

高校英语专业选修课系列教材



# BRITISH SHORT STORIES



## 英国短篇小说导读

■ 刘 英

张建萍 / 编著

■ 南开大学 出版社

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· 刘洪  
· 张惠明 / 编著

· 商务印书馆出版

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## 前 言

短篇小说的历史源远流长。在东方，大约公元三世纪，印度便有梵文写的《一千个故事》，至中古世纪演变成为《一千零一夜》。在英国，短篇小说作为独立的文学体裁，其雏形可见于十八世纪的英国报纸和杂志。玛丽·罗尔伯格（Mary Rohrburger）的《从小说到反小说》一书对欧美短篇小说发展过程进行了梳理，系统地阐述了短篇小说发展的三个阶段及每个阶段的文学特征和写作技巧。《英国短篇小说导读》的编写以罗尔伯格教授提出的三个阶段为框架，旨在能清楚展现英国短篇小说发展的历程。

第一个阶段是早期阶段，时间在十九世纪，这一时期英国短篇小说的特点是注重情节和冲突，以神秘恐怖、惊险曲折著称。如本书中狄更斯的《信号员》，乔治·爱略特的《揭起的面纱》等。第二阶段是现代阶段，时间在十九世纪末到二十世纪初期，英国短篇小说发生了重大的变化。首先，内容不再奇特神秘，而是普通和平常；其次，淡化情节，注重人物本身。如本书所选沃尔夫的《墙上的斑点》，小说采用“意识流”的手法，描写主人公对墙上斑点的种种猜想，最终发现它是一只蜗牛。第三阶段是当代，时间是二十世纪中叶以后。随着女性主义、后结构主义、后殖民理论的兴起，曾经处于“边缘”的种族与性别题材开始进入写作疆域，少数裔作家群体崛起，短篇小说写作呈现多元化态势。

在分析短篇小说持久不衰的原因时，丹内森和尼尔森（K. Donelson and Nilsen. A. P.）指出，“短篇小说以它的独特叙事方式——突发奇想，压缩和瞬间满足——与当今快节奏的动态的生活方式一拍

即合”(301)。短篇小说尤为适合大学生阅读,因为它长度适中,情节紧凑。阅读英语短篇小说,不仅有助于引导学生掌握英语语言背后所蕴含的精神价值和文化内涵,还可以体验短篇小说的艺术之美,同时更能感悟人生,了解世事百态。

然而,只有具备鉴赏力和素有训练的读者才能真正体会到短篇小说所特有的魅力。本书在选材和体例设计方面力求培养学生阅读和鉴赏短篇小说的能力,有如下安排:

(1) 在选材方面,我们考虑的主要是那些已得到普遍认可和肯定评价的作家和作品。选收的早期和现代的作家作品都是英国文学史上早有定论的优秀作家作品。对于当代作家尚难有定论,选择的依据主要是文坛上声誉较高的。

后结构主义、女性主义和后殖民主义文学理论的兴起和发展,改变了传统的文学研究体系。新的体系着重英语文学的多元化。这主要表现在将传统文学史上缺席的女作家收录进来,改变了那种经典名录由男性作家一统天下的局面。本书给予了女性作家相当的篇幅。

(2) 简要介绍短篇小说的要素和阅读方法,课后问题引导学生从多种角度解读小说文本。

(3) 编写体例为:每个单元依次包括作家介绍,正文和注释,思考问题共三个部分。

本书在编写过程中得到了南开大学外国语学院研究生王敏同学的帮助,本书中的五篇小说参考了她提供的注释,在此对她的工作表示感谢。

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编者  
2006年6月

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# Introduction

## What is in a Short Story?

A short story is made up of several aspects. These are:

- storyline or plot
- point of view
- theme
- characters
- setting

Each element contributes to the overall effect of the story.

**A character** is a person, or sometimes even an animal, who takes part in the action of a short story or other literary work.

**The setting** of a short story is the time and place in which it happens. Authors often use descriptions of landscape, scenery, buildings, seasons or weather to provide a strong sense of setting.

**A plot** is a series of events and character actions that relate to the central conflict.

**The theme** is the central idea or belief in a short story.

**Point of view** is defined as the angle from which the story is told. For example,

**(1) First Person**—The story is told by the protagonist or one of the characters who interacts closely with the protagonist or other characters

(using pronouns I, me, we, etc.). The reader sees the story through this person's eyes as he/she experiences it but only knows what he/she knows or feels.

**(2) Omniscient**—The author can narrate the story using the omniscient point of view. He can move from character to character, event to event, having free access to the thoughts, feelings and motivations of his characters and he introduces information where and when he chooses. There are two main types of omniscient point of view:

a) **Omniscient Limited**—The author tells the story in third person (using pronouns they, she, he, it, etc.). We know only what the character knows and what the author allows him/her to tell us. We can see the thoughts and feelings of characters if the author chooses to reveal them to us.

b) **Omniscient Objective**—The author tells the story in the third person. It appears as though a camera is following the characters, going anywhere, and recording only what is seen and heard. There is no comment on the characters or their thoughts. No interpretations are offered. The reader is placed in the position of spectator without the author there to explain. The reader has to interpret events on his own.

## **How do you read a Short Story?**

When you read a short story you should ask yourself:

- How important is the title?
- How does the story begin?
- How does the story develop?

- How does the story end?
- Who tells the story?
- What sort of language is used?
- What are the images used?

## Section One      Early

**Charles Dickens (1812–1870)** is considered to be one of the greatest English novelists of the Victorian period. Dickens's works are characterized by attacking on social evils, injustice, and hypocrisy. Charles Dickens was born in Landport, Hampshire, of lower-middle-class parents. Dickens's early education was fragmented, and when his father was committed to debtor's prison, Charles, then twelve, was forced for a time to take a job in a blacking warehouse. Dickens's career as a writer of fiction started in 1833 when his short stories and essays appeared in periodicals. His *Sketches by Boz* and *The Pickwick Papers* were published in 1836. Dickens's novels first appeared in monthly installments, including *Oliver Twist* (1837–39), which depicts the London underworld and hard years of the foundling Oliver Twist, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39), a tale of young Nickleby's struggles to seek his fortune, and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41). Among his later works are *David Copperfield* (1849–50), where Dickens used his own personal experiences of work in a factory, *Bleak House* (1852–53), *A Tale Of Two Cities* (1859), set in the years of the French Revolution, and *Great Expectations* (1860–61).

### The Signal-Man

<1>

“**H**alloo! Below there!”  
When he heard a voice thus calling to him, he was standing at the door of his box, with a flag in his hand, furled round its short pole. One

would have thought, considering the nature of the ground, that he could not have doubted from what quarter the voice came; but instead of looking up to where I stood on the top of the steep cutting nearly over his head, he turned himself about, and looked down the Line. There was something remarkable in his manner of doing so, though I could not have said for my life what. But I know it was remarkable enough to attract my notice, even though his figure was foreshortened and shadowed, down in the deep trench, and mine was high above him, so steeped in the glow of an angry sunset, that I had shaded my eyes with my hand before I saw him at all.

“Halloa! Below!”

From looking down the Line, he turned himself about again, and, raising his eyes, saw my figure high above him.

“Is there any path by which I can come down and speak to you?”

He looked up at me without replying, and I looked down at him without pressing him too soon with a repetition of my idle question. Just then there came a vague vibration in the earth and air, quickly changing into a violent pulsation<sup>①</sup>, and an oncoming rush that caused me to start back, as though it had a force to draw me down. When such vapor as rose to my height from this rapid train had passed me, and was skimming away over the landscape, I looked down again, and saw him refurling the flag he had shown while the train went by.

I repeated my inquiry. After a pause, during which he seemed to regard me with fixed attention, he motioned with his rolled-up flag towards a point on my level, some two or three hundred yards distant. I called down to him, “All right!” and made for that point. There, by dint of looking closely about me, I found a rough zigzag, descending path notched out, which I followed.

The cutting was extremely deep, and unusually precipitate. It was

---

① The act of pulsating, a single beat, throb, or vibration.

made through a clammy stone, that became oozier<sup>①</sup> and wetter as I went down. For these reasons, I found the way long enough to give me time to recall a singular air of reluctance or compulsion with which he had pointed out the path.

<2>

When I came down low enough upon the zigzag descent to see him again, I saw that he was standing between the rails on the way by which the train had lately passed, in an attitude as if he were waiting for me to appear. He had his left hand at his chin, and that left elbow rested on his right hand, crossed over his breast. His attitude was one of such expectation and watchfulness that I stopped a moment, wondering at it.

I resumed my downward way, and stepping out upon the level of the railroad, and drawing nearer to him, saw that he was a dark, sallow man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eyebrows. His post was in as solitary and dismal a place as ever I saw. On either side, a dripping-wet<sup>②</sup> wall of jagged stone, excluding all view but a strip of sky; the perspective one way only a crooked prolongation of this great dungeon<sup>③</sup>; the shorter perspective in the other direction terminating in a gloomy red light, and the gloomier entrance to a black tunnel, in whose massive architecture there was a barbarous, depressing, and forbidding air. So little sunlight ever found its way to this spot, that it had an earthy, deadly smell; and so much cold wind rushed through it, that it struck chill to me, as if I had left the natural world.

Before he stirred, I was near enough to him to have touched him. Not even then removing his eyes from mine, he stepped back one step, and

---

① Muddy.

② Totally wet.

③ A dark, often underground chamber or cell used to confine prisoners.

lifted his hand.

This was a lonesome post to occupy (I said), and it had riveted my attention when I looked down from up yonder. A visitor was a rarity, I should suppose; not an unwelcome rarity, I hoped? In me, he merely saw a man who had been shut up within narrow limits all his life, and who, being at last set free, had a newly-awakened interest in these great works. To such purpose I spoke to him; but I am far from sure of the terms I used; for, besides that I am not happy in opening any conversation, there was something in the man that daunted me.

He directed a most curious look towards the red light near the tunnel's mouth, and looked all about it, as if something were missing from it, and then looked at me.

<3>

That light was part of his charge? Was it not?

He answered in a low voice, —“Don't you know it is?”

The monstrous thought came into my mind, as I perused the fixed eyes and the saturnine<sup>①</sup> face, that this was a spirit, not a man. I have speculated since, whether there may have been infection in his mind.

In my turn, I stepped back. But in making the action, I detected in his eyes some latent fear of me. This put the monstrous<sup>②</sup> thought to flight.

“You look at me,” I said, forcing a smile, “as if you had a dread of me.”

“I was doubtful,” he returned, “whether I had seen you before.”

“Where?”

He pointed to the red light he had looked at.

“There?” I said.

---

① Having or marked by a tendency to be bitter or sardonic.

② Shockingly hideous or frightful.

Intently watchful of me, he replied (but without sound), "Yes."

"My good fellow, what should I do there? However, be that as it may, I never was there, you may swear."

"I think I may," he rejoined. "Yes; I am sure I may."

His manner cleared, like my own. He replied to my remarks with readiness, and in well-chosen words. Had he much to do there? Yes; that was to say, he had enough responsibility to bear; but exactness and watchfulness were what was required of him, and of actual work—manual labor—he had next to none. To change that signal, to trim those lights, and to turn this iron handle now and then, was all he had to do under that head. Regarding those many long and lonely hours of which I seemed to make so much, he could only say that the routine of his life had shaped itself into that form, and he had grown used to it. He had taught himself a language down here, —if only to know it by sight, and to have formed his own crude ideas of its pronunciation, could be called learning it. He had also worked at fractions and decimals, and tried a little algebra; but he was, and had been as a boy, a poor hand at figures. Was it necessary for him when on duty always to remain in that channel of damp air, and could he never rise into the sunshine from between those high stone walls? Why, that depended upon times and circumstances. Under some conditions there would be less upon the Line than under others, and the same held good as to certain hours of the day and night. In bright weather, he did choose occasions for getting a little above these lower shadows; but, being at all times liable to be called by his electric bell, and at such times listening for it with redoubled anxiety, the relief was less than I would suppose.

<4>

He took me into his box, where there was a fire, a desk for an official book in which he had to make certain entries, a telegraphic instrument with its dial, face, and needles, and the little bell of which he had spoken.



On my trusting that he would excuse the remark that he had been well educated, and (I hoped I might say without offence) perhaps educated above that station, he observed that instances of slight incongruity in such wise would rarely be found wanting among large bodies of men; that he had heard it was so in workhouses, in the police force, even in that last desperate resource, the army; and that he knew it was so, more or less, in any great railway staff. He had been, when young (if I could believe it, sitting in that hut, —he scarcely could), a student of natural philosophy, and had attended lectures; but he had run wild, misused his opportunities, gone down, and never risen again. He had no complaint to offer about that. He had made his bed, and he lay upon it. It was far too late to make another.

All that I have here condensed he said in a quiet manner, with his grave dark regards divided between me and the fire. He threw in the word, “Sir,” from time to time, and especially when he referred to his youth, — as though to request me to understand that he claimed to be nothing but what I found him. He was several times interrupted by the little bell, and had to read off messages, and send replies. Once he had to stand without the door, and display a flag as a train passed, and make some verbal communication to the driver. In the discharge of his duties, I observed him to be remarkably exact and vigilant<sup>①</sup>, breaking off his discourse at a syllable, and remaining silent until what he had to do was done.

In a word, I should have set this man down as one of the safest of men to be employed in that capacity, but for the circumstance that while he was speaking to me he twice broke off with a fallen color, turned his face towards the little bell when it did NOT ring, opened the door of the hut (which was kept shut to exclude the unhealthy damp), and looked out towards the red light near the mouth of the tunnel. On both of those

---

① On the alert; watchful.