

英国文学教程

孙汉云 编著

ENGLISH

LITERATURE

A COURSE

BOOK

河海大学出版社

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FOREWORD

English Literature : A Course Book is designed for senior students of English majors and also for teachers of English from secondary schools for self – improvement.

The book covers about twenty English writers of various periods of English literature, from William Shakespeare to William Golding. Full original texts of, or excerpts from the representative works of these writers are given in chronological order for careful reading. But they can also be dealt with according to their level of difficulty, starting, for instance, from writers of the nineteenth century and then moving upward and downward. Notes for the more difficult words, phrases and sentences in the selections are provided, and done in English for the convenience of teaching and learning. Preceding the selections are introductions to the authors, and in most cases, main characters, gists of the stories or of the plays and brief background information, so that both the teachers and students can have a general picture of the writers and their works in question. These are part of the features of this course book. Also noteworthy is that a number of questions are listed after each of the selected works, purposing to check the students' comprehension and to get them involved in classroom discussion. Some of the questions, as a matter of fact, can serve as topics for term papers. The part Passages Taken from the Novel (Book) for Further Reading is intended for the teachers to use when they make comments on the works, and for the advanced students to do some further study. And the topics that follow are for the students to write theses on.

Much has been said already about the features or strengths of this book. In the meantime, the editor is fully aware that errors and even blunders are not avoidable, since the work involves a huge amount of labour and it is done single – handed. Upon its completion, the editor hopes that improvement of this book will be made after using for a period of time. And for this purpose, any suggestions and criticisms will be most welcome.

Sun Hanyun
Jiangsu Institute of Education
April, 1997

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR:

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. He was the third son of a family of eight children. His father was a well-to-do merchant and had served as alderman, bailiff and chief alderman. Shakespeare attended the local grammar school. In 1582 he was married to Anne Hathaway, a yeoman's daughter. They had three children.

Probably in 1585, Shakespeare left Stratford for London. According to a tradition, it was because he was persecuted by Sir Thomas Lucy, a rich landlord and county magistrate, on whom Shakespeare had written a satirical rhyme after having been severely punished for stealing his deer. Little is known of his activities in London until 1592. But there are legends of his having taken care of horses outside the playhouse, and he must have undergone a great deal of hardships before he was given permission to work as a player of small parts and soon a reviser of old plays. By 1592 he had achieved so much success as to draw the scorn of an elder dramatist Robert Greene (1560? – 92), who, in a letter to his colleagues, jealously spoke of Shakespeare as “an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapt in a Player's hide”.

Shakespeare's first known poem, *Venus and Adonis*, was published in April 1593. It was dedicated to his patron Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton. This poem gained immediate popularity and was reprinted 11 times in the next few years. In May the next year came out Shakespeare's second non-dramatic poem, a dedication

to the same patron. That year also saw the establishment of the Lord Chamberlain's Company. From the very beginning Shakespeare was an important member of this leading theatrical company. As an actor he does not seem to have distinguished himself, but his genius as a playwright won quick recognition.

In about 1613 Shakespeare left his work in London and retired to spend his declining years in his native town. He died on April 23, 1616 and was buried in the church there. In 1623, two of his fellow players gathered his works together in the "Folio" edition. To this, Ben Jonson (1572 – 1637) dedicated a poem, in which he praised Shakespeare as "soul of the age", "the wonder of our stage" and "a monument without a tomb", and as being "not for an age, but for all time".

Shakespeare's career as a dramatist can be divided into four periods. The first period, roughly from 1588 to 1594, includes his works of apprenticeship. The second period, from 1595 to 1600, includes most of his history plays and comedies and a few early tragedies. Of his history plays, the better known are *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. The chief comedies of this period include *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* are two of his better known early tragedies. The third period of Shakespeare's dramatic career, dating from 1601 to 1608, includes chiefly his great tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*. In this period Shakespeare also wrote several tragicomedies, of which the most important is *Measure for Measure*. The last period, extending from 1609 to 1612 – 13, includes chiefly his three tragicomedies: *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

The complete works of Shakespeare consist of 2 long narrative poems, 154 sonnets and 37 plays.

Sonnets

The sonnet is a poem of 14 lines , usually in iambic pentameter with a very strict rime – scheme. This verse form was first used by the Italian poets as the most suitable for a love poem in the early period of the Renaissance and came to perfection in the hands of Dante (1265 – 1321) and especially of Petrarch (1304 – 74). It was introduced into England in the 16th century by Thomas Wyatt (1503? – 42) and then adopted by many English poets, with mainly two variants: the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet form and the English or Shakespearean form. The chief difference between the two forms lies in their rime schemes: abba, abba, cdecde or abba, abba, cdcdcd for the former and abab, cdcd, efef, gg for the latter.

Shakespeare's sonnets were composed probably between 1593 and 1600 and first came out in a collection in 1609. Of the 154 sonnets , 126 were addressed to his friend, a “handsome young man of high birth, gentle, wealthy and gifted”, the rest to a “dark lady”. As to who these two persons are, there is no agreement.

The two sonnets selected here are among the better known. In Sonnet 18, the poet expresses his deep affection for his friend and he thinks that he will bring eternity to him through his writing of poetry. In Sonnet 29, the poet complains of his dissatisfaction in time of difficulty, but the sudden thought of his beloved friend makes him happy again.

SELECTED READING:

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?¹
Thou art more lovely and more temperate,²

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease³ hath all too short a date.⁴
 Sometime⁵ too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;⁶
 And every fair⁷ from fair⁸ sometime declines,
 By chance, or nature's changing course,⁹, untrimmed;¹⁰
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,¹¹
 Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,¹²
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.¹³
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
 So long lives this,¹⁴ and this gives life to thee.

NOTES:

1. a summer's day: a day in summer. Summer in England is the best season in a year, the highest temperature being 20 – 25 degrees centigrade.
2. more temperate: better tempered. The word "temperate" is pronounced /'tempəreɪt/ here in order to rhyme with "date" in the fourth line.
3. lease: a legal term, meaning a contract. Here it refers to the time allowed (for the use of something).
4. date: a period of time.
5. Sometime = Sometimes.
6. dimmed: darkened.
7. every fair: every beautiful person or beautiful object.
8. fair: beauty or beautifulness.
9. nature's changing course: the normal course of change in the natural world, such as the cyclic change of seasons in a year.

10. untrimmed; destroyed; stripped of beauty.
11. ow'st = ownest (own).
12. Nor shall Death brag thou wand' rest in his shade; Nor shall Death boast that you are within range of his threat. wand' rest = wander; walk about.
13. When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st; When you live in poetry, which is permanent, you become a part of time. The poet is not boastful here. It is a Renaissance convention to believe in the permanence or immortality of poetry.
14. this; this poem.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why a question is used instead of a statement in the first line of the poem?
2. Why does the poet think it is inaccurate to compare his friend to a day in summer?
3. How can his friend be like the eternal summer?
4. What figures of speech are used in the poem?
5. In which respect does this poem reflect the poet's idea of humanism?

Sonnet 29

When, in disgrace¹ with Fortune and men's eyes,
 I all alone beweepe² my outcast state,³
 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless⁴ cries,
 And look upon myself and curse my fate,
 Wishing me like to one⁵ more rich in hope,
 Featured like him,⁶ like him with friends possessed,
 Desiring this man's art,⁷ and that man's scope,⁸

With what I most enjoy contented least;⁹
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
 Haply¹⁰ I think on thee, and then my state,¹¹
 Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
 For thy sweet love rememb' red such wealth¹² brings,
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

NOTES:

1. in disgrace; out of favour.
2. beweeep; cry over.
3. outcast state; state of being ignored by the society.
4. bootless; futile; useless.
5. Wishing me like to one; wishing me to be like someone. like to = like.
6. Featured like him; with appearance similar to his.
7. art; skill in the making or doing of anything.
8. scope; wide range of knowledge.
9. With what I most enjoy contented least; least contented or satisfied with what I am good at.
10. haply; fortunately; luckily.
11. state; state of mind; condition. But in the last line there is a pun on "state", meaning chair of state or throne.
12. wealth; meaning pleasure.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the poet describe his happiness at the thought of his friend?
2. What do you think of the mood of this poem in comparison with

that of the previous one?

SELECTED READING:

The Merchant of Venice

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Antonio: the merchant of Venice.

Bassanio: Antonio's friend, a poor gentleman.

Shylock: a Jewish money – lender.

Portia: a rich young lady, Bassanio's lover.

Gratiano: Bassanio's friend.

Nerissa: Portia's maid, Gratiano's lover.

Bellario: a learned lawyer, Portia's cousin.

The Duke

Balthassar: (Portia in disguise) a young doctor.

Jessica: Shylock's daughter.

Lorenzo: Jessica's husband, Antonio's friend.

GIST OF THE PLAY:

The Merchant of Venice is one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies, which was written between 1596 and 1597. The story is Italian in origin, and the scene is set in Venice. Bassanio, a young Venetian gentleman, falls in love with a beautiful young lady named Portia. Although of noble birth, he is poor. In order to go and court Portia, he asks his wealthy friend Antonio, the merchant of Venice, for a loan of 3,000 ducats. But it so happens that Antonio has invested all his money in goods and ships which are at sea. To supply Bassanio's need, Antonio turns to Shylock for the sum of money. At

first Shylock would not lend any money, as he hates the merchant for his illtreating him as a money lender and as a Jew. Then ,deeming it a good chance for revenge, he agrees to lend the sum of money on condition that he could take a pound of flesh from any part of Antonio's body if the latter should fail to return the money in three months time. And an agreement is signed between them.

Now richly dressed and accompanied by some servants, Bassanio goes to court Portia. The lady has a peculiar way of choosing her lover. According to her father's will, only the young man, who chooses the casket with her portrait inside from among the three caskets made of gold, silver and lead respectively, can have her as his wife. Bassanio makes the right choice. And they are happily married.

In the meantime, Antonio is endangered, for he is unable to repay the loan, his ships being reportedly damaged. Upon hearing the news, Bassanio hurries back to Antonio. The case is brought to the court. Both the Duke and Bassanio try hard to persuade Shylock to show mercy. However, Shylock insists on carrying out the bond. Just at this critical juncture, Portia comes to the court, disguised as a lawyer to help with the case. She defeats Shylock's demand by ordering him to cut no more and no less than exactly a pound of flesh without a single drop of blood. And Shylock is further charged with his attempt to kill a Venetian citizen. For this he is severely punished and is forced to become a Christian. Antonio is thus saved, and all his ships which are reported to have shipwrecked come back home safely.

EXCERPT FROM THE PLAY:

ACT IV

Scene 1. – *Venice, A Court of Justice*

Enter the DUKE: the Magnificoes; ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO, SALARINO, BALANIO, and Others.

Duke. What¹, is Antonio here?

Ant. Ready, so please your Grace.²

Duke. I am sorry for thee; thou art come to answer³

A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch

Uncapable⁴ of pity, void and empty

From any dram of mercy.

Ant. I have heard

Your grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify⁵

His rigorous course;⁶ but since he stands obdurate,

And that no lawful means can carry me

Out of his envy's⁷ reach, I do oppose⁸

My patience to his fury, and am arm'd

To suffer with a quietness of spirit

The very tyranny and rage of his.

Duke. Go one, and call the Jew into the court.

Sal. He is ready at the door; he comes, my lord.

Enter SHYLOCK

Duke. Make room, and let him stand before our face.

Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,

That thou but leadest this fashion of thy malice⁹

To the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought

Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange

Than is thy strange apparent cruelty;¹⁰

And where thou now exacts the penalty, –

Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh, –

Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture,¹¹
But touch'd with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a moiety of the principal;
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
That have of late so huddled on his back,
Enow to press a royal merchant down,¹²
And pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars,¹³ never train'd
To offices¹⁴ of tender courtesy.
We all expect a gentle¹⁵ answer, Jew.

Shy. I have possess'd¹⁶ your Grace of what I purpose;
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond;
If you deny it, let the danger light
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.¹⁷
You'll ask me why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats; I'll not answer that;
But say it is my humour: is it answer'd?
What if my house be troubled with a rat,
And I be pleas'd to give ten thousand ducats
To have it ban'd?¹⁸ What, are you answer'd yet?
Some men there are love not a gaping pig;¹⁹
Some that are mad if they behold a cat;
And others when the bagpipe sings i' th' nose,²⁰
Cannot contain their urine: for affection,²¹
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes, or loathes. Now for your answer;