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走近名人丛书

——文坛巨匠

黄昭英 刘芳 肖敏 编

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前言

为了提高学生阅读英语的兴趣和能力，在湖南大学出版社的倡导和组织下，我们编选了这套《走近名人丛书》。

名人的概念很不严格，本丛书所选人物以有一定世界声誉为原则，考虑到时代性，又恰逢千禧之年，我们以 20 世纪为各行业名人的入选时限。

按专业分，这套丛书包括文学、音乐、影视三类。

资料全部是从原文编选整理而成，编者只作了一些技术处理，使之能浑然一体。毋庸讳言，入选的人物往往受收集到的资料的限制。好在本书的目的并不是全面地总结 20 世纪各行业的名人及其成就，主要是以名人的事迹为媒介，给学生提供一个阅读英语的载体。

收集的资料基本上以其“正传”为依据，但尽量收集有意义的轶事，以增加趣味性。应特别说明的是，编者对原始资料所持的观点未加任何评论，请读者按“一家之言”对待。相信读者自有辨析能力。

考虑到面对的读者群层次不一，而各篇资料本身的难易有别，我们对原文中较难的词、句、典做了适当的注释。各篇资料均附有参考译文，以帮助读者加深理解。

这套丛书适合有一定基础的英语爱好者作阅读材料。在大力提倡素质教育的今天，本丛书也不失为一种较好的辅助资料，在提高英语水平的同时，对拓宽读者的知识面会有-定的帮助，对提高读者的人文素质水平会有所裨益。

本套丛书的《文坛巨匠》分册由于篇幅限制，只能在灿若群星的 20 世纪著名作家中选取 10 来位，这使编者颇感棘手。我们觉得应使这本小册子反映稍新的知识，所以把重点放在西方现代派作家上。现代派对当代文学的影响是全球性的（包括我国），我们介绍了现代派中一些主要流派的代表人物及作品。他们在现代文学史上的位置也许还有所争议，但很少有人能否认他们是各种流派的宗师级人物。如卡夫卡作为表现主义的代表作家，他在世界文学中最早揭示了人的异化问题，有人认为其意义不亚于文艺复兴。黑色幽默派的海勒，以《第二十二条军规》轰动美国，这部作品已成了大学生的必读书。最有争议的作家莫过于垮掉一代的凯茹亚克，他的“自发散文体”小说《在路上》也成了反对“美国生

活方式”的经典，引得年轻人趋之若鹜。存在主义的代表萨特在西方享有极高的声誉，他提出的“他人即地狱”惊世骇俗，他死后有三万多人自发为他送葬，作为一个文人，这在全世界也是不多见的。

我们介绍这些作家，是希望读者在阅读英语资料的同时，从多方面感触一下西方的文化，拓宽视野。但由于资料来源及篇幅限制，编选的任意性是不可避免的。

原始资料上关于入选作家的评价大多出自权威评论家，我们尽量保留，希望能提高阅读材料的学术价值，谨供读者参考。

每篇文章前加了一段百来字的提要式短文，简要概括作家的生平特点，给读者起点导向作用，希望不是蛇足。有些专有名词的译名可能与国内已有译作的译名不同，请读者原谅。

由于编者的水平与见识有限，错误之处在所难免，请专家和读者批评指正。

湖南大学出版社、国防科学技术大学炮兵学院、长沙民政职业技术学院、常德师范学院、海口经济技术学院、位于湖南的各大学的图书馆和资料室对本丛书的编选工作给予了大力支持，为本丛书的编选提供了宝贵的资料，谨在此表示感谢。

编者

2001年10月

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弗朗茨·卡夫卡

人变甲虫猿变人，
“异化”举世惊。
溃痛当财宝，
饿饭可出名。
人性蜕变如斯，
不是惊心是恶心！
一生焦虑谁解得？
源自尴尬父子情。
天生多情种，
却对自己的作品少自信，
遗言用火焚！
贤哉布洛德，
赢得朋友身后名。
“卡夫卡式”风格殊，
直面“异化”第一人。

Franz Kafka⁽¹⁾

It is a rare writer who produces a body of work so coherently integrated and so thoroughly imbued with his own unique perspective that his name becomes an adjectival shorthand⁽²⁾. To millions who have read the brooding, unsettling, but at times absurdly hilarious stories and prose po-



ems of Franz Kafka, and to millions more who have never read a word of his, the term “Kafkaesque” immediately brings to mind the image of the small, anonymous individual trapped in an existential nightmare from which there is no escape and no awakening. Out of his extreme sensitivity and the ambiguities and contradictions of his own life, out of

his sense that the nature of reality was such that merely to describe its surfaces would no longer suffice as a way of coming to terms with its essence, Kafka fashioned fables in whose reflection the modern world recognized its own image, works that have become indispensable to the twentieth century’s definition of itself.

Franz Kafka, the Jewish Czechoslovakian who write in German, ranks among the twentieth century's most acclaimed writers. He is often cited as the author whose works best evoke the bewildering oppressiveness of modern life, and though his writings accommodate a vast range of interpretations, his general perspective is inevitably one of anxiety and alienation. His characters constantly face failure and futility, and they struggle to survive in a world that is unfeeling and unfamiliar. This world, rendered with great detachment and detail, is one in which the fantastic is entirely normal, the irrational is rational, and the unreasonable seems reasonable. It is a bizarre, senselessly oppressive world in which characters endure between madness and despair, and between defeat and mere failure. Kafka's protagonists subject themselves to extraordinary torture contraptions, negotiate unfathomable bureaucratic mazes, and execute astounding transformations. It is a world in which a man becomes an insect and an ape becomes a sophisticate. Today, with genocide, madness, and even impending doom seen as everyday possibilities, Kafka's voice wound vital and prophetic. As Eunst Pawel wrote in *The Nightmare of Reason: A Biography of Franz Kafka*, Kafka articulates "the anguish of being human".

Kafka was born in Prague on July 3, 1883, a time when that city was still part of Bohemia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Anti-Semitism was rife throughout eastern Europe, and in Prague, as in many European cities, Jews were reduced by economic and social disadvantage to congregating in ghettos. Within Prague's Jewish ghetto, Kafka's father, Hermann, owned and operated a dry-goods wholesale store. Hermann Kafka was an

uneducated but extremely industrious Czech who had married Julie Loewy, an urbane, German-speaking Jew from a slightly higher social class. Although her husband's superior within Prague's Jewish society, Julie Kafka subordinated herself to him help in the store most days and joining him at card games most evenings.

Hermann Kafka's domineering manner greatly distressed young Kafka, who found his father loud, impatient, unsympathetic, and, consequently, overwhelming and intimidating. Particularly vivid he repeatedly cried from his bed for water, whereupon his father removed him to balcony and locked him out of the house. Years later, at age thirty-six, the event still powerfully haunted Kafka, and in a missive later published as *Letter to His Father* he reproached Hermann Kafka for his crude methods. "For years thereafter," Kafka wrote, "I kept being haunted by fantasies of this giant of a man, my father, the ultimate judge, coming to get me in the middle of the night, and for almost no reason at all dragging me out of bed onto the *paylatch*— in other words, that as far as he was concerned, I was an absolute Nothing."

With Kafka's parents devoting their time and energy to the dry-goods store, his upbringing was left largely to maids and governesses. He found himself further separated from his parents when he finally began his education, for Prague's schools, known as gymnasiums⁽³⁾, operated ten months each year and assigned extensive homework. Student life proved arduous and trying for Kafka, who was a minority as both a German-speaker and a Jew; and the school, which was designed to shape children into func-



tionaries for the empire's ever-flourishing bureaucracy, offered little of insight or interest to him. Kafka coped with this unappealing and even alienating approach to education by daydreaming and, in adolescence, by reading extensively, with a preference for the works of evolutionist Charles Darwin⁽⁴⁾ and philosophers Benedict Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche.

In adolescence Kafka also dwelled obsessively on his own self-perceived inadequacy, rejecting his intellect as inferior and his body as loathsome. As his self-perception degenerated, his grades suffered accordingly, and only with a great deal of relentless studying, and some cheating, did he survive his school's hellish period of rigorous final examinations and thereby complete his studies.

For a graduation present, Kafka's parents financed his vacation to a town near the North Sea. The vacation was his first venture from Prague and was intended at least by his father, as his respite before entering the family business. Kafka, however, had already decided to enter Ferdinand-Karls University, a German school where he intended to study philosophy. Upon returning home, Kafka announced his scholastic intentions and met with powerful disapproval from his father. Despite the parent's objections and harangues, Kafka entered the university in 1901, and soon afterwards he decided to pursue a law degree.

At Ferdinand-Karls University, Kafka became acquainted with intellectuals and aspiring artists. Like many German speaking students, he joined the Hall of Lecture and Discourse for German Studies⁽⁵⁾, an organization widely recognized as Prague's leading institution for German culture. The Hall had

been conceived as an anti-Semitic organization, but the steady influx of German-speaking Jews gradually transformed it into a predominantly Judaic body. Through this group Kafka met his closest friends, including Max Brod, a sickly, hunchbacked student who played and composed music and wrote poetry. While delivering a lecture on philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer⁽⁶⁾, Brod had denounced Nietzsche as a fraud, and when Kafka vehemently protested afterwards, their friendship began.

With Brod Kafka began sampling Prague's cultural offerings, which included theatrical productions and more esoteric events such as theosophic and anthroposophic lectures and spiritualist seances⁽⁷⁾. In addition, Kafka and Brod frequented Prague's cafes, which numbered more than two hundreds. As a result of his carousing and extra-curricular studies, Kafka's grades suffered. The insufferable boredom of the gymnasium had been replaced by the equally lethal monotony of law school, in which information was inevitably conveyed by such dull lectures that it was rendered appallingly useless to Kafka and his fellow students. Briefly, Kafka abandoned law studies for chemistry, then returned to law before leaving it again for German studies and art history. He then returned once more to law and continued in that field throughout the remainder of his education.

In 1905, one year before finishing his studies, Kafka's hectic and demanding life finally affected his health and compelled him recover at a sanatorium. There he enjoyed one of his rare pleasurable relationships with a woman. Although his lover was considerably older. Kafka apparently toyed with the notion of marriage. Once back in Prague, however, he abandoned the af-

fair and resumed his association with Jewish intellectuals and artists. At night he frequented theaters, bordellos⁽⁸⁾, and cafes, and listened as his friends and acquaintances discussed politics, art, and their own writings. Unlike his peers, though, Kafka showed little interest in politics or political concepts such as socialism, choosing instead to continue reading works by masters such as Goethe, Kleist, Kierkegaard, Flaubert, Dickens, and Dostoyevsky⁽⁹⁾.

Unbeknownst to his friends, Kafka had also begun writing his own novel, one referred to now as *Description of a Struggle*. This work—eventually abandoned by Kafka and given incomplete to Brod, who later provided the title—is a funny and fantastic account of a nameless narrator's adventures on a winter's evening. Upon reading *Description of a Struggle*, Brod immediately recognized that Kafka had already surpassed his peers as a writer, and in an essay for a local journal he placed Kafka in the “sainted company” of German literature's elite. Kafka received Brod's praise with humility and, characteristically, apprehension. He expressed concern that any writings he published henceforth might disappoint readers aware of his allegedly unmerited stature.

Aside from reading and writing, Kafka also devoted considerable time to preparing for his grueling, extensive final examinations. Upon successfully completing his tests, Kafka qualified for work in his prospective field, and in the spring of 1906 he began drafting legal notices for a local attorney. In addition, he also assisted his parents at the family store whenever such involvement was required. His jobs, together with his literary pursuits and his ongoing, seemingly endless studies, consider-

ably diminished his other extra-curricular activities, though he managed to continue indulging in one of his rare athletic interests, swimming.

Strained by constant pressure to fulfill familial, professional, and scholastic obligations and expectations, Kafka again succumbed to exhaustion after earning his law doctorate in June, 1906. Shortly thereafter he re-entered the sanatorium, where he briefly revived his affair with the mysterious older woman. But as before, upon returning home he promptly discontinued the relationship and resumed his relatively carefree social life with Brod's older friends.

Back in Prague Kafka also began writing another story, *Wedding Preparations in the Country*. This tale—left incomplete by Kafka and consequently titled by Brod—recounts a bridegroom's dread as he travels to meet his beloved. Unlike *Description of a Struggle*, which only superficially explores alienation, *Wedding Preparations in the Country* offers a disturbing evocation of apprehension in its all encompassing banality.

Upon returning to Prague Kafka also began one year's unpaid apprenticeship in the city's court system. His position, while apparently a career necessity, afforded him little opportunity to free himself from his father's household and authority. This continued dependence resulted in increased anxiety for Kafka in Mid-1907 when his father decided to move the family into a new building, one recently constructed on a razed portion of the ghetto. To Kafka's utter dismay, the new dwelling afforded him only minimal privacy, for his bedroom was situated between the living room and his parents' bedroom, thus serving as a

nerve-racking vantage point from which could be heard all noises and conversations occurring within the home. Also distressing to Kafka were his father's seemingly constant interruptions and his parents' ineffective discretion within their own room. Relaxing, much less writing, proved extremely difficult for the already hypersensitive Kafka.

Fortunately for Kafka, his social activities afforded him substantial distraction from his tense home life. After graduating, he devoted more time to recreation, including motorcycling, swimming, sunbathing, and billiards. He also entered into his first sustained love affair, though it is unclear whether this romance inhibited his enthusiasm for prostitutes. He had, by this time, also revealed serious literary aspirations to Brod and others. But with typically curious reasoning, he maintained that his income should derive from an occupation quite dissimilar from his literary pursuits, and he therefore sought an undistracting, undemanding position, preferably one abroad.

The job that Kafka eventually obtained, though, was a tedious post at an Italian insurance company with a Prague office. Offering low pay and long hours, the post was immensely unappealing, and Kafka almost immediately began hoping for a transfer. But such wishes were futile, and Kafka, sensing unending and unendurable boredom and poverty, contemplated suicide. In the throes of anguish, he abandoned writing and became a more frequent patron of bordellos and low-life cafes. In addition, he entered into relations with a Jewish student. But, realizing that he psychologically incapable of reciprocating a woman's love, he confessed to Brod that, conversely, he could

only love women unlikely to share his feelings. Thus his relationships with women were, understandably, impaired by his neurotic perspective.

In 1908 Kafka's fortunes improved when a friend's father, responding to Kafka's pleas for help, secured him a post at the Workmen's Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia. Although the firm was steadfastly anti-Semitic — Kafka became the second Jew of two hundred and fifty employees — he was nonetheless offered a promising job, one with regular hours and with greater pay than was accorded him by the Italian company. Seizing the opportunity, Kafka hastily obtained a medical report certifying him as prone to nervousness and agitation. This certificate assured his departure from the Italian insurance company, and in late July he assumed the post that he would hold until his death sixteen years later.

Although the change in employment lessened Kafka's anxieties, its increased responsibilities left him little time for writing and carousing. In March, 1908, Kafka had collected eight brief prose pieces under the title *Meditations* and published them. But these works brought him little recognition, and some readers even mistook them of another writer.

As an alternative to the constant demands of the Workmen's Institute, Kafka renewed his interest in boating and swimming. But these activities offered only minimal respite from the company, and in late summer, 1909—several months after the Jewish student had ended their largely epistolary relationship—Kafka finally took a brief vacation with Brod. Earlier that summer, he had published excerpts from his abandoned novel *Description of*