

高等学校英语专业规划教材



(上册 英国文学)

英美

文学简明教程

● 张伯香 主编

*An Introductory Course Book
of English and American Literatures
(Volume One English Literature)*

华中科技大学出版社

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内 容 提 要

《英美文学简明教程》根据教育部新修订的英语教学大纲的要求编写,旨在培养学生阅读、理解、欣赏英语文学原著的能力,掌握文学批评的基本知识和方法;通过阅读和分析英美文学作品,促进学生语言基本功和人文素质的提高,增强学生对英美文学及文化的了解。

《英美文学简明教程》分上、下两册。上册为英国文学。作者在编写本教材的过程中,参考了大量国内外同类教材,吸收了国内外英国文学研究的最新成果。按照英国文学发展的历史顺序,编选了各个历史时期有代表性的作家的代表作品;选材上也注意诗歌、小说、戏剧和散文等各种体裁的适当搭配。

《英美文学简明教程 上册 英国文学》按照英国文学历史发展顺序分为6个单元,每一单元对应英国文学历史的一个时期。每个单元除了作家及代表作品介绍,还有历史背景、注释和思考题,以帮助学生提高理解、分析和鉴赏能力。

本书既可作为普通高等院校英语专业教材,也可供独立学院、教育学院、广播电视大学、成人高等教育及社会上英语自学者学习使用。

前 言

文学教学是语言教学中十分重要的一部分,它不仅可以帮助学生拓宽视野,提高分析鉴赏能力,而且可以熏陶学生的思想情操,加强他们对人类社会的认识与了解。教育部新近修订的《高等学校英语专业教学大纲》指出:文学课程的目的在于培养学生阅读、理解、欣赏英语文学原著的能力,掌握文学批评的基本知识和方法;通过阅读和分析英美文学作品,促进学生语言基本功和人文素质的提高,增强学生对西方文学及文化的了解。

《英美文学简明教程》的出版正是为了这一目的。在教材编写过程中,我们广泛比较了国内外现有的同类教材,按照选取适合学生阅读又具代表性的常见作品为原则,并结合编者自己多年的教学和研究体会,以英美文学发展的历史为顺序,编选了各个历史时期主要作家的代表作品。在体裁上,我们注意了诗歌、小说、戏剧与散文的适当比例。每章的内容包括历史文化背景、作者简介、作品选读、注释和思考题等。

《英美文学简明教程》是普通高等院校英语专业教材,也可供独立学院、教育学院、广播电视大学、成人高等教育及社会上英语自学者学习使用。与《英美文学选读》(张伯香主编,1998年外语教学与研究出版社出版)相比,本教程吸收了近几年国内外英美文学研究的最新成果,扩大了入选作者,大幅调整了选读作品,增加了学习思考题,从而使教材内容更加充实,语言叙述更加简明,选读作品的难度也相对降低;我们相信这将更加有利于学生的理解与掌握。为方便英语专业教学计划的执行,我们将本教程分为上、下两册:上册为英国文学,下册为美国文学,意在用一年的课时,通过阅读原汁原味的英美诗歌、小说、戏剧和散文作品,让学生对英美文学发展的历史脉络、各个时期的主要文学流派及其创作特点有一个基本的了解,从而提高学生对文学作品的感受能力、分析能力和鉴赏能力。

《英美文学简明教程》的问世与华中科技大学出版社领导的关心与支持密不可分,更是杨鸥等编辑们辛勤劳动的结晶。在此,我谨代表所有编者向他们表示诚挚的谢意。

参加《英美文学简明教程》上册编写工作的有江宝珠、余永锋、何洁、路璐、姚岚、邹凌等老师,参加下册编写工作的有左广明、刘堃、鄢畅、雪莲、杨开杰、黄守刚等老师,他们在选材、撰稿、注释、录入、校对等方面做了大量的工作。全书的内容设计、章节安排、文字修改和最后的通读定稿都由主编负责。由于多人执笔,风格难以统一,各种错漏也在所难免,敬请广大读者批评指正。

张伯香

2009年4月于珞珈山

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Chapter 1 The Old and Medieval Period

1.1 An Introduction

Since historical times, the English race has shaped itself out of several distinct peoples that had successively occupied or conquered the island of Great Britain. The earliest inhabitants of the island were the Celts. Then for over three hundred years, from the first century A. D. to the beginning of the fifth, the island became a Roman province. In the middle of the fifth century, the Jutes, Angles and Saxons from the shores of the North Sea came in large bands with the purpose of permanent settlement. The Norman-French arrived six centuries later at the time of the Norman invasion. The Anglo-Saxons brought to England the Germanic language and culture, while the Normans brought a fresh wave of Mediterranean civilization, which includes Greek culture, Roman law and the Christian religion. It is the cultural influences of these conquests that provided the source for the rise and growth of English literature.

The period of Old English literature extends from about 450 to 1066, the year of the Norman conquest of England. The Germanic tribes from Northern Europe brought with them not only the Anglo-Saxon language, but also a specific poetic tradition which is both bold and strong, mournful and elegiac in spirit. Generally speaking, the Old English poetry that has survived can be divided into two groups: the religious group and the secular one. The poetry of the religious group is mainly on biblical themes. *Genesis A*, *Genesis B* and *Exodus* are poems based on the Old Testament; whereas *The Dream of the Rood* comes from the New Testament. In this poem, Christ is portrayed as the young warrior striding to embrace death and victory, while the rood (cross) itself takes on the burden of his suffering. In addition to these religious compositions, Old English poets produced the national epic poem, *Beowulf*, and a number of more or less lyrical poems of shorter length, which do not contain specific Christian doctrines but evoke the Anglo-Saxon sense of the harshness of circumstance and the sadness of the human lot. *The Wanderer*, *Deor*, *The Seafarer* and *The Wife's Complaint* are among the most beautiful in this secular group. The harsh climate of North Sea strongly affected the tone or mood of the poets. The life is sorrowful, and the speakers are fatalistic, though at the same time courageous and determined.

The Norman Conquest brought England more than a change of rulers. Politically, a feudal system was established in England; religiously, the Rome-backed Catholic Church had a much stronger control over the country; and great changes also took place in languages. After the conquest, three languages co-existed in England: French became the official language used by the king and the Norman lords; Latin became the principal tongue of church affairs and in universities; and Old English was spoken only by the common English people. Thus, Britain was opened up to the whole European continent.

With the Norman Conquest, the medieval period of English literature started. In the early part of the period, i. e. from 1066 up to the mid-14th century, there was not much to say about literature in English. It was almost a barren period in literary creation. But in the second half of the 14th century, English literature started to flourish with the appearance of

writers like Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, John Gower and others. In comparison with Old English literature, Middle English literature deals with a wider range of subjects; and it is uttered by more voices and is presented in a greater diversity of styles, tones and genres. Popular folk literature also occupies an important place in this period. Its presentation of life is not only accurate but also lively and colorful, though the originality of thought is often absent in the literary works of this period. Besides, Medieval English literature strongly reflects the principles of the medieval Christian doctrines, which were primarily concerned with the issue of personal salvation.

Romance, which uses narrative verse or prose to sing knightly adventures or other heroic deeds, is a popular literary form in the medieval period. It has developed the characteristic medieval patterns of the quest, the test, the meeting with the evil giant and the encounter with the beautiful beloved. The hero is usually the knight who sets out on a journey to accomplish some missions—to protect the church, to attack infidelity, to rescue a maiden, to meet a challenge, or to obey a knightly command. There is often a liberal use of the improbable, sometimes even supernatural, things in romance such as mysteries and fantasies. Romantic love is an important part of the plot in romance. Characterization is standardized so that heroes, heroines and wicked stewards can be easily moved from one romance to another. While the structure is loose and episodic, the language is simple and straightforward. The importance of the romance itself can be seen as a means of showing medieval aristocratic men and women in relation to their idealized view of the world. If the epic reflects a heroic age, the romance reflects a chivalric one.

Among the three great Medieval English poets, the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the one who produced the best romance of the period; while William Langland is a more realistic writer who dealt with the religious and social issues of his day in *Piers Plowman*. However, it is Chaucer alone who, for the first time in English literature, presented to us a comprehensive realistic picture of the English society of his time and created a whole gallery of vivid characters from all walks of life in his masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*.

1.2 Geoffrey Chaucer

1.2.1 About the Author

Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400) was born into a middle-class family of a wealthy wine merchant around the year 1343. In 1357 and 1358 he was a page to the wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence. As a young man, he fought for King Edward III, and was captured and ransomed later. He married in 1366, and pursued a public life, eventually holding jobs as Italian diplomat, customs official, and a Justice of the Peace. Chaucer's varied experiences gave him a broad opportunity to find much to write about, and he wrote through his entire lifetime. His early writings followed French trends, but his later ones were greatly influenced by Italian authors, notably Boccaccio and Petrarch. He began *The Canterbury Tales* in 1373 and was occupied by it on and off for the rest of his life. *The Canterbury Tales* was his most famous but unfinished work. It is unique for its variety, humor, grace and realism. Because of this, Chaucer became the first great poet of the English nation and gave strong influences

over the development of English literature. He died in London and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The influence of Renaissance was already felt in the field of English literature when Chaucer was learning from the great Italian writers in the last part of the 14th century. In his works, Chaucer affirmed man's right to pursue earthly happiness and opposed asceticism; he praised man's energy, intellect, quick wit and love of life; he exposed and satirized the social vices, including religious abuses. It can thus be said that though essentially still a medieval writer, Chaucer bore marks of humanism and anticipated a new era to come.

1.2.2 Excerpts from the General Prologue¹ of *The Canterbury Tales*

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root², and all
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power³
As brings about the engendering of the flower⁴,
When also Zephyrus⁵ with his sweet breath
Exhales an air in every grove and heath
Upon the tender shoots, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run⁶,
And the small fowls are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye
(So nature pricks them and their heart engages)
Then people long to go on pilgrimages
And palmers⁷ long to seek the stranger strands
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands⁸,
And specially, from every shire's end
In England, down to Canterbury they wend⁹
To seek the holy blissful martyr¹⁰, quick
To give his help to them when they were sick.

It happened in that season that one day
In Southwark¹¹, at The Tabard¹², as I lay
Ready to go on pilgrimage and start
For Canterbury, most devout at heart,
At night there came into that hostelry¹³
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry folk happening then to fall
In fellowship, and they were pilgrims all
That towards Canterbury meant to ride.
The rooms and stables of the inn were wide¹⁴,
They made us easy, all was of the best.
And shortly, when the sun had gone to rest,
By speaking to them all upon the trip
I soon was of them in fellowship
And promised to rise early and take the way

To Canterbury, as you heard me say.

But nonetheless, while I have time and space,
Before my story takes a further pace¹⁵,
It seems a reasonable thing to say
What their condition¹⁶ was, the full array¹⁷
Of each of them, as it appeared to me,
According to profession and degree¹⁸,
And what apparel¹⁹ they were riding in;
And at a Knight I therefore will begin.

* * *

There also was a Nun, a Prioress²⁰;
Her way of smiling was simple and coy²¹.
Her greatest oath was only "By St. Loy!"²²
And she was known as Madam Eglantyne,
And well she sang a service²³, with a fine
Intoning through her nose, as was most seemly,
And she spoke daintily in French, extremely,
After the school of Stratford-atte-Bowe²⁴;
French in the Paris style she did not know.
At meat her manners were well taught withal;
No morsel from her lips did she let fall,
Nor dipped her fingers in the sauce too deep;
But she could carry a morsel up and keep
The smallest drop from falling on her breast.
For courtliness²⁵ she had a special zest.
And she would wipe her upper lip so clean
That not a trace of grease was to be seen
Upon the cup when she had drunk; to eat,
She reached a hand sedately for the meat.
She certainly was very entertaining,
Pleasant and friendly in her ways, and straining
To counterfeit a courtly kind of grace,
A stately bearing fitting to her place,
And to seem dignified in all her dealings.
As for her sympathies and tender feelings,
She was so charitably solicitous.
She used to weep if she but saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bleeding.
And she had little dogs she would be feeding
With roasted flesh, or milk, or fine white bread.
And bitterly she wept if one were dead
Or someone took a stick and made it smart;
She was all sentiment and tender heart.

Her veil was gathered in a seemly way,
Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-gray;
Her mouth was very small, but soft and red,
Her forehead, certainly, was fair of spread,
Almost a span²⁶ across the brows, I own;
She was indeed by no means undergrown.
Her cloak, I noticed, had a graceful charm.
She wore a coral trinket on her arm,
A set of beads, the gaudies²⁷ tricked²⁸ in green,
Whence hung a golden brooch of brightest sheen
On which there first was graven a crowned A,
And lower, *Amor vincit omnia*²⁹.

* * *

A worthy *woman* from beside Bath city
Was with us, somewhat deaf, which was a pity.
In making cloth she showed so great a bent³⁰
She bettered those of Ypres and of Ghent³¹
In all the parish not a dame dared stir
Towards the altar steps in front of her
And if indeed they did, so wrath was she
As to be quite put out of charity³².
Her kerchiefs were of finely woven ground³³;
I dared have sworn they weighed a good ten pound,
The ones she wore on Sunday, on her head.
Her hose were of the finest scarlet red
And gartered tight; her shoes were soft and new.
Bold was her face, handsome, and red in hue.
A worthy woman all her life, what's more
She'd had five husbands, all at the church door,
Apart from other company in youth³⁴;
No need just now to speak of that, forsooth³⁵.
And she had thrice been to Jerusalem,
Seen many strange rivers and passed over them;
She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne,
Saint James of Compostella and Cologne³⁶,
And she was skilled in wandering by the way.
She had gap-teeth, set widely, truth to say.
Easily on an ambling horse she sat
Well wimpled up, and on her head a hat
As broad's is a buckler or a shield;
She had a flowing mantle that concealed
Large hips, her heels spurred sharply under that.
In company she liked to laugh and chat

And knew the remedies for love's mischances,
An art in which she knew the oldest dances³⁷.

Notes

1. In this modern English translation, Chaucer's original metrical form, the heroic couplet, is used.
2. **pierce the drought of March to the root**: The gentle spring rain penetrates the very roots of the plants. Here drought of March refers to the general situation on the European continent, not specifically to Britain, for March in Britain is not very dry.
3. **The veins are bathed in liquor of such power**: Spring rain provides enough water for every rib of the leaves, thus endowing the plants with its power.
4. **the engendering of the flower**: the budding of the flower. Here, engendering means springing up.
5. **Zephyrus**: the west wind (personified).
6. **the young sun / His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run**: The sun is young because it has run only half way through the Ram, which is the first sign of the Zodiac. The sun runs through the sign of the Ram annually from March 21st to April 21st.
7. **palmer**: pilgrims, so called because they carried palms to show that they had been to Jerusalem.
8. **the stranger strands/ Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands**: the foreign shores where there were the distant shrines of the saints, which were considered as holy places in different countries.
9. **wend**: (archaic) go.
10. **the holy blissful martyr**: Here it refers to Thomas à Becket who in his lifetime was Chancellor of Britain and Archbishop of Canterbury. He resisted the efforts of King Henry II to deprive the church courts of part of their power. As a result of the quarrel, four of Henry's knights rode to Canterbury and murdered Thomas in the cathedral. Thomas was later considered a martyr and worshipped as a saint. His tomb at Canterbury became one of the most famous shrines in England.
11. **Southwark**: a suburb of London.
12. **The Tabard**: an inn at Southwark.
13. **hostelry**: an inn, a lodging house.
14. **wide**: spacious.
15. **Before my story takes a further pace**: Before I proceed with my story.
16. **condition**: social status, position.
17. **the full array**: the complete outfit (dress and appearance).
18. **degree**: rank.
19. **apparel**: clothing.
20. **Prioress**: a nun corresponding in rank to a prior (i. e. the superior of a convent).
21. **coy**: The word carries two slightly different meanings: (1) "shrinking from contact or familiarity", (2) "marked by cute, coquettish or artful playfulness".
22. **"By St. Loy!"**: a very mild oath. St. Loy was a well-known French goldsmith in the 6th century.

23. **sang a service**: sang hymns in a church service.
24. **Stratford-atte-Bowe**: a monastery near London. Chaucer is making fun of the prioress by describing her speaking of French with a strong local accent.
25. **courtliness**: courtly behaviour, refined manners adopted by courtiers and ladies of the court.
26. **a span**: the maximum distance between the tips of the thumb and the little finger.
27. **gaudies**: A gaud is a large bead placed between every ten beads in a rosary to mark a division in a prayer.
28. **tricked**: decorated.
29. ***Amor vincit omnia***: (Latin) Love conquers all.
30. **a bent**: a natural skill.
31. **Ypres and Ghent**: cities in Belgium known for clothmaking in Chaucer's time.
32. **put out of charity**: to lose temper.
33. **ground**: texture.
34. **Apart from other company in youth**: not including other lovers she had in her youth.
35. **forsooth**: (archaic) truly, no doubt.
36. **Boulogne, / Saint James of Compostella and Cologne**: Boulogne, a seaside city in France; Compostella, a city in Spain; Cologne, a city in Germany. In Chaucer's time, the shrines of these places attracted many pilgrims.
37. **An art in which she knew the oldest dances**: She got to know all the old tricks of the art (of love).

Study Questions

1. What is the "framing device" that Chaucer uses for his collection of stories?
2. Study lines 1-18 of the "General Prologue". What seems to be the motives offered for the pilgrimage? In what ways are the season and the nature images important factors?
3. Based on Prioress's portrait, can you give a possible reason why she is undertaking this pilgrimage?
4. What details does the narrator use in describing the Prioress, and in what order?
5. Why does the Wife of Bath go on pilgrimage?
6. How does Chaucer reveal his attitude toward the Wife of Bath?

Essay Topics

1. Please name and define five specific methods of characterization Chaucer uses in the "General Prologue". In what additional ways are the pilgrims characterized?
2. Do you think the Prioress is portrayed by Chaucer as a perfect lady or a perfect nun? Why?

1.3 Folk Ballads

The folk ballad is a popular literary form; it comes from unlettered people rather than from professional minstrels or scholarly poets. As the main form of medieval folk literature, the folk ballad has an oral tradition which makes it easier to remember and memorize. Therefore, all the stylistic features of the folk ballad have derived from their oral nature. The first is its simple language; the simplicity is reflected both in the verse form and the colloquial

expressions. So far as the verse form is concerned, ballads are composed mainly in quatrains, which are known as the ballad stanza, rhyming *abcb*, with the first and third lines carrying 4 accented syllables and the second and fourth carrying 3. By making use of a simple, plain language or dialect of the common people with colloquial and, sometimes, idiomatic expressions in its narration or dialogues, the ballad leaves a strong dramatic effect to the reader. The second is its wonderful story which deals only with the culminating incident or climax of a plot. Most of the ballads have a romantic or tragic dimension, with a tragic incident, often a murder or an accidental death, as their subject. Like classical tragedy, ballads have an inevitability, which reflects the folk belief that people are lured into the fatally attractive traps just because all human life is shaped by fate. It is a common pattern of romantic tragic balladry that if one lover dies the other must follow suit. So usually the hero would die of his wound, and the heroine of her sorrow. The third is its dominant mood or tone, either tragic like "Sir Patrick Spens", which tells a story of treachery, or comic like "Get up and Bar the Door", which presents a funny scene of the domestic life. Furthermore, to strengthen the dramatic effect of the narration, ballads also make full use of hyperbole; actions and events are much exaggerated. This hyperbolic style partly comes from a desire to astonish, for the poor folk would be delighted to hear of the larger-than-life exploits of ballad people. Music has an important formative influence on ballads, too. Another impressive feature of the ballad is the use of refrains and other kinds of repetitions. Poetically the refrains are decorative; musically they are absolutely essential. Through refrains and repetitions, the narration is lent a quality of liturgy, or of incantation. Magic or supernatural force, the perpetual presence of impossibility, is a rich narrative source of balladry. In the ballad world, things happen suddenly and without warning; only the help of magic or supernatural force can overcome the fatal powers of destruction. Love, adventure, courageous feats of daring, and sudden disaster are frequent topics of folk ballads.

1.3.1 "The Three Ravens"¹

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Down a down, hey down, hey down,
They were three ravens sat on a tree,
With a down.

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as black as black might be,
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

The one of them said to his mate.
"Where shall we our breakfast take?"

"Down in yonder green field
There lies a knight slain under his shield.

His hounds they lie down at his feet,

So well they can their master keep².

“His hawks they fly so eagerly,³
There’s no fowl⁴ dare him come nigh.”

Down there comes a fallow doe⁵,
As great with young as she might go.

She lifted up his bloody head,
And kissed his wounds that were so red.

She got him up upon her back,
And carried him to earthen lake⁶.

She buried him before the prime⁷;
She was dead herself ere evensong⁸ time.

God send every gentleman
Such hawks, such hounds, and such lemman⁹.

Notes

1. Instead of the regular ballad form, this ballad basically consists of 11 two-lined stanzas. The second and the fourth lines in the first stanza and the third line in the second stanza are tunes sung by the ballad singer to attract the listener’s attention .
2. **So well they can their master keep**: So well do they keep guard over their master.
3. **His hawks they fly so eagerly**: The hawks he bred fly so fiercely.
4. **no fowl**: no bird.
5. **fallow doe**: reddish brown female deer. Here the doe is alluding to the knight’s mistress.
6. **earthen lake**: pit.
7. **prime**: the first hour of the morning.
8. **evensong**: the service of evening prayer in the church.
9. **lemman**: mistress.

Study Questions

1. What happens in this ballad?
2. What is the mood of this ballad?
3. What is its theme?

1.3.2 “Get Up and Bar the Door”

It fell about the Martinmas¹ time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our good wife got puddings to make,
And she’s boild them in the pan.