

大学英语选修教材

English Literature Recorded in a Nutshell

英美文学简史

刘旸 王冬辉 贾虹 主编



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前 言

为了适应我国高等教育发展的新形势,深化大学公共英语课程的教学改革,提高教学质量,满足新时期国家和社会对人才培养的需要及国际交流的需要,提高大学生英语语言综合应用能力,特别是提高文化素养,天津大学大学英语教学二部增加了特色精品课程的比重,面向全校各非英语专业本科二年级学生开设这门公共英语选修课。

全书主要介绍英美等英语国家的文学史,分 10 单元学习,每单元安排有常识预习、专题讲座、复习反馈、课题作业和自主拓展五个项目。旨在帮助学生了解各阶段的主要作家及其作品,使学生通过一个学期的学习对英美文学发展有一定的了解,增加学生相关的信息量和词汇量,提高英语水平,激发学生的文学阅读热情,增长知识、开阔眼界;同时,大家通过学习提高文学批评修养、增强文学审美力。

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Unit One



warming-up 常识预习

1. What historical background of the British and American literature are you familiar with?

2. Who is the most widely read and the most quoted of poets in the history of English literature? What do you know about him?

3. Who influenced the recognition of English as a literary language by writing in English at a time when other poets were using French and Latin?

4. Do you like English novels? Which ones have you ever read? Do you know their authors?

5. American literature was largely influenced by that of Europe at the beginning period. Do you know why?

6. Many works of Ernest Hemingway are regarded as classics of American literature. With which one did he win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954?



lecturette 专题讲座

History of English Literature

English literature is as diverse as the varieties and dialects of English spoken around the world. It has a history and this connects with cultural

history more widely. Prose narratives were written in the 16th century, but the novel as we know it could not arise, in the absence of a literate public. The popular and very contemporary medium for narrative in the 16th century is the theatre. The earliest novels reflect a bourgeois view of the world because this is the world of the authors and their readers (working people are depicted, but patronizingly, not from inside knowledge). The growth of literacy in the Victorian era leads to enormous diversification in the subjects and settings of the novel. The test of time may be a cliché, but is a genuine measure of how a work of imagination can transcend cultural boundaries; we should, perhaps, now speak of the test of time and place, as the best works cross boundaries of both kinds. We may not like or enjoy works such as *Wuthering Heights*, or *The Waste Land*, but they are the perfect expression of particular ways of looking at the world; the author has articulated a view which connects with the reader's search for meaning. It is, of course, perfectly possible for a work of imagination to make sense of the world or of experience while also entertaining or delighting the reader or audience with the detail and eloquence of the work, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *Great Expectations*.

Old English and Beowulf

The earliest written literature, mostly anonymous and narrative, was composed orally at first, and may have been passed on from speaker to speaker until they learned the Latin alphabet from Roman missionaries in the early Middle Ages. Much Old English verse in the extant manuscripts is probably a "milder" adaptation of the earlier Germanic war poems from the continent. When such poetry was brought to England it was still being handed down orally from one generation to another, and the constant presence of alliterative verse, or consonant rhyme (today's newspaper headlines and marketing abundantly use this technique such as in Big is Better)

helped the Anglo-Saxon peoples remember it. Even without their crudest lines, the Old English war poems, and to a larger extent all Germanic war poems, still smell of blood feuds and their consonant rhymes sound like the smashing of swords under the gloomy northern sky: there is always a sense of imminent danger in the narratives. Such an Old English epic of unknown authorship is *Beowulf*, a heroic poem about a young warrior, set in Denmark and Sweden, commonly cited as one of the most important works of Anglo-Saxon literature. Sooner or later, all things must come to an end, as Beowulf eventually dies at the hands of the monsters he spends the tale fighting. The feelings of Beowulf that nothing lasts, that youth and joy will turn to death and sorrow entered Christianity and were to dominate the future landscape of English fiction.

Middle English and Chaucer

From 1066 onwards, the language is known to scholars as Middle English. Ideas and themes from French and Celtic literature appear in English writing at about this time. The term Middle English literature refers to the literature written in the form of the English language known as Middle English when a form of London-based English, became widespread and the printing press regularized the language. There are three main categories of Middle English literature: religious, courtly love, and arthurian. Though much of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340—1400)'s work stands outside these, he is the first great name in English literature. His greatest work is mostly narrative poetry, which we find in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Renaissance Drama and Shakespeare

The Elizabethan era saw a great flourishing of literature, especially in the field of drama. The English playwrights were intrigued by Italian model: a conspicuous community of Italian actors had settled in London and much of the Italian language and culture had been brought to England. Be-

fore the 16th century English drama meant the amateur performances of Bible stories by craft guilds on public holidays. William Shakespeare, very gifted and incredibly versatile, stands out in this period as a playwright and poet as yet unsurpassed. Shakespeare was not a man of letters by profession, and probably had only some grammar school education. He was neither a lawyer, nor an aristocrat as the “university wits” that had monopolized the English stage when he started writing. Shakespeare found the medium of blank verse so productive. Shakespeare developed and virtually exhausted this form. All his dramas met with great success: *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest*, a tragicomedy that inscribes within the main drama a brilliant pageant to the new king. Shakespeare also popularized the English sonnet which made significant changes to Petrarch’s model.

Well, had Marlowe (1564—1593) not been stabbed at twenty-nine in a tavern brawl, he might have rivaled, if not equaled Shakespeare himself for his poetic gifts. Remarkably, he was born only a few weeks before Shakespeare and must have known him well. Marlowe’s subject matter, though, is different; it focuses more on the moral drama of the Renaissance man than any other thing. Marlowe was fascinated and terrified by the new frontiers opened by modern science. Drawing on German lore, he introduced Dr. Faustus to England, a scientist and magician who is obsessed by the thirst of knowledge and the desire to push man’s technological power to its limits. He acquires supernatural gifts that even allow him to go back in time and wed Helen of Troy, but at the end of his twenty-four years’ covenant with the devil he has to surrender his soul to him. His dark heroes may have something of Marlowe himself, whose death remains a mystery. He was known for being an atheist, leading a lawless life, keeping many mistresses, consorting with ruffians: living the ‘high life’ of London’s un-

derworld. But many suspect that this might have been a cover-up for his activities as a secret agent for Elizabeth I, hinting that the ‘accidental stabbing’ might have been a premeditated assassination by the enemies of the Crown.

Biblical Epic and John Milton

Long narrative poems on heroic subjects mark the best work of classical Greek and Roman poetry. John Milton (1608—1674) set out to write a great biblical epic.

Prose Fiction and Jonathan Swift

Jonathan Swift (1667—1745), wrote satires in prose, best-known for the extended fiction *Gulliver’s Travels*, in which a fantastic account of a series of travels is the vehicle for satirizing familiar English institutions, such as religion, politics and law.

Romanticism and Robert Burns

A movement in philosophy but especially in literature, romanticism is the revolt of the senses or passions against the intellect and of the individual against the consensus. The attempts to render the speech of ordinary people are not wholly convincing. Robert Burns (1759—1796) writes lyric verse in the dialect of lowland Scots (a variety of English). After Shakespeare, Burns is perhaps the most often quoted of writers in English.

Victorian Novel and Charles Dickens

In the 19th century, adult literacy increases markedly; attempts to provide education by the state, and self-help schemes are partly the cause and partly the result of the popularity of the novel. The greatest of all time is Charles Dickens (1812—1870). The complexity of his best work, the variety of tone, the use of irony and caricature create surface problems for the modern reader, who may not readily persist in reading.

And in the Victorian era, Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809—1892), was

Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom and remains one of the most popular poets in the English language. Tennyson makes extensive use of classical myth and Arthurian legend, and has been praised for the beautiful and musical qualities of his writing. Tennyson wrote a number of phrases that have become commonplaces of the English language, including: “Nature, red in tooth and claw”, “Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all”, “Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die”, “My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure”, “Knowledge comes, but Wisdom lingers”, and “The old order changeth, yielding place to new”.

Beginning of American Literature and Edgar Allan Poe

The early 19th century sees the emergence of American literature, with the stories of Edgar Allan Poe(1809—1849), the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804—1864) and Mark Twain (1835—1910), as well as the poetry of Walt Whitman(1819—1992).

Best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre, Poe was one of the earliest American practitioners of the short story and is considered the inventor of the detective-fiction genre. He is further credited with contributing to the *emerging genre of science fiction*. He was the first well-known American writer to try to earn a living through writing alone, resulting in a financially difficult life and career. Poe and his works influenced literature in the United States and around the world, as well as in specialized fields, such as cosmology and cryptography. Poe and his works appear throughout popular culture in literature, music, films, and television.

Modern Literature and Hemingway

Any list of “important” names is bound to be uneven and selective. Identifying broad movements leads to the exclusion of those who do not easily fit into schematic outlines of history, such as Ernest Hemingway(1899—

1961). During his lifetime he wrote and had published seven novels, six collections of short stories, and two works of non-fiction. Since his death three novels, four collections of short stories, and three non-fiction autobiographical works have been published. Hemingway received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954 for his novella *The Old Man and the Sea*. Hemingway's distinctive writing style is characterized by economy and understatement, and had a significant influence on the development of twentieth-century fiction writing. His protagonists are typically stoical men who exhibit an ideal described as "grace under pressure". Many of his works are now considered classics of American literature.

alliteration: a literary or rhetorical stylistic device that consists in repeating the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in close succession 头韵法

blank verse: a type of poetry, distinguished by having a regular meter, but no rhyme. In English, the meter most commonly used with blank verse has been iambic pentameter. 素体诗

Petrarch: an Italian poet (1304—1374), "the Father of Humanism". His sonnets were admired and imitated throughout Europe during the Renaissance and became a model for lyrical poetry. 波特拉克

Renaissance: French for "rebirth" 文艺复兴

Renaissance man: related and used to describe a person who is well educated or who excels in a wide variety of subjects or fields

Helen of Troy: the daughter of Zeus and Leda. Her abduction by Paris brought about the Trojan War. 海伦公主

Poet Laureate: a poet officially appointed by a government and is often expected to compose poems for State occasions and other government events 桂冠诗人



going-over 复习反馈

multiple-choice Q's

1. *Beowulf*, an Old English epic, emphasizes the sorrow and _____ of life, and the helplessness of humans before the power of fate.
A. ultimate futility B. infinite possibilities
C. unexpected variables
2. *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer was written in _____.
A. Old English B. Middle English
C. Modern English
3. William Shakespeare is noted for his use of _____ in his dramas to achieve special effects.
A. perfect rhyme B. alliteration
C. blank verse
4. Who is not the character in the works of William Shakespeare?
A. Queen Cleopatra. B. King Lear.
C. Dr. Faustus.
5. The greatest novelist of the Victorian era is _____.
A. John Milton B. Charles Dickens
C. Jonathan Swift
6. "Tis better to have loved and lost/ Than never to have loved at all" was written by _____, Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom.
A. Alfred Tennyson B. Ben Johnson
C. William Wordsworth
7. Who does not represent the emergence of American literature in the early 19th century?
A. Nathaniel Hawthorne. B. Walt Whitman.

C. Ernest Hemingway.

8. Who was the first well-known American man of letters to support himself as a professional writer?

A. Edgar Allan Poe.

B. Mark Twain.

C. Benjamin Franklin.

9. Which does not describe the writing style of Hemingway?

A. Economy.

B. Hyperbole.

C. Understatement.

essay Q's

10. What is Romanticism in terms of literature?

11. Compare Marlowe with Shakespeare.

12. What is the type of heroes in Hemingway's novels?



assignments 课题作业

Give a brief summing-up of the history of British and American literature. This assignment may be presented either as a written text or orally in class next time.



extensions 自主拓展

Mark Twain's first book The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County is a collection of short stories that were previously published in magazines and newspapers. Read after class the title story. This text is included mainly as entertainment. Do you know of any other strange contests?

...

He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edcate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most anything—and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor—Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog—and sing out, “Flies, Dan'l, flies!” and quicker'n you could wink, he'd spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightforward as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a

dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had traveled and been everywhere, all said he laid over any frog that ever they see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller—a stranger in the camp, he was—come across him with his box, and says:

“What might it be that you’ve got in the box?”

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, “It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, may be, but it ain’t—it’s only just a frog.”

And the feller took it, and looked at it carefully, and turned it round this way and that, and says, “H’m—so ‘tis. Well, what’s he good for?”

“Well,” Smiley says, easy and careless, “he’s good enough for one thing, I should judge—he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county.”

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, “Well, “he says” I don’t see no p’int about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

“Maybe you don’t,” Smiley says. “Maybe you understand frogs, and maybe you don’t understand ‘em; maybe you’ve had experience, and maybe you ain’t only a amature, as it were. Anyways, I’ve got my opinion, and I’ll risk forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county.”

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, “Well, I’m only a stranger here, and I ain’t got no frog; but if I had a frog, I’d bet you.”

And then Smiley says, “That’s all right—that’s all right—if you’ll hold my box a minute, I’ll go and get you a frog.” And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley’s, and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to himself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a teaspoon and filled him full of quail shot—filled him pretty near up to his chin—and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

“Now, if you’re ready, set him alongside of Dan’l, with his forepaws just even with Dan’l, and I’ll give the word.” Then he says, “One—two—three jump!” and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off lively, but Dan’l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders so like a Frenchman, but it wasn’t no use he couldn’t budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn’t no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn’t have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders this way at Dan’l, and says again, very deliberate, “Well, I don’t see no p’int about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan’l a long time, and at last he says, “I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw’d off for—I wonder if there ain’t something the matter with him—he ‘pears to look mighty baggy, somehow.” And he ketched Dan’l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, “Why, blame my cats, if he don’t weigh five pound!” and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketchd him. And—

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and