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新编英语文学选读教程

A NEW
ANTHOLOGY OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

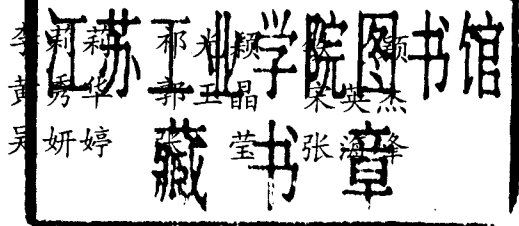
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前 言

根据国家高等学校英语专业《英语教学大纲》的有关规定,英美文学课程是英语专业学生的必修课。目前该课程的开设情况很不统一,有的学校文学史与文学作品选读分头进行,成了相互独立的课程,有的学校则是不分彼此,同时进行,不同学校所使用的教材也各不相同。因此,在有限的课时内,讲授文学史与作品选读的内容成了一个很大的挑战。但同时,文学课程的教材建设也面临着很好的机遇。面对这种挑战和机遇,我们编著的《新编英语文学选读教程》便是应运而生的一种新的尝试。

该教程突破了国内已有的文学教程的局限。编者以年代为脉络,围绕着诗歌、散文、戏剧和小说四种基本文类,介绍了英美文学史上的重要作家和他们的代表性作品。教程包括八个部分,从内容安排上看,每个部分由导读、文本分析、文本选读、思考题等部分组成。导读部分对作家的生平、创作生涯、代表作品以及创作特征作了简明扼要的讲解,这就对文学传统进行了全景式的扫描。编者拥有丰富的教学经验,因此在教程的编写过程中充分考虑到学生的实际需求。例如,文本分析部分引导学生对文学作品进行赏析。这部分提供了赏析的视角和操作模式,这样学生可以举一反三,而且能够提高自己分析和解决问题的能力。

思考题会有效地激发学生的学习兴趣与积极性,从实用的角度出发,这些题目对学生准备考试会有一定的帮助。而且,思考题会使教程具有亲和力,避免了教材让学习者敬而远之的尴尬局面,为学生们的学习大开方便之门。此外,这些题目也能使学生深入思考,甚至可以带领他们进入最初的学术研究。教程努力达到学术性、知识性和趣味性的统一。该教程也将帮助学生们有效地阅读和鉴赏英美文学的原著名篇,并以此作为学生专业训练、素质教育的一部分。

在编写的过程中,我们参考了国内外的英美文学史及选读教材,使我们的教程内容尽量详实,相信它将成为英语专业以及其他专业的学生和英美文学业余爱好者的良师益友。本教程由李莉莉、祁光颖和铁颖担任主编,分别承担了三分之一的主编工作量。黄秀华、郭玉晶、宋英杰、吴妍婷、张莹和张海峰参与了资料查找,练习整理和校对等编写过程,在此表示感谢。

由于经验不足,难免会出现错误和不当之处,希望读者批评指正。

编 者
2006 年 10 月

Contents

Part I The Anglo – Saxon Period	(1)
Chapter 1 Historical background	(1)
I. The Britons	(1)
II. The Roman Conquest	(1)
III. The English Conquest	(1)
Chapter 2 Anglo – Saxon literature	(2)
I. The story of Beowulf	(2)
II. Analysis of the poem	(4)
III. The main characteristics of Anglo – Saxon literature	(5)
Some Excerpts	(5)
Some Exercises	(6)
Part II English Literature of the Middle Ages	(9)
Chapter 1 Historical Background	(9)
I. The Norman Conquest	(9)
II. Romance	(10)
III. William Langland and Piers the Plowman	(11)
IV. The English Ballads	(12)
Chapter 2 The age of Chaucer	(13)
I. His life and literary career	(13)
II. The Canterbury Tales	(14)
III. His contribution	(16)
Some Excerpts	(17)
Some Exercises	(20)

Part III English Literature of the Renaissance	(24)
Chapter 1 Historical Background of the Renaissance	(24)
I. Historical background	(24)
II. Renaissance and Humanism	(25)
Chapter 2 The Beginning of the English Renaissance	
Thomas More	(27)
I. Life	(27)
II. Utopia	(28)
Chapter 3 The flowering of the English Renaissance	
.....	(28)
I. Poetry	(28)
II. Prose Francis Bacon	(32)
III. Drama	(33)
Chapter 4 William Shakespeare	(36)
I. Life and literary career	(36)
II. His play	(38)
Chapter 5 Ben Jonson	(49)
I. His life	(49)
II. His work	(50)
III. His contribution	(51)
Some Excerpts	(51)
Some Exercises	(58)

Part IV English Literature

During the English Bourgeois Revolution and Restoration

.....	(63)
Chapter 1 Historical background	(63)
I. Politics	(63)
II. The Outburst of the English Revolution and the Restoration	
.....	(63)
Chapter 2 John Milton	(66)

I. Life and literary career	(66)
II. His work	(68)
III. His contribution	(70)
Chapter 3 John Bunyan	(71)
I. Life and literary career	(71)
II. His poem	(71)
Chapter 4 Metaphysical poets and Cavalier poets ...	(72)
I. Metaphysical poets	(72)
II. Cavalier poets	(73)
Chapter 5 John Dryden	(74)
I. Life and literary career	(74)
II. Classicism	(74)
Some Excerpts	(75)
Some Exercises	(81)
Part V English Literature of The eighteenth century	
.....	(84)
Chapter 1 Historical background	(84)
I. Politics	(84)
II. Economy	(84)
III. Culture Background	(85)
IV. Literature Background	(86)
Chapter 2 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele	(87)
I. Richard Steele	(87)
II. Joseph Addison	(88)
III. <i>The Spectator</i>	(89)
IV. Their contribution	(90)
Chapter 3 Alexander Pope	(90)
I. Life and literary career	(90)
II. His work	(91)
III. His Contribution	(92)

Chapter 4	Some Prose Writers	(92)
I.	Jonathan Swift	(92)
II.	Daniel Defoe	(95)
III.	Samuel Richardson	(97)
IV.	Henry Fielding	(99)
V.	Tobias Smollett and Laurence Sterne	(104)
Chapter 5	Richard Brinsley Sheridan	(106)
I.	Life and literary career	(106)
II.	His work	(107)
Chapter 6	Oliver Goldsmith	(108)
I.	His life and literary career	(108)
II.	His work	(108)
Chapter 7	Samuel Johnson and Edward Gibbon	(111)
I.	Samuel Johnson	(111)
II.	Edward Gibbon	(112)
Chapter 8	Sentimentalism and Thomas Gray	(113)
I.	Sentimentalism	(113)
II.	Thomas Gray	(113)
III.	William Cowper, George Crabbe	(114)
Chapter 9	Pre – Romanticism	(114)
I.	Pre – Romanticism	(114)
II.	Thomas Percy, James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton	(114)
III.	William Blake	(115)
IV.	Robert Burns	(117)
	Some Excerpts	(119)
	Some Exercises	(136)
Part VI	Romanticism in England	(141)
Chapter 1	Historical Background	(141)
I.	The three revolutions	(141)
II.	Intellectual background	(142)

III. Romanticism	(142)
Chapter2 Lake Poets	(144)
I. William Wordsworth	(144)
II. Samuel Taylor Coleridge	(146)
III. Robert Southey	(148)
Chapter3 Active Romantic Poets	(149)
I. George Gordon Byron	(150)
II. Percy Bysshe Shelley	(153)
III. John Keats	(157)
Chapter 4 Charles Lamb and De Quincey	(160)
I. Charles Lamb	(160)
II. De Quincey	(162)
Chapter 5 Walter Scott	(163)
I. His life and literary career	(163)
II. His work	(164)
Some Excerpts	(165)
Some Exercises	(179)
Part VII The Victorian Age	(184)
Chapter 1 Critical realism	(184)
I. The major contribution made by the 19th century critical realists	(184)
II. The strength and weakness of English critical realism	(184)
Chapter 2 Dickens and Thackeray	(185)
I. Dickens	(185)
II. Thackeray	(191)
Chapter 3 Women Novelists	(194)
I. Jane Austen	(194)
II. The Bronte Sisters	(195)
III. Mrs. Gaskell	(197)
IV. George Eliot	(198)
Chapter 4 The Victorian Poets	(200)

I. Alfred Thennyson	(201)
II. Robert Browning	(202)
III. Matthew Arnold	(204)
Chapter 5 Literary Trends at the End of the Century	(204)
I. Naturalism	(204)
II. Neo - Romanticism	(205)
III. Aestheticism	(206)
Some Excerpts	(207)
Some Exercises	(219)
Part VIII English literature of the twentieth century	(225)
Chapter 1 Hisforical Background and Henry James ...	(225)
Chapter 2 Hardy and Galsworthy	(226)
I. Hardy	(226)
II. Galsworthy	(227)
Chapter 3 Bernard Shaw	(229)
I. His life and literary career	(229)
II. His work	(230)
Chapter 4 Imagism	(231)
W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot	(231)
I. Imagism	(231)
II. Yeats	(231)
III. T. S. Eliot	(232)
Chapter 5 The psychological fiction	(234)
I. D. H. Lawrence	(234)
II. James Joyce	(235)
III. Virginia Woolf	(237)
Some Excerpts	(238)
Some Exercises	(245)
Answer Key	(249)

Part I The Anglo - Saxon Period

Chapter 1 Historical background

I. The Britons

The early settlers of the British Isles were the Celts, who came from Upper Rhine Land of northwest Europe about 700. B. C. The first wave of Celtic invaders was the Gaels. About 500 B. C. another branch of the Celts called Britons came and from them came the name Britain, the land of Britons.

II. The Roman Conquest

In 55 B. C. , Britain was invaded by Julius Caesar and it was not completely subjugated to the Roman Empire until 78 A. D. At that time the Roman Empire ruled over Europe and had a high level of civilization. It was a slave society. The Roman occupation lasted for about 400 years. They built a network of highways, later called the Roman roads. Along these roads grew up scores of towns.

III. The English Conquest

The Roman Empire was in the process of declining and in

410 A. D. all the Roman troops left Britain. At the same time Britain was invaded by swarms of pirates. They were waves of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from Northern Europe. They settled in England and drove the Britons into Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They built some small kingdoms and gradually seven such kingdoms appeared in Britain. By the 7th century these kingdoms were combined into a united kingdom called England, i. e. , the land of Angles. The three tribes had mixed into a whole people called English, and the three dialects grew into a single language called Anglo - Saxon, or Old English.

Before the Anglo - Saxons settled down in Britain, they lived in the tribal society. After the conquest of Britain, their social constitution went through some rapid changes. The Anglo - Saxon period is a transition from tribal society to feudalism.

Chapter 2 Anglo - Saxon literature

English literature began with the Anglo - Saxon settlement in England. The Anglo - Saxons left five relics to us. They are poems, or, songs by the Anglo - Saxon minstrels. Four of them are short fragments of long poems and there is only a long poem, *Beowulf*, the national epic of the English people. It is of over 3000 lines. It is the oldest poem on the English language and the most important specimen of Anglo - Saxon literature. It is also the oldest surviving epic in the English language.

I. The story of *Beowulf*

The epic begins with a brief account of Danish kings down

to Hrothgar who built a splendid hall. But a terrible monster, Grendel, comes to the hall each night and devours warriors. Beowulf is the nephew of Hygelac, King of the Geats, a people in Jutland, Denmark. He hears the news and sails with fourteen companions and offers to fight the monster.

After a feast of welcome, Beowulf and his companions lie down in the hall for the night. Grendel comes and eats up one of his companions. A terrible combat follows and Beowulf finally wins. Grendel retreats mortally wounded because Beowulf tears one of his arms off the monster.

Grendel's mother comes to avenge her son's death and carries away Hrothgar's favourite counselor. Beowulf and his companions follow the bloody trail to the edge of a lake. He plunges into the water and finds a cave. There he fights with Grendel's mother and he finally succeeds in killing her because he seizes a big sword left by the giants of old time. With the heads of two monsters, he returns and the triumph is celebrated with feasting and song. Then Beowulf sails home to the land of the Geats.

In the following year King Hygelac dies and his son becomes the king. He is killed in a battle and Beowulf is chosen as the king and reigns wisely over his people for fifty years. Then a runaway slave robs part of a hoard of hidden treasure guarded by a dragon and it comes out of its den and belches forth its fire to burn the people. Beowulf is an old man now, but he goes to fight the dragon with eleven companions. The aged king fights the dragon and again the sword fails

to bite. One of the companions helps him and wounds the monster. The dragon is killed at last, but Beowulf is hopelessly wounded too. The poem ends with the funeral of the hero.

II. Analysis of the poem :

1. Analysis of the content

Beowulf has both pagan and Christian elements. It is a folk legend brought to England by Anglo – Saxons from their continental homes and it carries with it many pagan elements. When the monk wrote down the poem, many Christian elements were kept. The stories are the folk legends of primitive tribes.

Like Homer's poetry, *Beowulf* is about the adventures of a legendary hero. He is faithful to his people and forgets himself in face of death. He has high spiritual qualities, i. e. , his resolution to serve his country, his true courage, courteous conduct, and his love of honour. He is a strong, brave, and selfless person who is ready to risk his life in order to protect his people from evil monsters.

2. Features of *Beowulf*

The most striking feature is the use of alliteration. Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound or sounds at the beginning of two or more words that are next to or close to each other. Every half line consists of two feet and each foot is made up of an accented syllable and a varying number of unaccented syllables. The alliteration which links the two half lines falls on these accented syllables. Generally there are three alliterations in a line: two in the first half line and one on the first

foot of the second half line.

III. The main characteristics of Anglo – Saxon literature

1. Anglo – Saxon literature, also known as the Old English literature is mainly a verse literature in oral form.

2. For most of the verse, the authors are unknown and the verse was given a written form long after its creation.

3. There are two groups of poetry : the pagan poetry represented by *Beowulf*; the religious poetry represented by the works of Caedmon and Cynewulf, the author of *Paraphrase* and *The Christ*.

Some Excerpts

1. Fragments of *Beowulf*

...

Down off the moorlands' misting fells came
Grendel stalking; God's brand was on him.
The spoiler meant to snatch away
from the high hall some of human race.
He came on under the clouds, clearly saw at last
the gold – hall of men, the mead – drinking place
nailed with gold plates. That was not the first visit
he had paid to the hall of Hrothgar the Dane;
he never before and never after
harder luck nor hall – guards found.

Walking to the hall came this warlike creature
condemned to agony. The door gave way,

toughened with iron, at the touch of those hands.
Rage – inflamed, wreckage – bent, he ripped open
the jaws of the hall. Hastening on,
the foe then stepped onto the unstained floor,
angrily advanced: out of his eyes stood

an unlovely light like that of fire.
He saw then in the hall a host of young soldiers,
a company of kinsmen caught away in sleep,
a whole warrior – band. In his heart he laughed then,
horrible monster, his hopes swelling
to a gluttonous meal. He meant to wrench
the life from each body that lay in the place
before night was done. It was not to be;
he was no longer to feast on the flesh of mankind
after that night.

...

Some Exercises

I. Choose the best answer for each blank.

1. In the 8th century, the Anglo – Saxon prose writers were
Venerable Bede and _____.

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| a. Julius Caesar | b. Cynewulf |
| c. Caedmon | d. Alfred the Great |

2. The early Anglo – Saxon poets are _____, who wrote
Paraphrase and *Cynewulf*.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| a. Alfred the Great | b. Venerable Bede |
|---------------------|-------------------|