

# COLLEGE ENGLISH READING IMPROVEMENT —BRITISH HISTORY & ITS LITERATURE

大学英语阅读提高——英国文学史及文学赏析

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西安地图出版社

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**COLLEGE ENGLISH READING IMPROVEMENT  
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& LITERATURE APPRECIATION**

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龚丽平 等编著

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## 序

《大学英语阅读提高：英国文学史及文学赏析》是中原工学院外语系龚丽平等老师共同合作撰写的一部关于历史、文学及文学欣赏方面的著作。该书参编人员都是教学科研第一线的老师，参编过多部专著的撰写，发表过英语教学及文学方面大量的学术论文。本书在主编龚丽平老师的带领下，积极探索经过长期的积累，细致的准备，基于几十万字的课堂讲稿，进一步充实、完善而成。该书的编撰者立足实际教学，认真分析了目前的生源状况，调整编写内容和语言难度，使该书较好地满足教师和学生的使用需要。

本书介绍了英国自封建社会前直至资产阶级革命时期的重大历史事件及其对文学的影响、文学巨匠及其作品。时间跨度为公元10世纪至19世纪。基于其时的历史背景，本书重新审视了作家与所处时代的关系、其作品的产生背景及其文学地位的变迁。在编写过程中运用已有研究成果，对历史，作家，作品进行了高度归纳和总结。深入浅出地引导读者既能掌握一定的文学历史知识，又能更好地阅读和欣赏文学作品。

本书具有以下特点：一是新颖。以崭新的视角，对英国文学发展史的各个阶段的重要作家及其作品进行细致的分析，深入的研究。二是系统。本书全面地讲解了19世纪前英国的历史和文学。三是细致，通过细致入微的分析，为读者进一步学习和研究打下坚实的基础。

本书可以作为大学英语专业英国文学课程教材，也可以作为非英语专业学生的选修读本。本书文字通俗易懂，使得广大英语爱好者易于了解英国历史和文学，从而可以更好地提高其文学批评和鉴赏能力。

杜建慧

2006年8月30日

于中原工学院

## 前言

《大学英语阅读提高：英国文学史及文学赏析》这本书以历史为基石逐渐展开，针对各个阶段上的重要作家及其文本进行细致的分析，深入的研究和总结。其覆盖内容包括，英国早期历史和封建时期从10世纪到15世纪，16世纪，17世纪，18世纪，19世纪历史以及主要作家和他们的作品，是运用已有的文学批评成就，从文学批评的角度进行文学欣赏，深入浅出的引导学生掌握一定的文学历史知识，并且对文本进行阅读和欣赏。有助于丰富国内英国文学史和文化方面的研究领域，以崭新的研究视角重新审视英国文学这门教材。

本书的顺利出版，得益于编著者们的不懈努力和倾心协作。

中原工学院外语系龚丽平编著第1、2、4章共25万字；

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郑州大学申立教授百忙之中审阅了稿件，中原工学院副院长杜建慧教授为本书撰写了序言，河南省科学院赵永江教授提出了许多宝贵的意见和建议。西安地图出版社史英同志及其他编辑也为该书的出版做出了大量的工作，特此一并致谢。

由于作者水平有限，书中不足之处在所难免，敬请读者批评指正。此外由于时间和篇幅有限，对二十世纪现代英国作家作品部分编者正在编撰，在不久的将来希望与广大读者见面。

主编：龚丽平

2006.8.30

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# **Part I The Anglo-Saxon Period**

Old English Period  
(449~1066)

## ***1. The Historical Background***

This part goes to the earliest English history, which contributes to the origin of the British people and its country, Britain. Nobody knows entirely and clearly about the ancient Britain, because there is not enough historical records left. According to the limited records, at least three major invasions before the Romans, coupled with Roman invasion and Germanic invasion provide us the basic historical materials and research knowledge. Each invasion brings with its own characteristics, even though it is not yet known how they made it and how the different races mixed and survived exactly. The first of these is by a dark-haired Mediterranean race called the Iberians. The other two are by Celtic tribes: first the Gaels, Whose descendants are the modern Scots and Irish, some of whom still speak the Gaelic language; and secondly the Britons who gave its name to the whole island of Britain.

### **1.1 Celts: the earliest settlers**

When it comes to the contribution of the first three invasions, we usually regard them as one that is Celts, no matter what they are Gaels and Britons. People deduce the island originally inhabited by Celtic tribes from Mediterranean prior to the invasion by the Romans A.D. 50~100. Even though there are no written records of them we can acquire materials about them from archeological evidences as well as historical accounts of other cultures. The Celts were brave, fierce, barbaric and courageous people, who fled over the mountains to Britain, where stretched from the British Isles to Gallatia. When they met the fierce enemies, some of them would fled west to Wales or Irish and the rest stayed founding the cities

### **1.2 Roman Conquest**

Since Two thousand years after Egypt's pharaohs reigned, the Romans and four hundred years after the flowering of Greek culture, and three hundred years after Alexander the Great, Julius and his nephew Octavian known as Augustus, guided empire to reach its greatest extent, encircling the Mediterranean, reaching Scotland. The emperors relied on a strong army: the famous Roman Legions. In 55 B.C., Julius Caesar, the Roman conqueror, invaded Britain. The Roman Conquest was thought to bring about changes in the Roman mode of life, which remains still left today. New roads and walls, either for transits and battlements on the top of castles had been built by the Romans,

and theatres and baths rose in the towns. While the Roman conquerors enjoyed the highly developed civilization, the native Britons were treated as slaves to them. Not until 410 A.D., the Roman troops were withdrawn from the Britain.

### **1.3 Three Germanic Tribes: The Angles and Saxons the Jutes**

Roman's retreats left the native Celts open to attacks from the neighboring Jutes. The Celts turned to tribes of the Angles and Saxons, who was living the area that is the modern Germany - Denmark area. The Angles and Saxons saved the Celts, but then turned against them and settled in England, who lived in Angle-Land (= England), at present. Latter on, the three tribes had mixed into a whole people called English. The three dialects spoken by them naturally formed a kind of language called Anglo-Saxon, which is now called Old English. Old English developed into modern English, which was quite different from the English that we know today. Anglo-Saxon period (449-1066) was usually treated as the period from tribal society to feudal society, or the old English period.

## ***2. Literature of Old English (449~1066)***

### **2.1 Features of Old English Literature**

The Germanic tribes lived in the Northern Europe and they had the admirable physical bodies and bold characters. There were no written words for them. Therefore the ancient English literature had been kept in the oral form. Until 9-11th century they had written down by an unknown scribe. The period of the literature has two characters: one is pagan, the other being Christian. The former character reflects Angles and Saxons did not believe in religion, and so the latter likely implied that the oral sagas were written by monks, who believed in Christian religion. As for the poetry, they also fall into two groups: one is religious and the other being the secular one. The first group derived their aspiration from Biblical materials, such as Genesis, Exodus from the Old Testament; The Dream of the Rood from the New Testament. The representative Christian poet was supposed to Caedmon, who wrote a poetic Paraphrase of the Bible, and Cynewulf, probably the author of the four ancient English poems, the Dreams of Rood, Elene, Andreas and Guthlac B. The second group stood out owing to the classical national epic Beowulf, and a number of lyrical poems. The wanderer, Deor, the Seafarer, and the Wife's Complaint usually can be classified into the secular poetry.

### **2.2 The Song of Beowulf**

It is an Anglo-Saxon national epic, writing in alliterative verse and originating from the collective efforts in oral literature. An epic is a long narrative poem that operates on a grand scale and deals with the deeds of warriors and

heroes. In the epic the poet expresses a hope that the evil should be punished and the righteous rewarded. Some actions and achievements of a real or mythical hero had done when the challenges fell upon their shoulders. Confronted the dangerous and terrible situations, they were brave to take on their duties as a fighter and warrior.

In the long narrative epic Beowulf there are 3182 lines altogether. The story has little or no relation to England, which is set in Denmark or Sweden. Beowulf, who may be real and may be not, got the information that a monster always harassed his uncle's Mead hall. In order to help his kinsman he took his warriors to hall. And then, the vivid descriptions told how the hero, Beowulf, defeated the monster Grendel and his mother, a sea monster, but eventually received his own death in fighting with a fire dragon. It was believed to be written by a Danish clerk or a English monk in England monasteries, since the secular part of poetry was hooked by the religious interpolation which might be composed by the Christian.

With an exception of interpolation, the epic consists of two parts, complete with the two battles with monster Grendel and with female monster, Grendel's mother. The epic sets off a series of incidents between king and his subjects, originally written in an oral form, sung by the bards (Minstrels) at the end of the 6th century.

The present script was written down to the 10th century. Beginning and ending with the funeral of a great king, Beowulf, the epic was composed against a background of impending disaster, and described the exploits of a Scandinavian hero. During the fighting sequences against the monster Grendel, his revengeful mother, and as well a fire-breathing dragon, Beowulf was shown not only as a glorious hero but also as a protector of the people.

The major theme shows a brief account of the line Danish Kings Hrothgar, built a hall to celebrate his victory. A monster came to the hall at night and at one time devoured as many as thirty warriors who spent their nights in the hall. The sad news of Grendel's ravages finally reached Sweden, where Beowulf, Hrothgar's nephew, a man of great strength, heard and sailed with his 14 companions to lend help. The crisis was settled with the three adventures done. The hero engaged in a terrific battle with the monster as the hall rang at first night. Eventually Beowulf tore an arm and a shoulder off the monster. But finally the monster ran away. Then the second adventure began while Beowulf and his companions setting out for a pool. On arriving there, Beowulf plunged into the water and reached a cave underneath and waged in a long struggle with Grendel's mother and finally succeeded in killing her with a magic sword. Finally he cut off her head as well as that of her son lying dead nearby. The third or last adventure told us that he was now an aged king and resolved to fight with the dragon himself. He ordered his man to wait outside while he went down to the cave of the hill, where the fire dragon lived. He struck at the dragon on the head, but his sword broke and the dragon seized him by the neck. Over the dangerous situation, one of the companions rushed down to help while the other fleeing into the woods. The brave warrior named Wiglaf succeeded in wounding the dragon and killed the monster with his knife.

The adventures of Beowulf,  
Episode 5  
—The Speeches—

Hrothgar, standing on the steps,  
seeing the golden roof  
and Grendel's hand, spoke:  
"For this sight I give  
thanks to the Almighty.  
I have suffered much  
from Grendel's scourge.  
God, the glorious protector,  
works wonder after wonder.  
Only yesterday I expected  
these woes would never end--  
this best of houses  
stood shining in blood  
and all my wise ones said  
we could never protect  
the people and land  
from the work of demons  
and evil spirits. Now  
a warrior, through God's might,  
has performed a deed we,  
in our wisdom, could not contrive.  
The woman who bore you,  
Beowulf, if she yet lives,  
may say the Eternal Maker  
was kind in her child bearing.  
Now, Beowulf, best of warriors,  
I love you as a son:  
have from this moment  
a new kinship. Nor will there be  
any lack of earthly things  
I have power over.  
Often I have given gifts  
to a lesser warrior, weaker  
in fighting. You have, by  
your deeds, achieved fame  
forever. May God repay you  
always as He has just now!"  
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

"We have done this work of valor  
against the strength of an uncanny  
foe. I wish you might have seen  
this enemy killed in his gear.  
I planned to bind him quickly  
to his deathbed with hand grips.  
I thought I could pin him down  
struggling for life without  
his body's escape. But I could not  
keep him from going; the Creator  
did not will it, and I could not  
hold him firmly enough. The foe  
was too powerful in his going.  
However, he left behind his hand  
to save his life, and his arm  
and shoulder, though that won't buy  
the wretch much comfort.  
The evil-doer, afflicted by sin,  
won't live much longer;  
pain with its strong grip  
has seized him in deadly bonds,  
and there shall he await,  
guilty of crime, the great judgment,  
how the bright creator  
will decree. . . ."  
Then was the warrior silent  
in speaking of his war-like deed,  
and the nobles beheld  
the hand at the high roof.  
On each of the foe's fingers  
were nails like steel.  
Everyone agreed the heathen's  
claw was horrible  
and that the wretch's  
bloody battle hand  
could not be harmed  
by the best of iron.  
Entertainment in Herot  
Then it was ordered  
that Herot be decorated.  
Many there were,  
men and women, who

prepared that guest-hall.  
Gold ornaments shone,  
wondrous sights on the walls,  
for people to look at.  
That bright building  
had been much hurt,  
though its bands  
were made of iron.  
Hinges had been sprung  
apart. The roof alone  
had escaped damage before  
that monster, wicked outlaw,  
turned in flight  
despairing of his life.  
(Fate is not easy  
to flee from,  
try it who will--  
the children of men,  
bearers of souls,  
must go to the prepared place,  
his body rest  
fast in the grave,  
sleep after the feast.)  
Then came the time  
that Hrothgar himself  
went to the feast.  
Never have I heard  
of a greater company  
gathered around a treasure giver.  
Great ones sat at the benches  
and rejoiced with the cup.  
Those brave kinsmen  
drank many a mead cup  
in the high hall with  
Hrothgar and Hrothulf, his nephew.  
Herot was filled with friends  
(treachery had not yet  
come to the Danes).  
Hrothgar gave Beowulf  
a gilded banner,  
decorated battle flag,  
as reward for victory.

Also a helmet, armor, and  
a famous, precious sword  
were given to the hero  
before that company.  
Around the helmet's top  
as head-protection was  
a wrap of metal bands  
so that no sharpened swords  
could harm him  
in the battle storm  
when the shield-warriors fight.  
Beowulf drank the cup.  
He had no reason to be  
ashamed among warriors  
for taking those rich gifts.  
Never have I heard  
of golden treasure given  
at the ale bench in  
a more friendly way.  
The king ordered eight horses  
with gold-plaited bridles  
led into the hall.  
On one sat a saddle  
inlaid with jewels--  
it had been Hrothgar's  
when he had gone to sword play.  
Never had he failed  
at the front  
when corpses fell.  
Hrothgar gave horses and weapons,  
telling Beowulf to enjoy them well.  
Thus like a man  
that great prince,  
treasure giver of heroes,  
repaid Beowulf for his battle,  
and no man who tells the truth  
will blame him. Then that chief of nobles  
gave to each one on the mead bench  
who had taken the ocean's way  
with Beowulf an heirloom  
and ordered that the one  
Grendel killed in wickedness

should be paid for in gold.  
(Grendel would have killed  
more of them if wise God,  
and Beowulf's courage,  
had not prevented it.  
The Creator then ruled the race of men,  
as He does yet; and, therefore,  
understanding is best:  
the forethought of mind.  
Much shall he abide,  
from friends and foes,  
who lives long in these  
days of strife as he  
makes use of this world!)  
The Poet Sings Of Old Trouble,  
how Hildeburh,  
married to stop a feud between Jutes and Danes,  
saw her husband, brother,  
and son killed  
In the presence of the battle leader  
Hrothgar's poet touched  
the harp and recited  
many songs for entertainment  
in the hall. He sang  
of Finn's offspring and how  
Hnaef of the Danes fell  
in a Jute battlefield.  
Indeed Hildeburh did not have  
much cause to praise  
the good faith of her in-laws,  
the Jutes: though blameless,  
she was deprived of dear ones  
by the shield play, both her son  
and Hnaef, her brother, in fate  
fell to spear wounds.  
That was a sad woman.  
Not without cause, after  
morning came, when she could  
see under the sky,  
did she bewail the decree  
of fate, the slaughter  
of kinsmen. At first she had



possessed the world's joy.  
War took all but  
a few of the Jute men  
so they could not  
fight the Dane Hengst nor  
protect the survivors.  
But Hengst offered  
them a deal: that  
the Jutes would make  
room for the Danes  
in the beer hall and  
that with gifts  
King Finn would honor  
Hengst's men, rings,  
entertainment, and treasures  
of plated gold as if  
they were his kin.  
Both sides agreed to the peace.  
Finn declared to Hengst  
honest oaths that the survivors  
would be held in honor  
and that no man,  
by words nor works,  
would break the peace  
nor in cruelty mention  
that they were being friendly  
with the killer of their king,  
since a winter freeze had  
forced it. If any of the Jutes  
in daring speech mentioned it,  
then the edge of the sword  
would settle the matter.  
A funeral pyre was readied  
and gold brought from the hoard.  
The best of the Danes  
were ready for the pyre.  
At the fire were blood stained  
shirts of mail, boar images  
all golden and iron-hard.  
Not a few noble ones  
had been destroyed by wounds!  
Hildeburh ordered her son