普通高等教育“十一五”国家级规划教材

新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材(修订版)

总主编　戴炜栋

文学导论

An Introduction to Literature

主编 / 杨金才　王海萌

上海外语教育出版社
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序 言

长期以来，英语专业本科英美文学课的教师一向注重文学史和选读教材的编写，出版了一系列优秀的英美文学教材。然而适合本科英语教学且具有一定课堂教学操作性的文学导论教材尚不多见，这是编者近年来在英语文学教学实践中的困惑和切身体会。事实上，这样一部教材不仅显得重要，而且也是英语专业学生在接触英语国家国别文学之前必须了解的文学基本常识入门书。学习者在进入丰富的英语文学殿堂之前需要了解和熟悉英语文学所具有的文学要素、文学流派、文学原理和文学批评等知识，而如此丰厚的知识体系不可能在普通的英美文学史或英美文学选读课教学中得以系统灌输。为了弥补这一缺憾，我们经过四五年的调查研究和课程教学实践，精心策划了“文学导论”这一课件，并在此基础上不断补充和完善教学内容。这本题为《文学导论》（*Introduction to Literature*）的教材就是该课件拓展的成果，现由上海外语教育出版社出版。

《文学导论》由小说、诗歌、戏剧、文论和附录组成。全书以主要的三类文学体裁，即小说、诗歌、戏剧的特征、要素和流派为主线，精选经典作家的代表作品，通过对文本及具体要素的分析评论，使学习者掌握鉴赏、分析文学作品的必要技巧。尤为重要的是，该教材希望通过对20世纪文学理论的简明介绍，进一步培养学生的文学理论意识。为此，我们在作品评论中有意识地采用相关理论视角，以期提高学生对具体文学作品的鉴赏力。

小说和诗歌两个单元就主要的文学要素展开讨论。引论部分简要说明体裁的定义、特征、要素、类型及发展史。由于小说和诗歌的部分要素有所重叠，我们在每个单元选择了最能代表该体裁的文学要素加以考察。每一小节由“要素介绍”、“文学作品选读”、“作品评论”、“要素分析”和“课后讨论”五个部分构成。“要素介绍”力求扼要地阐明概念、术语等基本知识，为分析作品作准备。由于篇幅所限，我们基本上放弃了长篇小说或长诗，而是以短篇小说或篇幅适当的诗作为分析对象，所

有选读作品都是完整的文本。为了提高学生的学习兴趣，展示英语文学的多样性，我们并未局限于英美作家的作品，而是有目的地兼选了加拿大作家Margaret Atwood和意大利作家Luigi Pirandello的作品。在选材时我们特别关注被忽视但又特别具有阐释意义的经典作家作品，如D. H. Lawrence的"Tickets, Please"等。在同一单元里我们还会特意安排两篇主题类似的作品，如Lawrence的"Tickets, Please"与Atwood的"Rape Fantasies"、Ernest Hemingway的"In Another Country"与Pirandello的"War"。具体的文本分析可以帮助学生寻找两者在立场、观点、风格等方面的差异，进而深化其对作品主题的认识和感受文学潜在的魅力。在选材时我们也特别关注文学多面手，例如我们同时选取了Atwood的小说和诗歌，还有戏剧家Pirandello的诗歌。关于附于作品之后的文学评论和要素分析，我们主要考虑相关评论家的评论文章，可以说是一家或几家之言，具体来源都附在参考书目中，以便教师和学生查找。编写文学评论或要素分析的目的还在于启发学生阅读，引导他们进一步思考文学思想的多元性和复杂性。因此，课后的讨论或写作思考题值得仔细斟酌，相信对问题的开放性讨论可以弥补所选评论中出现的种种偏颇与不足。

戏剧单元以戏剧流派为线索贯穿始终。引论仍是对戏剧概念、特征、要素、类型及发展史的描述。由于戏剧作品数量繁多，我们倾向于选择各戏剧流派中最具代表性的名家名作，囊括了古希腊、文艺复兴时期、19世纪、20世纪初和20世纪下半叶各阶段的五部经典作品或选段。考虑到莎士比亚的悲剧选者甚多，我们转而选取了其著名的喜剧*A Midsummer Night's Dream*。受限于篇幅，我们不得不将Sophocles的*Antigonê*放进补充阅读栏目。与小说诗歌单元一样，每篇作品之后都附有指导性的文学评论及思考题，以便帮助教师组织课堂讨论、设计演出或布置课外作业。所有选择的剧本都历经多次上演，可以找到相关的音影资料配合具体教学。

以上三个单元的每篇作品均有注释，解决了一些语言难点和文化背景上的疑惑。另附上作家的图片、生平简介、创作背景及与主题相关的名言，旨在深化学生对作家作品的了解，多方面获益。值得关注的是，每单元最后的评论和补充阅读也不乏特色。每一个评论小节都包含两篇专家关于本单元选文的完整评论，它们的立场与附于选文后的简要评论不尽相同。学生不但可以从中学习写作文学评论的方法和研究论文写作的体例，而且还能就如何多角度看问题作进一步的思考。补充阅读后面附上一篇选文和一篇学生利用本单元所介绍的文学要素等知识对文本进行解读的范文，旨在为学生写作论文、分析问题提供示范。

文论单元和戏剧单元类似，也是由引论及各文论流派组成。引论重在梳理20世纪各文学理论之间的关系和结构版图，使教师能够形象地解释文论发展的脉络，理清各流派的着眼点。在内容上，我们重点选择了

常用的马克思主义、精神分析、女性主义和后殖民批评四种文论。思考题主要帮助学生深入认识每一种文论的局限与不足，并使其真正理解和运用该文论给人启示的理论视角及阐释文学或文化现象的方法。

附录部分包括文学术语汇编、文学背景资料、学术论文范文、参考书目以及对进一步学习有帮助的网站介绍等。所列术语汇编力求用简明的语言对教材中提到的重要文学术语进行定义、总结。由于本书并未侧重文学史的介绍，所有与文学运动相关的知识均被纳入文学背景资料范围，以历时顺序分国别进行归纳。若将该节内容连贯起来，可以说是一部简明的英美文学史。考虑到学生对学术论文体例非常陌生，我们特意选编了两篇用MLA格式写就的学术论文，主要展示引用小说、诗歌原文的具体方法以及参考文献制作与注释的标注方式。本教材的参考文献包括在编著过程中引用参考的书目和网站资源。所列进一步参考网站为对学习文学有益的门户网站，它们对文学概念、作品、文学史、文学评论和学术论文写作方法均有详细介绍。

在编写过程中，我们参考了大量国内外学术著作，在此向相关作者及出版社表示由衷的谢意。我们更要感谢上海外语教育出版社领导的大力支持和鼓励，尤其是谢宇女士。没有她的敦促，这部教材不可能如期付梓。还特别值得一提的是李锋博士和龚璇博士，他们为教材的编写也做了大量准备工作。由于编者水平有限，教材中难免舛误和不足之处，敬请广大读者批评指正。

编者

2009年9月1日

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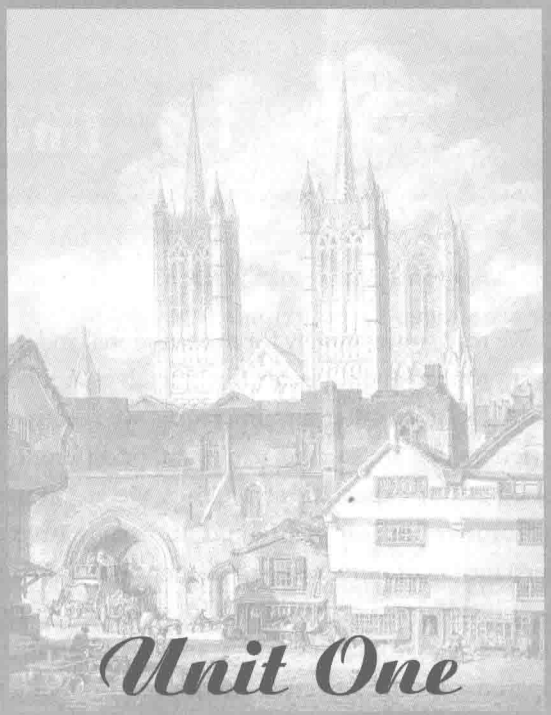
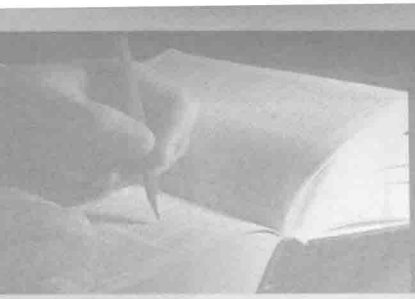


Unit One

Fiction



1.1 Understanding Fiction

We read stories largely for the emotional and intellectual pleasures they render us. Sometimes we want to read about people like ourselves, or about familiar and agreeable places, experiences, and ideas. Under other circumstances we read in order to escape from the reality and have the experiences that are strange, irrelevant, or different. Surprised by an unexpected turn of events or satisfied as our expectations are met, we are drawn into the imaginative worlds. Fiction, as a significant reflection of life and an imaginative extension of its possibilities, enlarges our understanding of ourselves and deepens our appreciation of life.

"**Fiction**" is a general term for invented stories. Now it is usually applied to novels, short stories, novellas, romances, fables, and other narrative works in prose. Its adjective form "fictional," compared with the adjective "fictitious" implying the unfavorable sense of falsehood, is more neutral as it possesses a positive sense closer to "imaginative" or "inventive."

In the realm of fiction the **novel** is the most important type due to its greater openness and flexibility. As a literary form quite influential in the modern time, the novel has taken the place of its narrative predecessors including epic and romance. Different from the marvels of romance or epic, the novel often describes a secular world with more sense of "reality." Generally, the novel can be categorized around particular kinds of character (the Künstlerroman, the spy novel, the Bildungsroman), setting (the historical novel, the campus novel), plot (the detective novel), or structure (the epistolary novel, the picaresque novel). The greater length distinguishes novels from short stories and novellas. Although there is no established minimum length for a novel, it is often long enough to be published in an independent edition, which is not the case of short stories and novellas. Such adequate length permits the novel a fuller and subtler development of characters, plots, and even the change of settings.

Short stories have their origins in oral story-telling traditions and the prose anecdote. The ancient forms comprising parables, fables, and tales are often instructive by making religious or spiritual points. The realistic short stories full of detailed representation of everyday life were popular in early-nineteenth-century magazines and often led to fame and novel-length projects for their authors. Some modern writers, however, try to break away from conventions and endeavor to mix features of early story forms with realistic modes. Shifting back and forth between realistic and fantastic worlds, these storytellers have discovered new ways to delineate human experiences powerfully.

The **short novel**, sometimes called **novella**, is a written, fictional, prose narrative longer than a short story but shorter than a novel. Although the novella is a common literary genre in several European languages, it is less common in English. The short novel shares characteristics with both the short story and the novel. Like the short story, the short novel depends upon glimpses

of understanding and quick turns of action to solidify theme or reveal character. Yet the relatively longer length allows the novella a slower unfolding of characters and ideas. Though it is difficult for the novella to achieve the novel's panoramic sweep, the advantages of the genre lie in a consistency of style and focus, as well as a concentration and compression of effect. Henry James has called it the "blessed" form, and Vladimir Nabokov has praised it as "intrinsically artistic" "by diminishing large things and enlarging small ones."

The understanding of fiction usually comprises three steps: experience, interpretation, and evaluation. In responding to a work, we bring our personal and collective experience to our reading. Such subjective, emotional, and impressionistic kind of response illustrates what we mean by the experience of fiction. As an intellectual counterpart to our emotional experience, interpretation makes sense of the work's implied meanings. Finally, evaluation involves judgments of the quality as well as the cultural, social, and moral values the work displays. Grounded in interpretation, evaluation is related with our emotional experiences.

As is shown, experience and evaluation are somewhat subjective. For academic learners, interpretation is cherished for its relative objectivity. Then how do we develop an ability to interpret fiction with competence and confidence? One way is to become familiar with its basic elements or characteristics. In interpreting fiction, we largely rely on analysis of such elements as plot, structure, character, setting, point of view, theme, style, irony and symbol.

Plot is the pattern of events and situations in a narrative work. It keeps us interested and turning pages to find out what will happen next. Different from the story that indicates the "raw material" of events, the plot is the selected version of events in a certain order or duration. An effective plot usually follows the mode of cause and effect between incidents. Many fictional plots turn on a conflict, or struggle between opposing forces, which is usually resolved at the end of the story. Therefore, a story's **structure** can be examined in relation to its plot. In examining structure, we look for patterns, for the shape that the story as a whole possesses. If plot is the sequence of unfolding action, structure is the design or form of the completed action. Plot and structure together reveal aspects of the story's artistic design. **Character** is the personage portrayed in the fiction. Usually characters possess particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities embodied by their words and actions. We approach them in the same way we approach people. We have to observe their actions, listen to their speech, and notice how they relate to other characters and how other characters respond to them, especially to what they say about each other. In analyzing characters' relationships, we relate one act, one speech, one physical detail to another until we understand the characters. Sometimes animals or even inanimate things may act as characters, but they are no more than the extension of human beings. **Setting** includes the time, place, and environment in the story. It is the context in which the events take place and the plot evolves. More than a simple backdrop for action, setting provides a historical and cultural context that enhances our understanding of the characters. Sometimes setting also symbolizes the emotional state of the characters. For instance, a contrast between an enclosed room and the world outside may indicate a character's subjugation and his desire for freedom. **Point of view** is the position from which the events seem to be observed and presented to the reader. It involves the author's decisions about who is to tell the story and how it is to be told. The chief distinction is usually

made between first-person narratives and third-person narratives, and some modern authors employ multiple point of view, in which the events are presented from the vantage-points of two or more characters. A story's **theme** is its main idea or point formulated as a generalization. It is often related to the other elements of fiction more as consequence than as a parallel element. In fiction theme is rarely presented and readers have to abstract it from the details and explain what these basic elements collectively suggest. Theme is different from subject, which means what the story is generally about. For example, that Pirandello's "War" is about parents and children is more a statement of subject than of theme. To pinpoint the theme we need to explain what the story implies about parents and children. It is not wise to think of theme as hidden somewhere beneath the surface of the story; instead it is better to be understood as the implied significance of the story's details. Any statement of theme is valid to the extent that it accounts for the details of elements. We have to understand that there are multiple ways to state a story's theme, but any statement is a simplified version because it inevitably excludes some dimensions of the story. **Style** is known as the verbal identity of the writer. Each author distinguishes himself by his own way of choosing words and arranging them. Diction, syntax, and the use of figures of speech help to create his face and voice. Two additional facets of fictional works are **irony** and **symbol**. While not as pervasive as elements such as plot and character, irony and symbol are tremendously important. If we cannot perceive a writer's ironic intentions, we may not only misconstrue a particular story, but also interpret it as suggesting the opposite of what it actually is intended to mean. And if we overlook a story's symbols, we may underestimate its achievement and oversimplify its significance. All in all, we discuss elements separately only to highlight their specific features. As a matter of fact, fiction is an organic whole, and each element is related to other elements to convey feeling and meaning.

As a literary type, fiction has undergone years of development and variation. Short stories dated back to oral traditions which produced epics such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The most famous fables were *Aesop's Fables*. Anecdotes, first popular under the Roman Empire, remained welcome well into the eighteenth century. In Europe, the oral story-telling tradition began to develop into written stories in the early fourteenth century, most notably with Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The mid-seventeenth century in France saw the development of a refined short novel, the "nouvelle," by such authors as Madame de Lafayette. It is wildly recognized that the publication of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote de la Mancha* in 1605 announced the appearance of the first true novel. The British novel originated from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). It was under the influence of a new kind of commercial society that novels emerged reporting the experiences of the middle-class groups and serving as a mirror in which readers found their own dilemmas. No wonder, early novels tended to be secular. In the late eighteenth century an emotionally extravagant kind named sentimental novel became popular. These novels repeatedly involved tearful scenes and exhibited close associations between virtue and sensibility. Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) were typical in this regard. Besides, Walter Scott's historical novels enjoyed reputation for their association of romantic atmosphere with realistic depictions of history and common people's lives. Scott was regarded as a transitional figure who moved from

romanticism to realism and was more concerned with social and moral problems.

The nineteenth century was an age of conversion from a traditional pre-modern state to a modern industrial society. History witnessed a disintegration of traditional local communities and a rise of industrial towns. Most Victorian novels were realistic, recording the main grounds of hope and uneasiness which Victorians felt, the modes of thought and behavior they followed, and the standards of value they held. The outstanding Victorian novelists include Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, William Thackeray, and Elizabeth Gaskell. Different from Victorian Britain, early nineteenth-century America was preoccupied with Idealism and independence. The nation experienced a shift from the anxious demand for a European-style tradition to a self-assured revival of spiritual intelligence and cultural autonomy. Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville all made explorations of American life. The first examples of the short stories in the United States were Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle* (1819) and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1842). In the late nineteenth century, the growth of print magazines and journals created a strong demand for short fiction. At the same time, the first literary theories about the short story appeared. A widely known one was Edgar Allan Poe's *The Philosophy of Composition* (1846). From 1865 on, the rules of American social action changed due to material expansion. The dominant characteristic became the growth and concentration of capital. Like their British contemporaries, Americans experienced an oppressive consciousness of displacement and separation. Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Theodore Dreiser were known for their realistic portrayal of the industrial progress and heightened materialism.

At the turn of the twentieth century, there arose a more deliberate kind of realism called naturalism which aimed to provide a precise description of actual circumstances of human life in minute details. As an extension of realism, naturalism placed more emphasis on the helplessness and insignificance of man in face of the cold and hostile world. Stephen Crane and Jack London were its spokesmen. Then a trend far more *avant-garde* in literary practice came on stage as a revolt against conventional realism. Inspired by new ideas in anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political theory, and psychoanalysis, modernist writers demonstrated a radical spirit free from bourgeois values. In fiction, the established chronological development was challenged by Joseph Conrad and William Faulkner, while James Joyce and Virginia Woolf attempted stream-of-consciousness styles. Their favored techniques included juxtaposition and multiple point of view, and the usual theme was about a sense of urban cultural dislocation.

The demand for quality short stories hit its peak in the mid-twentieth century, when in 1952 *Life* magazine published Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Since then, the number of commercial magazines that publish short stories has declined. After World War II, postmodernism has turned up when the Western morale is in crisis. Whether it is a reaction against or a continuation of modernism is still open to debate, and even the definition itself is controversial because of its obscurity, yet it is at least clear that postmodernism tries to overthrow the modernist elitism and carries the experimentation in technique to the extreme. While a modernist novelist would try to wrest a meaning from the world through myth, symbol, or formal complexity, the postmodernist

greets the absurd or meaningless confusion of contemporary existence, favoring "depthless" works of pastiche, parody, or aleatory disconnection. Postmodern techniques are often found in the novels of Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Vladimir Nabokov, William S. Burroughs, and Angela Carter. Recently short stories have also found a new life online, in publications, collections, and blogs.

The above-mentioned linear development may offer a panoramic view of fiction for beginners. Nevertheless, we have to be aware that such division of the literary development is based on common features like thematic concerns, writing styles, and historical periods. The chronological classification never indicates the replacement of the former by the latter. Rather, different schools often coexist in an interconnected and overlapping way. A deeper insight into this subject will undoubtedly entail far more efforts.

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