

文学研究方法

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内容提要

本教材介绍文学研究的基本方法,重点放在英美文学作品的阅读与分析之上,强调以文本细读为核心,综合实践文学阅读的不同层面,涉及小说、诗歌和戏剧三个文类。提倡在文本细读的基础上,尝试对作品进行“体验”“阐释”和“评价”,结合文学的基本要素对作品进行研究分析。本教材以“方法”为主,在选用文学作品时仍以英美文学名篇为主,所选作品的语言和内容具有代表性,有的还具有较强的时代感,且难易适中。本教材主要针对英语专业的本科生,也可以作为英语专业研究生或广大英美文学爱好者的参考读本。

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总 序

进入 21 世纪,高等教育呈现快速扩展的趋势。我国高等教育从外延式发展过渡到内涵式发展后,“质量”已成为教育改革与发展的关键词。由国务院颁布的《国家中长期教育改革和规划纲要(2010—2020)》(以下简称《纲要》)明确要求狠抓本科教育人才培养存在的主要问题,厘清高等教育人才培养目标、理念、社会需求,制订本科教学培养模式、教学内容和方法、质量保障与评估机制,切实提高人才培养的质量。我国英语专业在过去的数十年中经过几代人的努力,取得了显著的成绩和长足的发展。特别是近年来随着经济社会的快速发展和对外交流活动的增多,“一带一路”倡议的提出和“讲好中国故事”的需要,英语专业的学科地位也随之大大提升,其规模目前发展得十分庞大。英语专业虽然经历了一个“跨越式”“超常规”的发展历程,但规模化发展带来的培养质量下滑、专业建设和人才需求出现矛盾、毕业生就业面临巨大挑战等严峻的现实表明,英语专业的教育、教学与育人又到了一个不得不改的关键时刻。

《纲要》在强调狠抓培养质量的同时,也提出了培养“具有国际视野、通晓国际规则、能参与国际事务和国际竞争”人才战略方针。基于这样的战略需求,外语专业教学指导委员会明确提出了人才“多元培养,分类卓越”的理念。基于这样的理念,即将颁布的《英语专业本科教学质量国家标准》(以下简称《国标》)对英语专业本科的现有课程设置提出新的改革思路:英语专业课程体系包括公共课程、专业核心课程、专业方向课程、实践环节和毕业论文(设计)五个部分;逐步压缩英语技能课程,用“内容依托式”课程替代传统的英语技能课程,系统建设语言学、文学、文化、国别研究等方面的专业课程。

自 2001 年开始,在重庆大学出版社的大力支持下,我们成立了由华中、华南、西南和西北以及东北地区的知名专家、学者和教学一线教师组成的“求知高等学校英语专业系列教材”编写组,以《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》为依据,将社会的需求与培养外语人才的全面发展紧密结合,注重英语作为一门专业的学科系统性和科学性,注重英语教学和习得的方法与规律,培养学生能力和育人并举,突出特色和系列教材的内在逻辑关系,反映了当时教学改革的新理念并具有前瞻性,建立了与英语专业课程配套的新教材体系。“求知高等学校英语专业系列教材”经历了 10 余年教学实践的锤炼,通过不断的修订来契合教学的发展变化,在教材的整体性和开放性、学生基本技能和实际应用能力的培养、学生的人文素质和跨文化意识的培养三方面有所突破。对于这套系列教材的开发建设工作,我们一直在探讨新的教学理念、模式,探索英语专业人才培养的新路子。今天,我们以《国标》为依据,回顾我们过去十多年来在教学改革上所做的努力,我们欣慰地看到我们的方向是契合英语专业学科定位和发展的。随着《国标》指导思想的明确,为了适应英语专业学科课程设置的进一步调整,我们对“求知高等学校英语专业系列教材”进行了新一轮的建设工作。

全新的系列教材力求在以下方面有所创新:

第一,围绕听、说、读、写、译五种能力的培养来构建教材体系。在教材内容的总体设置上,颠覆以往“以课程定教材”的观念,不再让教材受制于刻板的课程设置体系,而是引入 Program 理念,根据《国标》中对学生的能力要求,针对某方面的具体能力编写对应的系列教材。读写和听说系列不再按照难度区分混合编排题材,而是依据文体或专业性质的自然划分,分门别类地专册呈现,便于教师在教学中根据实际需要搭配组合使用。例如,阅读教材分为小说类、散文类、新闻类等;口语教材分为基本表述、演讲、辩论等,并专题成册。

第二,将五种能力的提升融入人文素养的综合提升之中。坚持英语专业教育的人文本位,强调文化熏陶。在跨学科新专业不断涌现的背景下,盲目追求为每种新专业都专门编写一套教材,费时费力。最佳的做法是坚持英语专业核心教材的人文性,培养学生优秀的语言文化素养,并在此基础上依照专业要求填补相关知识上的空缺,形成新的教材配比模式和体系。

第三,以“3E”作为衡量教材质量的标准。教材的编写上,体现 Engaging, Enabling, Enlightening 的“3E”功能,强调教材的人文性与语言文化综合能力的培养,淡化技能解说。

第四,加入“微课”“翻转课堂”等元素,便于课堂互动的开展。创新板块、活动的设计,相对减少灌输式的 lecture,增加学生参与的 seminar。

我们希望通过这套系列教材的全新修订和建设,落实《国标》精神,继续推动高等学校英语专业教学改革,为提高英语专业人才的培养质量探索新的实践方法,为英语专业的学生拓展求知的新空间。

“求知高等学校英语专业系列教材”编委会
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前言

众所周知,文学阅读与读者的情感和思想紧密相连,阅读需要读者的积极参与。在阅读过程中,读者往往会将其情感反应与生活经历结合起来,对文学的内容与形式进行思考与评价。读者还会结合文本中的具体事例,对体现文本诸要素的内容做出反应,进行阐释和评价。文学阅读就是读者与作品、作家互动的过程,而读者与文本及其作者的互动也具有相应的特征。本教材旨在对文学研究的基本方法进行介绍,重点放在英美文学作品的阅读与分析之上,强调以文本细读为核心,综合实践文学阅读的不同层面,涉及小说、诗歌和戏剧三个文类。

本教材的编写深受罗伯特·狄亚尼《文学:小说、诗歌、剧本的研读》(Robert DiYanni. *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*[M]. Compact Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2000.)一书的启发。本教材的总体设计框架借鉴该书关于文学作品阅读的3个基本步骤或3种基本方法,即“体验”“阐释”和“评价”。这3个步骤是文学作品阅读最基本的方法。“体验”指的是读者对作品作出的情感反应,更多的是主观印象(即“我的感受”或作品“对我的影响”、让“我展开什么样的联想”等,涉及个人或与他人共享的经验);“阐释”指对作品进行知性思维与分析,主要针对作品的意义而言(即作品“表达什么样的意义”和“为什么是这样的意义”等,而作品的意义既是文本蕴含的信息又是读者解读的结果);“评价”主要涉及对作品作出的价值判断(读者结合自己的社会、伦理、文化等方面的价值观对作品的内容,尤其是其中所涉的价值观作出评价)。值得注意的是,在实际阅读和分析的过程中,这3个步骤看似相互区别但实则紧密联系,而且发生的顺序也并非固定的,“体验”的同时也在“阐释”,“阐释”免不了作出“评价”。

同时,为更好地理解作品,做到合理的阐释与评价,读者必须深入了解文学的基本要素及其特征。具体言之,对不同文类(小说、诗歌、戏剧)的基本要素进行分析和探讨也是文学研究的重要方法之一。本教材在介绍文学研究的总体方法(“三步骤”)的同时,也重点探讨和分析不同文类的基本要素,如小说的情节、人物、背景、视点、主题和语言风格等,诗歌的用语、意象、句法、结构、语气、语调、韵律和主题等,戏剧的对话、场景、情节、人物、舞台指示和主题等。

作为英语专业文学研究的基础教材,为了便于学生更好地了解不同部分的内容,掌握基

本的研究分析方法,本教材各部分末尾均附有相应的思考练习题。这样编排旨在启发学生对所学的内容进行思考,进一步加深对所学内容的印象。鉴于各种考虑,本教材没有提供相应的“参考答案”,而且这些思考题也很难直接从教材中找到全部答案。不过,各部分所探讨和分析的内容可以作为答题的重要参考。与此同时,学习者也需要做进一步的资料查询和阅读分析,研读更多的资料之后将“答案”整理成文。这样或许会更有利于激发学习者的积极性,使其主动参与到相应的文学作品阅读活动之中,学会并掌握好基本的文学写作方法。

本教材主要分为四部分:第一部分介绍文学的基本内涵和文学的类别、阅读文学作品的乐趣、文学研究的基本方法(“体验”“阐释”和“评价”)、文学作品的主题分析等;第二部分为小说研究,涉及小说的内涵和分类、小说的“体验”“阐释”和“评价”、小说基本要素的分析;第三部分为诗歌研究,涉及诗歌的内涵和分类、诗歌的“体验”“阐释”和“评价”、诗歌基本要素的分析;第四部分为戏剧研究,涉及戏剧的内涵和分类、戏剧的“体验”“阐释”和“评价”、戏剧基本要素的分析。各个部分相互之间有一定的独立性,但同时又是有机联系的,共同构成本教材的整体全貌。

本教材主要针对英语专业的本科生,也可以作为英语专业研究生或广大英美文学爱好者的参考读本。

由于编著者水平有限,书中难免有不尽如人意之处,敬请广大读者批评指正。

骆 洪

2017年10月15日

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Introduction

People read literature for different purposes: for fun, amusement or entertainment, for wisdom, or for academic research. For literature majors or scholars, literature may mean mostly academic work. They may go into literary history, literary works, writers, or theories for academic purposes (reading and writing about literature). The study of literature thus becomes an integral part of their academic activities. In this sense students are encouraged and expected to have certain systematic practices and strict training so as to improve their skills in this domain. To begin with, it is thus important for students to have some knowledge of literature and to become familiar with the practical approaches of its analysis. Finally, it should also be acknowledged that the study of literature, even for academic progress, can be a highly enjoyable and rewarding endeavor.

■ What Is Literature?

Literature, in its broadest sense, is any single body of written works considered an art form, or any single piece of writing assumed to have artistic value. In this sense, literature refers to all written narratives to be read.

... Literature is the body of works of art produced in linguistic media, and that this body is to be defined in terms of the possession of certain artistic values (Stecker 1996, 681–694).

In contemporary interpretation, literature may also include texts that are spoken or sung, which is known as oral literature. Additionally, some non-written verbal art forms are also considered to be literature such as electronic literature that has appeared with technological development.

Literature is a set of texts (a general term for objects made of words, no matter what their format) whose purpose includes, but extends beyond, communication, in which the language itself is as much a part of the end product as is the content. Those texts might include everything from lyric poetry to feature films and television series that use language not only in the typed screenplays but also in the spoken performances of script and body language and in the relationship between the words and screen images (Kusch 2016, 3–4).

Many scholars throughout history have attempted to define literature and their ideas can be summarized as:

literature is imitation; literature is function; literature is an expression of emotion; or literature is literature (Liu 2009, 1).

Definitions of literature have also changed over time and the definition itself has a strong cultural note. Many of the definitions attach great importance to the conventions of the earlier

time, while others allude to the popular and ethnic genres. Such attempts at defining literature never end.

In short, there are many perspectives to considering literature. The value judgment of literature involves interpretation or highlighting of “high quality or distinctive works” in the fine writing tradition. The formalist definition of literature attaches great importance to the poetic effects of literature that distinguish it from ordinary speech or other kinds of writing.

According to Kirsznner & Mandell (1997), in literary creation, writers attempt to express their personal ideas to their readers. Though writers of literature may often take advantage of facts such as historical documents, newspaper reports, life events or daily happenings, their overarching aim is to present a unique view of the experience, of what happened, what is happening and what will happen. They often take creative liberty with dates, characters, events, dialogue and more to shape their narratives. Certainly what is written means more than just the facts. The author uses his or her literary work to achieve certain ends, to praise or belittle, to defend or attack, to enlighten or blindfold, or to persuade or dissuade.

Literature is imaginative. Writers use verbal images and associative references to create a world of imagination. Most importantly, they exploit the rich connotations of words and images to create a literary text that is full of possibilities and interpretation.

Questions for Reflection

1. There have been various attempts to define literature. Please illustrate.
2. The concept of literature has changed over time. How so?
3. What are the problems in the value judgment of literature?
4. What are the problems in the formalist definition of literature?
5. As proposed by different scholars, “literature is imitation; literature is function; literature is an expression of emotion; or literature is literature (Liu 2009, 1)”.

How do you understand these statements?

■ Types of Literature

Literature can be classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction, poetry or prose. It can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama; and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or expectations, i.e. genre. The nature of genre may differ somehow from culture to culture despite the shared similarities. However, for the sake of study and discussion, literature is divided into three genres: fiction, poetry, and drama. Generally, literature has similar effects on readers. It helps the readers to understand the experiences of themselves and others, too.

Questions for Reflection

1. How would you explain the statement that the nature of literary genres varies from culture to culture?
2. Please illustrate how the narrative organization may vary from culture to culture.
3. In what way can literature have similar effects on readers despite cultural backgrounds?

■ The Pleasure of Reading Literature

Reading literature can be of great fun for people of all ages and all walks of life collectively love literature, especially stories. Reading literature involves thought and feeling and encourages readers to value their own emotional beliefs and to reflect on their life experiences. Literature is usually taken as a reflection of the world and an extension of the possibilities of life. Moreover, the language of literature is deeply fascinating because of the ways writers manipulate words to bring surprise and merriment to their readers. Reading literature is a deeply emotional and intellectual exercise that brings great joy to many.

The Pleasure of Reading Fiction

Reading stories brings readers pleasure, entertainment, and enlightenment. Stories introduce readers to imaginative worlds and help readers understand more about themselves and about life.

Readers enjoy the pleasures of being surprised by a turn of events, satisfied when their expectations are met, and disturbed or confused when they are not. Good stories involve readers emotionally in the lives of the characters. As readers empathize the protagonist or antagonist, they begin to understand more about the worlds that are portrayed, and about the characters' behavior and speech.

Stories entertain and also instruct, showing meaning about the world that the readers had not known before. Take for example "The Buffoon and the Countryman" from *Aesop's Fables*. The story brings readers entertainment and moral instructions.

The Buffoon and the Countryman

A rich nobleman once opened the theaters without charge to the people, and gave a public notice that he would handsomely reward any person who invented a new amusement for the occasion.

Various public performers contended for the prize. Among them came a Buffoon well known among the populace for his jokes, and said that he had a kind of entertainment which had never been brought out on any stage before. This report being spread about made a great stir, and the theater was crowded in every part. The Buffoon appeared alone upon the platform, without any apparatus or confederates, and the very sense of expectation caused an

intense silence. He suddenly bent his head towards his bosom and imitated the squeaking of a little pig so admirably with his voice that the audience declared he had a porker under his cloak, and demanded that it should be shaken out. When that was done and nothing was found, they cheered the actor, and loaded him with the loudest applause.

A Countryman in the crowd, observing all that has passed, said, "So help me, Hercules, he shall not beat me at that trick!" and at once proclaimed that he would do the same thing on the next day, though in a much more natural way.

On the morrow a still larger crowd assembled in the theater, but now partiality for their favorite actor very generally prevailed, and the audience came rather to ridicule the Countryman than to see the spectacle. Both of the performers appeared on the stage. The Buffoon grunted and squeaked away first, and obtained, as on the preceding day, the applause and cheers of the spectators. Next the Countryman commenced, and pretending that he concealed a little pig beneath his clothes (which in truth he did, but not suspected by the audience) contrived to take hold of and to pull his ear causing the pig to squeak. The Crowd, however, cried out with one consent that the Buffoon had given a far more exact imitation, and clamored for the Countryman to be kicked out of the theater.

On this the rustic produced the little pig from his cloak and showed by the most positive proof the greatness of their mistake. "Look here," he said, "this shows what sort of judges you are."

The story is enjoyable in both the reading and telling, and readers or listeners can easily remember it, or perhaps the point, and they can learn the moral of it: Men often applaud an imitation and hiss the real thing. Thus the story also makes instruction, or teaching, its primary purpose. It is didactic.

Quite often, stories do not show their point or theme clearly though they do have one(s). In this sense, making clear of the theme can also be a pleasure in reading stories. Take the following story for example.

Learning to Be Silent

The pupils of the Tendai School used to study meditation before Zen entered Japan. Four of them who were intimate friends promised one another to observe seven days of silence.

On the first day all were silent. Their meditation had begun auspiciously, but when night came and the oil lamps were growing dim one of the pupils could not help exclaiming to a servant: "Fix those lamps."

The second pupil was surprised to hear the first one talk. "We are not supposed to say a word," he remarked.

"You two are stupid. Why did you talk?" asked the third.

"I am the only one who has not talked," concluded the fourth pupil.

(DiYanni 2000, 3)

At the first glance the theme of "Learning to Be Silent" is not certain. There may be different interpretations, a promise unfulfilled, self-control, the hardship of meditation, human conceit, or

poor wisecracks. However, it is precisely the ambiguity of the story's theme which can make the tale so enjoyable. Moreover, the vivid dialogue is also a way to produce a pleasing experience for the readers.

Reading stories enables readers to enter into a different imaginative world, which is not only of great fun but also a way to expand the sight.

The Pleasure of Reading Poetry

Poetry often brings pleasure to readers through its sound, meaning, images, symbols, speech, and feeling. Poetry best embodies the idea that form carries meaning and that sound clarifies sense. The pleasure that comes from reading poetry can be intellectual in terms of witty words and syntactic structures which connote thought-provoking ideas, can be emotional as to how it evokes sorrow or pity, fear or joy, and can even be physical in the ways it seems to stimulate one's senses of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. Engaged in such a multidimensional experience, readers will thus become more perceptive to the imaginative experiences of the poetic worlds.

Dust of Snow

—Robert Frost (1874–1963)

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

The pleasure in reading this poem comes firstly from its brevity. The poem is actually a single sentence that speaks to the senses at different levels, which also touches on the relationship between man and nature. It connotes that nature can help (re-)adjust one's mood, from downcast to cheerfulness. This may account for people's love of returning to nature. Additionally, the sound effects of the poem from its rhythm and rhyme give readers enjoyment as well.

Poetry also produces pleasures in the way it engages with the relationship between man and man, and man and society as suggested in the poem "We Real Cool" (1960) by Gwendolyn Brooks.

We Real Cool

—Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000)

The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We
Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We
Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We
Jazz June. We
Die soon.

Like “Dust of Snow”, “We Real Cool” fascinates the readers by its brevity. “We Real Cool” portrays the young black Americans living in a world where racial discrimination prevails and the poem connotes their sense of life, their social surroundings and their future. Moreover, the poem is musical in its construction. It is very expressive and forceful in terms of monosyllabic words, enjambment and rhyme. The application of these figures of speech such as alliteration, irony, pun, and apostrophe also adds strength to the poetic effect.

On a whole, besides the thematic idea(s), poetry is also to interest and enlighten people through the connotations of its words, its expressive qualities of sound and rhythm, and its special manipulation of syntax. Poetry is a complex art teeming with implications.

The Pleasure of Reading Drama

Drama is an active art form made to be performed on the stage. Drama has representational and mimetic characteristics in that it imitates or represents the world, and life and experiences of people. If literature means imitation, drama as one of the literary genres is actually a more direct form of imitation. It is featured through the immediacy of imitation. The speech and action of the characters help to reproduce human life and experiences through their dialogues and movements, along with the effects of audio and visual displays. Drama best embodies the features of imaginative literature through expected performance that enlivens the past, present, and future. While reading drama, readers seem to watch things happening before their eyes and they may become totally involved in the scene as if they were part of the actual performance. They are tempted to participate in the action on the (imaginative) stage and may laugh, cry, be astonished and feel regret along with the theatrical development. They associate their feelings and experiences with the dramatic situations. The whole process brings with it entertainment and inspiration.

Take for example the selected section of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1958) by Lorraine Hansberry, a well-known African American woman playwright.

A Raisin in the Sun

—Lorraine Hansberry (1930–1965)

Scene Three

Time: Saturday, moving day, one week later.

Before the curtain rises, RUTH's voice, a strident, dramatic church alto, cuts through the silence.

It is, in the darkness, a triumphant surge, a penetrating statement of expectation: "Oh, Lord, I don't feel no ways tired! Children, oh, glory hallelujah!"

As the curtain rises we see that RUTH is alone in the living room, finishing up the family's packing. It is moving day. She is nailing crates and trying cartons. BENEATHA enters, carrying a guitar case, and watches her exuberant sister-in-law.

RUTH: Hey!

BENEATHA (*Putting away the case*): Hi.

...

RUTH (*Looking up at her and smiling*): You and your brother seem to have that as a philosophy of life. Lord, that man—done changed so 'round here. You know—you know what we did last night? Me and Walter Lee?

BENEATHA: What?

RUTH (*Smiling to herself*): We went to the movies. (*Looking at BENEATHA to see as if she understands.*) We went to the movies. You know the last time me and Walter went to the movies together?

BENEATHA: No.

RUTH: Me neither. That's how long it been. (*Smiling again.*) But we went last night. The picture wasn't much good, but that didn't seem to matter. We went—and we held hands.

BENEATHA: Oh, Lord!

RUTH: We held hands—and you know what?

BENEATHA: What?

RUTH: When we come out of the show it was late and dark and all the stores and things was closed up... and it was kind of chilly and there wasn't many people on the streets... and we was still holding hands, me and Walter.

BENEATHA: You're killing me.

(Walter enters with a large package. His happiness is deep in him; he cannot keep still with his newfound exuberance. He is singing and wiggling and snapping his fingers. He puts his package in a corner and puts a phonograph record, which he has brought in with him, on the record player. As the music, soulful and sensuous, comes up he dances over to RUTH and tries to get her to dance with him. She gives in at last to his raunchiness and in a fit of giggling allows herself to be drawn into his mood. They dip and she melts into his arms in a classic, body-melting "slow drag".)

BENEATHA (*Regarding them a long time as they dance, then drawing in her breath for a deeply exaggerated comment which she does not particularly mean*): Talk about—oldddddddd-fashioneddddd—Negroes!

WALTER (*Stopping momentarily*): What kind of negroes? (*He says this in fun. He is not angry with her today, nor with anyone. He starts to dance with his wife again.*)

BENEATHA: Old-fashioned.

WALTER (*As he dances with RUTH*): You know, when these New Negroes have their convention—(*Pointing at his sister.*) that is going to be the chairman of the Committee on Unending Agitation. (*He goes on dancing, then stops.*) Race, race, race! ... Girl, I do believe you are the first person in the history of the entire human race to successfully brainwash yourself. (*BENEATHA breaks up and he goes on dancing. He stops again, enjoying his tease.*) Damn, even the N double ACP takes a holiday sometimes! (*BENEATHA and RUTH laugh. He dances with RUTH some more and starts to laugh and stops and pantomimes someone over an operating table.*) I can just see that chick someday looking down at some poor cat on an operating table and before she starts to slice him, she says... (*Pulling his sleeves back maliciously.*) “By the way, what are your views on civil rights down there? ...”

(*He laughs at her again and starts to dance happily. The Bell sounds.*)

BENEATHA: Sticks and stones may break my bones but... words will never hurt me!

(*BENEATHA goes to the door and opens it as WALTER and RUTH go on with the clowning. BENEATHA is somewhat surprised to see a quiet-looking middle-aged white man in a business suit holding his hat and a briefcase in his hand and consulting a small piece of paper.*)

MAN: Uh—how do you do, miss. I am looking for a Mrs.—(*He looks at the slip of paper.*) Mrs. Lena Younger? (*He stops short, stuck dumb at the sight of the oblivious WALTER and RUTH.*)

BENEATHA (*Smoothing her hair with slight embarrassment*): Oh—yes, that’s my mother. Excuse me (*She closes the door and turns to quiet the other two.*) Ruth! Brother! (*Enunciating precisely but soundlessly: “There’s a white man at the door!” They stop dancing, RUTH cuts off the phonograph, BENEATHA opens the door. The man casts a curious quick glance at all of them.*) Uh—come in please.

MAN (*Coming in*): Thank you.

BENEATHA: My mother isn’t here just now. Is it business?

MAN: Yes... well, of a sort.

WALTER (*Freely, the Man of the House*): Have a seat. I’m Mrs. Younger’s son. Look after most of her business matters.

(*RUTH and BENEATHA exchanged amused glances.*)

MAN (*Regarding WALTER, and sitting*): Well—My name is Karl Lindner...

WALTER (*Stretching out his hand*): Walter Younger. This is my wife—(*RUTH nods politely.*)—and my sister.

LINDNER: How do you do.

WALTER (*Amiably, as he sits himself easily on a chair, leaning forward on his knees with interest and looking expectantly into the newcomer’s face*): What can we do for you, Mr. Lindner!

LINDNER (*Some minor shuffling of the hat and briefcase on his knee*): Well—I am a representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association—

WALTER (*Pointing*): Why don’t you sit your things on the floor?

LINDNER: Oh—yes. Thank you. (*He slides the briefcase and hat under the chair.*) And as

I was saying—I am from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association and we have had it brought to our attention at the last meeting that you people or at least your mother has bought a piece of residential property at—(*He digs for the slip of paper again.*)—four o six Clybourne Street...

WALTE: That's right. Care for something to drink? Ruth, get Mr. Lindner a beer.

LINDNER (*Upset for some reason*): Oh—no, really. I mean thank you very much, but no thank you.

RUTH (*Innocently*): Some coffee?

LINDNER: Thank you, nothing at all.

(*BENEATHA is watching at the man carefully.*)

LINDNER: Well, I don't know how much you folks know about our organization. (*He is a gentle man; thoughtful and somewhat labored in his manner.*) It is one these community organizations set up to look after—oh, you know, things like block upkeep and special projects and we also have what we call our new neighbors Orientation Committee...

BENEATHA (*Drily*): Yes—and what do they do?

LINDNER (*Turning a little to her and then returning the main force to WALTER*): Well—it's what you might call a sort of welcoming committee, I guess. I mean they, we—I'm the chairman of the committee—go around and see the new people who move into the new neighborhood and give them the lowdown on the way we do things out in Clybourne Park.

BENEATHA (*With appreciation of the two meanings, which escape RUTH and WALTER*): Un-huh.

LINDNER: And we also have the category of what the association calls—(*He looks elsewhere.*)—uh—special community problems...

BENEATHA Yes—and what are some of those?

WALTER: Girl, let the man talk.

LINDNER (*With understated relief*): Thank you. I would sort of like to explain this thing in my own way. I mean I want to explain to you in a certain way.

WALTER: Go ahead.

LINDNER: Yes. Well, I'm going to try to get right to the point. I'm sure we'll appreciate that in the long run.

BENEATHA: Yes.

WALTER: Be still now!

LINDNER: Well—

RUTH (*Still innocently*): Would you like another chair—you don't look comfortable.

LINDNER (*More frustrated than annoyed*): No, thank you very much. Please well—to get right to the point I—(*A great breath, and he is off at last.*) I am sure you people must be aware of some of the incidents which have happened in various parts of the city when colored people have moved into certain areas—(*BENEATHA exhales heavily and starts tossing a piece of fruit up and down in the air.*) Well—because we have what we think is going to be a unique type of organization in American community life—not only