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AMERICAN CULTURE,
HISTORY AND LITERATURE

美国 文化、历史与文学 导读

胡阶娜 编著

南开大学出版社

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内容简介

本书是为作者本人在南开大学开设的选修课配套设计的一本教材，主要介绍美国文化、历史与文学，以及相关名著名篇。希望这本书能为读者了解美国文化、历史与文学的精髓提供参考与帮助。

本书内容是根据课程要求，并将学生兴趣、接受能力等因素考虑在内，按照由易到难的顺序安排的。全书分为三大部分，共九个单元。每个单元又分为三个小部分，并配有各种形式的练习思考题和研究课题，可供读者复习或老师课上选用。

在文化部分中介绍美国三座具有代表性的城市，即纽约、洛杉矶和亚特兰大，同时收录并详解关于这三座城市的文学作品或文献。其中名城介绍部分是获得授权原版引进的，内容新颖、有特色，可以帮助读者全面了解这三个城市的风貌。选读部分作者也是力求选取最具有代表性的篇章，同时兼顾趣味性。海伦·凯勒的名篇《假如给我三天光明》是了解纽约文化特色的最佳选段之一。而且，她的经历与成就都是非同凡响的，因此作者决定将这篇文章作为全书开篇。第二单元选择著名动画大师迪斯尼作为洛杉矶的代言人。相信他的传记及名言会给读者带来启迪与鼓舞。第三单元中的《飘》第八章也是精心选择的。这一章描绘了斯佳丽离开塔拉庄园初到亚特兰大的情景，并追溯了亚特兰大的起源。这座当时的新兴城市与斯佳丽有着相同的性格特色。

在历史部分中，首先介绍《独立宣言》，其主要起草人托马斯·杰佛逊及独立战争的背景。然后介绍美国特有的节日——感恩节及其来历，并收录华盛顿及林肯的感恩节演说。最后介绍美国历史上举足轻重的另一场战事——南北战争，以及以此为背景的著名小说《汤姆叔叔的小屋》。《解放黑人奴隶宣言》和《葛底斯堡演说》等著名历史文献也被收录到这一部分中，以便为读者提供更多的经典阅读资料。

文学部分主要介绍三位诺贝尔文学奖获得者：福克纳、海明威和斯坦贝克。三位均为现代派作家，他们的作品都带有强烈的个人风格，在美国文学史上占有举足轻重的地位，并能代表美国文学的最高成就。

Foreword

American Culture, History and Literature is a course book for university students who learn English as a foreign language. In learning English, they are keenly aware that the Chinese culture is different from the American or British culture, and they know very well that background knowledge is of great importance in their acquisition of the language, as difficulties that they encounter are partly caused by the cultural difference.

American Culture, History and Literature consists of three parts: American cities, American history and American literature. The first part deals with major American cities such as New York and Los Angeles, as big cities are usually said to be influential in the way of life. The second part focuses on the War of Independence and the Civil War. The book provides the reader with historically important documents such as the American Constitution and the address delivered by President Abraham Lincoln at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg. The third part introduces three major modern American writers, i.e. William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck, with excerpts from their representative works. They all are winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The book provides the background information that will help the reader in his or her effort to learn English with good results. The readings selected and contained in the book will give the reader some idea of what the United States and the life of the people are like.

Xu Qi-ping*

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Preface

The United States of America is a young country with a history of a little longer than two hundred years. However, it is also the most powerful country in the world that attracts so many people. There are good reasons for its attraction: its dynamism, its openness, its multiculture and its leading status in almost any field: the Internet, the electronics, the education, the entertainment, just to name a few.

Apart from being attracted by this amazing country, people are also curious about it. How can it develop from wilderness into a modern Garden of Eden within such a short period of time? What is the cultural foundation of this nation? What are its people's ideals? This book cannot answer all the questions in the readers' mind but it tries to provide them some classic reading material to reflect this unique nation.

This book is designed for the elective course I teach at Nankai University. It offers a mosaic of American Culture, History and Literature through readings. In compiling this book, I have tried to select the most interesting and most representative reading material for each unit (most of them have come into the public domain).

Cities are the most imagistic reflection of a country's culture. Therefore, in the culture part, this book introduces three American cities—each with a distinctive definition of its own cultural identity. Helen Keller's *Three Days to See* is an excellent piece of essay to describe the cultural interests of New York, and her story is so moving and encouraging that I decided to put it in the first unit of the book. Los Angeles is the entertainment center of the U.S; even the dream factory of the world. For this city, nobody like Walt Disney can illustrate its characteristics better. And in Chapter VIII of *Gone with the Wind*, which I selected as the text for Unit 3, we can trace the beginning of the city of Atlanta and its development.



The U.S. has a short history with the Independence and the Civil War believed to be the most important events in the young nation's formation and development. So the history part focuses on these two periods of time introducing some historical documents and the famous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The U.S. has produced ten Nobel Laureates in literature so far. For this book, I selected three of them in the Modern period, namely William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck. Their works have employed groundbreaking styles and are sufficient to represent the highest achievement in American literature.

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Upon finishing this book, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to kind people who have helped me with this project.

First, I would like to thank my former teacher Xu Qiping, Professor of English at Nankai University. His book *Readings in Modern English Prose* benefits me greatly and is the direct inspiration for this book. He has offered me invaluable suggestions that helped make this book come into existence. He also advised me in choosing authors and material.

Then I owe a great deal to some organizations and individuals for providing me copyrighted material for free. Here I want to take this opportunity to thank the following for their generosity: *The Atlantic Monthly Magazine*, The Nobel Foundation, Monticello/Thomas Jefferson Foundation Inc., SparkNotes LLC., Wistar.com, etc.

Moreover, my students at Nankai University showed great support for me in this course and I am very grateful to their efforts. Their enthusiasm for this course encouraged me to compile this textbook.

Last but not least in importance, I want to express my special thanks to some of my American friends especially John & Nancy Gerhard, my editor Ms. Zhang Tong, my former Chair Prof. Xue Chen, and my family particularly my Mom for their continuous support for me during the compilation of this book.

About the U.S.A.—General Introduction

The USA is home to several of the world's most exciting cities, some truly mind-blowing landscapes, a strong sense of regionalism, a trenchant mythology, more history than the country gives itself credit for and, arguably, some of the most approachable natives in the world.

The US was fashioned from an incredibly disparate population who, with little in common apart from a desire to choose their own paths to wealth or heaven, rallied around the ennobling ideals of the *Declaration of Independence* to forge the richest, most inventive and most powerful country on earth.

So much of the country has been filmed, photographed, painted and written about that you need to peel back layers of representation to stop it from looking like a stage setting. This can make the country seem strangely familiar when you first encounter novelties like 24-hour shopping, bottomless cups of coffee, “Have a nice day,” drive-thru banks, TV evangelists, cheap gasoline and newspapers tossed onto lawns. But you'd be foolish to read too much into this surface familiarity, since you only have to watch Oprah for half an hour to realize that the rituals and currents of American life are as complex, seductive and bewildering as the most alien of cultures.

Full country name: United States of America (USA)

Area: 9.63 million sq km

Population: 285 million

Capital City: Washington DC (pop: 607,000)

People: Caucasian (71%), African American (12%), Latino (12%), Asian (4%), Native American (0.9%)



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Language: English, Spanish, Castilian, Native American languages

Religion: Protestant (56%), Roman Catholic (28%), Jewish (2%), Muslim (1%)

Government: Federal republic of 50 states

Head of State: President George W Bush

GDP: US\$9.3 trillion

GDP per capita: US\$33,900

Inflation: 2.2%

Major Industries: Oil, electronics, computers, automobile manufacturing, aerospace industries, agriculture, telecommunications, chemicals, mining, processing and packaging

Major Trading Partners: Canada, Japan, Mexico, the EU

Dialing Code: 1

Electricity: 110V ,60Hz

Weights & measures: Imperial

USA

History

“Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” reads the inscription on the Statue of Liberty. And the world did, fueling the dynamism of America with waves of ambitious immigrants from every downtrodden corner of the globe. Immigration is one of the defining characteristics of America’s national identity, though calling the US a “nation of immigrants” neatly sidesteps Native Americans (already here) and African American slaves (brought against their will).

It’s believed that the continent’s first inhabitants walked into North America across what is now the Bering Strait from Asia. For the next 20,000 years these pioneering settlers were essentially left alone to develop distinct and dynamic cultures. In the modern US, their descendants include the Pueblo people in what is now New Mexico;





Apache in Texas; Navajo in Arizona, Colorado and Utah; Hopi in Arizona; Crow in Montana; Cherokee in North Carolina; and Mohawk and Iroquois in New York State.

The Norwegian explorer Leif Eriksson was the first European to reach North America, some 500 years before a disoriented Columbus accidentally discovered ‘Indians’ in Hispaniola (now the Dominican Republic and Haiti) in 1492. By the mid-1550s, much of the Americas had been poked and prodded by a parade of explorers from Spain, Portugal, England and France. The first colonies attracted immigrants looking to get rich quickly and return home, but they were soon followed by migrants whose primary goal was to colonize.

The Spanish founded the first permanent European settlement in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565; the French moved in on Maine in 1602, and Jamestown, Virginia, became the first British settlement in 1607. The first Africans arrived as “indentured laborers” with the Brits a year prior to English Puritan pilgrims’ escape of religious persecution. The pilgrims founded a colony at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, in 1620 and signed the famous Mayflower Compact—a declaration of self-government that would later be echoed in the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution.

British attempts to assert authority in its 13 North American colonies led to the French and Indian War (1757-63). The British were victorious but were left with a nasty war debt, which they tried to recoup by imposing new taxes. The rallying cry “no taxation without representation” united the colonies, who ceremoniously dumped caffeinated cargo overboard during the Boston Tea Party. Besieged British general Cornwallis surrendered to American commander George Washington five years later at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781.

In the 19th century, America’s mantra was “Manifest Destiny.” A combination of land purchases, diplomacy and outright wars of conquest had by 1850 given the US roughly its present shape. In 1803, Napoleon dumped the entire Great Plains for a pittance, and Spain chipped in with Florida in 1819. The Battle of the Alamo during the 1835 Texan





Revolution paved the way for Texan independence from Mexico, and the war with Mexico (1846-48) secured most of the southwest, including California. The systematic annihilation of the buffalo hunted by the Plains Indians, encroachment on their lands, and treaties not worth the paper they were written on led to Native Americans being herded into reservations, deprived of both their livelihoods and their spiritual connection to their land.

Nineteenth-century immigration drastically altered the cultural landscape as settlers of predominantly British stock were joined by Central Europeans and Chinese, many attracted by the 1849 gold rush in California. The South remained firmly committed to an agrarian life heavily reliant on African American slave labor. Tensions were on the rise when abolitionist Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860. The South seceded from the Union, and the Civil War, by far the bloodiest war in America's history, began the following year. The North prevailed in 1865, freed the slaves and introduced universal adult male suffrage. Lincoln's vision for reconstruction, however, died with his assassination.

America's trouncing of the Spaniards in 1898 marked the USA's ascendancy as a superpower and woke the country out of its isolationist slumber. The US still did its best not to get its feet dirty in WWI's trenches, but finally capitulated in 1917, sending over a million troops to help sort out the pesky Germans. Postwar celebrations were cut short by Prohibition in 1920, which banned alcohol in the country. The 1929 stock-market crash signaled the start of the Great Depression and eventually brought about Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, which sought to lift the country back to prosperity.

After the Japanese dropped in uninvited on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the US played a major role in defeating the Axis powers. Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 not only ending the war with Japan, but ushering in the nuclear age. The end of WWII segued into the Cold War—a period of great domestic prosperity and a surface uniformity belied by paranoia and betrayal. Politicians like Senator Joe





McCarthy took advantage of the climate to fan anticommunist flames, while the USSR and USA stockpiled nuclear weapons and fought wars by proxy in Korea, Africa and Southeast Asia. Tensions between the USSR and USA reached their peak in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The 1960s was a decade of profound social change, thanks largely to the Civil Rights movement, Vietnam War protests and the discovery of sex, drugs and rock-'n-roll. The Civil Rights movement gained momentum in 1955 with a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. As a nonviolent mass protest movement, it aimed at breaking down segregation and regaining the vote for disfranchised Southern blacks. The movement peaked in 1963 with Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech in Washington, DC, and the passage of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Meanwhile, America's youth were rejecting the conformity of the previous decade, growing their hair long and smoking lots of dope. "Tune in, turn on, drop out" was the mantra of a generation who protested heavily (and not disinterestedly) against the war in Vietnam. Assassinations of prominent political leaders—John and Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.—took a little gloss off the party, and the American troops mired in Vietnam took off the rest. NASA's moon landing in 1969 did little to restore national pride.

In 1974 Richard Nixon became the first US president to resign from office, due to his involvement in the cover-up of the Watergate burglaries, bringing American patriotism to a new low. The 1970s and 1980s were a period of technological advancement and declining industrialism. Self image took a battering at the hands of Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini.

A conservative backlash, symbolized by the election and popular two-term presidency of actor Ronald Reagan, sought to put some backbone in the country. The US then concentrated on bullying its poor neighbors in Central America and the Caribbean by





meddling in the affairs of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama and Grenada. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc's "Evil Empire" in 1991 left the US as the world's sole superpower, and the Gulf War in 1992 gave George Bush the opportunity to lead a coalition supposedly representing a "new world order" into battle against Iraq.

Domestic matters, such as health reform, gun ownership, drugs, racial tension, gay rights, balancing the budget, the tenacious Whitewater scandal and the Monica Lewinsky "Fornigate" affair tended to overshadow international concerns during the Clinton administration. In a bid to kickstart its then-ailing economy, the USA signed NAFTA, a free-trade agreement with Canada and Mexico in 1993. In 1994 it invaded Haiti in its role as upholder of democracy, and in 1995 committed thousands of troops to operations in Bosnia. It hosted the Olympics in 1996 and enjoyed, over the next few years, the fruits of a bull market on Wall St.

The 2000 presidential election made history by being the most tightly contested race in the nation's history. The Democratic candidate, Al Gore, secured the majority of the popular vote but lost the election when all of Florida's electoral college votes went to George W Bush, who was ahead of Gore in that state by only 500 votes. Demands for recounts, a ruling by the Florida Supreme Court in favor of partial recounts, and a handful of lawsuits generated by both parties were brought to a halt when the US Supreme Court split along party lines and ruled that all recounts should cease. After five tumultuous weeks, Bush was declared the winner.

The early part of Bush's presidency saw the US face international tension, with renewed violence in the Middle East, a spy-plane standoff with China, and widespread global disapproval of US foreign policy with regard to the environment. On the domestic front, a considerably weakened economy provided challenges for national policymakers.

The climate of fear and anger following the terrorist attacks on US soil on September 11, 2001, prompted the "War On Terror." This saw the invasion of Afghanistan and the





overthrow of the repressive Taliban regime, who were held accountable for sponsoring the strikes against the US.

In March 2003, the US and its “coalition of the willing” launched a contentious pre-emptive strike against Iraq. Victory in the campaign and the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship has done little to ease tensions in the Middle East.

Culture

After WWII, the focus of the international art world shifted from Paris to New York. Artists leaving war-torn Europe brought the remnants of surrealism to the Big Apple, inspiring a group of young American painters to create the first distinct American painting style, abstract expressionism.

The relentless ascendancy of mass media gave birth to pop art. Slick, surface-oriented and purposely banal paintings like Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans* are now American icons.

The American music industry is the world’s most powerful and pervasive, though groundswell movements remain the driving force of American pop. African Americans’ influence, including blues, jazz and hip-hop, can hardly be exaggerated.

Rap, America’s inner-city sound, places an equal emphasis on an ultraheavy beat, sound montage, street cred and macho posturing. Its appeal to middle-class white America will no doubt bemuse sociologists for decades.

The US has churned out a veritable forest of literature. The illustrious lineup begins with Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, Henry James and Edith Wharton, and moves into the modern era with William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, Jack ‘Backpack’ Kerouac, Arthur Miller, both the Williamsses, Saul Bellow, John Updike and Toni Morrison.





For a trawl through the mean streets of America, try anything by Jim Thompson, Chester Himes or Raymond Chandler. James Ellroy and Elmore Leonard are arguably the hardest-hitting crime novelists.

The elusive concept of “American-ness” is often defined by cinema and television. The advent of TV in the 1950s shook Hollywood’s hegemony to its core, but both forms of media have managed to coexist, even operating synergistically. The global distribution of American movies and TV shows has shaped the world’s perception of the country to a high, if not completely accurate, degree.

When we think of US cities, we think of skyscrapers, those architectural testaments to market forces and American optimism. Chicago is a living museum of high-rise development. New York boasts its fair share of stunners too. Despite increasing homogenization, rural America retains its idiosyncrasies, and distinctive vernacular architectural styles persist in New England (clapboard), California (Spanish Mission) and New Mexico (adobe).

Environment

The continental US stretches across North America “from sea to shining sea.” There are three major mountain ranges: the Appalachians in the east, the titanic Rocky Mountains in the west and the Sierra Nevada along the border of Nevada and California. The country has abundant natural resources and vast swaths of fertile soil.

The Atlantic Coast is the most heavily populated area and retains strong traces of its European heritage. This is where the oldest American cities, such as Boston, New York, Washington and Philadelphia are located, and where most of the major events in early American history took place. The central northeast is marked by the humongous Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario), which occupy an area larger than most European countries. The rivers and canals linking the lakes to the Atlantic Ocean made virtual seaports out of Midwestern cities like Chicago and Detroit.





The central area drained by the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers is the grain basket of the country. Farther west, on the Great Plains, are the country's chief grazing areas. This is cowboy country, though today the trusty steeds tend to be battered pickup trucks rather than hi-ho Silvers. Desert predominates in the southwest, where the climate and degraded soils keep population density to a minimum, and where you really don't need much of a wind to see tumbleweed bouncing across the highway. Cross the Sierra Nevada and you're on the West Coast, which was settled by Americans only 150 years ago but has been on a headlong rush into the future ever since.

With such varied topography, the US has extremely diverse ecosystems. The most impressive flora are the huge sequoias and the redwoods of the West Coast, some of which are believed to be the oldest living things on Earth. The eastern states are home to leafy hardwood forests of maple, oak and elm, which burst into color in autumn.

The largest land mammals, such as black and grizzly bears, elk and deer, roam the northwestern states. The southern states are home to some of the most interesting fauna, including the marsupial opossum and the mean old alligator. Beasties to avoid include rattlesnakes, bears, wild boar, alligators and Hank, a gas station attendant from Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

The climate is temperate in most of the US. Generally, it gets hotter the further south you go and seasonally more extreme the further you are north and inland from the coasts. Winters in the northeast and upper Midwest can cause long periods below freezing even though it's still warm enough to swim at the beaches in Florida and southern California.

The USA borders Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. Alaska juts out from northwestern Canada; Hawaii lies 2500 miles (4000km) off the country's western coast, in the middle of the Pacific.

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