

英美小说

BRITISH AND AMERICAN
FICTION

王守仁 赵宇 编



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前 言

在编写《英美小说》这本书时,我们没有因袭国内高校英语专业英美文学教材通行的“选读本”传统模式,而是精选英美著名小说家完整的作品,并按小说要素进行编排,其目的是为了改进英美文学课的教学质量、培养学生对文本整体的分析和感悟能力。英美文学课有别于英语精读课,它应该是一门素质培养课。我们按照这一思路组织教学,效果良好,受到学生欢迎,也得到国内同行的好评。《英美小说》于1995年获全国高校外国文学教学研究会首届优秀教材奖。

《英美小说》由于篇幅有限,所收课文主要是短篇小说。在教学过程中,教师可以根据学生实际,指定学生课外阅读长篇小说原著,将其作为英美文学课的补充。实践证明,大量阅读有助于培养语感,提高阅读速度。

编 者

Introduction

What do we mean by “fiction”? Broadly, any story that is invented, as distinguished from true narrative — say, a historical account or a news report — is fiction. In this sense drama and narrative poetry may be described as fictional. But “fiction” is also a recognized literary form in a more definite sense; it is understood to be an imagined narrative told in prose, namely, the novel and the short story. In conformity with the literary use of the word “fiction”, this anthology is devoted exclusively to the short story and the novella. Our study of fiction, therefore, is essentially the study of narrative prose fiction.

Modern English literary fiction cannot be seen simply as an imitation of reality. Fiction does not reflect reality like a mirror; rather it constructs a particular kind of reality. It presents a reality constructed entirely upon language. The writer of fiction creates worlds “as real as, but other than the world that is”.^[1] Fiction can maintain the closest possible correspondence between its story and events that have actually happened in the world, but it is by nature made-up. It is a non-natural, unreal product of the human imagination. This, however, does not imply that fiction is nonsense. Fiction among other things presents a way of experiencing life, and offers insight as well as wisdom in our understanding human existence. Fiction is at once an impression of reality, and a distilled version of reality. The fictional work uses the artificial to express an essential truth.

Living now in the age of science and technology, many students regard literature courses as impractical or useless. This view partly proceeds from an erroneous assumption that literature courses consist of nothing but bundles of “dead facts” to be memorized. The proper way of studying fiction, however, is to confront the text itself, instead of merely familiarizing oneself with the great writers’ lives and the titles of their masterpieces. Fiction courses emphasize the development of students’ ability to understand, appreciate, and analyse literature. According to reader-response criticism, the meaning of the text is to be realized or created by the reader in the process of reading. Reading fiction becomes a creative activity; it broadens our horizon, sharpens our mind, deepens our understanding of life, and above all, helps

[1] John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (London: Triad/Panther Book, 1977), P. 86

our intellectual development.

It is true that there is no absolutely "right" way to read a story or novel. The same text is often approached in many "legitimate" ways which can be contradictory to each other yet justifiable by themselves. But there are "better" and "worse" readings. During their basic language training period, students majoring in English have been exposed to works of non-fiction, that is, writings attempting a literal report of life. Proficiency in reading non-fiction does not necessarily guarantee success in reading short stories and novels, however. Fiction is a special kind of writing which is different from non-fiction in kind, method, and purpose. A knowledge of the elements of fiction such as theme, plot, character, point of view and symbol, and an awareness of the ways in which these elements function, will certainly enhance our understanding of fiction. Sufficient training in the reading of fiction, therefore, becomes necessary for students who want to appreciate that form of art.

The study of fiction helps language learning as well. Language is literary fiction's vehicle, and many fiction writers have displayed linguistic virtuosity in their writings. Only in literature, of which short stories and novels constitute a very important part, are the subtleties and potentialities of English fully explored and brought out. English major students who wish to improve their abilities to use English as an effective means of communication can certainly benefit from reading fiction.

This anthology consists of several sections, each of which having one particular element as its heading. In conducting the study of fiction, the reader may find it necessary and profitable to take one element at a time, but our intention is not meant to force the reader to focus on a particular element to the exclusion of all others. In other words, no element should be totally isolated from the others. To quote Henry James, "A story is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts."^[1] The reader, therefore, must always bear in mind the interrelationship among the elements of fiction.

Since this anthology is designed to introduce the basic elements of fiction, only short stories and one novella are included here. As a work of narrative fiction in prose, the novel bears no fundamental difference from the short story or the novella. It is a matter of expansion and compression. A short story is distinguished by its concentration, while a novel is distinguished by its expansiveness and inclusive-

[1] Henry James, *Selected Literary Criticism*. ed. by Morris Shapira (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), P. 58

ness. Many techniques used by the short story writer are almost the same as those employed by the novelist. Short stories provide ideal cases for analysing and illustrating the ways in which the elements of fiction work. The various approaches recommended here for reading short stories are equally applicable to reading novels. Although the scope of this book does not allow any novel of length to be included, students are encouraged to read the novels of major writers outside of class, and to apply their knowledge of the elements of fiction in their extracurricular reading.

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1. Theme [10-11]

When we discuss a story after reading it, we often talk about its meaning. Meaning has both an objective component (the narrative details) and a subjective component (the unique experience and sensitivity with which each reader views those details). The dual nature of meaning suggests that a story does not have a single "correct" interpretation; at the same time, it indicates that a reader cannot arbitrarily impose his ideas upon a story, but must explain what is actually in the story. Meaning therefore can be regarded as an interpretation which is being "read out" of the story instead of being "read into" it. Theme is the central meaning that is implicit in a story; it is a general statement of the story's controlling idea as discovered by the reader.

In discussing fiction the details become meaningful when they are related to an overall conception of a story's general point — the theme. This element is unmistakably related to the **fable** and **parable**, two ancient forms of fiction. The fable and parable are allegorical, for they tell a story about one thing while really directing attention to something else. Thus, there are always "two levels" — a literal level and a figurative level. For example, in the fables of Aesop the literal level always involves animals, and the figurative level always points toward some aspect of human social behaviour. Aesop invariably concludes his fable with a moral generalization that brings home the figurative point made by the fable. Jesus, on the other hand, usually bases his parables on some ordinary human action. He tells an anecdote about human behaviour which is intended to illustrate a moral or spiritual truth at the figurative level.

FABLES OF AESOP

(c. 620—c. 560 B.C.)

The Dog in the Manger

A Dog was lying in a Manger full of hay. An Ox, being hungry, came near and was going to eat the hay. The Dog, getting up and snarling at him, would not let him touch it. "Surly creature," said the Ox, "you cannot eat the hay yourself, and yet

you will let no one else have any."

Moral: People often grudge others what they cannot enjoy themselves.

The Fox and the Grapes

A famished Fox saw some clusters of ripe black grapes hanging from a trellised vine. She resorted to all her tricks to get at them, but wearied herself in vain, for she could not reach them. At last she turned away, beguiling herself of her disappointment and saying: "The Grapes are sour, and not ripe as I thought."

Moral: It is easy to despise what we cannot have.

PARABLES OF JESUS

1—34 A. D.

The Sower and the Seed

And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

The Good Samaritan

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall

I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which one of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

In literary fiction, theme is seldom so obvious. Modern fiction is much subtler than traditional fables or parables. In fact, many fiction writers avoid setting forth general statements of meanings in a direct way. A story is always particular, an instance, but theme is usually general, an abstraction derived from the details. Discovering theme then becomes an interpretive act: it involves not only looking carefully at the work itself for meaningful details, but also looking away from the work toward the world of abstract ideas. As a general statement of some abstract idea, theme tends to be an oversimplification. It is useful for the purposes of analysis, and always subject to qualification and addition.

The process of formulating theme is that of moving from a given instance to a general notion. After we read William Carlos Williams' "The Use of Force", it may be easy to sum up what happens in the story: a doctor is invited to see a girl, and then forces her to open her mouth for examination. Though these events seem relatively slight, the narrative as a whole seems large and full of meaning. We may conclude that the girl rejects the doctor out of her fear and ignorance. If we say that, we are still talking about what happens in the story, though we have gone beyond

merely recording its external events. We may have another try: "Blind rejection comes out of fear and ignorance." This statement indicates that Williams' story is about more than just a doctor and a stubborn girl. Theme is usually stated in general terms, and must hold true for the story as a whole. What about the doctor's desire to destroy the girl? The story can certainly be read as a struggle of will in which the doctor overpowers the helpless girl. This reading is justified by the words such as "battle", "fought", "assault" and "defensive" that appear in the story. The sentence "It is social necessity" gives us some clue for our thematic discussion. Can we say: "The use of force is necessary but has a negative impact"? It is significant to note that the title "The Use of Force" is a general notion while the story itself is about a quite ordinary and specific incident. This furnishes an example showing that Williams is using the familiar event as the basis for philosophical meditation. Edmund Burke (1720—1790), an Irish-born English statesman and writer who was sympathetic to the cause of the American colonies, wrote: "The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered."^[1] Is there any connection between Burke and Williams in using the phrase "the use of force"? We may formulate another statement: "The use of force can defeat one's body but cannot conquer one's mind." Neither this nor any other statement of the story's theme is unarguably right. Modern fiction is often open to different interpretations. Confronted with a bundle of possibilities, the reader is invited to discover the theme, or themes, of a story. A statement of theme helps the reader to bring into focus a general notion of the central idea that narrative seems to be driving at.

In trying to state the theme of a story as accurately and inclusively as possible, one critic finds it useful to consider these points:

1. Look back once more at the title of the story. In the light of what you have read, what does it indicate?
2. Does the main character in any way change in the course of the story? Does this character arrive at any eventual realization or understanding? Are you left with any realization or understanding you did not have before?
3. Does the author make any general observations about life or human nature? Do the characters make any? (Caution: characters now and again will utter opinions with which the reader is not necessarily supposed to agree.)

[1] Edmund Burke, *The Works of Edmund Burke* Vol. II (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1839) p. 31.

4. Does the story contain any especially curious objects, mysterious flat characters, significant animals, repeated names, song titles or whatever, that hint toward meanings larger than such things ordinarily have? In literary stories, such symbols may point to central themes.
5. When you have worded your statement of theme, have you cast your statement into general terms, not just given a plot summary?
6. Does your statement hold true for the story as a whole, not for just part of it?^[1]

[1] X. J. Kennedy, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1983), p. 105.

The Use of Force

William Carlos Williams

(1883—1963)

Although William Carlos Williams is known primarily as a poet, his literary achievements include published novels, short stories, essays, and an autobiography. The son of immigrants — his father was English, his mother Puerto Rican — Williams was born in Rutherford, New Jersey. He attended preparatory schools in New York and Switzerland, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, and studied pediatrics in Leipzig, Germany.

For 40 years, Williams practiced medicine in Rutherford, specializing in the care of infants and children. At the same time, he was one of the most prolific twentieth American authors, publishing his first volume of poems at the age of 23. In the 1950s he abandoned medicine because of poor health and devoted himself entirely to literature. By that time he was widely respected and successful in his quest for a new and appropriate verse idiom. His poems achieve through vivid imagery, short, terse lyrics, and colloquial speech, a rapid pace and sharp tension release as the poem moves toward its conclusion. In his best works, Williams seeks universal patterns in small things; he writes of familiar objects and events, as in "The Use of Force", using them as the basis for philosophical speculation. Among his individual volumes are The Tempers (1913), Desert Music (1954), Journey to Love (1955) and Pictures from Brueghel (1962). Williams' other works are In the American Grain (1925), which is a study of the American character, Autobiography (1951), Make Light of It: Collected Stories (1950), and Selected Essays (1954).

They were new patients to me, all I had was the name, Olson. ^[1] Please come down as soon as you can, my daughter is very sick.

When I arrived I was met by the mother, a big startled looking woman, very clean and

[1] Olson: 斯堪的那维亚普通姓氏。

apologetic who merely said, Is this the doctor? and let me in. In the back, she added. You must excuse us, doctor, we have her in the kitchen where it is warm. It is very damp here sometimes.

The child was fully dressed and sitting on her father's lap near the kitchen table. He tried to get up, but I motioned for him not to bother, took off my overcoat and started to look things over. I could see that they were all very nervous, eyeing me up and down distrustfully. As often, in such cases, they weren't telling me more than they had to, it was up to me to tell them; that's why they were spending three dollars on me.

The child was fairly ^[1] eating me up with her cold, steady eyes, and no expression to her face whatever. She did not move and seemed, inwardly, quiet; an unusually attractive little thing, and as strong as a heifer ^[2] in appearance. But her face was flushed, she was breathing rapidly, and I realized that she had a high fever. She had magnificent blonde hair, in profusion. One of those picture children often reproduced in advertising leaflets and the photogravure sections of the Sunday papers. ^[3]

She's had a fever for three days, began the father and we don't know what it comes from. My wife has given her things, you know, like people do, but it don't do no good. ^[4] And there's been a lot of sickness around. So we tho't ^[5] you'd better look her over and tell us what is the matter.

As doctors often do I took a trial shot ^[6] at it as a point of departure. Has she had a sore throat?

Both parents answered me together, No . . . No, she says her throat don't hurt her.

Does your throat hurt you? added the mother to the child. But the little girl's expression didn't change nor did she move her eyes from my face.

Have you looked?

I tried to, said the mother, but I couldn't see.

As it happens we had been having a number of cases of diphtheria ^[7] in the school to which this child went during that month and we were all, quite apparently, thinking of that, though no one had as yet spoken of the thing.

Well, I said, suppose we take a look at the throat first. I smiled in my best professional manner and asking for the child's first name I said, come on, Mathilda, open your mouth and let's take a look at your throat.

Nothing doing.

[1] fairly: almost.

[2] heifer: 小母牛。

[3] the photogravure sections of the Sunday papers: 星期天报纸的彩色照片版; photogravure: 照相凸版印刷。

[4] it don't do no good = it hasn't done any good.

[5] tho't = thought.

[6] took a trial shot: made a first attempt; 这里指开始诊断。

[7] diphtheria: 白喉(症)。

Aw, come on, I coaxed, just open your mouth wide and let me take a look. Look, I said opening both hands wide, I haven't anything in my hands. Just open up and let me see.

Such a nice man, put in the mother. Look how kind he is to you. Come on, do what he tells you to. He won't hurt you.

At that I ground my teeth in disgust. If only they wouldn't use the word "hurt" I might be able to get somewhere. But I did not allow myself to be hurried or disturbed but speaking quietly and slowly I approached the child again.

As I moved my chair a little nearer suddenly with one catlike movement both her hands clawed instinctively for my eyes and she almost reached them too. In fact she knocked my glasses flying and they fell, though unbroken, several feet away from me on the kitchen floor.

Both the mother and father almost turned themselves inside out in embarrassment and apology. You bad girl, said the mother, taking her and shaking her by one arm. Look what you've done. The nice man . . .

For heaven's sake, I broke in. Don't call me a nice man to her. I'm here to look at her throat on the chance that she might have diphtheria and possibly die of it. But that's nothing to her. Look here, I said to the child, we're going to look at your throat. You're old enough to understand what I'm saying. Will you open it now by yourself or shall we have to open it for you?

Not a move. Even her expression hadn't changed. Her breaths however were coming faster and faster. Then the battle began. I had to do it. I had to have a throat culture^[1] for her own protection. But first I told the parents that it was entirely up to them. I explained the danger but said that I would not insist on a throat examination so long as they would take the responsibility.

If you don't do what the doctor says you'll have to go to the hospital, the mother admonished her severely.

Oh yeah? I had to smile to myself. After all, I had already fallen in love with the savage brat,^[2] the parents were contemptible to me. In the ensuing struggle they grew more and more abject,^[3] crushed, exhausted while she surely rose to magnificent heights of insane fury of effort bred of her terror of me.

The father tried his best, and he was a big man but the fact that she was his daughter, his shame at her behavior and his dread of hurting her made him release her just at the critical moment several times when I had almost achieved success, till I wanted to kill him. But his dread also that she might have diphtheria made him tell me to go on, go on though he himself was almost fainting, while the mother moved back and forth behind us raising and lowering her hands in an agony of apprehension.

Put her in front of you on your lap, I ordered, and hold both her wrists.

[1] culture: a sample of (throat) tissue to be tested for infection in a laboratory; 试样。

[2] brat: a contemptuous word for "child"; 小家伙。

[3] abject: deserving contempt because behaving in a cowardly or self-abusing manner.

But as soon as he did the child let out a scream. Don't, you're hurting me. Let go of my hands. Let them go I tell you. Then she shrieked terrifyingly, hysterically. Stop it! Stop it! You're killing me!

Do you think she can stand it, doctor! said the mother.

You get out, said the husband to his wife. Do you want her to die of diphtheria?

Come on now, hold her, I said.

Then I grasped the child's head with my left hand and tried to get the wooden tongue depressor between her teeth. She fought, with clenched teeth, desperately! But now I also had grown furious — at a child. I tried to hold myself down but I couldn't. I know how to expose a throat for inspection. And I did my best. When finally I got the wooden spatula^[1] behind the last teeth and just the point of it into the mouth cavity, she opened up for an instant but before I could see anything she came down again and gripping the wooden blade between her molars^[2] she reduced it to splinters before I could get it out again.

Aren't you ashamed, the mother yelled at her. Aren't you ashamed to act like that in front of the doctor?

Get me a smooth-handled spoon of some sort, I told the mother. We're going through with this. The child's mouth was already bleeding. Her tongue was cut and she was screaming in wild hysterical shrieks. Perhaps I should have desisted^[3] and come back in an hour or more. No doubt it would have been better. But I have seen at least two children lying dead in bed of neglect in such cases, and feeling that I must get a diagnosis now or never I went at it again. But the worst of it was that I too had got beyond reason. I could have torn the child apart in my own fury and enjoyed it. It was a pleasure to attack her. My face was burning with it.

The damned little brat must be protected against her own idiocy, one says to one's self at such times. Others must be protected against her. It is social necessity. And all these things are true. But a blind fury, a feeling of adult shame, bred of a longing for muscular release are the operatives.^[4] One goes on to the end.

In a final unreasoning assault I overpowered the child's neck and jaws. I forced the heavy silver spoon back of her teeth and down her throat till she gagged.^[5] And there it was — both tonsils covered with membrane.^[6] She had fought valiantly to keep me from knowing her secret. She had been hiding that sore throat for three days at least and lying to her parents in order to escape just such an outcome as this.

[1] wooden spatula: 压舌板。

[2] molars: the back teeth; 臼齿。

[3] desisted: stopped.

[4] operatives: here, the immediate, compelling motives.

[5] gagged: to hold the jaws of a person apart; 使张开口。

[6] both tonsils covered with membrane: 两个扁桃体上长有一层膜。