



西安外国语大学编著

# 21<sup>★</sup>世纪英语专业

系列教材

# 英国文学选读

Selected Readings in British Literature

主编 郑燕



西安交通大学出版社  
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY PRESS



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西安外国语大学“十一五”规划教材

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## Selected Readings in British Literature

主 编 郑 燕  
编 者 苗 森 梁 颖 李 晶 鸥  
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**图书在版编目(CIP)数据**

英国文学选读/郑燕主编. —西安:西安交通大学出版社,2012.1  
ISBN 978-7-5605-4033-7

I. ①英… II. ①郑… III. ①英语-阅读教学-高等学校-教材 ②文学-作品-介绍-英国 IV. ①H319.4:I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2011)第 175073 号

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书 名 英国文学选读  
主 编 郑 燕  
责任编辑 牛瑞鑫

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出版发行 西安交通大学出版社  
(西安市兴庆南路 10 号 邮政编码 710049)  
网 址 <http://www.xjtupress.com>  
电 话 (029)82668357 82667874(发行中心)  
(029)82668315 82669096(总编办)  
传 真 (029)82668280  
印 刷 陕西彩云印务有限公司

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开 本 727mm×960mm 1/16 印张 20.25 字数 372 千字  
版次印次 2012 年 1 月第 1 版 2012 年 1 月第 1 次印刷  
书 号 ISBN 978-7-5605-4033-7/H·1247  
定 价 35.00 元

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读者购书、书店添货,如发现印装质量问题,请与本社发行中心联系、调换。  
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投稿邮箱:cf\_english@126.com

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郑 燕

新世纪之初,随着英语教育的快速发展,高等学校英语专业学生的入学英语水平在不断提高,这对英语专业教材的时效性和适用性是一种挑战。随着新世纪的到来,中国在文化和经济等领域变化巨大,国际交往越来越多,网络应用不断普及,知识更新周期不断缩短。社会的种种变化也对英语专业的教学与教材建设提出了新的任务。为了顺应时代的进步,满足不断发展的社会对英语人才知识结构的新要求,高等学校英语专业应在继承优秀教材编写传统的前提下,不断创新,推出能够反映新的教学理念、体现新的教学改革成果、富有时代气息和丰富内容、符合英语专业教学实际需要的新教材。基于以上思路,西安外国语大学英文学院将“21世纪英语专业系列教材”列为“十一五”规划教材建设项目,统一策划并组织富有教学经验的教师参与编写。

“21世纪英语专业系列教材”包括英语语音、口语、听力、阅读、写作、翻译、英美文学、语言学、英语国家社会与文化等英语专业必修课程和选修课程使用的教材。本系列教材的编写以高等学校英语专业教学大纲为依据,在全面分析我国中西部地区英语专业学生实际水平和需要的前提下,对每门课程的教材内容进行精心筛选,有针对性地对教材的编排体例进行合理设计。专业基础课程的教材做到有利于学生英语基本功的训练和语言技能的全面发展;相关专业课程教材旨在拓宽学生的知识范围,提高他们的人文素养,培养分析问题、解决问题的能力。

“21世纪英语专业系列教材”在选材方面依据知识性、科学性、时代性的总原则,力图反映该教材涉及学科新的教学与研究成果。专业基础课程的教材选取语言知识丰富、内容生动活泼、能够反映现当代社会特征、启迪思想并能够调动学习自觉性的材料。此类教材在内容安排上体现循序渐进、由浅入深、有利于教学活动组织和学生参与讨论交流的原



则。相关专业知识课程的教材在侧重学科基础知识传授的同时力图体现反映学科发展的新内容,注意专业知识的系统性介绍并体现相近专业课程之间的相互关联。此类教材在编写方面力图做到表述语言简明、信息量大且相对集中,在选材和内容安排方面考虑到有利于现代教育技术的应用。

教材建设是英语专业建设的一项重要工作。编写能够通过教学有效传授系统的专业基础知识和相关专业知识、反映各门课程涉及学科的发展、体现和推广英语专业教学改革成果和成功经验的教材,是高等学校英语专业建设的一项长期任务。西安外国语大学英文学院在英语专业本科教育方面已有50多年的积淀,在长期的专业建设和发展中形成了自身的英语教育特色,编写了一批反响良好的本科教材。此次推出的“21世纪英语专业系列教材”有的是在过去出版使用的基础上修订再版的,有的是使用数年的校内教材经编者重新改编修订的,有的是依据教学大纲要求、结合编者的研究成果和教学经验新编的。所有教材编写人员均有多年的专业教学经验和相关研究成果。他们熟悉英语专业本科教学的原理与规律,了解学生的难点所在和实际需要,将各自的课程教学经验积累融入编写的教材之中并体现在教材内容科学合理的编排方面。

“21世纪英语专业系列教材”的编写出版丰富了英语专业教材的种类,为本科教学提供了更多的教材选择,从而使教学更符合学生需要、更有明确的针对性。限于编写水平,本系列教材不足之处在所难免。我们真诚地希望专家、同行提出宝贵意见,以帮助我们改进教材编写工作。

编委会

2008年9月

# 前言

《英国文学选读》(以下简称《选读》)是一本适合大学本科英语专业高年级英国文学课所需的,选材合理、实用、重点突出,而又不失全面的英国文学选读本。《选读》在参考了国内外现有的英国文学选读方面的教材图书的基础上,针对英语专业高年级英国文学课亟需合适的英文版英国文学教材授课以及学习的现状编写而成的。根据目前我国英语专业英国文学课程的课程设置和需要达到的水平,《选读》筛选出英国文学各个重要时期的代表作家及其代表作品,进行了重点突出,同时又兼顾英国文学发展脉络的详略得当的选介和梳理。《选读》的基本特色是:一、有总有分。在《选读》中,对于每个英国文学发展的重要时期,都有总括性的介绍性文字,在将每个重要时期的具体社会、文化、历史背景放置在总的文学发展脉络中的同时,突出各个发展阶段的文学特色以及其代表作家。不仅如此,《选读》对于每个作家的文学作品做了更为突出的介绍,尤其对部分文学术语做了着重诠释,以方便高校师生的使用。二、有舍有得。英国文学作家作品浩如烟海,在其中如何选取作家及其代表作是个难题。《选读》以文艺复兴时期、新古典主义时期、浪漫主义时期、维多利亚时期和现代主义时期等主要文学时期为文学发展节点,围绕每个时期的文学特点,选取代表作家及作品。其中收入了英国文学史上最重要、最有影响的作家,舍去其它可以留作扩展性阅读的作家。这样,教师可以在有限的教授时间中给学生作提纲挈领的讲解,同时,学生也能从整个英国文学语境中领略重点作家作品的风采。三、有主有次。在每个文学发展时期,突出个别作家做重点介绍,使得教师可根据各自的学期计划安排,进行适当的取舍。学生也可根据《选读》提供的作家介绍,做进一步研究和阅读。

《选读》是由西安外国语大学一线英美文学教师和科研人员合力编写完成的。他们了解教师和学生教授课程中的实际需求,因此在选篇内容上,做了各自不同的取舍,在语言上力求简洁流畅,使得阅读《选读》本身也是一种提高和愉悦。本书编写人员都是来自西安外国语大学英语专业的一线教师,其中两位是上海外国语大学文学博士,一位是北京外国语大学文学博士生,一位是新西兰奥克兰大学比较



文学博士生。具体的编写工作分工如下：

第一部分：梁颖

第一章(文艺复兴时期)：袁泉 苗森（其中的介绍部分和克里斯特弗·马娄部分由苗森完成）

第二章(新古典主义时期)：梁琰

第三章(浪漫主义时期)：王玫（其中的简·奥斯丁部分由苗森完成）

第四章(维多利亚时期)：苗森

第五章(现代主义时期)：李晶鸥 苗森

《选读》全书的体例、规划、统筹、修订由郑燕完成。

由于《选读》篇幅有限，准备时间仓促，如有不妥之处，还请读者和各方专家不吝赐教。在此还要感谢西安外国语大学杨达复教授和杨孝明教授为本书提供的帮助。

编者

2011年3月31日



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# An Introduction to Old and Medieval English Literature



The earliest English literature was created by the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons who successively occupied the island of Great Britain for over 1,000 years. They both transmitted something of their racial qualities to the English nation and literature although the amount of thoroughly great literature which they produced is small. The Britons, who are those of the Celtic family, lived in what is now Britain before the Anglo-Saxons. These people are brave, vivacious, but ineffective in practical affairs. They are also known for a fantastic but sincere and delicate sensitiveness to beauty. This charming fancifulness and delicacy of feeling is apparently the great contribution of the Britons to English literature.

Roman conquest and occupation of Britain in the middle of the first century B. C. made the island a Roman province from the first century A. D. to the beginning of the fifth. Latin was the language of the ruling class. Roman civilization and later on Christianity were introduced to the Britons. But the interest of the Romans in the island was centered on other things than writing. The Britons were still barbarous when the Roman garrisons withdrew. Roman occupation produced virtually no effect on English literature.

The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes occupied territories in the region which includes parts of the present Holland, of Germany and of Denmark. They were barbarians, living partly from piratical expeditions, partly from their flocks and herds, and partly from a rude sort of agriculture. They began to come in large bands with the deliberate purpose of permanent settlement not long after the Romans withdrew all their troops and abandoned Britain early in the fifth century. Until early in the seventh century the Anglo-Saxons were in possession of nearly all of what is now England. The Anglo-Saxons destroyed the civilization of their predecessors and began to rebuild one for themselves. They developed agriculture and trade with the continent. But perhaps the most important humanizing influence was the reintroduction of Christianity in 597, when Pope Gregory the Great sent St. Augustine to Britain and converted that kingdom. Within the next two

generations, all the other kingdoms as well had been christianized. The network of monasteries was gradually established and became centers of active hospitality and learning.

The Anglo-Saxons brought from the Continent the simple beginning of poetry, which consists largely of brief magical charms and of rough "popular ballads". The charms stem from primitive superstition, and the ballads from everyday life in villages and tribes. Popular ballads, out of which epic poetry regularly developed, were circulated by word of mouth, only, from generation to generation, among the common people, thus becoming one of the best expressions of their feeling.

The oldest and the most monumental remaining example of Anglo-Saxon poetry is the epic *Beowulf*. This long poem consists of about three thousand lines and the story seems to have originated on the Continent. It may have been brought to England in the form of ballads by the Anglo-Saxons or later by Danish or Norwegian pirates. It takes on its present form during the seventh and the eighth century. While the poem itself is written in English, the hero and his adventures are placed in Denmark and southern Sweden. It relates, with the usual terse and unadorned power of really primitive poetry, how the hero Beowulf, coming over the sea to the relief of King Hrothgar, saved the king from a monster, Grendel, and his mother. Beowulf returns home in triumph, and much later receives the due reward of his valor by being made king of his own tribe. He meets his death while killing a fire-breathing dragon which has become a scourge to his people.

As he appears in the poem, Beowulf is an idealized Anglo-Saxon hero. He uses his strength in the most courageous way by going alone, even unarmed, against monsters. And he has completely fulfilled the pagan ideal of a heroic life. Through the depiction of Beowulf, the poem invokes the value of the warrior society. *Beowulf* also explores human relationships between the warrior and his lord and the relationship of kinsmen among the northern Germanic tribes during their later period of barbarism on the Continent and in England.

*Beowulf* is an epic, descending from its original oral form and passing down from generations of tribes. It is now generally agreed that it is a Christian who put the old materials of *Beowulf* into their present form. Therefore, we can find in the poem a curious mixing of pagan elements with Christian coloring though the pagan mood is more dominant on the whole. There are direct references to Biblical personages, Christian emphasis on moral behavior and on the importance of "future life" above earthly bliss.

The spirit of the poem is somber and grim. Great as the differences are, very much of this Anglo-Saxon pagan spirit persists centuries later in the English Puritans. The poetic form of *Beowulf* is that of virtually all Anglo-Saxon poetry down to the tenth century. The verse is unrhymed, not arranged in stanzas, and with often end-stopped lines. The language, compared to that of our own vastly more complex time, was undeveloped. The use of metaphors is perhaps the most conspicuous style of the Anglo-Saxon poetry. In *Beowulf*, there were a great number of picturesque compound words serving as indirect metaphors, technically called kennings. Thus the sea becomes "swan-road", "whale-path" or "seal-bath"; spear becomes "the slaughter-shaft"; fighting "hand-play"; the sword "the leavings of the hammer"; and a ship "the foamy-necked floater". These add much imaginative suggestiveness to the otherwise over-terse style, and often contribute to the grim irony which is another outstanding trait of the epic.

The Anglo-Saxons were for a long time fully occupied with the work of conquest and settlement. On the whole, Anglo-Saxon poetry exhibits the limitations of a culturally early age, but it manifests also a degree of power which gives Anglo-Saxon literature unquestionable superiority over that of any other European countries of the same period. Their first literature of any importance, aside from *Beowulf*, appears in the Northern Anglian kingdom of Northumbria (Yorkshire and Southern Scotland) in the seventh century. Forms of popular literature there include ingenious riddles in verse and melancholy poems. They deal with the hard and tragic things in life, the terrible power of ocean and storm, or the inexorableness and dreariness of death, banishment, and the separation of friends. In spirit, they are obscurely pagan and there may be some influence from the Celtic spirit. The greater part of the literature of the period, however, was Christian, produced in the monasteries or under their influence. The first Christian writer is believed to be Caedmon (pronounced Kadmon) who toward the end of the seventh century paraphrased in Anglo-Saxon verse some portions of the *Bible*. After Caedmon, comes Bede, not a poet but a monk of strong and beautiful character, a profound scholar who in nearly forty Latin prose works summarized most of the knowledge of his time. Bede earned his place as "Father of English History" with his *Ecclesiastical History* in which Caedmon's story is told. The other name to be remembered is that of Cynewulf (pronounced Kinnywulf), the author of some noble religious poetry, especially narratives dealing with Christ and Christian Apostles and heroes.

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After the Danes made complete conquest of Northumbria, the centre of culture and learning shifted from the north to the south in the 9th and the 10th centuries. In the Kingdom of Wessex, King Alfred was the most prominent figure. Alfred, who was one of the greatest of all English kings, first obtained and secured peace for his kingdom, and then labored unremittingly for learning. He himself translated from Latin into Anglo-Saxon half a dozen of the best informational manuals of his time, manuals of history, philosophy, and religion. He translated in a rather free way, which helped him to write in a natural style in English. His most enduring literary contribution, however, was the inspiration and possibly partial authorship of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a series of annals beginning with the Christian era and recording year by year down to two centuries and a half after Alfred's own death, the most important events of history, chiefly that of England. Most of the entries in the *Chronicle* are bare and brief, but sometimes, the accounts of Alfred's own splendid exploits, in particular, are in spirited narrative, occasionally in verse.

Due to historical reasons, the 10th century saw little achievement in literature. For in this period, the country was constantly in a state of war. Intellectual and literary life was neglected. However, very soon in 1066, England ceased to be Anglo-Saxon and became Norman-French, a change more radical and far-reaching than any which it has since undergone.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 ushered in a new era in the history of England. In language and literature, the most immediate result of the Conquest was to make of England a trilingual country, where Latin, French, and Anglo-Saxon were spoken separately side by side. Latin was the tongue of the Church and of scholars, and long continued to be the language of religious and learned writing down to the 16th century or even later. French was introduced by the Conquest as the language of the governing and upper social class, and during the next three or four centuries a considerable body of literature was produced in it. Anglo-Saxon, which we may now term English, remained inevitably as the language of the subject race, but English writing of the more formal sorts almost absolutely ceased for more than a century although ballads did circulate widely on the lips of the people. In the interval, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is the only important document. By the end of 14th century and of Chaucer's life, the English language finally gained absolute supremacy in the whole country. By then, it had undergone gradual but radical and extensive changes through absorbing French. Most significant for literature, the

fusion of the two languages brings about a metrical system which has provided the indispensable formal basis for English poetry. And English language in this transitional stage from Old English to Modern English has been known as Middle English.

We may virtually divide all the literature of the period, roughly, into the religious and the secular. The forms of the religious literature include songs, paraphrases of many parts of the *Bible*, lives of saints in both verse and prose, and various other miscellaneous works. Most important of all for their promise of the future, there were the germs of the modern drama in the form of the Church plays. In secular literature, the variety was greater than that in religious, including lyric poetry, social satires, chronicles and romances. The best known of lyric poetry in the period is *Cuckoo Song* of the thirteenth century. There were also political and satirical songs and miscellaneous poems of various sorts. Most numerous of all the prose works, perhaps, were the *Chronicles*, which were produced generally in the monasteries and chiefly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Some of the printed ones serve as the main basis for our knowledge of the events of the period.

The romance, especially the metrical romance, was the chief form of secular literature during the three centuries after 1066. The typical romances were the literary expression of chivalry composed by professional minstrels. Frankly abandoning in the main the world of reality, they sing of knightly exploits in war or other heroic deeds, and usually emphasize chivalric love. Artistically, the greater part of the romances is crude and immature. Their usual main or only purpose is to hold attention by successions of marvelous adventures, natural or supernatural. There is often a complete lack of structure; the characters are ordinarily mere types; and motivation is little considered. There were, however, exceptional authors, genuine artists, masters of meter and narrative, possessed by a true feeling for beauty. And in some of the romances the psychological analysis of love is so subtle and powerful that it may well be seen as the direct precursor of one of the main developments in modern fiction.

The romances may very roughly be grouped into four great classes. First are those derived from the earlier French epics, concerning the military exploits of Charlemagne and his twelve peers. Second are the romances which retell the great stories of classical antiquity, mainly the achievements of Alexander the Great and the tragic fortunes of Troy. Third come the Arthurian romances, and fourth those scattering miscellaneous ones which do not belong to the other classes, dealing,

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most of them, with native English heroes.

Of all the romances the Arthurian are by far the most important. For centuries Arthur was taken up and handled in various fashions by numerous romancers in Latin and French. Arthurian story is told for the first time in native English in *Brut* (Chronicle) at about the year 1200 by Layamon, who was a humble parish priest in Worcestershire. His thirty-two thousand half-lines, in which he imperfectly follows the Anglo-Saxon alliterative meter, are rather crude. In language also the poem is almost purely Saxon with occasional application of the French device of rime.

Based on traditions of British history, the Arthurian romances belong peculiarly to English literature, but they have assumed a very prominent place in the literature of the whole western world. Rich in varied characters and incidents to which a universal significance could be attached, in their own time they were the most popular works of their class. And living on vigorously after the others were forgotten, they have continued to form one of the chief quarries of literary material and one of the chief sources of inspiration for modern poets and romancers.

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is perhaps the most outstanding single romance on the Arthurian legend and the best of the Middle English romances. It is a brief and carefully constructed work of an unknown but very real poetic artist, who was an almost exact contemporary of Chaucer. The story consists of two old folk-tales finely united in the form of an Arthurian romance. The book outlines an adventure of Sir Gawain, a knight of King Arthur's Round Table. In the tale, Sir Gawain accepts a challenge from a mysterious warrior who is the tallest on earth, clothed all in green and riding a green horse. The "Green Knight" offers to allow anyone brave enough to strike him with his axe and the challenger will receive a return blow "within a twelve-month and a day". Gawain accepts, and beheads him in one blow, only to have the Green Knight stand up, pick up his head, and remind Gawain to meet him at the appointed time. Gawain went through all kinds of hardships on his way to the Green Chapel, finally found the Green Knight and accepted his challenge with courage. The story of Gawain's struggle to meet the appointment and his adventures along the way demonstrate the spirit of chivalry and loyalty. The plot and motif of the green man's decapitation originate in very ancient folklore. And the poet employed them to study how successfully Gawain maintains Christian ideals under unusual pressure. The dialect is that of the Northwest Midland, the same border region between England and Wales from



which came also Laghamon. Like many other medieval writings, this one is preserved by mere chance in a single manuscript, which contains also three slightly shorter religious poems, all possibly by the same author as the romance.

Of the century and a half, from 1350 to 1500, the most important part for literature was the first fifty years, which constitutes the age of Chaucer. During the reign of Edward III in the middle of the 15th century, the country as a whole was really increasing in prosperity, but the oppressiveness of the feudal system was apparent and abuses in society, state and church were almost intolerable. One of the earliest literary works of the period, however, was uninfluenced by these social and moral problems. This is the highly entertaining *Voyage and Travels of Sir John Mandeville* written in 1370, and in the French language. Its tales are narrated with skillful verisimilitude and still strongly hold the reader's interest even if they no longer command belief. In style the English versions reflect the almost universal medieval uncertainty of sentence structure. Nevertheless, they are straight forward and clear; and the book is notable as the first example in English after the Norman Conquest of prose used not for religious edification but for amusement. Mandeville, however, is a very minor figure when compared with his great contemporaries, especially with the chief of them, Geoffrey Chaucer.

Chaucer was born into a middle class family in 1338. He was the first important author who was born and lived in London, which with him becomes the center of English literature. There remains only very fragmentary information about his life. While still in his teens, Geoffrey became a page in the service of one of the great aristocratic households and soon won favor as a fluent story-teller. This acquainted him with the seamy as well as the brilliant side of courtly life. In 1359 he was in the campaign in France and was taken prisoner. After his release, he was transferred to the king's own service, where about 1368 he was promoted to the rank of esquire at the age of thirty. His practical sagacity and knowledge of men had been recognized, for from this time on he held important public positions. He was often sent to the Continent on diplomatic missions; and for eleven years he was in charge of the London customs. In 1386 he was a Member of Parliament, knight of the shire for Kent, but also in that year he lost all his offices at the overthrow of the faction of his patron. Chaucer's party and himself were soon restored to power, but he appeared often to have been poor and in need during the remaining dozens of years. Dying suddenly in 1400, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, the first of the men of letters to be laid in the nook which has since become the Poets' Corner.