



《大学英语选修课系列教材》
COLLEGE ENGLISH ELECTIVE COURSE SERIES

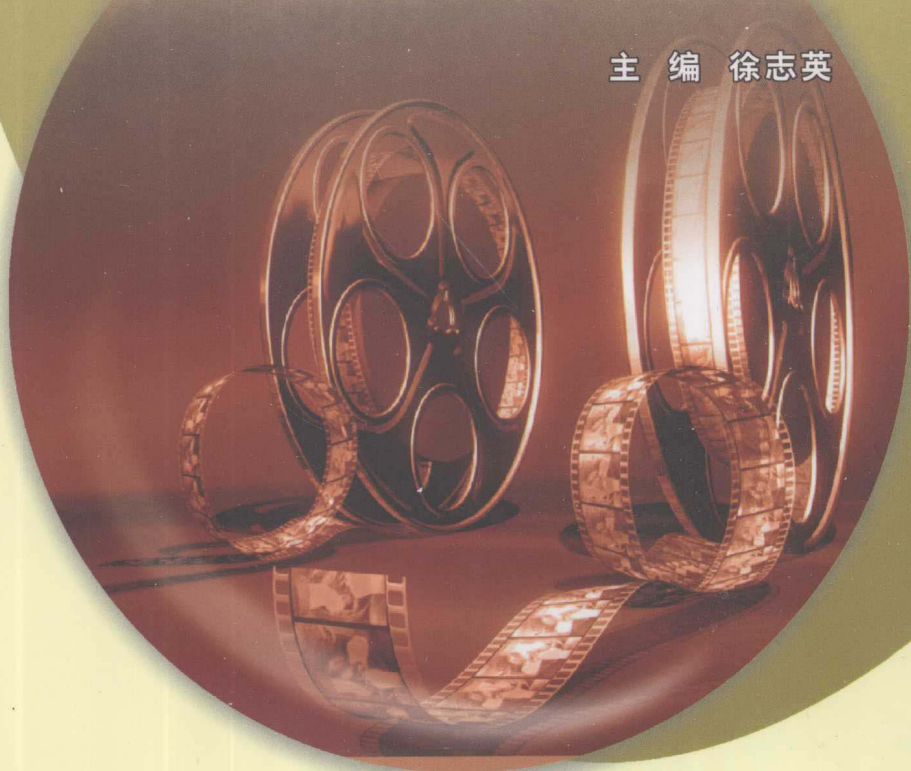
语言文化类

总主编 石 坚
副总主编 敖 凡 邹晓玲

English Movies: A Cultural Perspective

英语电影文化透视

主 编 徐志英

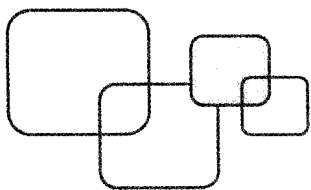


重庆大学 出版社

<http://www.cqup.com.cn>



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总 序

我国的大学英语教学起步于 20 世纪 80 年代,经过 20 多年的发展,大学英语在教学水平、课程设置、教学方法、教学环境、师资队伍等各个方面都有了长足的进步和发展。但随着我国加入 WTO 和国民经济的快速发展,大学英语教学暴露出与时代要求不相称的一面。为适应现代社会对人才培养的实际需求,推动和指导大学英语教学改革,教育部于 2003 年颁布了《大学英语课程教学要求(试行)》(以下简称《要求》),并于 2007 年结合对人才能力培养的新要求再次做了修订和调整,作为全国各高校组织非英语专业本科生英语教学的主要依据。

《要求》将大学阶段的英语教学分为一般要求、较高要求和更高要求三个层次,强调要贯彻分类指导、因材施教的原则,使英语教学朝着个性化的方向发展,要“将综合英语类、语言技能类、语言应用类、语言文化类和专业英语类等必修课程和选修课程有机结合,形成一个完整的大学英语课程体系,以确保不同层次的学生在英语应用能力方面得到充分的训练和提高”。这样,大力发展大学英语选修课就成了大学英语教学改革的重要课题。

大学英语选修课的开设不仅是《大学英语课程教学要求(试行)》精神的体现,也是《教育部财政部关于实施高等学校本科教学质量与教学改革工程的意见》(以下简称《意见》)的内在要求,《意见》将“学生的实践能力和创新精神显著增强”作为教学改革的重要目标之一,而大学英语教学要在这方面有所作为的话,必须注重培养学生的跨文化交际能力、文化素养和在全球化、信息化的背景下获取知识的能力,这显然是传统的大学英语教学和课程设置所不能胜任的。

近年来,全国许多高校纷纷进行了开设大学英语选修课的尝试,并取得了可喜的成绩。但是由于指导思想不明晰、教师知识结构单一和配套改革滞后等原因,在大学英语选修课的开设中出现了“因人设庙”,开课随意性强,开课种类单一,各门课程难易不均,课程测试不规范,学生对各门课程的兴趣差异过大等问题。大学英语选修课的开设迫切需要某种程度的规范与引导,需要更为科学地设置选修课程,确实达到《要求》和《意见》中提出的目标。

针对以上问题,我们认为,一套由成熟理念指引的、体系科学的、建立在选修课开设的成功实践基础之上的系列教材能够起到这种规范和引导作用。因此,重庆大学出版社组织来自全国各地的、在选修课开设方面走在前列的高校的专家和教师,在多次交流与反复论证的基础上,组织编写了这套“大学英语选修课系列教材”。该套教

材具有以下明显的特点:

第一,教材体系科学、系统。系列教材以《大学英语课程教学要求(试行)》为指导,覆盖语言技能类、语言应用类、语言文化类和专业英语类四个板块,既注重语言基础知识的积累,也充分考虑对学生文化素质的培养,确保不同层次的学生在英语应用能力方面得到充分的训练和提高。

第二,坚持“实用、够用”的原则。在体例安排和内容选择上严格按照选修课的课时要求和学生水平的实际需要,力求精练,避免长篇累牍,在语言难度上体现了与英语专业同类教材的差别。

第三,注重知识与技能相结合,语言与文化相结合。在深入浅出地讲授知识的同时,结合课程内容尽可能多地为学生提供说与写的练习,在雕琢学生语言的同时,尽可能培养学生的跨文化交际能力和批判性思维能力。

第四,强调学生综合能力的培养。考虑到学生在选修课阶段可能不再修综合英语类的课程,各教材在主要训练与课程相关能力的基础上,适当补充了其他能力的训练内容。

第五,吸纳并总结近年来相关高校选修课开设的经验和成果。该套教材的参编者来自全国多所高校,多数教材是由开设该门课程最成功的、最受学生欢迎的学校和教师撰写,教材既吸纳了相关讲义的优点,又根据专家意见,按照学科要求和普遍情况进行了改编,在保证教材科学性的前提下,最大程度地体现了大学英语学生的选修取向。

选修课的开设是大学英语教学改革的重要发展方向,但是在改革中诞生的事物也必然不断地在改革中被重新定义,因此我们这套大学英语选修课教材的体系也将是动态的和开放的,不断会有新的教材被纳入,以反映大学英语教学改革在这方面最新的成功尝试。相信随着教学改革不断走向深入,我们的教材体系也将日臻完善。

总主编

2008年1月

前 言

语言与文化密不可分,语言传递着文化信息,通过了解文化又能够更好地理解语言,而观赏英文影片正是英语学习者了解西方文化的一个有效途径。

本书既是一本详尽的英语电影指南,又是一部以电影为平台、深入阐述和评析东西方各种社会文化现象的导读类作品。

全书按主题分为六个单元,每单元包含三部影片,它们分别从各自的视角演绎了同一主题的不同侧面。这十八部影片中既有令人百看不厌、回味无穷的经典老片,又有让人耳目一新、颇具时代感的主流大片。本书所选影片,无论新旧,都体现了高超的制作水平和深刻的人文思想,影响力大,典型性强。

每一单元的第一部分为引介部分,重点提炼单元主题,并着力勾勒出单元内容的全貌。

第二部分为三部影片的剧情介绍,其间穿插了简要的评述,力求在清楚明了地讲述电影故事的基础之上,进一步强调影片的艺术特色,凸显其亮点。第一单元既有大气凝重的史诗片《埃及艳后》,清新别致的动画片《埃及王子》,又有紧张刺激的探险片《神鬼传奇》,旨在引领读者寻踪追迹,尽情体会古埃及文明的悠长韵味。第二单元的《莎翁情史》《美丽心灵》和《梵高传》让人们得以近距离地接触那些在人类科学、文化发展史上留有深深印迹的泰斗级人物。第三单元的主题是法律,涉及三部影片:《肖申克的救赎》《十二怒汉》《律政俏佳人》,尽管表现手法多有不同,它们却传达了一个共同的理念:法律的威严衬托出人性的尊严,而法律的智慧也辉映着人性的博大。第四单元通过《拯救大兵雷恩》《风语者》和《辛德勒的名单》描绘了第二次世界大战的壮阔场景,展现战争的残酷,反映了个人的命运与民族的命运在特殊历史时期的交集。既有对爱国主义、献身精神的赞美和讴歌,也有对邪恶势力疯狂践踏人类文明的丑恶行径的揭露和鞭挞。第五单元呈现的是奥林匹克运动,《奇迹》和《烈火战车》两部影片生动刻画了奥运健儿们战胜对手、超越自我、为国争光的艰辛历程,他们不屈不挠的奋斗意志和视荣誉为生命的崇高精神感染了几代人。而有着纪录片风格的《九月的一天》却再现了奥运历史上最深重的耻辱、最黑暗的一页,使人在悲痛之余开始反思人类自身所处的道德困境。第六单元以灾难片为主,收录了近年来

从同类影片中脱颖而出的几部佳作:《2012》《后天》以及《龙卷风》。自然界的破坏力令人惊惧而无奈,而在面对灾难时人与人之间表现出的关爱和温情又让人感动不已,让人在无情的毁灭中感受到新生的希望。

第三部分侧重文化性的思索,从几部影片中提炼出最有价值的文化点,加以细致的论述。优秀的英文影片是多元的文化载体,能最直观、最生动地展现不同时代不同国家的民族文化风貌和社会生活场景。可以说,这是《英语电影文化透视》一书最重要的环节,也集中体现了本书编撰的基本宗旨:借助电影传达文化信息。

每单元后都附有五道思考题,这有助于读者梳理思路、强化对篇章的理解。

我们真诚地希望这本书能得到广大读者的喜爱。

编 者
2011 年 3 月

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Unit 1

Egypt — A Brilliant Civilization



Part One An Overall View

Egypt, quite often referred to as the “gift of the Nile”, boasts a recorded 7000-year-old civilization. Not any country or civilization in the world has captured so much imagination as this ancient kingdom with its divine Pharaohs and awe-inspiring pyramids. The Pyramids of Giza are the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World to survive. On this piece of land, striking contrasts are the norm. While the arid desert dominates the landscape, the Nile travels several thousand kilometers from central Africa to ease the country’s thirst and nourishes the world’s oldest civilization. While the River Nile teems with life, the Valley of the Kings which located right on the river’s west bank houses the massive tombs of the great Pharaohs. In this country, people’s passionate love for life becomes the driving force behind their obsession with the afterlife and ceaseless pursuit of eternity. Well-preserved mummies, spectacular pyramids, colorful tomb paintings and countless treasures from the tombs hold so many fascinating mysteries for modern architects, scientists and archaeologists. Throughout decades, strenuous efforts have been made by architects to figure out how such extraordinary engineering feats like the pyramids could have been accomplished in the absence of modern equipment. Scientists and medical experts have been using the latest technology to reveal the secrets of the mummies, especially the famed mummy of the boy king Tutankhamen. However, despite their remarkable efforts, so many mysteries

are still waiting to be unlocked: What was the real Cleopatra like? Did the pyramid builders in the biblical story of Exodus — the enslaved Hebrews actually gain their freedom through the Ten Plagues inflicted by God or it's just an uplifting story about freedom? What was the truth behind the successive mysterious deaths of the tomb excavators after King Tutankhamen's tomb was opened? Was there really a mummy's curse? The three films in this unit will take us on a journey back in time to explore this great country and look for our own answers. *Cleopatra* helps us to peek into the exotic beauty of the great Egyptian Queen and discover how she suffered an infamous and tragic end. *The Prince of Egypt* brings the wonders of the almighty God to life right before our eyes and illuminates our hearts with the light of freedom. *The Mummy* makes the adrenaline flood and rush in our bodies by unleashing the evillest mummy who wrecks havoc over the living world, bent on the destruction of both his enemies and the humankind as a whole.

Part Two Movie Talk



I. Cleopatra



Cleopatra is a historical epic following the two great love of the mysterious Egyptian Queen Cleopatra VII. Set in the turbulent final years of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, the film opens with Julius Caesar's defeat of his primary rival Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalus. Pompey fled to Egypt to enlist the support of Pharaoh Ptolemy XIII and his elder sister Cleopatra with Caesar in hot pursuit. At that time, Egypt was deeply engulfed in a civil war, with Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra competing with each other for independent reign of the kingdom. To win the favor of Caesar, the young Pharaoh had

Pompey killed and presented his head to Caesar in an oil jar, which disgusted the great Roman general who held Pompey as a worthy rival.

After Caesar settled down in the Palace, a rug merchant arrived with a gift from Cleopatra. Having unbound the rug with his sword, Caesar spilt the concealed Cleopatra onto the floor. Contrary to the instant seduction story believed by so many people, their first encounter in the film was more of a verbal battle over who was the host and who was the guest in the Palace. Though the duel between them continued, Cleopatra warned Caesar of her brother's insidious conspiracy against the Romans. Caesar counterattacked by setting the Egyptian fleet ablaze to gain control of the harbor but accidentally burnt down the famous Library of Alexandria in the process. Soon, the Roman reinforcements arrived on the Egyptian soil, and Ptolemy XIII's conspiracy was completely foiled. With his Lord Chamberlain sentenced to death, Ptolemy XIII was banished and Cleopatra was crowned the Queen of Egypt, who became romantically involved with Caesar. On their journey along the River Nile, at the Tomb of Alexander, Cleopatra confided to Caesar her dream of a united Rome and Egypt ruling over the world and her pregnancy. When their son Caesarion was born, Caesar immediately embraced the little creature as his in public. Caesar returned to Rome triumphantly, leaving Cleopatra in Egypt for two years before they met again.

Now that Caesar had been made dictator for life, he welcomed Cleopatra into Rome. Under the gaze of Caesar and the Roman Senate members, the Egyptian queen along with her son Caesarion entered Rome in a lavish procession, both clad in gold and sitting atop a giant Egyptian Sphinx pulled by a multitude of sturdy servants. The city was buzzing with the talk of the Egyptian Queen and rumors about Caesar's desire to become a king fueled the discontent among the Senate members. The fateful day fell on the Ides of March, a day for senators to vote on new powers for Caesar. As Caesar approached the Senate, he was attacked and cold-bloodedly stabbed to death by a group of opposing senators. By then Cleopatra's first great love came to an end. After Caesar's nephew Octavian was named Caesar's heir, Cleopatra realized that there was no future for her and Caesarion in Rome and their stay in Rome would

only pose great threat to their lives. Therefore, she headed back to Egypt.

Two years later, Julius Caesar's assassination was avenged in the Battle of Philippi. The leading general Mark Antony established the second triumvirate (三雄执政) with Octavian and Lepidus. They agreed to split the empire into three spheres of influence: Octavian would control the west; Lepidus Africa and Antony the eastern provinces. The rivalry between Octavian and Mark Antony was gradually building up. When financing his military campaign against Parthia on the eastern frontier, Antony found a powerful backer in Cleopatra and her abundant Egypt. When Cleopatra's sumptuous barge arrived at Tarsus, the headquarters of Antony's domain, the Roman general was instantly fascinated and seduced.



Their romance was manipulated by Octavian, who began to start a smear campaign in Rome to ruin Antony's reputation. Antony rushed back to Rome to make reconciliation with Octavian and ended up marrying his political rival's sister to cement the deal. However, it soon dawned on Antony that he could not proceed emotionally or politically with Cleopatra out of his life, so after all the envoys he sent were denied access to the Queen, Antony went to meet her in person only to be humiliated by her in public. As a return for her alliance, Cleopatra demanded a third part of the Roman Empire be put under her control, which Antony readily agreed. Following that, Antony divorced Octavian's sister and married Cleopatra. Back in Rome, Octavian managed to manipulate the Senate into voting for a war against Antony and the decisive battle between the two was fought at Actium off the coast of Greece. Antony's fleet fell into a trap and was set ablaze. Assuming that Antony had been killed, Cleopatra departed the battle field for Egypt. When Antony fled back to Egypt, he was misled into believing that Cleopatra had already died and fell on his own sword. The great Roman general's death could have been even more tragic if he had not be taken to Cleopatra in time and died in her arms. Since all her beloved ones were gone, Cleopatra succumbed herself to the poisonous bite of a concealed asp in a basket

of figs rather than subjected herself to the humiliation of Octavian. The last scene of the film was so overwhelming with the dead queen lying on an elaborately decorated golden sarcophagus in all her royal ornaments. When the queen's attempt to commit suicide was disclosed, the Roman guards rushed into her tomb and asked, "Was this well done of your lady, Charmion"? Her dying handmaid Charmion answered, "Extremely well, and as fitting for the descendant of so many kings." Undoubtedly, that was a dignified death befitting the most celebrated queen of Egypt.

Released in 1963, *Cleopatra*, starring Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra, Richard Burton as Mark Antony and Rex Harrison as Caesar, runs 242 minutes, a remarkable length even for the genre of historical epics. Long before the film came out, it had already gained considerable publicity.

First, it was the most expensive film at that time. With an original budget of 2 million, the film was finished at 44 million, an equivalent of about 320 million American dollars in 2010. The grand and elaborate sets, lavish costumes and continued delays in the production including the relocation of the shooting from London to Rome all contributed to this high price tag, which almost drove the Twentieth Century Fox bankrupt. The company had to renew the posters several times with new release dates of the film as the shooting dragged on. Unfortunately, big budget or investment didn't necessarily guarantee commercial success. Though the film managed to gross 26 million US dollars, the highest one in that year, it still fell far short of its cost.

Second, the on-screen chemistry between Cleopatra and Mark Antony and even more sensational love affair off the screen between Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton caused a storm of hype, which somehow assisted the producer's marketing of the film. Both of them were married during the shooting, but their passionate love for each other brought them into marriage in 1964, a year after the release of *Cleopatra*.

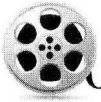
Third, the film witnessed the somewhat dramatic change in both the cast and director. The two actors hired to play the key male roles Julius Caesar and Mark Antony left the production unit for other commitments, and the original director Rouben Mamoulian was dismissed after he squandered a huge sum, but

got the film nowhere. Then the second director Mankiewicz took things over and gathered a star-studded cast. Unluckily, Mankiewicz shared his predecessor's fate and got fired when he was editing the film. He wasn't called back until the company found that no one could put the film together except him. The film got all together 9 Oscar nominations and won four of them in Best Cinematography, Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design and Best Visual Effects. Maybe the four Oscars were some kind of comfort for the Twentieth Century Fox, for at least some part of the money was well spent.

The response to this film was a quite mixed one. Some moviegoers were completely overwhelmed by some spectacular scenes like the majestic entrance of Cleopatra and Caesarion into Rome or the fierce naval battle at Actium. Some others just begged to differ. For example, some history-conscious viewers challenged the historical accuracy of the film. They argued that Octavian, the great successor to Julius Caesar, who later became the first emperor of the Roman Empire, was so poorly depicted as nothing but a power-hungry young lad, with none of his great administrative capability mentioned. What's more, those colorful and fabulous low-cut dresses worn by both Cleopatra and her handmaids were more of Hollywood fashion than a faithful display of the typical clothing of Egyptian women at that time. If it took an expert and some serious study on the ancient queen to spot the historical inaccuracy, it would be much easier for the audience to evaluate the performance of the cast. Rex Harrison was nominated for Best Actor, but the film's heroine — Elizabeth Taylor took some harsh criticism. She was criticized for her monotonous overly cold portrayal of the arrogant and powerful queen, though some people strongly held that she was the perfect embodiment of the mysterious queen with her beauty and charm. Some audience simply were baffled by the incoherence in the plotline and development of characters, since the film, originally a six hour production, was forced to cut down to a bit over four hours to increase the daily number of showings in the cinema.

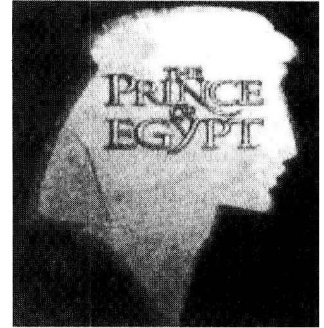
Despite all the fault-finding, *Cleopatra* continues to fascinate new audience over the years. As for Elizabeth Taylor, even if the film didn't help her clinch an Oscar, she did become a legend for the beautiful, intelligent and ambitious

Egyptian queen she portrayed.



II. The Prince of Egypt

As one of the chief sources of western culture, the Bible has inspired many great films. *The Prince of Egypt* is one of them, which is based on the greatest story from the holy book — *the Exodus*. For thousands of years, the legendary life story of Moses, the greatest Hebrew prophet has been told and retold for his loyalty to God and undaunted pursuit of peace and freedom. This 1998 animation vividly brings the biblical story to life and offers the audience a visual and audio extravagance.



Adapted from the Book of the *Exodus*, the film follows the life story of Moses from his survival as a months old infant to a national hero who delivered the Hebrews from slavery upon God's calling. When Pharaoh Seti issued an order that all Hebrew male babies be killed, Moses' mother Yocheved hid baby Moses in a basket and set it adrift on the Nile. His elder sister Miriam followed the basket to ensure her baby brother's safety. Fortunately, after a perilous journey, the basket was picked up by the Queen, who adopted the little baby and named him Moses. Moses grew up together with the Pharaoh's biological son Rameses in the splendid Egyptian palace, with no knowledge of his slave origin. He and Rameses forged a close bond. Moses was quite carefree with his mischievous pranks, but Rameses's conduct was closely scrutinized by the Pharaoh, since he was the successor to the throne.

Moses didn't uncover the secret of his identity until he bumped into his real siblings Miriam and Aaron. But when Miriam revealed to Moses his Hebrew origin, Moses was overwhelmed and refused to accept the truth. Back in the palace, the possibility of being a Hebrew haunted him and he had a nightmare about the ruthless infanticide. After his worst suspicions were confirmed by the Queen, Moses's eyes were opened to the tragic plight of his own people. Driven

by an impulse, Moses accidentally killed a taskmaster at a construction site and then fled into the boundless desert, where he stripped off the trappings of his past royal life.

He was trapped in a blinding storm and rescued by a naughty passing camel, which took him to a Midianite village. There, he kindly helped a couple of girls to expel two brigands and water their sheep. These girls happened to be the daughters of Jethro, the High Priest of Midian who enthusiastically welcomed Moses to the tribe. Tzipporah, the girl whom Moses rescued from the palace turned out to be one of Jethro's daughters. Moses gradually regained inner peace at the small village as a shepherd and married Tzipporah. One day, this contented shepherd was led by a stray sheep into a cave, where he came across an unearthly scene — a burning bush that could not be consumed by the flame and heard the calling of the god of his ancestors. Having promised his people a land flowing with milk and honey, God commanded Moses to go back to Egypt and liberate the Hebrew people from slavery.

Obeying God's order, Moses went back to Egypt to conduct his mission. Upon his arrival at the palace, he found that Pharaoh Seti had died and Rameses had ascended the throne. Overjoyed to see Moses's return, Rameses immediately declared his innocence of all previous charges and warmly welcomed him back as the prince of Egypt. However, his excitement soon subsided when Moses pleaded for the freedom of the Hebrew slaves and tried to demonstrate the power of God. Moses further infuriated the Pharaoh by confronting him with the massive slaughter of Hebrew babies many years ago and the plight of the slaves. However, to Moses's disappointment, Rameses turned his back on all these and instead demanded that the slaves' workload be doubled. Miriam's words comforted and encouraged the frustrated Moses to challenge the Pharaoh again. Again, the Pharaoh was not impressed, even Moses managed to turn the Nile's water into blood.

The relationship between the former brothers kept deteriorating and finally ruptured when God sent a series of plagues to overrun the land: Pestilence struck down livestock, frog hordes invaded houses, louse and fly swarms harassed people, roaring thunder and fire rain devastated the land and locust