

21世纪外国文学
系列教材

英语散文选读



马爱华 赵永青 赵忠德
张雪 井卫华/主编



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前 言

人生的意义取决于人生的态度,而人生的态度在一定程度上受一个人的阅读经历所影响。这本《英语散文选读》收集了不同历史时期的西方著名作家、学者的名篇全文和节选,内容涉及文学、艺术、历史、社会、宗教和日常生活等诸多方面,英语学习者和爱好者可从中管窥精深博大的西方文明思想,在学习那些富有哲理的言论、耐人寻味的隽语和发人深省的警句的同时,思考和感悟自己的人生。

西方文化素有较强的抽象思辨传统,这一特点恰浓缩于历代英语散文之中。散文作家精于说理和论辩,也不乏以讽刺、幽默、诙谐笔法见长者,本书所选作品老到深邃与机智活泼、简洁朴实与华丽堂皇并举,字里行间显露着挥洒自如,堪称为思想性和艺术性兼而有之的上乘佳作。细细品尝这些散发着浓郁西方文化但不乏独到见解、充满个性的名家妙笔无疑会令英语学习者在精神上获得极大的满足感,有助于他们加强抽象思辨能力,领略英语散文流光溢彩的艺术风貌,并深切体会英语文字摇曳多姿的丰富表现力。

本书专为英语专业高年级学生而编。全书共分 18 个单元,每单元的文章主题力求相关,旨在为学习者提供不同视角,以扩展思维和想象。单元内设有课内讨论问题和写作任务、词汇和阅读等加强语言技能的口、笔头相关练习,教师可视具体教学时数灵活安排使用。

在编写过程中编者参考了一些同类教材、文集和网上资料,受益匪浅,在此深致谢忱。谷华、张蕾、杨晶协助校对全书,一并致谢。限于水平,书中疏漏乃至错误之处在所难免,敬请读者同行批评指正。

编者

2006 年夏

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Text A

My Wood

By E. M. Forster

① A few years ago I wrote a book^① which dealt in part with the difficulties of the English in India. Feeling that they would have had no difficulties in India themselves, the Americans read the book freely. The more they read it the better it made them feel, and a cheque to the author was the result. I bought a wood with the cheque. It is not a large wood—it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected, blast it^②, by a public foot-path. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate in my shame, and should ask themselves, in accents that will vary in horror^③, this very important question: What is the effect of property upon the character? Don't let's touch economics; the effect of private ownership upon the community as a whole is another question—a more important question, perhaps, but another one. Let's keep to psychology. If you own things, what's their effect on you? What's the effect on me of my wood?

② In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have

① a book: The writer considers his reaction to owning the small estate he bought with royalties from his novel *A Passage to India* (1924).

② blast; damn (used to express annoyance).

③ in accents that will vary in horror; in different tones revealing the state of being shocked.

this effect. Property produces men of weight^①, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was not wicked, that unfortunate millionaire in the parable, he was only stout; he stuck out in front, not to mention behind, and as he wedged himself this way and that in the crystalline entrance and bruised his well-fed flanks, he saw beneath him a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle^② and being woven into the robe of God. The Gospels all through couple stoutness and slowness^③. They point out what is perfectly obvious, yet seldom realized; that if you have a lot of things you cannot move about a lot, that furniture requires dusting, dusters require servants, servants require insurance stamps, and the whole tangle of them makes you think twice before you accept an invitation to dinner or go for a bathe in the Jordan^④. Sometimes the Gospels proceed further and say with Tolstoy^⑤ that property is sinful; they approach the difficult ground of asceticism here, where I cannot follow them. But as to the immediate effects of property on people, they just show straightforward logic. It produces men of weight. Men of weight cannot, by definition, move like the lightning from the East unto the West, and the ascent of a

① men of weight: men with wealth, power and influence, also men with a heavy burden.

② a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle: In the Bible, Christ points out the dangers of riches, saying, "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (verses 23, 24).

③ The Gospels all through couple stoutness and slowness: The four New Testament books all link stoutness with slowness.

④ make you think twice before you in the Jordan: makes you hesitant when you are trying to get into the Kingdom of Heaven because you don't want to disown your property. (The Jordan River was the area where John The Baptist conducted much of his ministry and where Jesus Christ was baptized.).

⑤ to say with Tolstoy: agreeing with Tolstoy. Leo Tolstoy: Russian novelist, author of *War and Peace* (1863—1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1873—1877). He was offended by the materialism of Western Europe and rejected private ownership.

Unit 1

fourteen-stone bishop^① into a pulpit is thus the exact antithesis of the coming of the Son of Man. My wood makes me feel heavy.

③ In the second place, it makes me feel it ought to be larger. The other day I heard a twig snap in it. I was annoyed at first, for I thought that someone was blackerrying, and depreciating the value of the undergrowth. On coming nearer, I saw it was not a man who had trodden on the twig and snapped it, but a bird, and I felt pleased. My bird. The bird was not equally pleased. Ignoring the relation between us, it took fright as soon as it saw the shape of my face, and flew straight over the boundary hedge into a field, the property of Mrs. Henessy, where it sat down with a loud squawk. It had become Mrs. Henessy's bird. Something seemed grossly amiss here, something that would not have occurred had the wood been larger. I could not afford to buy Mrs. Henessy out, I dared not murder her, and limitations of this sort beset me on every side. Ahab^② did not want that vineyard—he only needed it to round off his property, preparatory to plotting a new curve^③—and all the land around my wood has become necessary to me in order to round off the wood. A boundary protects. But—poor little thing—the boundary ought in its turn to be protected. Noises on the edge of it. Children throw stones. A little more, and then a

① a fourteen-stone bishop: a bishop weighing 14 stone. "Stone" is the unit used to measure the weight of a human body; equal to 14 pounds.

② Ahab; king of Israel, who rules in Samaria in the Bible. In an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite, Ahab says to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth." But Naboth replies, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."

③ plotting a new curve: planning a new boundary for his land.

little more, until we reach the sea. Happy Canute^①! Happier Alexander^②! And after all, why should even the world be the limit of possession? A rocket containing a Union Jack^③, will, it is hoped, be shortly fired at the moon. Mars. Sirius. Beyond which... But these immensities ended by saddening me. I could not suppose that my wood was the destined nucleus of universal dominion—it is so very small and contains no mineral wealth beyond the blackberries. Nor was I comforted when Mrs. Henessy's bird took alarm for the second time and flew clean away from us all, under the belief that it belonged to itself.

④ In the third place, property makes its owner feel that he ought to do something to it. Yet he isn't sure what. A restlessness comes over him, a vague sense that he has a personality to express—the same sense which, without any vagueness, leads the artist to an act of creation. Sometimes I think I will cut down such trees as remain in the wood, at other times I want to fill up the gaps between them with new trees. Both impulses are pretentious and empty. They are not honest movements towards money-making or beauty. They spring from a foolish desire to express myself and from an inability to enjoy what I have got. Creation, property, enjoyment form a sinister trinity in the human mind. Creation and enjoyment are both very, very good, yet they are often unattainable without a material basis, and at such moments property pushes itself in as a substitute, saying, "Accept me instead—I'm good enough for all three." It is not enough. It is, as Shakespeare said of lust, "The expense of spirit

① Canute; King of England (1016—1035), Denmark (1018—1035), and Norway (1028—1035) whose reign, at first brutal, was later marked by wisdom and temperance.

② Alexander; known as Alexander the Great (356—323 B. C.), King of Macedonia (336—323) and conqueror of Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia Forster takes both Canute and Alexander as examples of men who were never content with the land they possessed, and who always wanted more. Alexander is sometimes described as having conquered all the known world.

③ Union Jack; British flag.

in a waste of shame”: it is “Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.”^① Yet we don’t know how to shun it. It is forced on us by our economic system as the alternative to starvation. It is also forced on us by an internal defect in the soul, by the feeling that in property may lie the germs of self-development and of exquisite or heroic deeds. Our life on earth is, and ought to be, material and carnal. But we have not yet learned to manage our materialism and carnality properly; they are still entangled with the desire for ownership, where (in the words of Dante^②) “Possession is one with loss.”

- ⑤ And this brings us to our fourth and final point: the blackberries. Blackberries are not plentiful in this meagre grove, but they are easily seen from the public footpath which traverses it, and all too easily gathered. Foxgloves, too—people will pull up the foxgloves, and ladies of an educational tendency even grub for toadstools to show them on the Monday in class. Other ladies, less educated, roll down the bracken in the arms of their gentlemen friends. There is paper, there are tins. Pray, does my wood belong to me or doesn’t it? And, if it does, should I not own it best by allowing no one else to walk there? There is a wood near Lyme Regis, also cursed by a public footpath, where the owner has not hesitated on this point. He has built high stone walls each side of the path, and has spanned it by bridges, so that the public circulate like termites while he gorges on the blackberries unseen. He really does own his wood, this able chap. Dives^③ in Hell did

① “The expense of spirit a dream.”: Both lines are taken from sonnet 129 by Shakespeare.

② Dante: Italian poet (1265—1321), author of *The Divine Comedy* (1321), “Possession is one with loss”: Possession means the same thing as loss.

③ Dives: a man of great wealth.

pretty well, but the gulf dividing him from Lazarus^① would be traversed by vision and nothing traverses it here. And perhaps I shall come to this in time. I shall wall in and fence out until I really taste the sweets of property. Enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudo-creative, intensely selfish, I shall weave upon my forehead the quadruple crown of possession until those nasty Bolshies^② come and take it off again and thrust me aside into the outer darkness.

About the author



E. M. Forster, English author and critic (1879—1970). Forster was born into an upper-middle-class family. He attended the University of Cambridge and from roughly 1907 was a member of the informal Bloomsbury group and friend of Virginia Woolf. His early works include *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), and his first major success, *Towards End* (1910), novels that show his acute observation of middle-class life and its values. After periods in India and Alexandria, he wrote his finest novel, *A Passage to India* (1924), examining the failure of human understanding between ethnic and social groups under British rule. After gaining fame as a novelist,

① Lazarus; a beggar. In the Bible, Jesus tells the story of the rich man, called Dives (*dives* means *rich* in Latin), and Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:19—31). The rich man, dines sumptuously every day, while Lazarus desires but does not get even the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. Lazarus, in the next life, gets to lie in the bosom of Abraham in heaven, while the rich fellow groans in the torments of the netherworld.

② Bolshies; members of a Marxist-Leninist party or supporters of one; a Communist, also called Bolshevist or Bolshevik.

Unit 1

Forster spent his 46 remaining years publishing mainly short stories and non-fiction. *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) is a classic discussion of aesthetics and the creative.

Exercises

I. Questions on meaning and ideas

1. What does the passage focus on?
2. The writer assumes that stoutness and slowness are connected. How does he justify himself here?
3. What does the writer mean by saying that the wood makes him heavy?
4. Why does the writer feel sad when he reflects on the size of the wood?
5. How does possession lead to restlessness of the owner?
6. What are the misconceptions of possession pointed out by the writer?
7. What kind of dilemma is the writer describing in the ending paragraph?
8. What are Forster's attitudes toward owning this property?

II. Questions on writing and language

1. Forster's essay "My Wood" is rich in biblical and literary allusions. What role do the allusions play?
2. The writer enumerates the effects property produces on him. How does he arrange the points? Are they logically connected?
3. How do the writer's word choice and manipulation of sentences help to convey his attitude?
4. The essay ends with the fourth point. Is there a need for a separate ending paragraph? Why/Why not?

5. The essay provokes the reader's thought on a serious subject. Is it heavily didactical? Comment on the tone the author adopts.

III. Themes for discussion and writing

1. What do you think of E. M. Forster's views on owning property?
2. Is it possible for one to be acquisitive and infallible in the moral sense?
3. Consider your own reflections on obtaining a significant sum of money and write on the topic of "My First Income."
4. Write an essay that explores the idea of materialism and its effect on us as individuals and as a community. At what levels does materialism remain positive and at what level does it become negative? Where do the media play into materialism? How does materialism affect social values?
5. What is the nature of satisfaction in consumer culture? How do we achieve satisfaction in a materialistic/consumer-oriented society? Is it based on possessions and, if so, how do possessions determine when and for how long we are satisfied?
6. What is the effect of ownership on our lives? Write an essay that explores the various effects (good and bad) that owning things has on our personal identity, our relationship with others, and our sense of community.

IV. Vocabulary practice

1. I was standing waiting for a bus, _____ between two old ladies and their bags of shopping.
A. wedged B. beset
C. ceded D. ensued
2. He is well acquainted with many of the _____ Jesus Christ told to his followers.

Unit 1

- A. anecdotes B. parables
C. legends D. myths
3. The church was devastated by the fire. Nearly everything was destroyed, including the _____, from which sermon is delivered.
- A. shrine B. shank
C. pulpit D. culprit
4. They launched an offensive and attacked the enemy's right _____.
- A. flank B. wedge
C. angle D. plank
5. We were struck by what was happening in the distance. A helpless zebra was _____ by leopards.
- A. planked B. enticed
C. beseeched D. beset
6. It's impossible to arrange an interview with her. She has _____ publicity since she retired from the theatre.
- A. shunned B. stunned
C. shorn D. straggled
7. They _____ a microphone in front of me and fired questions at me.
- A. crust B. grudged
C. thrashed D. thrust
8. Astronauts must overcome the fear of the _____ of space.
- A. enormities B. immensities
C. immortality D. grossness
9. The children _____ themselves with candy.
- A. gouged B. gorged
C. scourged D. barged
10. The _____ eagerly grasp after wealth at the expense of others.
- A. callous B. satiable

- C. avaricious D. specious
11. The law _____ that new cars must have seat belts for the driver and every passenger.
A. stipulates B. stagnates
C. putters D. stalemates
12. We should be encouraging new ideas, instead of _____ them.
A. stapling B. spieling
C. stifling D. magnifying
13. The work of the artist is to take these chaotic and _____ things, and put them together in a frame to give them some kind of shape and meaning.
A. identical B. disparate
C. ferocious D. structured
14. The brokers agreed to arbitrate the dispute to avoid the cost of _____.
A. litigation B. mitigation
C. abomination D. itineration
15. A radical change in social policy could be in the _____ if Labour wins the election.
A. upping B. dubbing
C. scoffing D. offing
16. He was a _____ child, being so clever at mathematics at such an early age.
A. poorly B. precocious
C. ignorant D. forlorn
17. In Sweden, public _____ of official documents is widespread.
A. agony B. stamina
C. scrutiny D. litany
18. She never knew whether her husband would be in an angry or cheerful mood as he was such a _____ character.
A. volatile B. meticulous

- C. avaricious D. voluble
19. His work is often _____ and unreliable.
 A. floppy B. poppy
 C. sloppy D. jalopy
20. Before the interview, each candidate had to have a
 _____ medical examination.
 A. porous B. vigorous
 C. thesaurus D. rigorous

V. Reading comprehension

Passage 1

① There are a variety of ways to think about the self. Two of the most widely used terms are self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept generally refers to the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that people hold about themselves, while self-esteem generally refers to how we feel about or how we value ourselves. There is a great deal of research which shows that the self-concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivation for behavior. Self-concept is related to self-esteem in that people who have good self-esteem have a clearly differentiated self-concept. When people know themselves, they can maximize outcomes because they know what they can and cannot do. It would seem, then, that one way to impact self-esteem is to obey the somewhat outworn cliché of “know thyself.”

② There are several different components of self-concept: physical, academic, social, and transpersonal. The physical aspect of self-concept relates to that which is concrete what we look like, our sex, height, weight, and what kind of clothes we wear. Our academic self-concept relates to how