



# 英美文学史 及精要选读

引

◎ 编著

Essentials of  
English and American Literature:  
History & Selected Readings



中国经济出版社  
CHINA ECONOMIC PUBLISHING HOUSE

# 英美文学史 及精要选读

张丽娟 张艳波 张丽娟◎编著

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## 前言

作为我国高等院校本科英语专业的一门必修课程,英美文学教材的建设是我国高校本科英语专业课程设置和改革的重要内容。该教材的编写参考了国内诸多版本教材的编写,本着重点突出、简洁明了的原则,在编写时注重基于实际教学效果和方便学生使用,注重培养欣赏思辨能力及应试能力等。具体来讲,教材具有以下一些特点:

首先,教材的编写以文学史为框架,框架结构清楚明了。既囊括了经典作家,也涵盖了对20世纪作家的讲解与评论,较之很多教材更具有时代感,更方便学生的日常学习及研究生考试入学备考。

其次,每个篇章包括了以下这些部分:作家介绍、作品介绍、选段精选、问题思考及参考答案。在作家介绍部分,我们挑选了与其创作关系紧密的作家主要经历;作品介绍以作家主要作品和评论家关注最多的作品为主;故事情节介绍少而精,便于学习者分析时使用;而选段选读的原则是选经典段落,篇幅适中。此外,以前的很多教材都设有思考问题,但提供参考答案的较少。对于三本或专科学生而言,参考答案的提供无疑降低了他们学习的难度,便于他们对文学课程的学习保持兴趣。

最后,本书末尾对主要文学术语及文学批评理论进行了简单扼要的总结,这样更便于学习者使用。

本书的“英国文学”开篇到“浪漫主义时期”由张艳波老师编写,“维多利亚时期与二十世纪文学”由西安外国语学院毕业的张丽娟老师编写,“美国文学及附录”由四川外国语大学毕业的张丽娟老师编写。在教材的编著过程中,习题、文学理论的总结梳理参考了网络及多本教材,在此也向这些教材的编者表示深深的感谢。由于时间仓促水平有限,本书肯定存在不足和缺点,望读者不吝指正。

编者

2013年5月

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# **Part I**

## **English Literature**



## Chapter

# 1

## *The Anglo – Saxon Period(449 – 1066)*

### **1. Historical Background**

In about B. C. 600, the primitive Celtic tribes, Britons, began to migrate to the British Isles, the biggest island of which was Great Britain. Then in B. C. 55, the Roman Empire invaded the British Isles and defeated the Celts. After the Roman Empire had declined, all their troops were withdrawn in about the 5<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the British Isles were ruled by the Roman Empire for three and a half centuries. During this period, people in Britain had to pay taxes to the Roman Empire, but they still kept their own language, customs and religion.

Later in about the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Teutonic or Germanic tribes of Angles, Saxons and Jutes from Northern Europe began to invade the British Isles. They drove the native Celts to Wales, Scotland and Ireland, settled down there and merged into a whole people called English, who were the masters of England and the ancestors of the English people. Nowadays, their language is called Old English, which belongs to the Germanic language family.

From about the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Danes from Scandinavia started to come to the British Isles and plundered them. In the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the English people, united under the Wessex King, Alfred the Great (849 – ca. 899), drove the Viking Danes away. However, the Saxons were defeated by the Danes

once again in 1013. Some Danes lived in the British Isles forever, but they did not exert much influence.

*Beowulf* (《贝奥武夫》) is the first great English literary work and is regarded today as the national epic of the Anglo -

Saxons. The story is set in Scandinavia when the Jutes lived there. The poem is like the Scandinavian epics and it is composed of 3182 lines, divided into two parts. *Beowulf* depicts how Beowulf, a Scandinavian hero during the Danish king Hrothgar's reign, fought against the monster Grendel, his revengeful mother, and a fire - breathing dragon.

The king built Heorot, a great feast - hall to entertain his kinsmen and warriors, but a huge sea - monster, named Grendel, regularly appeared in the hall at night and ate some warriors. Then Beowulf, the king's nephew and a mighty warrior of Jutes, came to the hall with a band of warriors. One night, the monster came and killed a warrior. Beowulf fought with him and caught him in an iron grip. The monster escaped, with his arm left. At last, he died in his cave. The next night, the monster's mother, a water - witch, came to revenge for his son's death. With a magic sword found there, Beowulf and his warriors came to the mother's cave and killed the old monster. Then he saw Grendel's dead body and cut off his head. Beowulf was rewarded with treasure, and he went back to Jutland (the land of Jutes) and gave all treasure to Hygelac, his king. He was elected king after Hygelac's death and ruled for fifty years, during which, his people lived a peaceful and prosperous life. However, at the close of these fifty years, a fire - breathing dragon killed many of Beowulf's people as revenge, because he guarded a cave in which enormous treasure was hidden and he found a traveler had stolen a jeweled cup when he was asleep. Beowulf, accompanied by only one young warrior named Wiglaf, went to fight the three - head monster. After he cut off two of the dragon's heads, the dragon's last head breathed fire at Beowulf's face. Beowulf, together with Wiglaf, defeated the dragon. Unfortunately, he himself was seri-



ously injured and died. Wiglaf succeeded him to be the king.

### Exercises

1. Read the following passage and answer the questions:

(1) What work is the passage taken from?

(2) Make a brief comment on it.

*Wise sir, do not grieve. It is always better*

*To avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning.*

*For every one of us, living in this world*

*Means waiting for our end. Let whoever can*

*win glory before death. When a warrior is gone,*

*that will be his best and only bulwark.*

2. What role does religion play in *Beowulf*?



## Chapter

# 2

## *The Anglo – Norman Period (1066 – 1485)*

### **1. Historical Background**

In about 1066, the Normans, led by William who was the Duke of Normandy in Northern France, invaded England. The English and Norman armies fought bravely, however, the former were defeated and their leader Harold was killed because they were hesitant and not united. As a result, William, the Conqueror, became the king of England.

The Norman Conquest brought about great changes on England. First, the change regarding politics. A feudalist system was established in England. Second, the change of religion. The Roman – backed Catholic Church had a much stronger control over the country. Third, the change of language. After the conquest, there are three languages co – existing in England, that's, French, Latin and Old English. French was the official language, mainly adopted by the king and the Norman lords; Latin was used by the clergymen and scholars in universities; Old English was spoken only by the common English people. It must be pointed out that Old English was ignored first, but the lowly people kept to Old English and gradually the invaders were assimilated, thus, it survived. In addition, the vocabulary of the English language was enriched by words borrowed from French and Latin, and the grammar and pronunciation also went through changes. Fourth, the change of interaction of civilization. With the introduction of the culture and literature of

France, Italy and other European countries, a fresh wave of Mediterranean civilization came into England.

Romances are a popular literary form used by the ruling classes during the Anglo – Norman Period. To be more specific, Romances use narrative verse or prose to describe adventures or other heroic deeds of the nobles. In this way, the Norman nobles would like to justify their invasion to England.

The English romances mainly cover three subjects: Matter of France, Matter of Rome and Matter of Britain. Matter of France refers to a series of tales about Chalemagne (a real person, the mighty ruler of France about the year A. D. 800), his peers such as Roland and their wars against the Saracens. Matter of Rome is related to Roman history, Roman poetry and Greek mythology, such as the Trojan War and the Voyage of the Argonauts. Matter of Britain means the legendary history of Britain which consists of adventures of King Arthur and his Round – Table knights, like Sir Gawain and Launcelot.

### 3. Introduction to *Sir Gaiwain and the Green Knight* (*《高文爵士与绿衣骑士》》*)

is a late 14<sup>th</sup> – century Middle English romance. It belongs to Arthurian stories, known as the “beheading game”. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Sir Gawain, who is a knight of King Arthur’s Round Table, accepts a challenge from a mysterious Green Knight who challenges any knight to strike him with his axe if he will take a return blow in a year and a blow. Gawain accepts and beheads him with his blow. However, the Green Knight stands up, picks up his head and reminds Gawain of the appointed time.

As the date is coming, Sir Gawain sets off to find the Green Chapel and keep his promise. He goes through many adventures and battles and suffers from starva-

tion. Then he reaches a splendid castle and meets Bertilak de Hautdesert and his beautiful wife. Bertilak de Hautdesert is the lord of the castle. He and his wife are pleased to have such an honored guest. Besides, there is an elderly lady in the castle and she is treated with honor by all. Gawain tells them that he is going to the Green Chapel to meet his New Year's appointment, because there are only a few days left. Bertilak tells him that it is less than two miles away and proposes that Gawain stay at the castle till then. Gawain agrees.

Before going hunting the next day Bertilak tells Gawain that he will give Gawain whatever he catches, and Gawain has to give him whatever he might gain during the day. Gawain agrees. After Bertilak leaves, Lady Bertilak comes to Gawain's bedroom and seduces him. However, Gawain doesn't yield but gives a single kiss to show his unwillingness to offend her. When Bertilak returns and gives Gawain the deer he has killed, Gawain gives a kiss to Bertilak without telling its source. The next day the lady comes again, Gawain again avoids her advances politely. He exchanged two kisses for a hunted boar with Bertilak. The third day, Gawain still refuses the lady's seduction but accepts her belt, a girdle of green and gold silk, because the lady says the girdle will protect him from any all physical harm. That evening, Gawain exchanges the three kisses with Bertilak for the hunted fox—but he says nothing of the girdle.

The next day Gawain leaves for the Green Chapel with the girdle around his waist. He finds the Green Knight and bends his bared neck to receive his blow as promised. At the first swing Gawain cowers slightly and the Green Knight looks down on him for it. He feels ashamed of himself, so he does not flinch at the next swing; but to his surprise, again the full force of the blow is withheld. The knight says he was testing Gawain's nerve. Gawain is very angry and tells him to blow at once and so the knight does, but striking softly and causing only a slight wound on Gawain's neck. The game is over; Gawain is now free to defend himself from further harm. He seizes his sword, helmet and shield. At that time, the Green Knight laughs and reveals himself to be the lord of the castle, Bertilak de Hautdesert, transformed by magic. He explains that the entire adventure was a trick of the elderly lady Gawain saw at the castle who is the sorceress, Arthur's sister, who in-