

同濟大學美國文學系列教材

An Introduction to American Literature

第一冊

# 美国文学入门

短篇小说

李枝盛 编著



同濟大學出版社  
TONGJI UNIVERSITY PRESS

高等学校美国文学系列教材

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An Introduction to American Literature

第一册 (短篇小说)

Vol. 1 (Short Story)

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## 内容提要

本书是《美国文学入门》系列教材的第一册“短篇小说”部分,是为适应地方高校快速发展而编写的,本册共有6个单元一个附录。每单元包括3大部分:1.文学发展概况;2.小说要素学习;3.名家短篇欣赏。各部分后均有相应的巩固、提高练习(包括问答、词汇、写作和初步研究)。编写本书旨在使学生通过系列教材的学习,掌握美国文学发展的脉络、学会欣赏不同体裁的文学作品,全面提高文学、文化素养和综合使用语言的能力,为今后的进一步深造打下基础。

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## 美国文学入门

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## 编写说明

### 1. 编写宗旨

本书是《美国文学入门》系列教材的第一册“短篇小说”(随后即将推出“诗歌”、“戏剧”分册)部分,是为适应地方高校快速发展而编写的,旨在使学生通过系列教材的学习,掌握美国文学发展的脉络、学会欣赏不同体裁的文学作品,全面提高文学、文化素养和综合使用语言的能力,为今后的进一步深造打下基础。

### 2. 本书框架

全套教材共分3册。每册配有相应的教师参考书(待出)。

本册共有6个单元一个附录。每单元由下列3部分组成:

- 1) 文学发展概况;
- 2) 小说要素学习;
- 3) 名家短篇欣赏;

以上各部分均有相应的巩固、提高练习(包括问答、词汇、写作和初步研究)。

### 3. 使用建议

本书各单元之间是一个有机整体,但为了方便教学,每个单元相对独立,老师课前布置预习,课上检查并重点讲授第3部分和相应的巩固、提高练习,但主要由老师根据课时,具体情况灵活变通。

### 4. 本书特色

无论是从事文学教学的老师还是学习文学的学生都清楚,不同文化背景之间的人们相互理解最有效的方法就是通过语言学习。语言就是人们了解对方的窗口,或者说是进入对方世界的通道。因此,注重语言学习是本书的特色之一。

文学是文化的重要成分。本书邀请您和我们一道去那陌生的世界旅行,聆听人们在不同文化中的对话,探索他们那不为我们熟悉的传统,品评人际关系的高下,为我们日益多元化、多文化的社会成员之间更好地互相理解提供参照。注重文化的内涵是本教材的又一特色。书的每章、每个作家都以一段名言开头,目的也正在于此。

文学是一面镜子,它能使我们更好地认识自己并进而对所见所闻有更好的领悟。当我们读到书中的人物面临某种挑战时,或许能让我们从中受到启发,从而促使我们更积极地去应对自己面前的坎坷际遇。因此,文学不仅帮助人们认识客观世界,它也能使我们更好地内省。如果读者能悟出编者的这一良苦用心,它的又一特色也就不言而喻了。

而本书的最大特色,在于它的彩线串珠式的编排体例。每一单元以一个时期的文学发展脉络为主线,贯之以短篇小说构成要素、名家精品和思考练习,宛如红线串着粒粒珍珠,琳琅满目,读者每读一章都是享受,感到一卷在握,爱不释手。

当然,这是我们第一次尝试编撰这样的系列教材,无论经验与学识都难臻完美。有位叫 Alexander Pope 的 18 世纪英国诗人说:

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,  
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.

“谁都别想读到一篇完美无暇之杰作,  
过去没有,现在没有,将来也一样没有。”

编者并非想用这句话来为自己书中的瑕疵开脱。相反,书中的错讹失当之处自知难免,编者如能祈盼到广大读者的不吝赐教,将不胜感激。

李枝盛  
2007 年 4 月 30 日

## Preface

For more than thousand years, through drawing, sculpture, pantomime, dance, and language, human beings have told stories. The first stories were probably communicated through cave paintings, followed shortly by the pantomime and dance reenactments of tribal triumphs such as a successful hunt. An ancient Egyptian papyrus notes that the sons of the great pharaoh Cheops amused their father by telling him stories. In nearly all cultures a body of myths deals with such topics as the creation of the world, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, are long poems comprised of episodes similar in length to short stories and containing the legendary exploits of heroic Greek and Trojan superheroes. The parables of the Bible are essentially short or short-short stories, so, too, are fairy tales, fables, and folktales.

A story can be as simple as a joke or an anecdote or as a short novel. If you think about it for a moment, your daily conversations are filled with stories, long and short, true or fictional. The stories you *tell* allow you to share your experiences with others, perhaps to instruct, entertain, frighten, or inspire them. The stories you *hear* enable you to learn about people and places different from you and yours and to compare your life with that of others.

What are short stories? And why do we human beings respond so eagerly to them? The answer to the second question is simple. Young or old, we want to know the answer to this question: "What happens next?" The answer to the first can also be simple; a short story is a short narrative. If it contains some five hundred words, it is usually categorized as a short-short story. If its length reaches fifteen thousands words, it may be considered a novella, a short novel.

The real answer to that first question, however, is not as simple as total word length. Edgar Allan Poe, often credited with creating the modern short story, described it as "a short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal." As a definition, that might be a good beginning, but it is incomplete. It does begin to encompass the sophistication of most short stories. The majority of—and some say the best—short stories:

- are "*consciously made*." Many story ideas come from events in the author's life or from the pages of the daily newspaper. Instead of simply retelling what occurred, skillful writers often rearrange the chronology, change or combine characters, or move or invent setting—all to achieve some desired end.

- *have a formal structure.* The story has a form—a beginning, middle, and end.
- *exhibit causality.* The establishment of causes and effects reveals why characters act as they do and what the results of their actions are.
- *develop and end inevitably.* All actions, the happenings or the series of events in a story, should seem inevitable. This is particularly true of the ending.
- *establish an atmosphere.* The mood of a short story should complement the characters and their actions.

Poe recognized his description was incomplete. Writing in 1847, he asserted that the “skillful artist” does not fashion “his thoughts to accommodate his incidents, but having deliberately conceived a certain *single effect* to be wrought, he then invents such incidents, he then combines such events, and discusses them in such a tone as may best serve him in establishing this preconceived effect.”

Stories can simultaneously convey experiences both individual and universal. Universal experiences are those that would be familiar to people from any period of time and in any country. They include being part of a family, growing up, finding one’s place in the world, falling in love, overcoming obstacles, and / or accepting success or failure. Storytellers particularize experiences by creating characters that are specific, unique individuals. Storytellers dramatize a concrete struggle that their fictional characters encounter, then choose the resolution that would logically occur to those particular characters. The result is a narrative whose individual characters engage your interest and whose experiences often parallel your own. A skillful storyteller enables you to identify with one or more characters and to become concerned about their situation, intrigued by their actions, and perhaps instructed by the resolution of their conflicts.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOK

In putting together this book, we have five primary goals:

- to enable you to learn about the basic elements of fiction and how these elements contribute to the creation of an artistic whole.
- to acquaint you with the brief history of the American literature and the most famous authors in it.
- to promote your awareness of the cultures represented by these writers.
- to provide you with an opportunity to apply your knowledge to the oral and written analysis of short fiction, and solidify your foundation for further study.
- to encourage you to respond to literature on both an emotional and an intellectual level.



## FEATURES OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into six major sections. Each of the first five chapters focuses on one of the elements of fiction: plot, setting, character, theme, point of view and mood. The sixth chapter is a showcase, presenting two famous stories for students to appreciate them as a whole—the total effect. A glossary of literary terms follows the last chapter.

**Each chapter features the following elements:**

- **Discussion of Literary Elements.** Each of the first five chapters begins with a brief introduction on the development of the American fictions followed by a general discussion of the featured element. Pertinent literary terms appear in boldface type, followed by definitions.
- **Biographical Sketch.** Preceding each of the stories is a short biography of the author that includes relevant personal data as well as the titles and publication dates of important works. The sketch concludes with questions or suggestions a reader should consider while reading the story.
- **Footnotes.** Some readers see the footnoting of a work as an annoying disruption of the reading process. We disagree. Our experience suggests that many readers find it even more annoying to wonder about a word, a reference, or a foreign phrase. We have included a footnote for something that might impede a reader's ability to understand the meaning or nuance in a story.
- **Assignments.** After each story we provide some kinds of exercises (including synonym, polysemy, etc.) to help the students have a better understanding of the story. **The discussion questions** following each story emphasize the element focused on in the chapter but are not limited to it. They also highlight important issues in the stories. **Topics for writing.** Some suggested writing topics follow the discussion questions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the kind encouragement from my fellow teachers and my daughter and thorough professionalism of the professors from the Education Department of P. R. C. and Jiangxi Science and Technology Publishing House, and to thank the writers represented in this volume whose insights illuminate the human condition.



# A Letter to Students

People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born and reborn in contact with other men and women, with men and women of another culture, another creed, another race. If we do not recognize our humanity in others, we will not recognize it in ourselves.

Carlos Fuentes

As teachers and students of literature, we believe that one of the most effective ways to understand people of other cultures, creeds, or races is through language; a person's words are the windows through which we gain access to his or her world. In this anthology, we invite you to travel with us to worlds beyond your own, to engage in a conversation among cultures, to explore unfamiliar traditions, and to evaluate human relationships in an attempt to understand better the meanings of community in our own pluralistic society and the multicultural society of the twenty-first century.

We hope that as you listen to these voices, past and present, you will feel compelled to enter the conversation, to add your own voice and your own words. As you engage in dialogue with the selections, both in writing and discussion with your fellow students, you will experiment with new ways of looking at yourself, enlarging the windows from which you are viewing the world. The journey we invite you to share will be challenging—many of the voices, both classical and contemporary, expect you to respond.

As you converse with the voices, both old and new, in this anthology, you will travel into uncharted territories, to real and imagined worlds where many of the familiar guideposts will no longer apply. But this is as it should be. Preparation for the global village of the twenty-first century requires your generation to sharpen its

definition of an educated person. By adding your voice to the cultural conversations in this anthology, you will begin that process, perhaps leaving the familiar in favor of the unfamiliar.

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Reading enables us to see with the keenest eyes, hear with the finest ears, and listen to the sweetest voices of all times.

—James Russell Lowell

## CHAPTER 1 Romanticism and the Beginning(1789-1850)

### Part 1 Introduction

Although the short story as we know it today springs from a tradition buried in the distant past, it first appeared as a distinctive literary form in the United States about two centuries ago at a time when the young nation was becoming culturally self-conscious. In 1815, as the second war against England ended, Americans could boast of their military and political achievements and look forward confidently to a great economic future for their country, but their pride in these things was a bit dampened by the feeling that they had as yet no independent literary tradition. Ever since the Revolution, the patriotic desire to establish a native literature had spurred many an American into energetic, though largely amateurish writing of poetry, drama, and fiction. Yet, as late as 1820, their failure to impress foreign travelers and critics, who jeered at their lack of artistic development, could be summed up in Sydney Smith's contemptuous wisecrack: "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?" Significantly, the short story gave the first effective response to this paltry question, for Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book* (1820) proved that American writers could produce a literature that would command respect abroad.

A single book, however, even though a classic, does not make a literature. Long after 1820, the United States, while developing rapidly in other fields, continued to lag culturally behind Europe, its literature overshadowed by England's. To cut away its literary dependence upon England was especially difficult, first because Americans naturally kept on reading English books, and second because they had little time or monetary incentive to write many of their own, as both book publishers and magazinists filled their pages with the more popular English literary works (which they could pirate freely!) and often ignored the prior claims of American writers whom they would have had to pay. Nevertheless, during the brief period between 1820 and the 1850s, the short story flourished in America despite the nation's predominantly agrarian make-up; with no large cities and rural population

thinly scattered over a million square miles, Americans founded hundreds of literary periodicals, many of them sincerely dedicated to bringing the writings of their fellow citizens before the public. Among the most noteworthy of these were the *North American Review*, *Knickerbocker Magazine*, *Graham's*, and *Southern Literary Messenger*. Next to poetry, short fiction was perhaps most adaptable to magazine publication, and, as it quickly proved to be the most popular as well, the short story developed as a distinctive art form with extraordinary rapidity. By the 1850s, thousands of short stories had been written and published in America, and the technique of the short story had been raised to the highest level of nineteenth-century literary art.

### Types of Magazine Short Fiction Before 1820

Magazines began appearing in the Colonies as early as the 1740s, and the people who published them quickly took advantage of the opportunity to imitate popular English journals by borrowing the kinds of literary fare that English readers admired. Often without bothering to acknowledge their sources, many of the earliest American magazines simply reprinted excerpts from or amateurish imitations of the works of leading English writers such as Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, Ben Jonson, and Laurence Sterne. By 1800, more than one hundred American magazines had sprung up, most of them surviving only a year or two, but leaving behind in their files nearly 500 pieces of short fiction; and these numbers increased dramatically during the next few decades as more and more magazines appeared on the scene. Lacking fixed principles of content, composition, and form, the earliest pieces of short fiction published in American magazines were usually anonymous adaptations of tales or anecdotes casually lifted from British or Continental magazines without reference to their authorship or point of origin. Many of these early narratives were mere anecdotal fragments such as sentimental sketches of girls gone astray or comic parodies or skits involving Indian or black dialogue. But many others were narratives of six to ten pages and more, revealing some effort to achieve individuality in composition, structure, and style. Since most of them are anonymous, it is almost impossible to determine whether any were original tales written by Americans; yet the presence in them of many native touches of character, setting, and speech, as well as local or regional references, suggests that a sizable proportion of these tales were of native American origin.

Whatever their sources, the growing numbers of these tales toward the end of the eighteenth century reveal an ironic paradox: on one hand obviously, there is the increasing popular appeal of fiction; on the other hand, a vociferous clamor against it from pulpit and public rostrum. The make-up of this fiction—its themes, struc-

ture, tone, and emphasis-reflected the actions, interests, and aspirations, as well as the doubts and fears, the manners and morals, of a self-conscious, democratic society, a society emerging from its Puritan, colonial work ethic and responding to the winds of change both at home and abroad. Adjusting to new conditions and problems, Americans were seeking their identity as a nation in the very process of dramatizing their behavior under the guise of a moralistic self-examination; and the earliest tales thus fulfilled their purpose simply by appealing to an unsophisticated reading public eager to be amused, instructed, preached to, shocked, or titillated. Ironically, therefore, the more vigorously some Americans condemned fiction as a debaucher of youth and a waste of time, the more it was published and read, and the more it seemed to echo the tones of its harshest critics!

The prevailing movement in European literature at this time was the romantic revival, a movement in thought and expression embracing a sense of newness and wonder, which Americans found particularly appealing and quickly turned to their own uses. Though difficult to define precisely, Romanticism was characterized by: (1) an ardent interest in the emotions and the imagination and an awareness of the mystery, ecstasy, and yearning locked up in the human heart; (2) a fondness for the picturesque, exotic, and sensational manifestations of these feelings; (3) a belief in the greater goodness of simple, unspoiled humanity, and a humanitarian sympathy for the joys and sorrows of the common man; (4) a marked enthusiasm for external nature, the wilder and more primitive the better, since many romantics tended to assume that nature in its pristine state taught unmistakable lessons of wisdom, beauty, and truth; (5) a fascination for remote times and places that possessed exotic charms in the form of picturesque legends, superstitions, and adventures; and (6) a tendency to manipulate all these materials so as to idealize both nature and human nature without too much regard for "truth to life". Romanticism, in short, implied a search for new realms of experience, a thirst for novelty, and a desire to live intensely.

In their efforts to dramatize such freewheeling urges as these and, at the same time, turn aside the wrath of outraged critics, the early tale writers often became pseudo-moralists themselves. To justify their role as storytellers, they wrote fiction that resembled the Biblical parables evoked by the clergy, combining under the cloak of sermonistic truth-telling many a scandalous episode or sequence of events that could be luridly embroidered. Holding the mirror up to nature in the new world, they thus provided both moral guidance and heightened entertainment by ringing a familiar pattern of changes involving three prevalent themes: (1) sexual incontinence, its hazards and painful results; (2) rural virtue as opposed to urban vice; and (3) the vulnerability of unprotected individuals in a lawless, uncertain world.



Under the first two of these headings many doleful tales focused upon the fatal effects of rape, seduction, fornication, marital infidelity, even incest; others stressed the virtues of the gospel of work, pointing out explicitly how satisfaction with one's humble status and honest daily toil in a quiet rural setting became the pathway to salvation, remote from the city-bred evils of luxury, idleness, and discontent, which, of course, led straight to perdition. Scores of admonitory titles can be cited to illustrate the popularity of these tales as well as those of the third group, which dramatized the remaining social or psychological ills the harried colonist had to face; the threat of highway robbery, murder, kidnapping, slavery, piracy, or mass upheaval and violence. A few such titles from magazines of the 1780s and 1790s are self-explanatory: "The Exemplary Daughter", "Miseries of Idleness and Affluence", "The Pangs of Repentance", "The Progress of Vice", "The Imprudent Parents", "The Fatal Effects of Seduction", "The Repentant Prostitute", and "Treachery and Infidelity Punished".

Whatever the substance of these anonymous early tales-whether external violence and physical pain or remorse and emotional distress caused by misconduct, parental tyranny, or frustrated desires-their authors had to cope with the basic problem of achieving fictional validity. The writers' repeated claim that their stories were based on actual events implied a felt need to defend themselves against the charge of falsifying("making things up") and to establish a connecting link between the palpable, external world of the senses and the inner world of the imagination. They were groping toward what Nathaniel Hawthorne would later call "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairyland, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other." Because these writers still lacked the formulae and the techniques for producing such a creative art form, they had to seek their "neutral ground" through a process of trial and error. They had to find ways of making the tale come alive as a convincing portrayal of lifelike human beings, acting and reacting believably in a believable situation and place. They had to suit the individual to the deed, to master the art of character motivation, and to arouse and maintain, from start to finish, the reader's mounting concern for a sequence of developments leading up to an unforeseen yet logical climax and an aesthetically satisfying denouement. And besides such basic structural problems as these, they also faced that of getting the story told in language appropriate to its tone, mood, atmosphere, and source of utterance, that is, the problem of style and point of view.

Few of the nation's earliest fiction writers had the professional skills needed to fulfill these aims. Many, perhaps, were but dimly aware of the need for them; for theories about the proper make-up and role of the short story did not emerge until

the 1830s, when such writers as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and William Gilmore Simms began to consider critically the basis of their own literary aims, particularly those involving significant distinctions between long and short fiction. Still, however crudely contrived most of these early tales would appear to an average reader today, the alert student can detect in them some interesting techniques designed to enthrall their own readers. Varied uses of the first-person narrative method, for example, were employed to evoke a suitably horrified response, as in the lugubriously remorseful letters presented in "*Fatal Effects of Seduction*" (1789) and "*Melancholy Effects of Seduction*" (1795); while in others, the spirit of Fielding rather than of Richardson probably accounted for the rollicking humor and sprightly dialogue provided in "*The Fair Recluse*" (1784), "*Three Days After Marriage*" (1789), and "*Matrimonial Infidelity*" (1789), which dealt with the same popular theme.

Among the best examples of competent craftsmanship in the treatment of marital infidelity, however, are the two tales reprinted here: "*The Story of the Captain's Wife, and an Aged Woman*" (1789) and "*The Child of Snow*" (1792). In both of these one finds a combined use of irony, novel detail, both realistic and fantastic, a matter-of-fact tone, and a touch of the macabre—all of which lead to remarkably contrasting conclusions. The earlier tale, attributed to the anonymous Ruri Colla, deals with the routine social problem of the long-absent seafaring husband and the lonely wife in terms of universal, psychologically genuine human yearning, frustration, and fulfillment. And equally shorn of moral preachment, the latter one works up the same standard materials, even more economically, to a much grimmer, bizarre end. Whoever their authors may have been, no superior talents than these would be evident in American short fiction until Poe and Hawthorne emerged forty years later.

### The Development of an American Art Form

American writers naturally turned to popular European romantic literary types for inspiration and strove to convert them to the uses of American materials. Their efforts were often too slavishly imitative to be wholly successful, but they quickly demonstrated considerable originality in the short story, possibly because European romanticists had only begun to work out the techniques of this type of fiction when the Americans themselves began to experiment with it. In form the short tale was partly an outgrowth of the eighteenth-century sketch and periodical essay, and the possibilities of its development into a type of fiction distinct from the novel, yet containing most of the elements that gave the novel its strong popular appeal, were just coming to be realized when Irving took it up and fashioned it into a species of