英语人文知识手册

高校英语专业基础必备系列

主编 张喆

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·北京·

内 容 简 介

本书依据高等院校英语专业教学大纲进行编写，旨在为英语专业的学生提供一本方便有效的有关专业基础知识的检测读本。全书由英美文学、英语国家概况和语言学三个主要部分组成，提纲挈领，重点突出，英汉对照，每部分后配有一定量的检验性练习。

本书适用于高等院校英语专业本科生、研究生，英语教师和英语爱好者。

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前　言

《英语人文知识手册》是高校英语专业基础必备系列丛书之一，旨在为英语专业的学生提供一本方便有效的有关专业基础知识的检测读本。2000年的高等院校英语专业的教学大纲在培养目标中明确规定，21世纪我国高等院校英语专业人才“应具有扎实的基本功、宽广的知识面、一定的相关专业知识、较强的能力和较高的素质。”①该目标还特别强调了拓宽人文学科知识的重要性。本着大纲的精神，同时也是从二语习得本身的特点出发，本书将英语专业的学生所应了解的语言学、英美文学、英语国家概况的基本概念和基本知识置于同一阅读空间，最大限度地为读者掌握及检测本专业所应知应会的人文知识提供方便。本书的思路与新改革的英语专业八级考试中的人文知识一题相吻合，但决不仅仅是一本应考之作，它是基于二语习得要考虑到文化因素的理念而编写的。我们无法将语言从其赖以生存和发展的文化中割裂开来，而且在外语的教与学中强调人文性，比如文学等，不但可以拓展思维，还可以培养和提高学习者的自身素质。因此本书还适用于对英语学习感兴趣的自学者和其他愿意了解英语语言文化知识的读者。当然，由于本书作者水平有限，书中定有一些错误与不足之处，恳请广大读者批评指正。

全书由英美文学、英语国家概况和语言学三个主要部分组

① 见由高等院校外语专业教学指导委员会英语组编写的《英语教学大纲》。

成，每部分之后配有一定量的检验性练习。本书由张喆主编。英国文学中的诗歌和散文部分由张喆完成，戏剧由徐颖完成，小说由郑淑娟完成，美国文学中散文和20世纪20年代之前的部分由徐颖完成，戏剧和20世纪20年代之后的部分由高晶完成。英国概况由李亚莉完成；美国概况的英文部分由张春晓完成，中文部分及澳大利亚、新西兰和加拿大概况由石蕊完成。语言学由曲莉完成。

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Section One

English and American Literature

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Chapter One

English Literature

I. Poetry

If we trace the development of English literature, we will find that poetry takes an important part in it. We may even say that English literature burgeons from poetry, and *Beowulf*, the national epic, is a convenient beginning of the English poetry. In the long course of English literature, English poetry has manifested its glory through immortal poets and several distinctive stages, such as the father of English poetry—Geoffrey Chaucer; Philip Sidney; Edmund Spencer, Shakespeare and Marlowe as poets; metaphysical poets, John Donne, John Milton; the neoclassicists, John Dryden and Alexander Pope; Romantic poetry, 19-century poetry and new poetry in the 20th century. In this section we will have a bird's view of the development of English poetry.

1. *Beowulf*: An English Epic

Beowulf was written around A. D. 700. It contains three thousand lines. Although it is believed that *Beowulf* was written by a Danish cleric living in England, the poet is unknown in the literature history. It is a Scandinavian legend told in English. It is called the English national epic because the combat between Beowulf and monster Grendel and his mother embodies the values, beliefs and longings of

the Anglo-Saxon people. It shows the great courage that human beings struggle hard to survive in a hostile environment. "No other literary achievements in old English can compare with *Beowulf*"①. The status of *Beowulf* is profound as C. L. Wrenn states in *Word and Symbol* (1967), "there exits a clear linkage from the poet of *Beowulf* to Chaucer, down Milton, and even to Wordsworth".②

2. Geoffrey Chaucer

His Life and Status in Literary History

If we say *Beowulf* is the masterpiece of old English, then modern English poetry begins with Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 — 1400), diplomat, soldier, and scholar, so he is also considered as the father of English poetry. Chaucer was the son of a well-to-do wine merchant living in London. His educational background was not clearly recorded, but he held some important positions in public service, such as he was the diplomat of England to France and Italy. He translated French literary works into English. He not only witnessed the booming of Renaissance in Italy, but also was a good friend of Boccaccio. His life experience gave him a wide range of knowledge about people from different walks of life.

His Major Works

The Book of Duchess (1369) is Chaucer's first major work. *Troilus and Criseyde* (1385) is Chaucer's great achievement.

The Canterbury Tales (1387—1400) is Chaucer's monumental success, and actually *The Canterbury Tales* has become the synonym of Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of series told by a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. The pilgrims

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① 见张定铨、吴刚《新编简明英国文学史》第7页。

② 见张定铨、吴刚《新编简明英国文学史》第4页。

meet at the Tabard Inn on the southern end of London Bridge. The journey covers fifty-nine miles and the pilgrims come to the Inn to take a proper rest before they set out. Henry Bailey, the host of the Inn, offers to join them and suggests that they tell stories to ease the boredom of the long journey. The best storyteller will be awarded a fine dinner when they are back at his Inn at the expense of the group. Chaucer's original plan was to write 120 stories, two for each pilgrim on their way to Canterbury and two more on their way back. However, unfortunately Chaucer only completed 22. *The Canterbury Tales* is much influenced by Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Chaucer's deep understanding towards life provides him keen insist into human nature, and his social status enables him to portray people from different walks of life with a broader understanding of human weakness as well as human virtue.

After Geoffrey Chaucer there are two poets worth mention. One is William Langland (1332 —1400) who wrote *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, "a social protest from the viewpoint of a common man"①. The poem is allegorical, and it shows the three stages towards Truth are—Do-Well, Do-Bet(ter), and Do-Best.

The other one is the Gawain-poet. The author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is unknown, so people often refer to him as the Gawain-poet. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, written between 1325 and 1400, is one of the most outstanding poems in medieval English literature. This poem exposed paradoxes in the romance world and questioned the validity of chivalric courage.

3. Major Poets of the Renaissance Period

The Renaissance generally refers to the period between the 14th

① 见张定铨、吴刚《新编简明英国文学史》第 18 页。

and mid-17th centuries. It first started in Italy. The Renaissance literally means a revival of classical medieval obscurantism, but actually a movement around by a series of historical events, such as the rediscovery of ancient Roman and Greek culture, the new discoveries in geography and astrology, the religious reformation and economic expansion. So in essence, the Renaissance "is a historical period in which the European humanist thinks and scholars made attempts to get rid of those old feudalist ideas in medieval Europe, to introduce new ideas that expressed the interest of the rising bourgeoisie, and to recover the purity of the early church from the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church"①.

In English Renaissance period, poetry and drama are the major literary forms. The major poets of this period are Edmund Spencer, Philip Sidney, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and John Donne.

Edmund Spencer (1552—1597) and His Masterpiece *The Faerie Queen*

Edmund Spencer was eager to glorify the English language through poetry. His masterpiece *The Faerie Queen*, a long allegorical romance, was dedicated to the Queen Elizabeth. *The Faerie Queen* is not only famous for the extensive imagination, rich vocabulary, but also for the Spenserian Stanza, a nine-line verse stanza that the first eight lines are iambic pentameter, and the ninth, iambic hexameter.

Christopher Marlowe (1564—1593)

As the most gifted of the "University Wits", Marlowe is not only famous for his plays but also his poems. As a poet, Marlowe's language is bold, and his imagination is rich and boundless. *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* is one of the most beautiful lyrics in English literature. His *Hero and Leader* is a mythological poem.

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① 见张伯香《英美文学选读》第7页。

Shakespeare as a Poet

Although Shakespeare is well known for his talents in drama, his poems certainly bring him a prominent status in literary history. Actually, his Sonnets represent the finest poetic craftsmanship of Elizabethan poetry. He wrote 154 sonnets. Shakespeare's sonnets are profound in their moral depth and more complex in their expressed feelings. As his drama, Shakespeare's sonnets "reveal the sophisticated aspects of human nature, the moral conflicts and psychological uncertainties; the immortality of art as being represented by poetry, the value of genuine friendship; and the sorrows of feeling neglected in a corrupted world"①.

Besides 154 sonnets sequences, Shakespeare also wrote two long poems: *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Because Shakespeare was the most distinguished practitioner of the English sonnet during the Elizabethan Age, the English sonnet is often called the Shakespearean sonnet. It has fourteen lines with three quatrains and one couplet which makes an effective and verifying climax to the whole, with a consistent rhyme scheme of abab, cdcd, efef, gg.

John Donne (1572—1631) and Metaphysical Poetry

John Donne is the leader of metaphysical school. Metaphysical poetry is usually used to define the work of the 17th-century writers who wrote under the influence of John Donne. The group of poets paid efforts to break away from the conventional fashion of the Elizabethan love poetry. They "emphasized intellectual wit as against feeling and emotion"②. Although they used novel and shocking expressions for their sophisticated ideas, their diction is simple and echoes

① 见张定铨、吴刚《新编简明英国文学史》第42页。

② 见张定铨、吴刚《新编简明英国文学史》第52页。

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