

Selected Readings in English Literature

英国文学选读

高继海 编著

河南大学出版社

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编写说明

目前国内有多种版本的《英国文学选读》，较有影响的是陈嘉编的三卷本《英国文学选读》和杨岂深编的三卷本《英国文学选读》。这两个选本资料丰富，但作为大学英语专业文学课的教材，只能选择其中一小部分讲授，三分之二的內容都浪费了。吴伟仁编的《英国文学史及选读》和张伯香编的《英美文学选读》，对于大学英语专业的学生来说又过于简略。最近北京大学罗经国教授编的《英国文学选读》比较适合学生使用，但我们感到对于 20 世纪的作品选择偏少。为了满足广大英语爱好者和大学英语专业学生学习英国文学的需要，我们编写了这本教材，同时还编写了一部《简明英国文学史》。读者可以单独使用这本教材，也可以与《简明英国文学史》一道使用，效果可能更佳。

我们编选的原则是英国文学中的名篇佳作，所选篇幅尽量短些，以便多选几部作品。作品按照时间顺序排列，结构安排为：a. 作者简介；b. 作品题解；c. 选文；d. 注释；e. 思考题。题解力求简明，注释力求准确详尽，减少读者在理解上的困难，思考题供教师和学生参考。在时代划分上与《简明英国文学史》一致，即：16 世纪之前；16 世纪；17 世纪；18 世纪；19 世纪上半叶；19 世纪下半叶；20 世纪上半叶；20 世纪下半叶。遵循厚今薄古的原则，16 世纪前仅仅选了乔叟，16 世纪选了斯宾塞、马洛和莎士比亚，17 世纪选了 6 位作家，大多是短诗，所占篇幅很短，18 世纪选了 7 位作家。与《简明英国文学史》相似，19 世纪前占总篇幅的一半。19 世

纪下半叶我们选了佩特,是考虑到他的《文艺复兴研究》的结论对后代唯美主义的影响。20 世纪上半叶我们选了吉本,不仅仅因为他的《苏格兰之书》代表了无产阶级文学的最高成就,还因为这部小说包含的深刻哲理和语言特色。20 世纪后半叶的选文更难把握,我们选入了几位诺贝尔文学奖得主,是把诺贝尔文学奖作为评判一位作家成就的重要标准之一。

吴雪莉教授仔细审阅了书稿,提出许多修改意见,河南大学出版社外语编辑室王超明同志对本书的出版付出了大量心血,在此一并表示衷心的感谢。

限于水平,书中不当之处,欢迎读者指正。

高继海

2005 年 12 月于河南大学

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I Middle English Literature

When discussing English literature, critics usually divide it into three periods: Old English Literature, Middle English Literature, and Modern English Literature. Old English Literature refers to the literature in the period from 450 to 1066. The year 450 marked the coming of the Anglo-Saxons to England to settle in Wessex while the year 1066 witnessed William Duke of Normandy conquering England. The most important work in Old English Literature is the epic *Beowulf*, which tells the story of Beowulf, a warrior prince from Sweden, who goes to Denmark and kills a monster that has been attacking the great hall built by the Danish king. Middle English Literature refers to the literature in the period from 1066 to 1485, that is, from Norman Conquest to the founding of the Tudor Dynasty, 1485 being the year when Richard III was killed on the battlefield and Henry Tudor became king of England. The most important work in this period is Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340—1400)

About the Author

Chaucer was born of a wine-merchant's family. He fought in the war with France and was taken prisoner. In 1366 he married Philippa, a lady in waiting of the Queen, and entered the service of King Edward, III. He travelled widely on diplomatic missions and came on close contacts with the Italian Renaissance. He was a favourite of John of Gaunt, one of the most influential uncles of King Richard II, and his close connection with the English royal court brought him special privileges. Even in the reign of Henry IV he still enjoyed the royal favour.

In his lifetime Chaucer served in a great variety of occupations. As courtier, office-holder, soldier, ambassador and legislator, he had broad and intimate acquaintance with persons high and low in all walks of life and knew well the whole social life of his time. This varied life of rich experiences helped him to produce literary works of lasting merits. He was the first to be buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

On the Selection

The Canterbury Tales was written between the years 1387—1400, generally considered his masterpiece. It begins with a general prologue that explains the occasion for the narration of the tales and gives a description of the pilgrims who narrate the tales, and then follows the 24 tales that make up the bulk of the book, with separate prologues and links intersected between the main narrations. The book remains unfinished upon Chaucer's

death.

The Canterbury Tales are tales told by the pilgrims on their way to Canterbury to beguile with the time. They go to Canterbury to pay homage to Thomas Becket, a saint killed on 29 Dec. , 1170 by the henchmen of Henry II when the two quarrelled fiercely over religious questions and each wanted more power over the other. The pilgrims include men and women of different professions and social status, so the total effect of the poem is a comprehensive picture of the social reality of Chaucer's time. Our excerpt is taken from the beginning of the poem, the General Prologue in which Chaucer explains the background for the stories and gives a vivid description of the pilgrims. The language is modernized.

THE CANTERBURY TALES

The Prologue¹

When the sweet showers of April fall and shoot
Down through the drought of March to pierce the root²,
Bathing every vein in liquid power³
From which there springs the engendering of the flower,⁴
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 run,⁶
And the small fowls⁷ are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye
(So nature pricks them and their heart engages)⁸

Then people long to go on pilgrimages
And palmers long to seek the stranger strands⁹
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands¹⁰,
And specially, from every shire's end¹¹
In England, down to Canterbury¹² they wend¹³
To seek the holy blissful martyr¹⁴, quick
In giving help to them when they were sick.

It happened in that season that one day
In Southwark¹⁵, at *The Tabard*¹⁶, as I lay
Ready to go on pilgrimage and start
For Canterbury, most devout at heart,
At night there came into that hostelry¹⁷
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 wide¹⁸;
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 was admitted to their fellowship
And promised to rise early and take the way
To Canterbury, as you heard me say.
But none the less, while I have time and space,
Before my story takes a further pace,¹⁹
It seems a reasonable thing to say
What their condition²⁰ was, the full array²¹
Of each of them, as it appeared to me,
According to profession and degree²²,

And what apparel²³ they were riding in;
And at a Knight I therefore will begin.

...

There also was a Nun, a Prioress²⁴;
Simple her way of smiling was and coy²⁵.
Her greatest oath was only "By St Loy!"²⁶
And she was known as Madam Eglantyne²⁷.
And well she sang a service²⁸, with a fine
Intoning through her nose, as was most seemly,²⁹
And she spoke daintily³⁰ in French, extremely,
After the school of Stratford-atte-Bowe³¹;
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 courtliness 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 entertaining³²,
Pleasant and friendly in her ways, and straining
To counterfeit³³ 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.
Sorely she wept if one of them 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-grey;
Her mouth was very small, but soft and red,
And certainly she had a well-shaped head,
Almost a span across the brows,³⁴ 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 gaudies³⁵ tricked³⁶ in green,
Whence hung a golden brooch of brightest sheen
On which there first was graven a crowned A,
And lower, Amor vincit omnia.³⁷

A worthy woman from beside Bath³⁸ city
Was with us, somewhat deaf, which was a pity.
In making cloth she showed so great a bent³⁹
She bettered those of Ypres and Ghent.⁴⁰
In all the parish not a dame dared stir
Towards the altar steps in front of her,⁴¹
And if indeed they did, so wrathe was she
As to be quits put out of charity⁴².
Her kerchiefs were of finely woven ground⁴³;