



普通高等教育“十一五”国家级规划教材

21世纪外国文学  
系列教材

新编英国文学  
选读(上)  
第二版



罗经国 编注



北京大学出版社  
PEKING UNIVERSITY PRESS

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## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

新编英国文学选读(上卷)/罗经国编注. —北京:北京大学出版社,  
1996.5

ISBN 978-7-301-02971-8

I. 新… II. 罗… III. 文学-作品综合集-英国 IV. 1561.11

书 名: 新编英国文学选读(上卷)

著作责任者: 罗经国 编注

责任编辑: 张建民 周学艺

标准书号: ISBN 978-7-301-02971-8/I·0375

出版发行: 北京大学出版社

地 址: 北京市海淀区成府路 205 号 100871

网 址: <http://www.pup.cn>

电 话: 邮购部 62752015 发行部 62750672 编辑部 62755217  
出版部 62754962

电子邮箱: [zpup@pup.pku.edu.cn](mailto:zpup@pup.pku.edu.cn)

印刷者: 北京汇林印务有限公司

经销者: 新华书店

650 毫米×980 毫米 16 开本 23.75 印张 401 千字

1996 年 5 月第 1 版

2005 年 7 月第 2 版 2008 年 6 月第 8 次印刷(总第 20 次印刷)

定 价: 26.00 元

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## FOREWORD

This textbook, composed of two volumes, is intended for the teaching of English literature to both English and non-English majors in higher educational institutions as well as for those who learn English in their spare time and whose English has reached such a level that guidance for further study seems necessary. The main aim of this textbook is to cultivate in the reader an interest in English literature and a sense of the development of English literature.

In editing this textbook, I paid particular attention to the following points:

1. All materials here-in are fragments or full texts of well known literary works written by the best English authors, and they have stood the test of the time, as many of them are time and again collected in selected readings or anthologies both at home and abroad. They are not only the quintessence of English masterpieces, but also the best of English writings, which are worth memorizing by heart, and which will be beneficial to students in their learning of the English language.

2. As literature takes its root in social life and is inseparable from the economic, political, religious, and intellectual factors of a given historical period, a brief summary of the period is given at the beginning of each chapter. Thus, the questions of why Shakespeare's great tragedies were all written during the first decade of the 17th century, why romanticism became prevalent in the beginning of the 19th century, and why there appeared a galaxy of novelists in the Victorian age—all these need to be considered from a historical perspective. It is hoped that the brief introduction of each historical period will help to answer these questions.

3. Special effort has been made to guide students to appreciate the aesthetic value of the selected pieces. The Notes serve not only to interpret the meanings of difficult words or passages, but also to call students' attention to the stylistic characteristics and rhetorical devices of the excerpts. Suggestive questions concerning the artistic techniques of the selected pieces are asked to arouse students' interest.

4. As the emphasis of the book is on the interpretation and appreciation of the selected readings, the biographies of most writers are reduced to the minimum. It is meaningless and boring to give students the detailed biographies of writers, a long list of their works, and the synopses of their representative works, without offering them first-hand materials. Regrettably, such a style of teaching foreign literature is still practised in some institutions. Students who want the above information can easily find them in any history of English literature or in an encyclopaedia.

5. Literature in the twentieth century is very complex. Various trends and schools come and go. Few writers are generally accepted as representative writers of the modern age. No consensus has been reached as to which novels, poems, or prose selections represent the characteristic features of a particular writer. Attempts are made in this textbook to introduce students to T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, John Osborne, Samuel Beckett, William Golding, Iris Murdoch, V. S. Naipaul, Martin Amis and Seamus Heaney as major writers, representing the different trends of twentieth century English literature.

6. As the total teaching hours for English literature course vary widely in different higher institutions, this textbook provides sufficient materials for a year course of 4 hours per week. Teachers in various institutions can choose texts from the book at their own will according to the teaching hours of their institutions.

I have to express my thanks to all my colleagues and friends who encouraged me in my writing, especially to my wife, Professor Li

Shu(李淑), who has been supporting and helping me throughout my forty years' teaching career. Special thanks should also be given to Professor Liu Yi-qing(刘意青), who, being an expert in 18th century English literature, generously helped me in formulating my discussion of four writers: Edmund Spenser, Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, and Henry Fielding. I also owe my gratitude to Professor Ruan Wei(阮炜) for his selections of Golding, Murdoch, Naipaul, and Amis, and to Professor Xu Wenbo(徐文博) for his selection of Heaney. Finally I have to thank my Canadian friend Sean MacDonald, who read over the manuscripts of the first five chapters of Volume I, my American friend Joshua Goldstein, who read over the manuscripts of the rest of Volume I, and my American colleague Professor Iris Maurer, who read over the manuscripts of Volume II. They offered many valuable suggestions.

Luo Jingguo  
Peking University  
March, 2005

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgments must be made to the following reference books and dictionaries. The list is not arranged in alphabetical order, but according to their importance to me in my editing work:

*The Norton Anthology of English Literature*

Wang Zuo-liang, et al. : *An Anthology of English Literature Annotated in Chinese*

Chen Jia: *A History of English Literature*

Chen Jia: *Selected Readings in English Literature*

William Long: *English Literature*

Paul Harvey: *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*

Christopher Gillie: *Longman Companion to English Literature*

Albert C. Baugh: *A Literary History of England*

Cleanth Brooks, Jr. and Robert Penn Warren: *Understanding Poetry*

*The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, edited by Alfred Harbrace

*Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare*, edited by George Lyman Kittredge

Encyclopaedia and dictionaries:

*The Everyman Encyclopaedia*

*Oxford American Dictionary*

*The Scribner-Bantam English Dictionary*

*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

*The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*

*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*

## CONTENTS

### Chapter One The Anglo-Saxon Period (450—1066)

- 1. Historical background ..... (1)
- 2. Northumbrian School and Wessex literature ..... (3)
- 3. Anglo-Saxon poetry ..... (5)
- Beowulf* ..... (6)

### Chapter Two The Norman Period (1066—1350)

- 1. Historical background ..... (14)
- 2. Middle English ..... (15)
- 3. Religious literature ..... (15)
- 4. Romance and the influence of French literature ..... (16)
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*  
(ca. 1375—1400) ..... (18)

### Chapter Three The Age of Chaucer (1350—1400)

- Historical background ..... (24)
- Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340—1400) ..... (29)
- The Canterbury Tales* ..... (33)

### Chapter Four The Fifteenth Century (1400—1550)

- 1. Historical background ..... (49)
- 2. Popular ballads ..... (50)
- 3. Sir Thomas Malory (ca. 1405—1471) ..... (52)
- 4. Early English plays ..... (53)
- The Popular Ballads ..... (55)
- The Three Ravens* ..... (55)



<i>Sir Patrick Spens</i> .....	(57)
<i>Robin Hood and the Three Squires</i> .....	(60)

## Chapter Five The English Renaissance (1550—1642)

1. Historical background .....	(66)
2. The enclosure movement .....	(66)
3. Humanism .....	(67)
Edmund Spenser (1552? —1599) .....	(68)
<i>The First Booke of The Faerie Queene</i> .....	(72)
4. The flourishing of drama .....	(83)
Christopher Marlowe (1564—1593) .....	(85)
<i>The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus</i> .....	(87)
William Shakespeare (1564—1616).....	(93)
<i>Sonnets</i> .....	(98)
<i>Sonnet</i> 18 .....	(99)
<i>Sonnet</i> 29 .....	(100)
<i>Sonnet</i> 66 .....	(102)
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> .....	(104)
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> .....	(108)
<i>Julius Caesar</i> .....	(133)
<i>Hamlet</i> .....	(149)

## Chapter Six The Seventeenth Century (1603—1688)

1. Historical background .....	(159)
<i>The King James Bible of 1611</i> .....	(162)
Francis Bacon (1561—1626) .....	(169)
<i>Of Great Place</i> .....	(171)
<i>Of Studies</i> .....	(178)
2. Metaphysical Poets and Cavalier Poets .....	(182)
John Donne (1572—1631) .....	(183)
<i>Song</i> .....	(185)
<i>The Canonization</i> .....	(187)
<i>A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning</i> .....	(192)

George Herbert (1593—1633) ..... (196)  
     *Virtue* ..... (196)  
 Ben Jonson (1572—1637) ..... (198)  
     *Song to Celia* ..... (198)  
 Robert Herrick (1591—1674) ..... (200)  
     *To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time* ..... (200)  
 John Milton (1608—1674) ..... (202)  
     *To Mr. Cyriack Skinner Upon His Blindness* ..... (206)  
     *Paradise Lost* ..... (209)  
 John Bunyan (1628—1688) ..... (216)  
     *The Pilgrim’s Progress* ..... (218)  
 John Dryden (1631—1700) ..... (225)  
     *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* ..... (227)

**Chapter Seven The Eighteenth Century (1688—1798)**

Historical background ..... (232)  
 Daniel Defoe (1661—1731) ..... (238)  
     *Moll Flanders* ..... (243)  
 Jonathan Swift (1667—1745)..... (251)  
     *A Modest Proposal* ..... (255)  
 Joseph Addison (1672—1719) and Richard Steele  
     (1672—1729) ..... (268)  
     *The Royal Exchange* ..... (270)  
     *Sir Roger at Church* ..... (276)  
 Alexander Pope (1688—1744) ..... (280)  
     *An Essay on Man* ..... (283)  
 Samuel Johnson (1709—1784) ..... (289)  
     *Letter to the Right Honourable The Earl*  
         *of Chesterfield* ..... (291)  
     *The Preface to Shakespeare* ..... (294)  
 Henry Fielding (1707—1754) ..... (299)  
     *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* ..... (304)  
 Thomas Gray (1716—1771) ..... (318)

<i>Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard</i> .....	(319)
Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751—1816) .....	(328)
<i>The School for Scandal</i> .....	(330)
Robert Burns (1759—1796) .....	(347)
<i>Is There for Honest Poverty</i> .....	(348)
<i>Scots, Wha Hae</i> .....	(350)
<i>Auld Lang Syne</i> .....	(352)
<i>A Red, Red Rose</i> .....	(354)
William Blake (1757—1827) .....	(356)
<i>From Songs of Innocence</i> .....	(358)
<i>The Lamb</i> .....	(358)
<i>Holy Thursday</i> .....	(359)
<i>From Songs of Experience</i> .....	(360)
<i>The Chimney Sweeper</i> .....	(360)
<i>Holy Thursday</i> .....	(361)
<i>The Tyger</i> .....	(362)
<i>London</i> .....	(364)

## CONTENTS IN CHINESE

### 第一章 盎格鲁-撒克逊时期(450—1066)

1. 历史背景 ..... (1)
2. 诺森伯兰文学和西撒克斯文学 ..... (3)
3. 盎格鲁·撒克逊诗歌 ..... (5)
  - 《贝奥武甫》 ..... (6)

### 第二章 诺曼时期(1066—1350)

1. 历史背景 ..... (14)
2. 中古英语 ..... (15)
3. 宗教文学 ..... (15)
4. 骑士传奇和法国文学的影响 ..... (16)
  - 《高文爵士和绿衣骑士》(约 1375—1400) ..... (18)

### 第三章 乔叟时期(1350—1400)

- 历史背景 ..... (24)
- 乔叟(约 1340—1400)..... (29)
- 《坎特伯雷故事集》..... (33)

### 第四章 15 世纪(1400—1550)

1. 历史背景 ..... (49)
  2. 民谣 ..... (50)
  3. 马洛礼(约 1405—1471) ..... (52)
  4. 早期英国戏剧 ..... (53)
- 民谣 ..... (55)
- 三只乌鸦 ..... (55)
- 帕特里克·斯本土爵士 ..... (57)
- 罗宾汉和三个乡绅 ..... (60)

## 第五章 英国文艺复兴(1550—1642)

1. 历史背景 .....	(66)
2. 圈地运动 .....	(66)
3. 人文主义 .....	(67)
斯宾塞(1552? —1599) .....	(68)
《仙后》 .....	(72)
4. 戏剧的繁荣 .....	(83)
马娄(1564—1593) .....	(85)
《浮士德博士的悲剧》 .....	(87)
莎士比亚(1564—1616) .....	(93)
十四行诗 .....	(98)
第 18 首 .....	(99)
第 29 首 .....	(100)
第 66 首 .....	(102)
《罗密欧与朱丽叶》 .....	(104)
《威尼斯商人》 .....	(108)
《尤利乌斯·凯撒》 .....	(133)
《哈姆雷特》 .....	(149)

## 第六章 17 世纪(1603—1688)

1. 历史背景 .....	(159)
詹姆斯一世的《钦定圣经》 .....	(162)
培根(1561—1626) .....	(169)
谈高位 .....	(171)
谈读书 .....	(178)
2. 玄学派诗人和骑士派诗人 .....	(182)
多恩(1572—1631) .....	(183)
歌 .....	(185)
封为圣者 .....	(187)
别离辞:节哀 .....	(192)
赫伯特(1593—1633) .....	(196)
美德 .....	(196)

琼森(1572—1637)	(198)
致西莉亚	(198)
赫里克(1591—1674)	(200)
给少女的劝告	(200)
弥尔顿(1608—1674)	(202)
关于自己的失明致西利雅克·斯凯纳	(206)
《失乐园》	(209)
班扬(1628—1688)	(216)
《天路历程》	(218)
德莱顿(1631—1700)	(225)
论戏剧诗	(227)

## 第七章 18世纪(1688—1798)

历史背景	(232)
笛福(1661—1731)	(238)
《摩尔·弗兰德斯》	(243)
斯威夫特(1667—1745)	(251)
一个谦卑的建议	(255)
艾迪生(1672—1719),斯梯尔(1672—1729)	(268)
皇家交易所	(270)
罗吉先生在教堂	(276)
蒲柏(1688—1744)	(280)
《人论》	(283)
约翰逊(1709—1784)	(289)
致吉斯特非尔德爵爷书	(291)
《莎士比亚集》序	(294)
菲尔丁(1707—1754)	(299)
《弃婴托姆·琼斯的故事》	(304)
格雷(1716—1771)	(318)
墓畔哀歌	(319)
谢里丹(1751—1816)	(328)
《造谣学校》	(330)
彭斯(1759—1796)	(347)

穷得有志气 .....	(348)
苏格兰人拥有 .....	(350)
往昔的时光 .....	(352)
我的爱人像朵红红的玫瑰 .....	(354)
布莱克(1757—1827) .....	(356)
天真之歌 .....	(358)
羔羊 .....	(358)
耶稣升天节 .....	(359)
经验之歌 .....	(360)
扫烟囱的孩子 .....	(360)
耶稣升天节 .....	(361)
虎 .....	(362)
伦敦 .....	(364)

## Chapter One

# THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD(450—1066)

### 1. Historical background

The earliest settlers of the British Isles were the Celts, who originally lived in the upper Rhineland and migrated to the British Isles about 600 B. C. . About 400 to 300 B. C. the Brythons, a branch of the Celts, came to the British Isles and from them came the name Britain. The culture of the Celts belonged to an early stage of the Iron Age. They knew how to make iron swords and grow crops. Very little is known about their beliefs, but we know about their religious ceremonies of May Day and the cult of mistletoe, which have become part of the national tradition of the English people.

From 55 B. C. to 407 A. D. the British Isles were under the rule of the Roman Empire. At that time the Roman Empire was a slave society. It ruled over Europe and had a high level of civilization. The Romans defeated the Celts and became the masters of the British Isles. It was during the Roman occupation that London was founded.

The first Roman general who came to Britain was the famous Julius Caesar (102—44 B. C. ) who crossed the Dover Strait in 55 B. C. with a force of 10,000 men after his victory over the Gauls. But he stayed there only for a few weeks, and although he came back again in the following year, he did not station Roman troops on the isles as he was busily engaged in suppressing rebellions on the Continent and fighting the civil war at home. Almost a century elapsed before the Romans extended their conquest of Britain.

The Romans ruled over Britain for three and a half centuries. They built temples, roads, walls, and military camps, but made



little influence on the cultural life of the Celts. They built forty or fifty walled towns and whenever a town today has a name ending in “chester” or “caster”, we may be sure that it is on the site of a Roman military settlement, because the word is derived from Latin “castra”, which means “fort”. Most of our knowledge of the Roman Britain comes from *De Bello Gallico*, a book written by Caesar, and *Germania* by Publius Cornelius Tacitus (55—120 A. D.).

About 450 A. D., waves of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded the British Isles. They settled in England, and drove the Celts into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The Angles and Saxons were Germanic tribes occupying parts of the coast of modern Denmark and modern Germany on both sides of the Elbe and the difference between their languages was very slight. From the very names of these tribes we can know that they are seafaring people and brave in their action. The old Saxon word “angul” means a hook, from which we can surmise that they lived by the sea and their lives were related to fishing. The name Saxon is from “seax”, that is, a short sword, and from that name we can judge that they were hardy fighters. The Anglo-Saxons defeated the Celts, although the latter resisted bravely. They became the new masters of the British Isles and were the ancestors of the present English people.

It was around 500 A. D., in the struggle against Cerdic, the founder of the kingdom of Wessex, that the Celtic King Arthur, a legendary figure, is said to have acquired his fame. At Camelot in Somersetshire, which was his capital, he gathered around him the bravest of his followers, who were known as the Knights of the Round Table and for twenty four years he fought bravely for his kingdom against the Anglo-Saxon invaders, and about whom many English romances were composed.

Before their migration from the Continent the Anglo-Saxons were apparently still in the later stage of tribal society. After their settlement in Britain, their tribal society gradually disintegrated and feudal society came into being. At the close of the 6th century there