



高校英语选修课系列教材

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE FICTION AND ITS READERS

英美文学赏析 ——小说与读者

徐怀静

【美】盖瑞·哈蒙 (Gary Harmon)

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内 容 简 介

本书为读者提供了一片视野、一面棱镜，以看破生活的迷雾，透析人性的本质。本书将短篇小说按照主题分为6个单元：“何为人？”“人所遭遇的逆境”“人该如何应对？”“人所应珍惜的价值”“人所应拥有的生存观”“生命的归宿”。每个单元荟萃4篇经典短篇，对上述哲学问题给予文学独特的阐释与解答。通过对经典作品与作家具有穿刺力的“导读”与“提问”，每个单元围绕上述6个环环相扣的主题，给予读者最有灵性的启迪。

本书可供高校英语专业和非英语专业的本科生使用。

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Preface

15 years ago, Gary and I attended a conference in Toronto; 15 years later, I was in Toronto alone. Gary had several wishes for me—to publish this book and the collection of my poems.

This book is of great significance to us. Throughout his life, Gary was completely and thoroughly in love with literature. We studied literature as if we were studying life. The framework of this book shows our lifelong effort of studying literature, understanding literature, studying life and understanding life. And the most striking innovation is its thematic organization, not found in other college-level short story anthologies: “The Person: What Is Human Being?” “Personal Struggle: What Adversaries Do Humans Face?” “Conduct: How Does a Person Act?” “Value: What Should a Person Value?” “Outlook: What Views of Existence Can a Person Have?” “Purpose: To What Ends Can a Person Live?” This fresh organizational scheme reflects the great endeavor of both fiction writer and its readers to understand the truth of life.

The strength of this book partially lies in that its choices are not limited to any nation or age, although its selected short stories mainly come from English literature. The best short stories of Western literature have been included here for their power to touch our hearts. Glossary of literary terms should have been provided, which we will surely make up in the second edition of this book.

The teaching and reading of this book will be of great value to those seeking the meaning of life, which is all Gary ever wanted.

Huaijing Xu

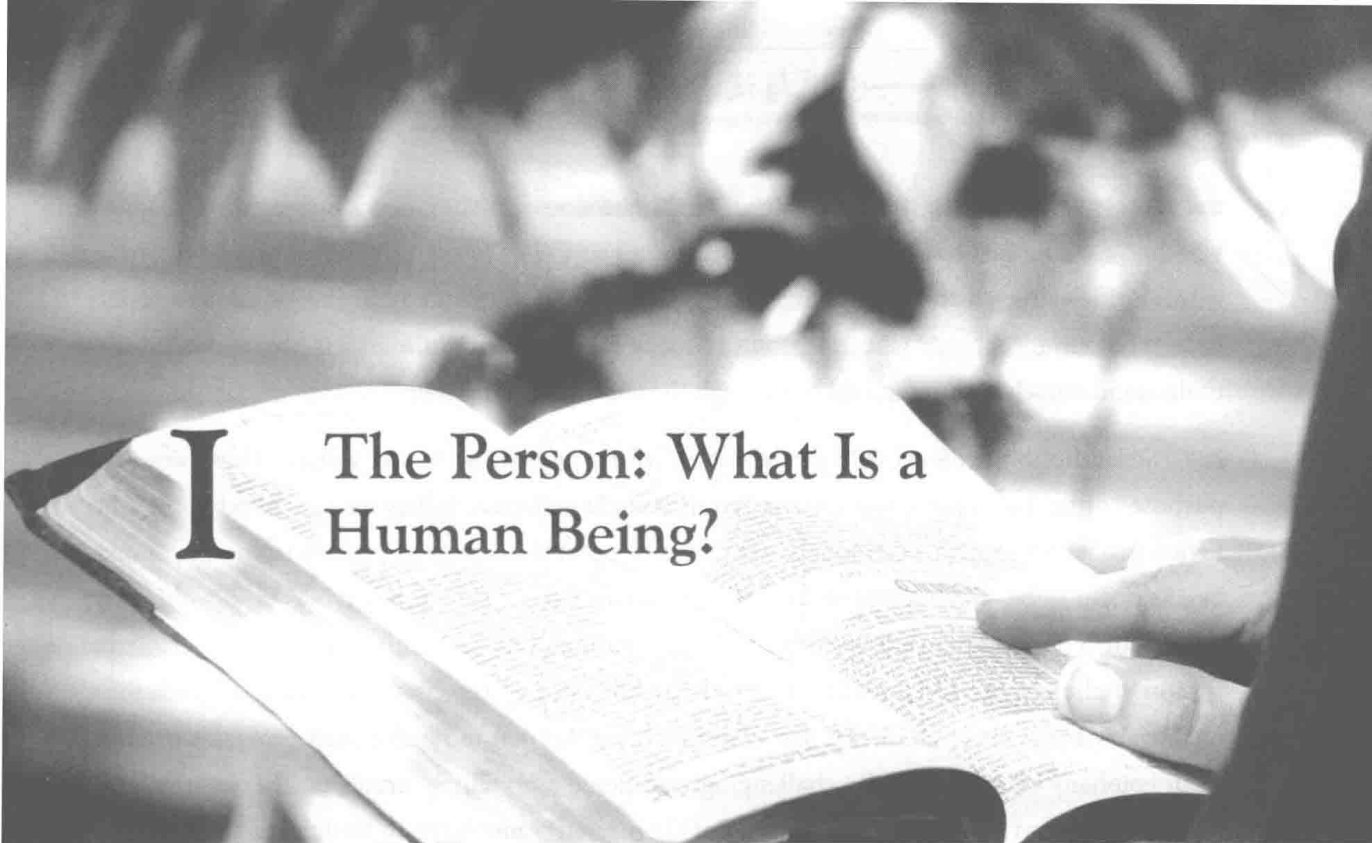
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I The Person: What Is a Human Being?

Man's nature, man's dignity is that he acts, lives, loves, and finally destroys himself seeking to penetrate the mystery of existence, and unless we partake in some way, as some part of this human exploration..., then we are no more than the pimps of society and the betrayers of our Self.

—from Norman Mailer

This is a strong statement from one of the foremost American novelists of our time. Exploring “the mystery of existence” fulfills part of our human nature. One of the most important objects of our exploration is surely the human being. The attempt to fathom the nature of the person and the conditions of our existence may well be the principal pleasure of living. If we do not explore, we betray our human nature, or “our Self”, as Mailer says. The discoveries are sure to be fascinating, and perhaps endless though. To know the human being is to know ourselves and other people better.

Virtually all fiction reveals some aspects of the human being, for at center, fiction need characters—ones in conflict with some adversaries or multiple adversaries. Characters, as metaphorical inventions, express selected features of the mystery of existence as possibilities of the human being—our struggles, values, conduct, outlooks, or purposes are explored in each of

the successive sections in this book. Reading about a doctor who makes a house call to diagnose whether a young girl has a contagious disease in *The Use of Force*, or about a beautiful woman who sacrifices herself to save the lives of a group of travelers in *The Heroine* or about a foolish but supremely good baker who is the butt of many jokes in *Gimpel the Fool* is a way of coming to understand ourselves through others, through the characters of fiction.

Some fiction projects role models or reinforce prevailing social values. These are valid purposes of fiction because our culture requires some collective values we can all rely on. Other fiction probes alternative role models and serves to upset short-sighted notions of the way human beings ought to be. Some of the short stories, novellas, fables, tales, and parables in this book may even disturb our common storywriting traditions. By doing so, such anti-stories and experimental fiction challenge the usual assumptions about how stories represent life, such as traditional portrayals of persons in conflict proceeding in a linear fashion to resolve their problems or arrive at an epiphany or revelation. By challenging traditional storytelling strategies, the authors imply that our disrupted contemporary lives are not appropriately portrayed in traditional ways. Probing and unsettling fiction may in fact “entertain” thoughtful readers, but fiction is more than “just entertainment” or unconnected with the important business of life.

The stories in this section challenge and expand/enrich our notions of what persons are or can be through their characters. Besides the stories included in this part, we strongly recommend you *The Use of Force*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Savant Who Seized Power*, *In the Region of Ice*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and *A Father-to-Be*.

In *The Use of Force*, we can find a darker side of human beings. The doctor, a representative of civilized order and intelligence, is overwhelmed by his own capacity for pleasure from using force on a child patient, a young girl who exhibits her for stubbornness. In *The Cask of Amontillado*, the readers share short journey of two men who, while drinking, descend into a wine cellar, where, in the haze the wine drinking produces, the darkest part of man's nature emerges. After a murder, the protagonist joins in the jubilation of a carnival going on above ground. Clearly, the margin between a disturbed mind and a rational one is very slim. *The Savant Who Seized Power* is a fable showing us a way in which the nature of a person (or animal) prevails over the relationship one holds with another. In *In the Region of Ice*, we meet a nun who teaches English at a university contending with a young Jewish boy who disturbs her usual way of relating to students, which is a way of protecting herself against whatever her particular nature avoids. What does she try to avoid, ironically? True commitment to her faith and true involvement in the welfare of another person. We should be disturbed, and most readers surely are.

Then, we encounter *Jack and the Beanstalk*, a fairy tale which many might regard as beneath serious critical consideration. We follow a young boy's natural but essential growth process through



a clearly symbolic caper he successfully completes by infiltrating a giant's castle and making off with a goose, a leather bag of gold, and a singing harp. And finally, in *A Father-to-Be*, an urban man in his twenties struggles to maintain his freedom, but in the end submits to the marriage that, for him, is inevitable. An often delightful and often dreadful learning experience, learning about the human being is one worth pursuing all our life long.

A&P

John Updike

In walks these three girls in nothing but bathing suits. I'm in the third check-out slot, with my back to the door, so I don't see them until they're over by the bread. The one that caught my eye first was the one in the plaid green two-piece. She was a chunky kid, with a good tan and a sweet broad soft-looking can with those two crescents of white just under it, where the sun never seems to hit, at the top of the backs of her legs. I stood there with my hand on a box of HiHo crackers trying to remember if I rang it up or not. I ring it up again and the customer starts giving me hell. She's one of these cash-register-watchers, a witch about fifty with rouge on her cheekbones and no eyebrows, and I know it made her day to trip me up. She'd been watching cash registers forty years and probably never seen a mistake before.

By the time I got her feathers smoothed and her goodies into a bag—she gives me a little snort in passing, if she'd been born at the right time they would have burned her over in Salem—by the time I get her on her way the girls had circled around the bread and were coming back, without a pushcart, back my way along the counters, in the aisle between the check-outs and the Special bins. They didn't even have shoes on. There was this chunky one, with the two-piece—it was bright green and the seams on the bra were still sharp and her belly was still pretty pale so I guessed she just got it (the suit)—there was this one, with one of those chubby berry-faces, the lips all bunched together under her nose, this one, and a tall one, with black hair that hadn't quite frizzed right, and one of these sunburns right across under the eyes, and a chin that was too long—you know, the kind of girl other girls think is very “striking” and “attractive” but never quite makes it, as they very well know, which is why they like her so much—and then the third one, that wasn't quite so tall. She was the queen. She kind of led them, the other two peeking around and making their shoulders round. She didn't look around, not this queen. She just walked straight on slowly, on these long white prima donna legs. She came down a little hard on her heels, as if she didn't walk in her bare feet that much, putting down her heels and then letting the weight move along to her toes as if she was testing the floor with every step, putting a little deliberate extra action into it. You never know for sure how girls' minds work (do you really think it's a mind in there or just a little buzz like a bee in a glass jar?) but you got the idea she had



talked the other two into coming in here with her, and now she was showing them how to do it, walk slow and hold yourself straight.

She had on a kind of dirty-pink—beige maybe, I don't know—bathing suit with a little nubble all over it, and the straps were down. They were off her shoulders looped loose around the cool tops of her arms, and I guess as a result the suit had slipped a little on her, so all around the top of the cloth there was this shining rim. If it hadn't been there you wouldn't have known there could have been anything whiter than those shoulders. With the straps pushed off, there was nothing between the top of the suit and the top of her head except just her, this clean bare plane of the top of her chest down from the shoulder bones like a dented sheet of metal tilted in the light. I mean, it was more than pretty.

She had sort of oaky hair that the sun and salt had bleached, done up in a bun that was unraveling, and a kind of prim face. Walking into the A&P with your straps down, I suppose it's the only kind of face you can have. She held her head so high her neck, coming up out of those white shoulders, looked kind of stretched, but I didn't mind. The longer her neck was, the more of her there was.

She must have felt me in the corner of her eye and over my shoulder, Stokesie in the second slot watching, but she didn't tip. Not this queen. She kept her eyes moving across the racks, and stopped, and turned so slow it made my stomach rub the inside of my apron, and buzzed to the other two, who kind of huddled against her for relief, and they all three of them went up the cat-and-dog-food-breakfast-cereal-macaroni-rice-raisins-seasonings-spreads-spaghetti-soft-drinks-rackers-and-cookies aisle. From the third slot I look straight up this aisle to the meat counter, and I watched them all the way. The fat one with the tan sort of fumbled with the cookies, but on second thought she put the packages back. The sheep pushing their carts down the aisle—the girls were walking against the usual traffic (not that we have one-way signs or anything)—were pretty hilarious. You could see them, when Queenie's white shoulders dawned on them, kind of jerk, or hop, or hiccup, but their eyes snapped back to their own baskets and on they pushed. I bet you could set off dynamite in an A&P and the people would by and large keep reaching and checking oatmeal off their lists and muttering "Let me see, there was a third thing, began with A, asparagus, no, ah, yes, applesauce!" or whatever it is they do mutter. But there was no doubt, this jiggled them. A few house-slaves in pin curlers even looked around after pushing their carts past to make sure what they had seen was correct.

You know, it's one thing to have a girl in a bathing suit down on the beach, where what with the glare nobody can look at each other much anyway, and another thing in the cool of the A&P, under the fluorescent lights, against all those stacked packages, with her feet paddling along naked over our checkerboard green-and-cream rubber-tile floor.

“Oh Daddy,” Stokesie said beside me. “I feel so faint.”

“Darling,” I said. “Hold me tight.” Stokesie’s married, with two babies chalked up on his fuselage already, but as far as I can tell that’s the only difference. He’s twenty-two, and I was nineteen this April.

“Is it done?” he asks, the responsible married man finding his voice. I forgot to say he thinks he’s going to be manager some sunny day, maybe in 1990 when it’s called the Great Alexandrov and Petrooshki Tea Company or something.

What he meant was, our town is five miles from a beach, with a big summer colony out on the Point, but we’re right in the middle of town, and the women generally put on a shirt or shorts or something before they get out of the car into the street. And anyway these are usually women with six children and varicose veins mapping their legs and nobody, including them, could care less. As I say, we’re right in the middle of town, and if you stand at our front doors you can see two banks and the Congregational church and the newspaper store and three real-estate offices and about twenty-seven old free-loaders tearing up Central Street because the sewer broke again. It’s not as if we’re on the Cape; we’re north of Boston and there’s people in this town haven’t seen the ocean for twenty years.

The girls had reached the meat counter and were asking McMahon something. He pointed, they pointed, and they shuffled out of sight behind a pyramid of Diet Delight peaches. All that was left for us to see was old McMahon patting his mouth and looking after them sizing up their joints. Poor kids, I began to feel sorry for them, they couldn’t help it.

Now here comes the sad part of the story, at least my family says it’s sad but I don’t think it’s sad myself. The store’s pretty empty, it being Thursday afternoon, so there was nothing much to do except lean on the register and wait for the girls to show up again. The whole store was like a pinball machine and I didn’t know which tunnel they’d come out of. After a while they come around out of the far aisle, around the light bulbs, records at discount of the Caribbean Six or Tony Martin Sings or some such gunk you wonder they waste the wax on, six packs of candy bars, and plastic toys done up in cellophane that fall apart when a kid looks at them anyway. Around they come, Queenie still leading the way, and holding a little gray jar in her hand. Slots Three through Seven are unmanned and I could see her wondering between Stokes and me, but Stokesie with his usual luck draws an old party in baggy gray pants who stumbles up with four giant cans of pineapple juice (what do these bums do with all that pineapple juice’ I’ve often asked myself) so the girls come to me. Queenie puts down the jar and I take it into my fingers icy cold. Kingfish Fancy Herring Snacks in Pure Sour Cream: 49¢. Now her hands are empty, not a ring or a bracelet, bare as God made them, and I wonder where the money’s coming from. Still with that prim look she lifts a folded dollar bill out of the hollow at the center of her nubbled pink top. The jar went heavy in my hand.



Really, I thought that was so cute.

Then everybody's luck begins to run out. Lengel comes in from haggling with a truck full of cabbages on the lot and is about to scuttle into that door marked MANAGER behind which he hides all day when the girls touch his eye. Lengel's pretty dreary, teaches Sunday school and the rest, but he doesn't miss that much. He comes over and says, "Girls, this isn't the beach."

Queenie blushes, though maybe it's just a brush of sunburn I was noticing for the first time, now that she was so close. "My mother asked me to pick up a jar of herring snacks." Her voice kind of startled me, the way voices do when you see the people first, coming out so flat and dumb yet kind of tony, too, the way it ticked over "pick up" and "snacks". All of a sudden I slid right down her voice into her living room. Her father and the other men were standing around in ice-cream coats and bow ties and the women were in sandals picking up herring snacks on toothpicks off a big plate and they were all holding drinks the color of water with olives and sprigs of mint in them. When my parents have somebody over they get lemonade and if it's a real racy affair Schlitz in tall glasses with "They'll Do It Every Time" cartoons stenciled on.

"That's all right," Lengel said. "But this isn't the beach." His repeating this struck me as funny, as if it had just occurred to him, and he had been thinking all these years the A&P was a great big dune and he was the head lifeguard. He didn't like my smiling—as I say he doesn't miss much—but he concentrates on giving the girls that sad Sunday-school-superintendent stare.

Queenie's blush is no sunburn now, and the plump one in plaid, that I liked better from the back—a really sweet can—pipes up, "We weren't doing any shopping. We just came in for the one thing."

"That makes no difference," Lengel tells her, and I could see from the way his eyes went that he hadn't noticed she was wearing a two-piece before. "We want you decently dressed when you come in here."

"We are decent," Queenie says suddenly, her lower lip pushing, getting sore now that she remembers her place, a place from which the crowd that runs the A&P must look pretty crummy. Fancy Herring Snacks flashed in her very blue eyes.

"Girls, I don't want to argue with you. After this come in here with your shoulders covered. It's our policy." He turns his back. That's policy for you. Policy is what the kingpins want. What the others want is juvenile delinquency.

All this while, the customers had been showing up with their carts but, you know, sheep, seeing a scene, they had all bunched up on Stokesie, who shook open a paper bag as gently as peeling a peach, not wanting to miss a word. I could feel in the silence everybody getting nervous,

most of all Lengel, who asks me, “Sammy, have you rung up this purchase?”

I thought and said “No” but it wasn’t about that I was thinking. I go through the punches. It’s more complicated than you think, and after you do it often enough, it begins to make a little song, that you hear words to, in my case “Hello (bing) there, you (gung) happy pee-pul (splat)” —the splat being the drawer flying out. I uncrease the bill, tenderly as you may imagine, it just having come from between the two smoothest scoops of vanilla I had ever known were there, and pass a half and a penny into her narrow pink palm, and nestle the herrings in a bag and twist its neck and hand it over, all the time thinking.

The girls, and who’d blame them, are in a hurry to get out, so I say “I quit” to Lengel quick enough for them to hear, hoping they’ll stop and watch me, their unsuspected hero. They keep right on going, into the electric eye; the door flies open and they flicker across the lot to their car, Queenie and Plaid and Big Tall Goony-Goony (not that as raw material she was so bad), leaving me with Lengel and a kink in his eyebrow.

“Did you say something, Sammy?”

“I said I quit.”

“I thought you did.”

“You didn’t have to embarrass them.”

“It was they who were embarrassing us.”

I started to say something that came out “Fiddle-de-doo”. It’s a saying of my grand-mother’s, and I know she would have been pleased.

“I don’t think you know what you’re saying,” Lengel said.

“I know you don’t,” I said. “But I do.” I pull the bow at the back of my apron and start shrugging it off my shoulders. A couple customers that had been heading for my slot begin to knock against each other, like scared pigs in a chute.

Lengel sighs and begins to look very patient and old and gray. He’s been a friend of my parents for years. “Sammy, you don’t want to do this to your Mom and Dad,” he tells me. It’s true. I don’t. But it seems to me that once you begin a gesture it’s fatal not to go through with it. I fold the apron, “Sammy” stitched in red on the pocket, and put it on the counter, and drop the bow tie on top of it. The bow tie is theirs, if you’ve ever wondered. “You’ll feel this for the rest of your life,” Lengel says, and I know that’s true, too, but remembering how he made that pretty girl blush makes me so scrunchy inside I punch the No Sale tab and the machine whirs “peepul” and the drawer splats out. One advantage to this scene taking place in summer that I can follow this up with a clean exit, there’s no fumbling around getting your coat and galoshes. I just saunter into the electric eye in my white shirt that my mother ironed the night before, and the door heaves itself open, and outside the



sunshine is skating around on the asphalt.

I look around for my girls, but they're gone, of course. There wasn't anybody but some young married screaming with her children about some candy they didn't get by the door of a powder-blue Falcon station wagon. Looking back in the big windows, over the bags of peat moss and aluminum lawn furniture stacked on the pavement, I could see Lengel in my place in the slot, checking the sheep through. His face was dark gray and his back stiff, as if he'd just had an injection of iron, and my stomach kind of fell as I felt how hard the world was going to be to me hereafter.

☿ Questions on *A&P* ☿

1. Is Sammie, the narrator, a typical teenager?
2. In what way is Queenie an interesting “mixture”?
3. Is the first person's narration reliable in the story?
4. How is the theme of rebellion and conformity reflected in the story?
5. What are the symbolic meanings of Herring Snacks and Bathing Suits?

John Updike (1932—2009), a novelist, poet, essayist, and short story writer, creates fiction rich and accurate in the color and texture of its details and metaphors. For this reason, some early critics felt his work was mostly art without much substance.

Nothing could be further from the truth, and this has become clearer over time. Some of his remarkable novels include *Rabbit, Run* (1960), *Couples* (1968), *Bech: A Book* (1970), *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *A Month of Sundays* (1975), *Too Far to Go* (1979) adapted into a television drama—*Hugging the Shore* (1983), *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984), and *Facing Nature* (1984). *Rabbit is Rich* (1981) received the Pulitzer Prize and American Book award as well as the Edward MacDowall medal for literature. Short story collections include *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories* (1959), *The Music School* (1962), *Museums and Women* (1972), *Picked-up Pieces* (1975), and *Licks of Love* (2000).

His realistic stories resemble the subjects of the painter, Andrew Wyeth—ordinary people of average means who live simply and go to church on Sunday. He portrays the experience of life typically as a series of paradoxes, just as we discover in *A&P*, one of his early stories. He lacks that sense of despair that leaves many writers no choice but to view middle-class life as a horrible vacuum, a metaphor for the end of life and real humanity. Instead, he writes without rancor. One critic wrote, “He is fair to just about everyone.” Like John Cheever, represented by *The Country Husband* later in this book, Updike finds love and beauty somewhere in the middle of suburbia, just as he does in *A&P*, one of the most widely-read stories in the late 20th century.

Updike values human intelligence, and he believes that every individual can use it to discover the kind of world he is living in as well as to struggle, sometimes comically, sometimes through the complex labyrinths of everyday life. He finds the world of nature and of man in *A&P*, for instance, to be a place of intricate and marvelous patterns of meaning. Indeed, we can see in *A&P* a kind of young knight-errant who, though self-unconscious and anti-heroic, is transformed into a metaphor of intelligence expressed in action and, to some extent, accident.



Lullaby

Leslie Marmon Silko

The sun had gone down but the snow in the wind gave off its own light. It came in thick tufts like newly-washed wools before the weaver spins it. Ayah reached out for it like her own babies had, and she smiled when she remembered how she had laughed at them. She was an old woman now, and her life had become memories. She sat down with her back against the wide cottonwood tree, feeling the rough bark on her back bones; she faced east and listened to the wind and snow sang a high-pitched Yeibechei song. Out of the wind she felt warmer, and she could watch the wide fluffy snow filling in her tracks, steadily, until the direction she had come from was gone. By the light of the snow she could see the dark outline of the big arroyo a few feet away. She was sitting on the edge of Cebolleta Creek, where in the springtime the thin cows would graze on grass already chewed flat to the ground. In the wide deep creek bed where only a trickle of water flowed in the summer, the skinny cows would wander, looking for new grass along winding paths splashed with manure.

Ayah pulled the old Army blanket over her head like a shawl. Jimmie's blanket—the one he had sent to her. That was a long time ago and the green wool was faded, and it was unraveling on the edges. She did not want to think about Jimmie. So she thought about the weaving and the way her mother had done it. On the tall wooden loom set into the sand under a tamarack tree for shade. She could see it clearly. She had been only a little girl when her grandma gave her the wooden combs to pull the twigs and burrs from the raw, freshly washed wool. And while she combed the wool, her grandma sat beside her, spinning a silvery strand of yarn around the smooth cedar spindle. Her mother worked at the loom with yarns dyed bright yellow and red and gold. She watched them dye the yarn in boiling black pots full of beeweed petals, juniper berries, and sage. The blankets her mother made were soft and woven so tight that rain rolled off them like birds' feathers. Ayah remembered sleeping warm on cold windy nights, wrapped in her mother's blankets on the hogan's sandy floor.

The snow drifted now, with the northwest wind hurling it in gusts. It drifted up around her black overshoes—old ones with little metal buckles. She smiled at the snow which was trying to cover her little by little. She could remember when they had no black rubber overshoes, only the high