

彭家海 主编

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# 新编实用 美国文学教程

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A COURSE BOOK OF

A M E R I C A N L I T E R A T U R E

华中科技大学出版社

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# 新编实用美国文学教程

## A Course Book of American Literature

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## 前言

《新编实用美国文学教程》是一本用英语编写、文学史与作品选读相结合的英语专业本科生教材。文学史部分主要介绍美国文学中几个重要时期的历史背景、文学思潮、文学流派以及作家的文学生涯、艺术特色及代表作品的情节;作品选读部分选择了美国文学中代表人物的优秀作品,主要包括短篇小说、诗歌和散文等,并提供了必要的注释和小说的生词表。

本教程的编写原则是:

一、突出小说,尤其是短篇小说在美国文学中的重要性。我们没有从长篇小说中节选,而是精选了一些短篇作品,而且所选短篇小说均从一定程度上代表了某一作家长篇小说中的创作主题和风格等。对于有些作家我们从其作品中精选了两篇,目的是把该作家不同时期的风格呈现在读者面前,并且它们难易程度不一,从而可以供不同层次的读者阅读。同时,本教程提供了被公认为某一作家代表作的长篇小说的故事梗概。

二、突出实用性。在突出作品的代表性和可读性的同时,少而精地确定入选作家。所选作家都是美国文学中的代表人物,可以从很大程度上代表某一流派的创作主题和风格。在文学课程课时有限的情况下,可以让广大学生对美国文学的历史、发展趋势和特点有一定的认识和了解。正是基于以上情况,20世纪60年代以后的作家暂不选入本教程。

另外,为了便于大学本科及相当水平的读者阅读,本教程特地为部分所选作品提供了生词表。之所以这样做是因为有很多学生由于小说中的生词较多而不能很好地阅读和理解,从而失去了对文学课的兴趣,使文学欣赏和课堂讨论无法进行。

三、突出作品本身的重要性。对作家只进行简单扼要的介绍。为了把文学史和作品选读结合起来,除了作家介绍外,还对美国文学史中的几个重要时期的社会背景及文学特色进行了介绍。

四、突出文化内涵。由于文学与文化密不可分,而且对文化的了解有助于对作品的理解,因此,我们在背景及作家介绍、选材及注释等方面把文化置于极其重要的位置。

五、为了让读者对美国文学有一个比较全面的了解,我们也精选了美国文学中一些著名诗人的优秀诗篇及若干篇散文。

为了便于读者自学,我们将为本教程编写一本学习手册,供配套使用。

《新编实用美国文学教程》的问世与华中科技大学出版社领导的关心和支持密不可分,更是编辑辛勤劳动的结晶。在此,我代表所有编者向他们表示诚挚的谢意。

参加本教程编写工作的都是教学一线的老师,而且都在美国文学的教学和研究方面进行了多年探索,本教程正是他们的经验总结。除主编外,参与编写的还有黄新副教授、王勇副教授、贾勤副教授、罗绮伦、张莉铃和钱莉娜老师。全书的设计、选材、文字修改和最后的通读定稿都由主编负责。由于对作家作品的了解、认识和研究不一,再加上编者水平有限,我们的观点和对作家、作品的选择可能与研究美国文学方面的专家学者的意见有出入,欢迎广大读者提出修改意见。

彭家海

2005年3月于武汉



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# **Part One Early American Literature**

## **Chapter 1 Birth of American Literature**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **1. 1 A New Land**

The United States is a young country, with a shorter history compared with most other countries in the world. But this didn't stop it from having become a world power economically, politically as well as militarily. And, with several Nobel Prize winners, American literature is now an important part of world literature. One reason is that youth is usually associated with vigor. What else has given American literature the strong life? The reading of some of the writings by American literary masters will furnish us with the course of its development and thus the answer.

It's generally believed that Christopher Columbus (1451—1506), an Italian sailor and explorer, is the first person who discovered the American Continent. On 12 October, 1492, he reached Bahamas and saw some land, which he took for India, and thus discovered a "new world." (Another Italian sailor, Amerigo Vespucci (1454—1512), claimed to have sailed to America several times, and thus America was named after him.) Five years later, in 1497, another Italian sailor and explorer, John Cabot (1450—1498) who was working then for the English king, Henry VII (1457—1509), arrived in today's Canada, and the next year, he got to the east coast of what is now America. Based on his findings, the English king could claim that the whole of the territory of North America belonged to England. At that time, about 10—20 million people, mistakenly called Indians by Christopher, inhabited the Americas.

When the news of the discoveries reached Europe, people were greatly inspired. And in the early 16th century, for various reasons, some Europeans arrived in the New World. The earliest settlers include Dutch, Swedes, Germans, French, Spaniards, Italians, and Portuguese in addition to British people. It was not until 1607 that the first permanent British settlement, Jamestown, was established in Virginia. The second settlement was set up at Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620 by some Puritans who came in Mayflower, and then in 1630 a larger Puritan colony was established in the Boston area.

As soon as they got to the New World, the colonists began to write. They wrote about their voyage to the new continent, about adapting themselves to unfamiliar climates and crops, about dealing with the Indians. Their writings were in the form of diaries.

They also wrote about the land which stretched before them—unimaginable and immense. From that time on, American literature has been recording the story of quest.

In spite of the many difficulties, such as food shortage, severe weather and the disturbance caused by Indians, the early settlers prospered. Later more colonies were created along the east coast of what is now the United States. They also succeeded in establishing a kind of government, complete with town meetings, popular elections, and official policies. On July 30, 1619, in the Jamestown church, the delegates elected from various communities in Virginia met to discuss, along with the governor and his council members who were appointed, the enactment of laws for the colony.

## 1.2 Puritan Ideas

It is generally accepted that American mainstream culture has been developed by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. And the Puritans formed a substantial part of Protestants in the early years. In New England, which is located in the north-east of the present US, where the first few British colonies were built, the term “Puritans” has been applied to those settlers who originally were devout members of the Church of England. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church ruled all Europe. The Pope and the church priests became very powerful, which led to corruption in the church, such as the buying and selling of indulgences. In 1517, Martin Luther, a German professor of theology, started a movement to protest against abuses in the church, which came to be called the Protestant Movement. Twelve years later, the English king, Henry VIII (1509—1547), broke ties with the Pope and established an independent Church of England. By the time of Elizabeth’s reign (1558—1603), the Church of England was clearly Protestant in respect to its separation from Rome. However, the separation didn’t bring about much change in ceremony in churches. Some members branched out because they felt that the Church of England was too close to the Church of Rome in doctrine, form of worship, and organization of authority. Another point is that they felt the influences of politics and the court led to corruption within the church. They were known as “Separatists”—people who wished to break away from the Church of England. Puritans wished to “purify” the rituals, lessen the authority of bishops, and make pure their religious beliefs and practices. They wished to restore simplicity to church services and the authority of the Bible to theology. With a high moral standard, the Puritans considered themselves as a chosen people, and in their eyes, anyone who challenged their way of life was opposing God’s will and was not to be accepted. They believed that governments should enforce God’s morality. They strictly punished drunks, adulterers, violators of the Sabbath and other religious believers different from themselves. Puritans had strong opposition to pleasure and the arts. They tended to suspect joy and laughter as symptoms of sin. Their lives were disciplined, simple and hard. In the middle 17th century, they had a revolution in England, overthrowing the monarch. After the Restoration in 1660, they were severely persecuted. Eventually, these reformers were so suppressed that they sought escape. Some of them have come to the New World.

Today, Puritans are no longer in existence. But their legacies are still felt in American society and culture. For example, the Puritans hoped to build an ideal community, which

is made clear in the "Mayflower Compact." Since that time, Americans have viewed their country as a great experiment, a worthy model for other nations.

In the early years of the colonies, nothing was written for mere amusement. The early literature that emerged from such a God-centered world was heavily weighted, in subject and style, by religious considerations. For example, the writings of William Bradford (1590—1657), Anne Bradstreet (1617—1672), Edward Taylor (1645—1729) and Jonathan Edwards (1703—1758) are mostly sermons.

### 1.3 Enlightenment Ideas

The Middle Ages was thought by many to be a dark period in European history because people were ignorant and superstitious under the control of the Roman Catholic Church. In the late 17th century, Enlightenment appeared in Europe. The movement was characterized by the philosophic, scientific and rational spirit, the freedom from superstition and the skepticism. With the development of education and the advancement of scientific research, a lot of discoveries and inventions were made. As a result, people began to learn more about themselves and the world around them. The findings of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton were significant; They rejected man as an evil creature; man was capable. The emphasis began to shift from one's duties toward God to rights, from in-born evil to in-born good. In their writings Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Locke, Descartes, Condorcet and Rousseau showed their resentment against tyranny in government and against ignorance and inequality in society. For example, in his *Two Treatises on Government* (1690), John Locke, the English political philosopher, defended the natural rights of man against the power of government.

### 1.4 The Revolutionary Period

The Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries made Britain a rich and powerful country, but it also brought some problems such as overproduction. The British government at that time didn't want colonial industries to compete with those in England. It hampered colonial economy by requiring Americans to ship raw material abroad and to import finished goods from Britain. In 1756, England and France began a war, known as the French and Indian War, brought about by the dispute about the control of territory in North America. The war ended in the victory for England. The British government argued that Britain had spent large sums of money to defend their American colonies in those wars, and that the colonists therefore should pay a part of those expenses. As a result, it began to charge new taxes on sugar, coffee, textiles and other imported goods. What's more, Britain ruled the colonies and taxed them without giving them representation in Parliament.

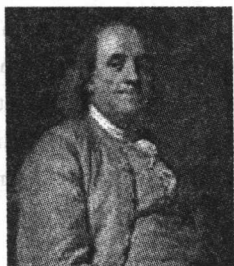
To safeguard their own interests, the thirteen British colonies in North America got united. In September 1774, the First Continental Congress, a meeting of colonial leaders who opposed British rule, met in Philadelphia. They decided to organize militias and collect and store weapons and ammunition to defend themselves because the British government had sent many soldiers to Boston when the colonists refused to pay the above-mentioned tax. In 1775, the English colonies rose in arms against their mother country. "The

Declaration of Independence,” which was adopted on July 4, 1776 by the Second Continental Congress, officially proclaimed the independence of the colonies although the War of American Independence was still going on. It lasted for 6 years (1775—1781) and ended in the formation of a Federative bourgeois democratic republic—the United States of America.

Although Puritan thought was still quite strong in the colonies, a new, more rational approach to life was appearing in the 18th century, begun by movements in Europe due to scientific discoveries. And, because of the political events of the Revolution, the literature of the time was largely political, didactic and moralizing, which was exemplified in the writings of Benjamin Franklin. With some ideas borrowed from John Locke, “The Declaration of Independence,” in which we can find the theory of politics and the guiding principle of the American Revolution, is a highly effective piece of prose.

## II. Benjamin Franklin (1706—1790)

### 2.1 Life and Career



Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was the only American writer in the colonial period whose works are still read today. He was born in Boston, the tenth son in the family. At the age of 12, Franklin was apprenticed to his half-brother, James Franklin, a newspaper printer in Boston. In 1723, Franklin went to Philadelphia almost penniless, where he stayed for a short time working as a newspaper printer. There he attracted the notice of the governor of Pennsylvania. Through the governor's influence Franklin went to London and stayed there for two years. In 1743, he proposed the establishment of a learned society, American Philosophical Society, and became its first president. He stressed applied science and new inventions and techniques. He proved that lightning is a form of electricity and invented the lightning conductor. He also invented the Franklin stove and bifocal spectacles.

The most famous work, *The Autobiography*, extends the religious Puritan ideal of rising from poverty, or humble beginnings, to success. His life is a lesson to those who want to achieve greatness. It asks for honesty and almost provides instructions, in typical American fashion, of “how to” succeed. He listed 13 virtues in it, the first two being temperance (Eat not to dullness. Drink not to elevation) and silence (Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation). His secondly most famous book, *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1732—1758) contains a lot of proverbs and practical advice. The sayings are so popular that they are still quoted frequently in conversations today. For example, “Fish and visitors smell in three days”; “God helps them that help themselves”; “Lost time is never found again”; “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.”

In 1775, Franklin was appointed to the Second Continental Congress which was drafting articles leading to *The Declaration of Independence* which was written mostly by

Thomas Jefferson, assisted also by John Adams, the second president of the United States (1797—1801). In 1785, only five years before he died, he returned to Philadelphia, served two terms as governor of the State of Pennsylvania, and after that served on the convention to draft the constitution, which was finally adopted in 1789.

Franklin is looked on by some people as a good example of the promise of American Dream.

## 2.2 Selected Writings

### The Declaration of Independence

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.—That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present king of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only. He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. He



has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. He has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands. He has obstructed the administration of justice by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers. He has made judges dependent on his will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance. He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies without the consent of our legislatures. He has affected to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power. He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution and unacknowledged by our laws, giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation for quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;—For protecting them by a mock trial from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;—For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;—For imposing taxes on us without our consent;—For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury;—For transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences;—For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies;—For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments;—For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us. He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation. He has constrained our fellow citizens taken captive on the high seas to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands. He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injuries. A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement

here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends.

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America in General Congress assembled, appealing to the supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do in the name, and by authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

### Questions

1. What is the significance of *The Declaration of Independence*?
2. In what way is *The Declaration of Independence* a piece of prose?
3. Were the colonists justified in declaring independence according to the passage?

## Chapter 2 The Rise of a National Literature

### I. Introduction

#### 1.1 The Frontier

After the American Revolution, a new country came into being. It was made up of 13 colonies lying along the east coast of what is now the US. Beyond the Appalachian Mountains, there were vast stretches of land. The knowledge that there was some untouched land lying out West to explore and settle shaped the lives and dreams of generations of Americans.

Reflected in the works of Cooper, Mark Twain and some other writers, the word "frontier" originally refers to regions where white Americans went as settlers and competed against nature and the Indians. The first such settlers were the immigrants who came over on the Mayflower. The word is more often used with reference to westward expansion that took place in the 19th century and especially after the discovery of gold in California in 1848.

The westward expansion was obtained sometimes by fighting, for example, the 13

years of Indian Wars after the American Revolution, the War of 1812 against Britain, the War with Mexico from 1846 to 1848, and sometimes by peaceful means, for example, the crossing of the Mississippi in the 1790s and the Louisiana Purchase. The latter was approved under the administration of Thomas Jefferson. It increased the physical dimensions of the new nation by 140%. A large area (828 000 square miles) was sold by Napoleon of France at a price of \$16 million (four cents an acre) to America. The purchase more than doubled the size of the USA and 13 additional states were eventually created—those lying all along the Mississippi basin.

The Americans always want to take new territory. It is psychologically beneficial to them because it can give them new hope of success and they can remain optimistic in the midst of hardship. This has given rise to the ever-expanding frontier.

## 1.2 The Growth of American Literature

In 1819, an English critic, Sydney Smith, wrote in *The Edinburgh Review*: “In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book or goes to an American play?”

As the nation grew in size, American literature sought for identity. The American writers soon turned to the American scene and civilization, and found their materials in the culture and history, the lore and landscape of their native country. Some of the writers of this period had even greater critical acclaim abroad than at home, for example, Edgar Allan Poe. And Washington Irving's *Sketch Book* (1819—1820) became the first work by an American writer to win financial success on both sides of the Atlantic. The stories in this book are about some legendary people in the Appalachian Mountains and by the Hudson River. Soon a national literature began to emerge at the hands of Poe, Melville, Hawthorne, Emerson and Whitman.

## II. Washington Irving (1783—1859)

### 2.1 Life and Career



Washington Irving

Born in New York City, Washington Irving is considered to be the father of American literature. As a child, Irving was quite different from his father, a stern, gloomy person who thought “everything that was pleasant was wicked.” But he was quite fond of his mother who bore eleven children and he was the youngest. Later he grew into a well-mannered young man, even though he often daydreamed. And he was fond of reading. He read a great deal of Chaucer, Shakespeare, the adventures of Robin Hood and Robinson Crusoe. As a desultory student, Washington Irving never made the most of his schooling. After his graduation, he began to prepare for the bar exam, as there was great demand to settle issues concerning ownership of property after the American Revolution. In 1809, he published his first book—*A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*. It was a great success.