often of a religious or spiritual nature. Likewise, fables are also brief stories that point to a certain moral. The difference between

them lies in the fact that the moral of fables is stated explicitly, whereas the moral of parables is implied. For instance, at the end of each piece of the famous *Aesop's Fables* there must be a clear sentence to elucidate such morals like "goodness is the reward for good deeds"; but when Jesus speaks to his disciples in the New Testament, he will always choose to tell a story without stating out his true teaching verbally. Another earlier form, the tale, is a story that narrates strange or attention-grabbing happenings in a direct manner, without detailed descriptions of character. If we read a parable or a fable to get enlightened by its moral, we read a tale maybe just for fun, for the delight of reading.

It might be generally overviewed that novels, novellas and short stories can be distinguished from each other through their lengths. This is not true. The short story developed and became popular in the 19th century. Parables, fables, and tales tend to summarize action, to tell what happens. Short stories, on the other hand, typically reveal character in dramatic scenes. The novella, the short novel, shares characteristics with both the novel and short story. Like the novel, the novella narrates incidents and portrays characters over a certain amount of time, which cannot be achieved by the short story due to the limitation of its scope. Yet like the short story, the novella also turns to moments of flashlights and quick turns of action to bring out a solidified theme.

Elements of Fiction

The basic elements of fiction are plot, character, setting, point of view, style and language, symbol, irony and theme. Each of them is worth plenty of discussion, but the reader should be aware that all the elements of a story work together to convey feeling and embody meaning.

Plot Plot, the action element in fiction, is the arrangement of events that make up a story. An enchanting plot is the magic that keeps readers turning the pages of a story and even want to hold their breath to read on. A skillful writer knows how to manipulate his plot in such a pattern or order as to reveal his intentions and properly respond to the readers at the same time. Therefore, in examining plot, we are concerned with causality, with how one action leads to or has relation with another one.

Characters Characters are the imaginary people that writers create for a certain purpose, sometimes identifying with them and sometimes judging them. In fact, most of us read a story not only to find out what happens but also to follow the fortunes of the characters. We want to know not just "how did it happen" but "how did it happen to him or her". The well-forged characters often come alive when we read about them. We often make distinctions between major and minor, static and dynamic characters. Theoretically speaking, a major character centers the plot of the story yet a minor character supports the

development process. A static character is one whose depiction remains in congruity throughout the development of the plot, while a dynamic character is one who may have undergone a certain change, sometimes an abrupt psychological one, in the story.

Setting Setting refers to the place or location of a story's action along with the time in which it occurs. For writers like James Joyce or William Faulkner, setting is essential to meaning. Functioning as more than a simple backdrop for action, it provides a historical and cultural context that enhances our understanding of the theme or characters.

Point of View It is necessary to study the point of view in a story because we want to know who is telling the story and how that factor shapes our understanding. For example, in a story with an objective point of view, we seem to get an unbiased account of the happening. The narrator does not state clearly how we should form a judgment, so every single piece of knowledge has to be inferred from the fictional fact. Yet if the narrator also takes part in the story, we get a first-person point of view. It feels more personal and might affect the reader more directly, but certainly has limitations of knowledge and vision.

Irony and Symbol Irony and symbol are two very important techniques used in many stories, but not in all. Writers have their own preferences. Irony is brought about by a contrast or discrepancy between one thing and another. For instance, the contrast may be between what is said and what is meant or between what happens and what is expected to happen. In some stories, the reader sees what is actually going on but some character may not see that. In that case, we see irony of circumstance. Symbols are simply objects, actions or events that convey meaning. The meaning will extend beyond their literal and superficial significance.

Theme A story's theme is its idea or point of view formulated as a generalization. Unlike earlier forms of fables or parables, modern fiction rarely reveals its theme openly so that it is abstracted from the details of characterization and action that compose the story. Different readers might see totally different themes in one story, because each of them inevitably relates the narration with their own life experience or vision.

Suggestions on Reading Fiction

1. Read the story a few times until you understand the plot and the characters. Some stories may not be designed for easy comprehension and immediate delight of the reader, for they demand thoughtfulness and wit.
2. Identify the setting and point of view of the story. Is there anything special about the setting? Why is the story told from this point of view?
3. Pay attention to special language phenomena, figure of speech, syntax features,