高级英语阅读指导

李日俭 编

武汉出版社

A Guide

to

Advanced English Reading

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Preface

A Guide to Advanced English Reading is intended for English majors who are beginning a serious study of literature. It is a textbook for an introductory coursee in American fiction. To make it highly stimulating for students and practical for classroom use, the anthology includes only 18 representative short stories by American authors, with a great diversity of subjects and forms. They range in time from 1835 to 1970 and in length from the brief sketch to the fully developed story. They present America's culture and society from different angles. In choosing them, great attention is paid to their social values, readability and artistry. I hope the selections will arouse the reader's interest in literature and whet his/her appetite for more.

Explanatory notes for the stories and biographical notes on each author are designed to provide the background and cultural information needed for understanding and critical interpretation. Some of the notes are meant to alleviate difficulties in language. In addition, some guiding questions are offered to encourage responsive reading.

Due to my own limitations in English and literary knowledge, this anthology could still be greatly improved. Therefore, suggestions and criticisms are warmly welcomed.

Li Xijian

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Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

Hawthorne is one of the greatest writers of all American fiction and also the first American writer of fiction in whose work one can sense the inner relation of life to fiction.

Hawthorne was born in a ship captain's family in Salem, Massachusetts. After his father's death, he lived with his uncle for some time and then entered Bowdion College through his uncle's aid. At college he lived a solitary life. Upon his graduation in 1825, he returned to the home of his widowed mother at Salem and for 12 years lived mostly in seclusion. These 12 years were years of his literary apprenticeship. Between 1830 and 1837 his 36 tales and sketches appeared in periodicals. In 1837 a friend of his secretly financed the publication of a collection of 19 of the 36 tales under the title of *Twice Told Tales*. He was employed in the Boston Custom House in 1839-1840. Then he stayed for seven months at the Brook Farm, a Utopian socialist co-operative. In 1850 he published his masterpiece, *Scarlet Letter*, winning the fame of the finest American romancer. Now he was at the height of his creative activity. *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), a great novel of the decadence of an aristocratic family, was followed by *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), a novel on the Brook Farm experience. *A Wonder Book* (1852) and *Tanglewood Tales* (1853) entered the literature of juvenile classics. Later, he served as consul at Liver-

pool, England and then lived in Italy, the scene and inspiration of his last novel *The Marble Fa[illegible]860)*, until he returned home in 1860. He died in [illegible].

Hawthorne writes about the p[illegible]past over the present and traces the results of the pa[illegible]on in the lives of descendants of it. His works are often symbolic, embodying Puritan preoccupations — with sin, with guilt and with secrecy. His dominant theme is that life is essentially tragic and that "a loving heart is better than wisdom."

Hawthorne's works are called romances because they deal with a time a century and more before his time and imply that invisible worlds dominate visible ones. Critics say that American psychological realism begins in the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Young Goodman[1] Brown

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee[2] put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A

lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeared of herself sometimes. Pray tarry[3] with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, [4] must needs be done 'twixt[5] now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought[6] as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."[7]

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately

behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not[8] who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.[9]

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"[10]

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire;[11] seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston,[12] and that is full fifteen minutes agone."[13]

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life[14] as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him,[15] though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad[16] as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the

governor's dinner table or in King William's[17] court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither.[18] But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here,[19] it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter[20] thou wot'st of."[21]

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not[22] thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept--"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say.[23] I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the

Quaker[24] woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. [25] They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters, [26] or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that[27] the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works[28] to boot, [29] and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me, [30] the selectmen of divers[31] towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too—But these are state secrets." [32]

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, [33] I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day[34] and lecture day." [35]

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking

himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own."

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en[36] go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm."[37]

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth,[38] and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly that Goody Cloyse[39] should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods[40], and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with

singular[41] speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth[42], and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip[43], Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick[44] hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane"—[45]

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, howev-

er, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," he said, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along."

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst[46] without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do,[47] when bound to

some ordination or ecclesiastical council.

While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch. [48]

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than tonight's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here form Falmouth[49] and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, [50] besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, excep direct-