



普通高等教育“十五”国家级规划教材



# 文学原理教程

Elements of Literature

金莉 张剑 编著

Wardsworth writes "Milton, there should be listening  
at this time" he is addressing an imaginary or absent  
listener, for Milton was dead long before his poem.  
The apostrophe enables Wordsworth to bring back a  
historical figure and establish a direct dialogue, thus  
giving his writing more immediacy and more urgency.

外语教学与研究出版社



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## 前 言

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《文学原理教程》为我国高校本科英语专业文学导论课程教材。该课程以培养学生阅读欣赏英语文学原著的能力、掌握文学批评的基本知识和方法、拓宽学生知识结构为目的。学生在经过本科低年级的英语基础技能训练、进入高年级学习阶段之后,阅读一定数量的英美文学经典作品有助于提高学生的文学修养与人文素质,增强学生对于西方文学与文化的了解。

我国高校英语专业文学导论课多年来没有统一的固定教材,许多高校一直采用由任课教师自行选篇、以讲义代替教材的做法,带有较大的随意性。我们在连续五年的授课过程中,在参考了国外同类教材的基础上,经过不断筛选和调整,编写了这本在内容和程度上都较符合我国高校学生特点的教材,以填补我国英语专业教材中的这一空缺。本书已被列入普通高等教育“十五”国家级规划教材。

《文学原理教程》教材以理论与实践相结合的编写宗旨,强调对于文本的阅读与分析。全书按照小说、诗歌、戏剧三大文学体裁分类编排,取代传统文学课程中以国别或年代为脉络的梳理。本书编写体例如下:小说、诗歌、戏剧各为一章,每一章又按照文

学要素分成小节,每节内容分为要素讲解、文学名篇、原文注释、思考题这样几个板块。书中每一章节首先用英语简单明了地解释文学要素,为学生阅读文本提供一种可行的视角和分析模式,然后提供英美文学名篇让学生使用学到的文学批评基本知识欣赏文本并做分析练习。为帮助学生理解原著,所选文本均配以原文注释。另外,为开阔学生思路、引导学生深入思考,在每篇作品后面皆附有思考题,供学生课堂讨论或课后学习。

该教材的教学内容为一学期,授课周时数为两节。教学内容的安排顺序依次为小说、诗歌、戏剧。

本书也可作为我国高校公共外语选修课教材,或作为自考英语教材、以及有一定英语水平的文学爱好者的英语文学读本。

本书的小说与戏剧部分由金莉编写,诗歌部分由张剑编写。在我校任教的美籍教授 **Kate Laskowitz** 及其先生曾看过原稿,在此谨致衷心的感谢。

由于编者水平所限,书中错误与考虑不周之处在所难免,恳切希望批评指正。

编 者  
北京外国语大学  
2003 年 11 月

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# Part One

## Fiction

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What do we generally expect of a work of fiction? The answer might differ from reader to reader. Yet we will surely find one element common to every reader's expectations before examining a work of fiction. That is, the expectation that the work will tell a story. Fiction, then, is a name for stories at least partially imagined. The term is most commonly associated with novels and short stories, though in this sense drama and narrative poetry may also be regarded as fictional. As a specific form of literature, fiction can be more accurately defined as a narrative told in prose, namely, the novel and the short story. Out of consideration for space, we only include short stories in our discussion of elements of fiction.

In fiction the facts are not necessarily true or historically accurate. A writer may depict actual people, events and places in his/her fictional world, but the facts are not usually his/her primary concern. What is more important is how a writer makes use of these facts. A writer leads us into a world of his/her creation and makes us accept that what is happening in the story is true. For example, Stephen Crane, the author of the American civil war novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, was not even born when the war was fought. And yet, his novel has been regarded by many as one of the best war novels that has ever been written.

In order to appreciate and interpret fiction, we need first to learn certain characteristics or devices of fiction, each of which helps to make a literary work a unified and meaningful whole. These characteristics, called elements of fiction, consist of plot, character and characterization, theme, point of view, tone, style, symbol, etc. Understanding the functions of each individual element will certainly help us understand the story as a whole. The elements of fiction then become useful tools when we try to read and interpret fictions. They are the common ground on which we can share our reading experiences with others, and ultimately learn to appreciate and critique literary works.

## I. Plot

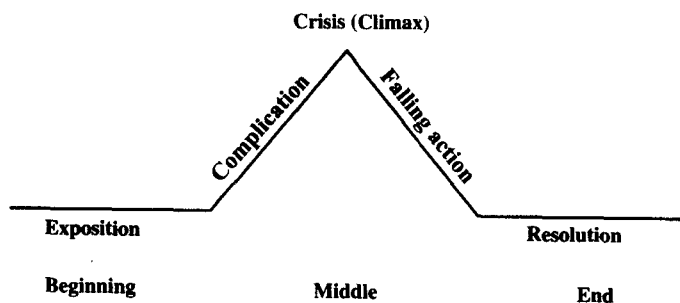
Plot is the arrangement of events that make up a story. In other words, what is more important for a writer of fiction is not the simple setting down

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of events in a temporal sequence, but rather the arrangement of those events according to their causal relationships. That is to say, plot reveals events to us, not by recounting them in their temporal relationships, but by making us aware of the intricate pattern of cause and effect in a story. It is important that one should try to distinguish plot from story. E. M. Forster, in his *Aspects of the Novel*, discusses the difference between the two. He defines story as a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence. In this sense, "The king died and then the queen died" should be regarded as a story. Plot also includes a sequence of incidents, but the emphasis is on their significant causal relationship to each other. In this sense, "The king died, and then the queen died of grief" promises a plot, since one thing happens because of—or as a result of—something else. Therefore, causality becomes the most important feature of realistic fictional plots.

Plots of most realistic stories have an identifiable beginning, middle, and end. They revolve around some significant conflict between opposing forces that is usually resolved by the end of the story. Plot, therefore, is often further defined as the element of fiction that sets up, develops, and resolves a conflict. A conflict can be either external (physical, moral, or psychological contest between antagonistic characters) or internal (moral, psychological, or spiritual struggle within the character itself). External conflicts sometimes are merely projections of internal conflicts. The conflict is in this sense the most significant kind of action. It is this basic opposition, or tension, that engages the reader's attention. The plot of a typical realistic story usually moves through five stages. They can be diagrammed in the following manner:



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a) Exposition:

**Exposition** is the beginning section in which the author provides the necessary background information of the story, describes the setting, and introduces characters. It helps the reader to make sense of the action later in the story.

b) Complication:

The **complication**, also referred to as the **rising action**, intensifies the conflict and leads to a crisis or moment of great tension.

c) Crisis:

**Crisis**, also referred to as the **climax**, is the point of greatest tension in the story. It is the turning point that precipitates the outcome of the conflict.

d) Falling action:

**Falling action** is the moment when the tension subsides and the plot moves towards its resolution.

e) Resolution:

Also referred to as **conclusion** or **denouement** (a French word meaning the "untying of the knot"), **resolution** is the final section of the plot. Quite appropriately, the conventional type of plot has frequently been compared to the tying and untying of a knot. It is the moment when the complications are resolved and the outcome of the conflict is reached.

What we should be aware of is that the conventional plot patterns are not to be expected in all stories. Many stories do not follow the exact patterns of the plot and sometimes certain stages are unproportionally longer or shorter in a story. In some stories the falling action and resolution merge and become one. Many modern writers especially feel that they cannot convey their ideas successfully by using the conventional plot pattern. These writers purposely disrupt the conventional plot by focusing their interest upon psychological states. In these stories nothing is ever resolved at the end because this is exactly how these writers view life. What they try to present is how human beings grope for the meaning of existence. In consideration of all factors, the absence of conventional plot techniques should not be regarded as a flaw. Instead we should pay close attention to the way that a writer

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arranges events in a story and see how he/she conveys the theme by such an arrangement.

There are different ways of arranging events in a plot. A writer might decide to present them chronologically, that is, arranging the events according to their occurrence in time; or he/she might want to rearrange the chronology and invert the usual order of beginning and ending. By revealing the outcome of the story at the beginning, **inverted order** forces the reader to shift his/her attention from what happens to why and how it happens. The most frequently used device for a writer to interrupt a chronologically ordered plot is the **flashback** (or **retrospect**), through which a writer can bring in the past whenever it is most relevant to the present. **Foreshadowing** is a device of equal importance, whereby a writer prepares the reader for what is yet to happen by presenting some details which hint at the direction the story will take. It is a device conducive to **suspense**, the expectant uncertainty as to the outcome of the story.

In some longer works of fiction we may discern a **subplot**, by which is meant a sequence of events distinct, at least in part, from the main plot. In most cases, the subplot is closely related to the main plot, and used as an analogy to the main plot.

Creating a plot is not a mere mechanical process. It is through plot that the author organizes the raw material of experience and expresses the meaning of a work of fiction. An understanding of plot therefore becomes the most important factor in the understanding of fiction.



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[REDACTED]

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KATE CHOPIN (1851-1904)  
THE STORY OF AN HOUR

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Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences, veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence<sup>①</sup> of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her