











he American
Short Story Through Film

# 美国短篇小说与电影

马乃强 编



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#### Introduction

The advances in Information Technology have greatly changed the practice of language teaching. We used to teach language with texts in print, and now multimedia, the integration of sound, text, graphics, and video, is enriching our instruction. Yet, the introduction of multimedia is not to help students learn how to liberate themselves from the printed texts. Rather, the broader goal is to cultivate systematic methods of inquiry, models of critique, and analytical ways of reading visual images and messages in both print and media texts. Media are the important teaching tool, but the current language teaching further requires teaching with as well as teaching about multimedia.

#### 1. A Rationale for Teaching Literature in ELT

The teaching of language and literature is inseparable. There has been controversy on the place of literature in language teaching. The controversy, however, centers not on if literature should be used, but always on how it should be used. The opponents often argue about when and where to use literary works, but literature takes varied forms in ELT classroom, and its significance has never been ignored.

Literature has great cultural value. Besides language instruction, the students of English also require an orientation to the target culture. The world of literature provides abundant cultural insights and experiences for language students. When reading literature from the foreign culture, we would encounter different cultural barriers and problems. With their exposition and solution, we could develop the communication across cultures, and this will improve our cultural awareness.

Literature has important linguistic value. Literature in English could be called English at its best. There are rich resources of language in literary works, which are most fully and skillfully used. The literary language could help to elaborate vocabulary and syntax, grammar and context. It is also a teaching aid for all language skills, including listening and writing. And moreover, we, as students, could learn many communicative skills through various characters that English literature displays.

Literature also has much educational value. We integrate the study of literary work into teaching English, and this demands that English literature should contribute to language instruc-

tion. Literature actually does more than that. With the appreciation and enjoyment from literature, it refines our language skills, and further stimulates us toward more advanced discussion and knowledge. Learning from classic literary characters, we could even make our own personal growth.

Considering the linguistic level of college students, the exclusive use of literature in English language teaching is hard to achieve, and not necessary, either. Yet, English literature is an available and also valuable resource for our language instruction. J. F. Povey comments on the place of literature in classroom, "Literature gives evidence of the widest variety of syntax, the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination. It provides examples of the language employed at its most effective, subtle, and suggestive. As literature sets out the potential of the English language it serves as an encouragement, guide, target to the presently limited linguistic achievement of the foreign student." Fully understanding the significance of literature in language arts, we could say that the integration of literature with English teaching is both feasible and inevitable.

#### 2. A Rationale for Using Multimedia in ELT

Multimedia means the combined use of several mass media, especially for the purpose of education or entertainment. It integrates sound, text, graphics, and video, and interacting with computer technology, multimedia invades into almost every corner of our society. Apart from the entertaining function, multimedia still "provides continuous education throughout our life, offering a popular day and night school for the nation." For many educators, multimedia is only for entertainment, not worth for serious study. However, we have to realize that the students nowadays are barraged with multimedia and technique advances. Facing this challenge, we are to provide students with media skills for today and tomorrow, and that forms a rationale for using multimedia in classroom, especially of language arts. English language teaching intends to improve students' potential, so it has no reason to refuse using multimedia.

With the development of information technology, the introduction of multimedia into curriculum expands the notion of school literacy, which used to be principally the ability to read printed texts. Following traditional communication skills, the students are likely to fall into rote memorization. We know that many students of English try to learn the language through only memorizing vocabulary list, but often in vain. Media education stimulates critical thinking and analytical reading of students, and therefore, the school literacy today should also include the critical reading of media texts. The media literacy could help students comprehend and communicate through both traditional and emerging skills of information exchange.

Actually, multimedia is not strange to English language teaching from the very beginning.

① Povey, J. F. "The Teaching of Literature in Advanced ESL Classes." In L. McIntosh & M. Celce-Murcia, Eds. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Rowley: Newbury House, 1979, pp. 162–186.

② Semali, Ladislaus M. Literacy in Multimedia America: Integrating Media Education across the Curriculum. New York: Falmer Press, 2000, p. 13.

The audiovisual materials have long accompanied the teaching of English listening, such as tapes, videos, and in recent years, computer courseware. Yet, most teachers use media only as a teaching tool, namely as audiovisuals to illustrate instruction or even as entertainment to compensate students' hard work. This is far from satisfactory, and we should further teach about media as a source of information, messages and texts. Semali believes that the real expansion of school literacy will "require teaching with as well as teaching about television, computers, video, and film," and only in this way could the students really become media literate.

The introduction of multimedia into language classroom does not mean exclusion of texts in print. Like the place of literature in English language teaching, the exclusive use of multimedia materials is not practical, either. Since they both function well in enriching language instruction, we are to integrate literature and multimedia into teaching English. The students would acquire systematic knowledge about analytical reading and critical thinking from the printed texts and media texts, to be specific, from the short story and video film.

#### 3. Teaching Short Story in ELT Classroom

English literature is an available and valuable resource for teaching the language, and now the problem is how to select and prepare literary works for classroom instruction. When teaching foreign literature, we mainly worry about the linguistic and cultural barriers between literary texts and students. Still, most teachers don't favor the abridged or simplified versions, because they simply have no place in literature anthology. The students do not have to understand everything they read, as the failure in some difficult structures usually does not prevent general comprehension. Thus, English language teaching demands literature in completeness. Literature is classified in genres, such as poetry, novel, play, essay, and short story, among which short story is the most approachable and satisfying literary form for College English teaching.

Short story is relatively brief. By the classic definition of Edgar Allan Poe, a short story must be short enough to be read at one sitting. The contemporary short story most often refers to a work of fiction no longer than 20,000 words and no shorter than 1,000. So, short stories are short enough to maintain students' interest within class, although they also vary in length. The length fits well our teaching unit, and it makes the students' reading task and teachers' coverage both easier.

Short story is complete. Allan Poe defines that short story must have a unified plot about a single protagonist, and it must aim at producing a single effect within the complete work. 

Short

① Semali, Ladislaus M. *Literacy in Multimedia America: Integrating Media Education across the Curriculum.* New York: Falmer Press, 2000, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan. "Nathaniel Hawthorne." In G. R. Thompson, Ed. The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe. New York: Norton, 2004, pp. 643–647.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

story has a beginning to initiate the main action, a middle to presume what has gone before and require something to follow, and an ending to finish the plot. The simple beginning-middle-ending structure could illustrate completeness of literature. Actually, the structure of short story is more complicated, like this classic five-part scheme: "the first stage presents the conflict or problem to be solved; the second stage complicates that conflict; the third stage brings it to climax; the fourth explores the implications of choice at the climax; and the fifth presents the resolution." Reading a short story, we could experience a complete literary piece rather than some key passages, chapters, or episodes of long works.

Short story is universal. It represents different English-speaking world, and it could further cross the limitation of age, sex, class and even nation. The universal themes of short story are to involve the readers rapidly, making an immediate impact and a single impression. Although outside the target culture, the students possibly have some similar experiences in life, and they could relate to the tales in front. Focused and memorable, short story serves as an essential part of the language and cultural experience available to the students of English.

These are the benefits of teaching short story, which grant this literary form a safe place in English language curriculum. The inclusion of short fiction does not expel the potential of poetry, novel or play, but comparing advantages (varied literary genres and writing characteristics) and disadvantages (poetry is often very abstract, while novel or play is too long), short story is still the most approachable and satisfying. The remaining question is how to integrate selected tales into English classroom. The teaching of short story requires the active participation of students, but the teachers' elaborate instruction is the same important.

When teaching short story, the focus must be on the text of tales. Considering the linguistic and cultural barriers facing the students, it is necessary to provide some background knowledge before approaching difficult vocabulary and allusion. Text notes could always help, but the information should be related enough not to distract attention or cause confusion. Additional cultural questions are to be cleared up whenever they arise. The preview in class could also work, if not costing much time. Before coming to class for discussion, students are supposed to have read the short story. If possible, it is better to read twice, first a normal reading for general comprehension, and then a fast reading for the story line and basic relationships among characters. One possible assignment is to make plot summaries as preparation for class discussion. This summary exercise, as simple as who's-doing-what-where, does not guarantee, but does encourage the basic understanding of tales.

Only when students are ready to talk could those discussion questions function well, which are prepared elaborately and cast carefully. For fruitful discussion, literary terms are probably an annoying holdback. They should be defined in familiar language, and it is very likely to find some appropriate examples from stories we are reading. Of course, we don't have to be so

① Dunning, Stephen. Teaching Literature to Adolescents. Glenview: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1968, p. 133.

ambitious as to teach all literary terms through one or two tales. Naturally, we are not satisfied with the plot summaries or literary terms, because "our ultimate aim is extension of students' skills as readers rather than consolidation of their skills as readers of simple narrative." To extend beyond the narrative level, students should learn how to read between the lines, from concrete examples to abstract ideas.

Very often, classroom discussion will not yield a true consensus. Within the range of rationality, every reader could have his own interpretation of the story. When students achieve enough literary taste, they start to read out the voice, scene, image, and angle from the printed text. Now they come close to the role of screenwriter or film director. The comparative study of short story and film could expand students' vision and further inspire their desire for advanced discussion.

#### 4. Using Film in ELT Classroom

Literature comes into being with the appearance of human beings, but film has a much shorter history, a little more than a century. "On December 28, 1895, the Lumière brothers held one of the first public showing of motion picture projected on a screen, at the Grand Café in Paris," and film critics usually agree that this date signifies the birth of movie industry. Yet, film is a medium of ever-increasing popularity, and nowadays it is attracting billions of audience every year. By and large people go to the movies for the same reason they read literature: to lose themselves in a good story. Only the nature of film is an artistic form of collaboration, and it tells a story by integrating language, costumes, makeup, music, sound effects, color, light, locations, and visual images. For many teachers, it seems that reading is considered a highbrow activity, while movies are for the mass. This preference for literature over film is not necessarily correct, for in the past century, film writers, directors, and actors have produced many profound and lasting works of no less artistic value. Besides, the movies illustrate the language spoken in diverse context by native speakers and provide richly detailed cultural information. Thus, we could contend that literature and film both have a deserved place in language teaching. As we ask our students to be active readers of literature, we also challenge them to become active viewers of film, so that they could achieve both verbal and visual literacy.

Most students have positive experience of watching film, and they will not refuse the appearance of movies in English class. We are not to show films, but to teach films, teaching with as well as teaching about film. After reading a literary work, we could give a movie version as an extension or comparison, since most film adaptation is an act of effective interpretation. Film viewing imparts pleasure and always generates fruitful discussion, but teaching film language would bring more benefits. Previously, when watching movies, we focus our attention on story

① Dunning, Stephen. Teaching Literature to Adolescents. Glenview: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1968, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Bordwell, David & Kristin Thompson. Film Art: An Introduction (7th edition). New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004, p. 466.

lines, plot conventions, and popular actors. If we favor some particular movie, we mainly like its plot or characters. This is a superficial viewing. Like fiction, film has plot, character, setting, theme, and point of view. Like play, film has actors, costumes, makeup, locations, and director. We could say that film shares a lot with literature on literary and dramatic aspects. But after all, film is another medium, and it has basic difference from printed texts. It relies on the visual image combined with spoken word, so movie has its own special language.

We are not familiar with the cinematic aspects of a film, but they are hard to skip when teaching about movies. The introduction of film language becomes necessary, and this includes technical terms that describe cinematography, sound, editing, and special visual effects. Similar to teaching literary terms, we are to define and give examples of various shots, editing techniques, and sound sources. This will facilitate our discussion and enrich our viewing. Teasley & Wilder state that studying film language could "make explicit the techniques for telling a story visually, heighten our appreciation for the art of film, and increase our awareness of how subtle cues can shade meaning." We cannot agree more, and only with the mastery of film language could we begin to see and hear things that have been invisible and inaudible before.

The film adaptation of literary works has a long history, and novels, plays, and even poems have been adapted into movies. No matter how hard it tries, a film cannot exactly represent its literary source, mainly because of the difference between printed text and media text. The most we can expect of a film adaptation is that it is relatively faithful to the original work and still a good film. When adapting a novel or a play, we have to compress events and simplify characters to suit the running time and match the taste of common audience, so it is easy to invite criticism. Harrison cites Béla Balázs, one of the first film theorists in adaptations, who goes to the extreme and says, "One may perhaps make a good film out of a bad novel, but never out of a good one." His word proves the criticism for novel adaptation, but it seems that short story is exempted from this problem. According to Alfred Hitchcock, a film bears a closer similarity to a short story, because "they both sustain one idea that culminates when the action has reached the highest point of dramatic curve." With this reassurance, we could integrate short story and film into our English teaching curriculum.

#### 5. Selecting Short Story and Film for ELT

Short story is printed text, and film is media text, but English language teaching benefits from the combined reading of both texts. Short stories exist to be read, to be experienced, and to be interpreted, while adaptations extend, enhance, and elaborate on their sources. Film scripts start the process of adaptation and interpret the original texts, translating the stories from one me-

① Teasley, Alan B. & Ann Wilder. Reel Conversations: Reading Films with Young Adults. Portsmouth: Boynton / Cook Publishers, 1997, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Harrison, Stephanie, ed. Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005, p. xv.

<sup>3</sup> Aquino, John. Film in the Language Arts Class. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1977, p. 16.

dium into another. Yet, film scripts are still words on pages, and they need another step of interpretation. When shooting films, the scripts are transmuted into visual images by directors, actors, cinematographers, designers, and other film craftspeople. The writing of a script and the making of a film, therefore, both require unfolding the original story, and "in the end the film is here and the story is there and one hopes there is a fruitful interaction." As active readers and positive viewers, we experience different interpretative approaches when reading the story in print and watching the story in film. This mutual collaboration could improve our verbal and visual literacy, and hence students become more media literate.

Talking about literature in English, the amount of short stories is immense. We have the task to keep in front of students a few stories to represent those many fine ones. The Americans are said to have invented the short story, which has thrived in this country from the moment of its literary independence. American writers are "the first to define the short story as a specific literary form, different from the novel or the long narrative poem not only in length but also in kind." Most great American novelists, from Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James in the 19th century to Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner in the 20th century, have written great short stories. Many other American writers, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Sherwood Anderson, and Katherine Anne Porter, have especially excelled in writing short story with its own rules and values. The flourishing American magazines have been featuring in publishing short stories. With the invasive development of radio, television, and film, they only fade out gradually in the second half of last century, but still far from disappearance. Recently, the successful film adaptation of the short story "Brokeback Mountain" proves its continuous popularity. This literary form demands the highest literary craft and still attracts many most talented writers. Thus, the heritage of American short story, reflecting the diversity of American experience, fully deserves our attention in the teaching of English language.

The amount of films adapted from short stories is the same huge. Carol Emmens' book Short Stories on Film and Video claims to include all the films produced between 1920 and 1984 that are based on the short stories by American authors or outstanding international authors well known in America. This book has approximately 1,375 entries. Surely many more movies have been adapted from short stories during the past thirty years. Some films have achieved more success than the original stories, such as Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window (Cornell Woolrich's "It Had to Be Murder"), and Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (Arthur Clarke's "The Sentinel"). Some others are successful on their own terms, even if receiving less acclaim than their sources, and here we have Robert Siodmak's The Killers (Ernest Hemingway's same title story) and Richard Brooks' The Last Time I Saw Paris (F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited"). Still others have failed, not because they are unfaithful, but because they are not good films. (One obvious example is the recent version of Scarlet Letter starring Demi Moore, though it is

① Harrison, Stephanie, ed. Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005, p. xix.

<sup>2</sup> Skaggs, Calvin, ed. The American Short Story. New York: Dell Publishing, 1977, p. 11.

not based on a short story.) With American short story in our mind, we are to choose the corresponding and most appropriate movies for English language class.

The films adapted from short stories are not necessarily short, and the above-mentioned several movies all last about two hours. We have said that the potential use of novel or play in English teaching class is limited by its length, and the same problem confronts film using. With both story and film to discuss, it is not practical to spend two hours of class time only watching a movie. One solution is to use film clips to illustrate the whole movie, and many teachers have been doing this way, but this will definitely affect its completeness. Another approach is to choose short films. Many great short stories have been adapted into short films, such as Henry James' "The Real Thing," Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," and William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." The American Short Story series are among the best ever shot, and they have received much acclaim from critics and audience. Funded by National Endowment for the Humanities, Learning in Focus has been shooting this series from the late 1970s, which are shown on the influential American Public Broadcasting Service. It is a collection of some finest short stories covering a diverse range of topics by some of America's greatest authors such as Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and many others.

To illustrate the integration of literature and multimedia in ELT classroom, we are to give a sample of teaching short story through film. "Rappaccini's Daughter" (story: 1844; film: 1980), the most problematic but also the most characteristic of all of Hawthorne's tales, could provide us a model worksheet. The story explores two essential Hawthorne themes: the sin of interfering with another's soul and the futility of trying to tamper with nature, both relevant till today. Starring Kathleen Beller (the Academy Award nominee) and Kristopher Tabori, the film is written by Herbert Hartig and directed by Dezsö Magyar. Vividly reproducing its mysterious, ambiguous and symbolic world, the film adaptation is faithful to but not confined by Hawthorne's text. We read the story and watch the movie, enjoying both but not to decide which is better.

#### 6. Model Worksheet for "Rappaccini's Daughter"

#### 6.1 Preview

- 1. Introduce Nathaniel Hawthorne and his tales.
- 2. Point out linguistic barriers: Middle English usage and Italian words.

#### **6.2 Plot Summary**

- 1. Read the tale and sum up story plot: who's-doing-what-where pattern.
- 2. Think over discussion questions, and prepare for class discussion.

#### **6.3 Story Discussion**

- 1. Structure: Do you like and agree with the story's conclusion? If you were the author, how would you finish the tale?
  - 2. Style: Do you think "Rappaccini's Daughter" is a gothic story, a feminist story, or an al-

legorical story? Please explain why.

- 3. Theme: How does Hawthorne explore the nature of good and evil in this story? What about the portraying of science?
- 4. Character: Is Beatrice an angelic figure, a seductive temptress, neither, something else? Analyze the relationships between Beatrice and three male characters, Giovanni, Doctor Rappaccini, and Professor Baglioni.
- 5. Symbol: Discuss and explain the symbolic meaning of the garden and the color purple. Can you find some other symbols in the story?
- 6. Setting: What effect does the post-medieval Italian setting have on the action and interpretation of the story?

#### 6.4 Visual View

- 1. Sketch the garden image and the final scene of the story. What would compose the foreground and background? Please explain.
  - 2. Watch the movie together and take notes for any interesting point.

#### 6.5 Film Analysis

- 1. Introduce high angle shot and low angle shot with the sequence of Giovanni throwing the bouquet to Beatrice, from his window to her in the garden. Could you find some other shooting point of view, such as the reverse angle?
- 2. What do you think of the color, sound, and costume of the movie? Is it necessary to use a voiceover for Giovanni?

#### 6.6 Integration of Story and Film

- 1. Does the film confirm or oppose against your impression from reading the story? Are you satisfied with the film?
- 2. Compare the different conclusions to the story and the film. Further talk about the addition (a servant to the landlady; the little restaurant; some friends of Giovanni) and omission (Professor Baglioni's final cry) when adapting a tale to film.

#### 7. Beyond the Integration of Literature and Multimedia

The advances of information society demand more literate students, literate in both printed texts and media texts. The expansion of school literacy, therefore, extends the realm of our education and also challenges the traditional instruction. Teaching the English language with literature and multimedia is a possible tendency for future media education, and it could contribute a bit to cultivating the graduates of new ages. English, as a universal language, is not only a tool; neither is multimedia in our teaching practice. We are to master language skills, but we should not exclude the culture and literature of the target language. We teach the English language with the help of multimedia, and the teaching about media texts is equally necessary.

Up to today, the American Short Story series have released twenty-one films. Teachers of



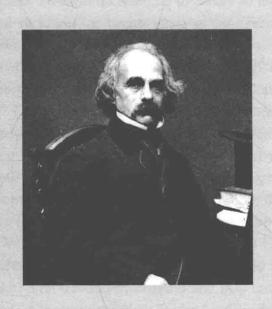
the story-film courses could choose from, but of course not limited by this series. There are more and more choices with the flourishing of film and media industry. The collection *The American Short Story Through Film* here includes twelve filmed short stories, for one semester of College English teaching. With this book, we intend to teach the English language through the integration of both media. The teaching combines traditional fiction criticism and modern film study, and hence improves the students' cultural awareness, literary education, and school literacy. English language teaching benefits a lot from the development of information technology, and looking beyond, we would like to wait for its positive influence in every corner of our coming society.

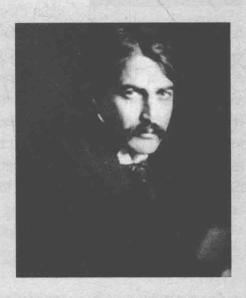
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# Unit One

Theme







## **Chapter 1**

### Rappaccini's Daughter

Nathaniel Hawthorne

#### **Author Introduction:**

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804—1864) was born in Salem, Massachusetts, into a prominent family who traced their lineage back to the Puritans. After graduating from Bowdoin College in 1825, Hawthorne returned to Salem to live a life of almost total seclusion for twelve years as he mastered his skills as a writer. Only when his first collections *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) made money did he feel secure enough to marry Sophia Peabody and settle in the Old Manse in Concord, Massachusetts. *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), his greatest novel of a woman taken into adultery, brought him recognition as a major literary figure, which was followed by three more novels, *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), a story tinged with night-



marish humor, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), drawn from his short, disgruntled stay at a Utopian commune, Brook Farm, and *The Marble Faun* (1860), inspired by a short stay in Italy. In 1853 he was appointed consul to Liverpool by his college friend Franklin Pierce, who had become President of the United States. After four years of service in his post, Hawthorne traveled in England and Italy until his return to America in 1860. Much of his work is centered on New England and colored by romanticism, while the weight of his Puritan heritage, with its ethical biases and emphasis on sin, radically shaped his themes. His books of short stories are two volumes of *Twice-Told Tales* (1837 and 1842) and *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846). Hawthorne wrote for children, too, retelling classic legends in *The Wonder Book* (1852) and *Tanglewood Tales* (1853).

#### **Story Summary:**

Young Giovanni comes to Padua to study. His apartment window overlooks a voluptuously beautiful garden which comforts him in his otherwise dismal surroundings and