全国高等学校面向21世纪课程统编教材

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新编

英美文学概论

◎《新编英美文学概论》编委会 著

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全国高等学校面向21世纪课程统编改革教材

新编英美文学概论

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE
AN INTRODUCTION

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前　言

近年来，我国高等学校教学改革的思想十分活跃，1998年3月教育部在武汉召开了全国高等学校第一次教学工作会议后，教育部明确要求我国高等学校全面实施《高等教育面向21世纪教学内容和课程体系改革计划》，改革重点是基础课程、主干课程的教学内容和体系的改革，要按照新的专业目录制定出主要专业的人才培养方案，实现课程结构和教学内容的整合优化，编写出版一批高水平、高质量的“面向21世纪课程教材”。“英美文学概论”就是在此要求下编写的一本高等学校英语专业的必修课教材，也可作为大学英语的阅读读本。

18世纪以来，欧洲和美洲的许多国家都先后进行了工业革命，各国的资产阶级相继掌握了国家政权，但同时封建的思想和保守势力与资产阶级先进思潮和革命的斗争异常尖锐，资产阶级本身在革命的过程中也发生了变异，资产阶级国家之间的矛盾也非常激烈，特别是20世纪的前五十年，世界爆发了两次世界大战，世界政治经济格局发生了巨大的变化，这对英国和美国的文学创作和文学思想的活跃提供了丰厚的素材，因而从18世纪以来在英美两个国家出现了一大批反映社会现实、揭露社会矛盾和倾吐人们心声的文学作品和文学家，本书的重点是力求对18世纪以来英美两个国家的主要文学家及其代表作品进行介绍和简要评析，旨在帮助我国高等学校的大学生全

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面了解英美两国文学发展的基本情况，通过对英美文学的了解，进一步认识英美这两个国家的历史和现状，从而在与英美两国文化交流的各项活动中，更加客观、准确地认识英国和美国，为中国的改革开放和经济建设服务。因此，编写一本紧跟时代变化的英美文学概论教材，这对于我国高校大学生掌握更多的英语文学背景知识，学好英语语言就显得尤为重要。正是根据教育部的有关文件精神和我国高校开设英美文学概论课程急需教学内容调整和改革的要求，由汕头大学出版社直接组织全国有代表性的高等学校从事英美文学概论研究和教学的专家和专业教师，联合编写和修改而成的结构完整、体系新颖、内容广泛的高等学校面向21世纪课程建设统编改革教材。

《新编英美文学概论》一书共有13章，分为英国部分和美国部分，本书在全面介绍英美文学基本内容的框架基础上，突出了以下三个特点：一是保留了第一、二版的主要内容和基本结构，对部分在历史上有较大影响的现当代英美文学作家及作品进行评述；二是在选择作家和作品时，首先考虑思想内容，同时也考虑作品影响及作家在文学史中的地位；三是通过对英美两国的主要文学作品和作家介绍反映出重要的文学流派。

本书由汕头大学出版社直接组织全国部分高校的专家学者联合编写和修改而成。参加编写和修改的专家和专业教师有(按编写章节先后为序)：娄琦（牡丹江师范学院）、刘晓华(咸宁学院)、张平功（佛山科技学院）、苏鹏（雁北师范学院）、田野、蔡玉新（东北电力学院）、汪国军（襄樊学院）、魏晓红（邯郸师范高等专科学校）、肖运初（湖南师范大学）、万鹏杰、李建仓（安阳大学）、张叔宁、陆小虹（广西师范大学）、王彦君（大同职业技术学院）、陈许（盐城师范学院）、王佳英（克山师范高等专科学校）、梁悦（广东农工商职业技术学院）、秦志强（忻州师范学院）、徐明（天津理工学院）。

本书初稿由副主编分别审改后交主编对全书进行系统的修改和定稿。本书在编写过程中，参考了国内外有关文献、著作、教材，引用了其中的相关材料，在此注明并表示感谢。由于编者的水平有限，编写时间比较仓促，资料的来源渠道不一，加上是合作编著，尽管本书主编和出版社责任编辑作了较大的努力和认真的修改，但错误之处在所难免，恳请读者批评指正，便于今后再版时统一修改和完善。

《新编英美文学概论》编委会

2003 年 6 月于广州

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VOLUME ONE
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Chapter One Early and Medieval English Literature

Section Ⅰ Introduction

Ⅰ. **Anglo – Saxon Period**(450 – 1050)

The English people are not of one origin but a mixed blood. The early inhabitants in the island we now call England were Britons, a tribe of Celts. From the Britons the island got its name of Britain, the land of Britons. The Britons were a primitive people living in the tribal society. They were divided into dozens of small tribes, each of which lived in a clustering of huts for their safety and their mutual dependence.

The Roman Conqueror, Julius Caesar, led his troops and invaded Britain in 55 B.C; then Claudius conquered it in 43 A.D. and Britain became a Roman province. With the Roman Conquest came the Roman way of life. During their rule the Romans built roads, walls, villas, theatres and baths. The native Britons were trampled down either as slaves or indentured cultivators of the land. At the beginning of the 5th century, attacked and overrun by Germanic peoples the Roman Empire fell into decline. In 410 A.D., all the Roman troops in Britain were withdrawn. Though the Roman occupation lasted for about 400 years, the Roman Conquest of Britain, generally speaking, had a somewhat

limited influence on its national and cultural way of life.

During this historical period, Britain was invaded by swarms of pirates. They were three tribes from Northern Europe: Angles, Saxons and Jutes. These three tribes landed on the British coast, drove the Britons west and north, and settled down themselves. The Jutes occupied Kent, in the southeastern corner of the island. The Saxons took the southern part and established some small kingdoms as Wessex, Essex and Sussex. The Angles spread over the east midland and built the kingdom of the East Angles. Gradually seven such kingdoms arose in Britain. And by the 7th century these small kingdoms were combined into a united kingdom called England, or, the land of Angles. The three tribes had mixed into a whole people called English, the Angles being the most numerous of the three. And the three dialects spoken by them naturally grew into a single language called Anglo - Saxon, which is now called Old English. Old English is quite different from the English that we know today.

The Danish Vikings began to plunder the country from around 787. In late 9th century King Alfred the Great(849 - 901) of the kingdom of Wessex succeeded in driving the Danes off after a protracted war. After his death, the Danes came again to invade England. Under the military leadership of Canute all of England was occupied and ruled for a quarter of a century(1017 - 1042). Following the repulsion of the Danes the Normans (from Normandy in northern France) invaded England in 1066. Under the leadership of William, the Duke of Normandy, they defeated the English troops at Hastings and William was crowned as king of England. Revolts were cruelly suppressed and the conquest was completed with sword and fire. It was called the "* Norman Conquest *", which marked the end of the Anglo - Saxon

period.

Ⅱ. Secular poetry of the Anglo – Saxon period

Some critics maintain that English literature began with the national epic of the Anglo – Saxon "＊Beowulf＊"(which will be discussed in detail in Section Ⅱ). As a matter of fact, a few relics of old English literature are still preserved. All of them are poems, or songs by gleeman (minstrels). Like that of many other peoples, the earliest poetry of the Anglo – Saxons was created collectively and orally probably during periods of work or rest . Their stories, based on history, legend or contemporaneous events, would be narrated orally and often sung during festivals and on other occasions, chiefly for entertainment. Some of the more interesting and more significant narratives would pass down from mouth to mouth, from generation to generation with additions or deletions. Besides 'Beowulf', other secular poems of this period deserve mention as important literary and historical works.

"Widsith". The poem "Widsith", the wild goer or wanderer is in part, at least, one of the oldest poems in the English language (probably dating to the 4th century, though some parts of the poem may have been added later). The author and the exact date of its composition are unknown; but the personal account of the minstrel's life belongs to the time before the Saxons first came to England.

It expresses the wandering life of the gleeman, who goes forth into the world to abide here or there, as he is rewarded for his singing. From the numerous references to rings and rewards, and from the praise given to generous givers, it would seem that literature as a paying

profession began very early in English history, and also that the pay given was barely sufficient to hold soul and body together.

"Deor's Lament". In"Deor's Lament", we see another picture of the Saxon scop, or minstrel, not in glad wandering, but in manly sorrow. It seems that the scop's living depended entirely upon his power to please his chief, and that at any time he might be supplanted by a better poet. Deor had this experience and comforts himself in a grim way by recalling various examples of men who have suffered more than himself. The poem is arranged in strophes, each one telling of some afflicted hero and ending with the same refrain: His sorrow passed away; so will mine. "Deor" is much more poetic than "Widsith", and is the one perfect lyric of the Anglo – Saxon period.

Of later lyrics mention may be made of "The Wife's Complaint" and "The Husband's Message" (or "The Lover's Message"), perhaps the two earliest love poems in the English language. The former poem laments the loss of the poet's love while the latter declares the writer's faith and steadfastness in love. "The Sea Farer" and "The Wanderer"are both early poetic pieces dealing with adventures on the sea.

Ⅲ. The Anglo – Norman Period(1066 – 1350)

At the battle of Hastings (1066), the power of Harold, last of the Saxon Kings, was broken, and William, Duke of Normandy, became master of England. The completion of that stupendous conquest changed the civilization of the whole nation and accelerated the development of feudalism in England. Norman barons were bestowed large tracts of land that had been confiscated grom the Anglo – Saxon

lords. The Norman barons in turn divided allotted lands to their own vassals. In order to secure the King's authority over his barons, William I compelled all vassals to swear allegiance to himself directly. He also ordered a great survey to be made of all the land and taxable property in the whole kingdom. The result was listed on a roll called the "Domesday Book" by the English people. By all these means he pushed England well into the feudal society. Division of classes appeared, *mainly, two classes: landlords and peasants*. Noblemen, knights, bishops, archbishops, abbots and the like, with the king at the top, all belonged to the ruling class who possessed most of the land and property. The conqueror and the conquered lived in the relation of masters and servants. There was terrible oppression and exploitation of the peasants by the feudal rulers. The peasants toiled all the year round and paid rent to the rulers in grain, service or cash, with little left to sustain themselves. To rule the people, there was a whole network of church government as well as secular government under the king's officers. Those who dared to rebel against the feudal order were often condemned as heretics and severely punished, usually burnt alive. So this period of time, often called the Middle Ages, has been called the Dark Age by some historians, and it extended into the 15th century.

The Norman Conquest of England produced three great results which had a direct bearing on the development of English literature. First, it brought to an insular nation a new and larger continental culture and at a critical time when England with her literature and civilization had already begun to decay. Second, it forced on England "the national idea", a concept of a strong, centralized government to replace the loose authority of a Saxon chief over his tribesmen. The world's history shows that without a great nationality a great literature

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