

Preface

Readings in Modern English Prose is designed to stimulate a serious interest in reading, provide cultural information, broaden the vision, and present good models for writing practice. The book is for the seniors at the university and also for self-study and literary appreciation.

It contains fourteen pieces of writing by great British and American authors including Winston Churchill, Bertrand Russell, William Golding, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, E. B. White, and Albert Einstein. The range of subject matter is broad—from history to philosophy, from literature to psychology. The selections discuss the atomic bomb, the end of the Second World War, professions of women, the age of anxiety, the American way of life, and the civil rights of the black people in the United States. Each is, in its own way, challenging and rewarding.

The exercises accompanying them serve several purposes. They are prepared to help students to retain the important points, further explore the issues raised, develop writing skills and the capacity to draw inferences. There is an emphasis on reading comprehension and retention.

Finally to those who will take the trouble to inform me of any errors found in the book and so help its improvement, I here express my thanks in advance.

Xu Qiping

修订版前言

本书第一版于1992年面世,至今将近10年了。承蒙读者们的厚爱,先后印刷了7次,我非常感激。但是,把10年前的东西,一成不变地、一次又一次地印刷出来,交给读者,又使我内心非常不安。况且新的世纪需要有新的承载内容。于是,我与出版社达成共识,对它进行修订。

修订工作的基本思路是:在我目前条件所允许的范围内,尽可能全面地收集20世纪中负有声望的英、美作家有关文化题材的散文作品,使本书在一定程度上反映刚刚过去的那个世纪的英美国家中的主要文化思潮,以及它仍在回响的余音。

修订本选录的文章,同第一版比较,调整甚多:删除了以前选辑的三分之一左右的篇目,增添了15篇新的文章。此外,按照读者需求的特点,“作者简介”与“注释”一律使用汉语;英语练习的份量也适当缩减。我希望它以一个新的面貌同读者见面。

诚然,从我个人来说,我做了积极的努力,然而,对波澜壮阔的文化思潮的海洋来讲,它只是一朵小小的浪花。

徐齐平

2001年7月

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1 . Acceptance Speeches

Acceptance Speech (I)

William Faulkner

I feel that this award was not made to me as a man, but to my work—a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before. So this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the money part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin. But I would like to do the same with the acclaim too, by using this moment as a pinnacle from which I might be listened to by the young men and wo men already dedicated to the same anguish and travail, among whom is already that one who will some day stand here where I am standing.

Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question; When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or wo man writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.

He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old

verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands.

Until he relearns these things, he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound; that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking, I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

Acceptance Speech (II)

Ernest Hemingway

(Read by John C. Cabot, United States Ambassador)

Having no facility for speech-making and no command of oratory nor any domination of rhetoric. I wish to thank the administrators of the generosity of Alfred Nobel¹ for this Prize.

No writer who knows the great writers who did not receive the Prize can accept it other than with humility. There is no need to list these writers. Everyone here may make his own list according to his knowledge and his conscience.

It would be impossible for me to ask the Ambassador of my country to read a speech in which a writer said all of the things which are in his heart. Things may not be immediately discernible in what a man writes, and in this sometimes he is fortunate; but eventually they are quite clear and by these and the degree of alchemy that he possesses he will endure or be forgotten.

Writing, at its best, is a lonely life. Organizations for writers palliate the writer's loneliness but I doubt if they improve his writing. He grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates. For he does his work alone and if he is a good enough writer he must face eternity, or the lack of it each day.

For a true writer each book should be a new beginning where he tries again for something that is beyond attainment. He should always try for something that has never been done or that others have tried and failed. Then sometimes, with great luck, he will succeed.

How simple the writing of literature would be if it were only necessary to write in another way what has been well written. It is

because we have had such great writers in the past that a writer is driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him.

I have spoken too long for a writer. A writer should write what he has to say and not speak it. Again I thank you.

Acceptance Speech (III)

John Steinbeck

Thank the Swedish Academy for finding my work worthy of this highest honor.

In my heart there may be doubt that I deserve the Nobel award over other men of letters whom I hold in respect and reverence—but there is no question of my pleasure and pride in having it for myself.

It is customary for the recipient of this award to offer personal or scholarly comment on the nature and the direction of literature. At this particular time, however, I think it would be well to consider the high duties and the responsibilities of the makers of literature.

Such is the prestige of the Nobel award and this place where I stand that I am impelled, not to squeak like a grateful and apologetic mouse, but to roar like a lion out of pride in my profession and in the great and good men who have practiced it through the ages.

Literature was not promulgated by a pale and emasculated critical priesthood singing their litanies in empty churches—nor is it a game for the cloistered elect, the tinhorn mendicants of low calorie despair.

Literature is as old as speech. It grew out of human need for it, and it has not changed except to become more needed.

The skalds, the bards, the writers are not separate and exclusive. From the beginning, their functions, their duties, their responsibilities have been decreed by our species.

Humanity had been passing through a gray and desolate time of confusion. My great predecessor, William Faulkner, speaking here, referred to it as a tragedy of universal fear so long sustained that

there were no longer problems of the spirit, so that only the human heart in conflict with itself seemed worth writing about.

Faulkner, more than most men, was aware of human strength as well as of human weakness. He knew that the understanding and the resolution of fear are a large part of the writer's reason for being.

This is not new. The ancient commission of the writer has not changed.

He is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement.

Furthermore, the writer is delegated to declare and to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit—for gallantry in defeat—for courage, compassion, and love. In the endless war against weakness and despair, these are the bright rally-flags of hope and of emulation.

I hold that a writer who does not passionately believe in the perfectibility of man, has no dedication nor any membership in literature.

The present universal fear has been the result of a forward surge in our knowledge and manipulation of certain dangerous factors in the physical world.

It is true that other phases of understanding have not yet caught up with this great step, but there is no reason to presume that they cannot or will not draw abreast. Indeed it is a part of the writer's responsibility to make sure that they do.

With humanity's long proud history of standing firm against natural enemies, sometimes in the face of almost certain defeat and extinctions, we would be cowardly and stupid to leave the field on the eve of our greatest potential victory.

Understandably, I have been reading the life of Alfred Nobel—a

solitary man, the books say, a thoughtful man. He perfected the release of explosive forces capable of creative good or of destructive evil, but lacking choice, ungoverned by conscience or judgment.

Nobel saw some of the cruel and bloody misuses of his inventions. He may even have foreseen the end result of his probing—access to ultimate violence—to final destruction. Some say that he became cynical, but I do not believe this. I think he strove to invent a control, a safety valve. I think he found it finally only in the human mind and the human spirit. To me, his thinking is clearly indicated in the categories of these awards.

They are offered for increased and continuing knowledge of man and of his world—for understanding and communication, which are the functions of literature. And they are offered for demonstrations of the capacity for peace—the culmination of all the others.

Less than fifty years after his death, the door of nature was unlocked and we were offered the dreadful burden of choice.

We have usurped many of the powers we once ascribed to God.

Fearful and unprepared, we have assumed lordship over the life or death of the whole world—of all living things.

The danger and the glory and the choice rest finally in man. The test of his perfectibility is at hand.

Having taken Godlike power, we must seek in ourselves for the responsibility and the wisdom we once prayed some deity might have.

Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope.

So that today, St. John the Apostle may well be paraphrased: *In the end is the Word*², and the Word is Man—and the Word is with Men.

作者简介

1. William Faulkner, 1897—1962, 威廉·福克纳, 美国小说家,

公认的 20 世纪文学中最重要的作家之一,在一系列精心巧妙创作的长篇和短篇小说中,他构建了一个想象中的世界。这个世界不仅超越了它所基于的美国南方的背景,而且具有普遍的意义,表述了人类的尊严,遭遇,苦难,以及忍受世事的命运和心灵的冲突。他的主要作品有《喧嚣与骚动》、《我弥留之际》、《八月之光》、《押沙龙,押沙龙》等。

1950 年,福克纳获诺贝尔文学奖。

2. Ernest Hemingway, 1899—1961, 欧内斯特·海明威, 美国小说家。20 世纪现代主义文学思潮中主要作家之一,“压力之下依然风度优雅”是他对人的勇气所下的定义,体现在他的小说中的人物身上。1926 年问世的《太阳照样升起》确立了他在美国文学中的地位,以后一系列的作品使之进一步巩固和加强:《别了,武器》、《战地钟声》、《老人与海》等以及他的短篇小说集。

1954 年,海明威获诺贝尔文学奖。

3. John Steinbeck, 1902—1968, 约翰·斯坦倍克, 美国小说家。他所创作的关于农业工人的小说,使他在 20 世纪 30 年代经济大萧条时期,名振一时。他的杰作《愤怒的葡萄》倾诉了农业流动工人的辛酸,抨击了现实的无情与社会的不公。评论界认为他的作品成就,起伏不均,他的上乘佳作已经是文学经典,而一般作品也都充满着生活气息,与现实密切相关。他的主要作品有:《托蒂亚平地》、《鼠与人》、《天堂的牧场》、《胜负未决的战斗》以及《我们不满意的冬天》等。

1962 年,斯坦倍克获诺贝尔文学奖。

注释

1. Alfred Nobel, 1833—1896, 诺贝尔, 瑞典化学家, 达纳炸药及其强烈爆炸物的发明者, 1896 年 12 月 10 日去世。他留下遗嘱, 将绝大部分财产, 委托建立后来人们高度赞扬的国际奖金——诺贝尔和平奖、文学奖、物理学奖、化学奖以及生理学—医学奖。诺贝尔经济学奖是瑞典国家银行在 1968 年提供资金建立的。

2. In the end is the Word: 参阅《圣经·新约》“约翰福音”1:1 原

C) award

D) commendation

8. The biologists were concerned about the _____ of some animal species in Asia.

A) death

B) disappearance

C) extinction

D) extermination

9. The university with a history of 100 years has a lot of _____ in the country.

A) fame

B) prominence

C) significance

D) prestige

10. Relations between the two European countries have _____ sharply in the recent months.

A) jeopardized

B) deteriorated

C) estranged

D) undermined

II. Reading Comprehension

Choose the best answer to each question on the basis of what is stated or implied in the speeches.

1. Used in "the money part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin", the word commensurate means _____.

A) having a common purpose

B) helping to honor the memory of an important person

C) corresponding in extent or degree

D) as significant as it was expected

2. According to Faulkner our tragedy today is _____.

A) problems of the spirit

B) problems of the human heart

C) the agony and sweat of the human spirit

D) a general and universal physical fear: When will I be blown up?

3. Which of the following statements is not true?
- A) Man will not merely endure: he will prevail.
 - B) The poet's duty is to write about man's soul, man's spirit capable of compassion, sacrifice and endurance.
 - C) A writer watches the end of man when he writes.
 - D) The poet's voice can be one of the pillars to help man endure and prevail.
4. What is it that can make good writing?
- A) Man's griefs.
 - B) The glory of man's past.
 - C) Man's inexhaustible voice.
 - D) The human heart in conflict with itself.
5. What did Hemingway say about himself as the winner of the prize?
- A) There is no need to list the great writers who were not awarded the prize.
 - B) No one can tell how many great writers did not receive the prize.
 - C) He accepts the prize with humility.
 - D) Everyone can make a list of great writers according to his knowledge and his conscience.
6. According to Hemingway, a true writer _____.
- A) should try to write in the way that great writers in the past wrote their masterpieces
 - B) should try to draw lessons from the experience of great writers in the past
 - C) should try to write from the very beginning
 - D) should try for something that has never been done, something that is beyond attainment
7. Which of the following statements about literature is not true?
- A) It is as old as speech.

- B) It grew out of human need for it.
 - C) It is not a game for the privileged rich.
 - D) It is a psychological analysis of human strength as well as of human weakness.
8. What did Alfred Nobel do when he saw some of the cruel and bloody misuses of his inventions?
- A) He became cynical.
 - B) He was disillusioned and was in despair.
 - C) He decided to offer the awards for increased and continuing knowledge of man and of his world.
 - D) He invented a safety valve.
9. John Steinbeck made it clear in the speech that his preoccupation was that _____.
- A) man had the powers we once ascribed to God
 - B) the door of nature was unlocked but we were unprepared
 - C) man was responsible for the life or death of the whole world-of all living things
 - D)
10. To finish his speech, John Steinbeck said, "the Word is with Men." What did he mean?
- A) In the end Man will be the most powerful of all.
 - B) It is men who are to decide whether to be our greatest hazard or our only hope.
 - C) It is Man who will be as great as St. John.
 - D) In the end there will be nothing but the word men.

III. Questions for Discussion

1. What did Faulkner mean by "So this award is only mine in trust"?
2. Faulkner said, "Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear." Discuss.

3. What do you think is worth writing about?
4. What did Hemingway say about a true writer?
5. What are the Nobel awards offered for?