

(英语原著版·第四辑)
中译经典文库·世界文学名著



一个以利己主义为基础的时代和国家的悲剧



AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

(UNABRIDGED)

美国的悲剧

■ Theodore Dreiser

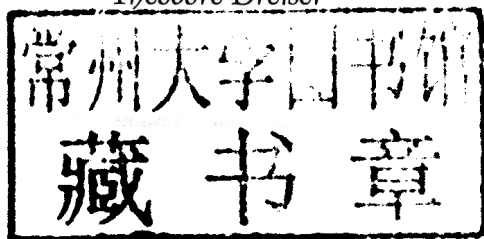
中国出版集团公司
中国对外翻译出版有限公司

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国的悲剧: 英文/(美)德莱塞(Dreiser, T. H. A.)著. —北京: 中国对外翻译出版有限公司, 2011. 8

(中译经典文库·世界文学名著: 英语原著版)

ISBN 978-7-5001-2990-5

I. ①美… II. ①德… III. ①英语-语言读物 ②长篇小说-美国-现代 IV. ①H319.4:I

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2011)第124087号

出版发行/中国对外翻译出版有限公司

地 址/北京市西城区车公庄大街甲4号(物华大厦六层)

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网 址/http://www.ctpc.com.cn

总 经 理/林国夫

出版策划/张高里

责任编辑/章婉凝

封面设计/奇文堂·潘峰

排 版/竹页图文

印 刷/保定市中画美凯印刷有限公司

经 销/新华书店北京发行所

规 格/787×1092毫米 1/32

印 张/26

版 次/2011年8月第一版

印 次/2011年8月第一次

ISBN 978-7-5001-2990-5 定价: 48.00元



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出版前言

一部文学史是人类从童真走向成熟的发展史，是一个个文学大师用如椽巨笔记载的人类的心灵史，也是承载人类良知与情感反思的思想史。阅读这些传世的文学名著就是在阅读最鲜活生动的历史，就是在与大师们做跨越时空的思想交流与情感交流，它会使一代代的读者获得心灵的滋养与巨大的审美满足。

中国对外翻译出版有限公司以中外语言学习和中外文化交流为自己的出版方向，向广大读者提供既能提升语言能力，又能滋养心灵的精神大餐是我们的一贯宗旨。尽管随着网络技术和数字出版的发展，读者获得这些作品的途径更加便捷，但是，一本本装帧精美、墨香四溢的图书仍是读书人的最爱。

“熟读唐诗三百首，不会做诗也会吟”，汉语学习如此，外语学习尤其如此。要想彻底学好一种语言，必须有大量的阅读。这不仅可以熟能生巧地掌握其语言技能，也可了解一种语言所承载的独特文化。“中译经典文库·世界文学名著（英语原著版）”便是这样一套必将使读者受益终生的读物。

PREFACE

A history of literature is a phylogeny of human beings growing from childhood to adulthood, a spiritual history of masters in literature portraying human spirit with great touch, as well as a thinking history reflecting human conscience and emotional introspection. Reading these immortal classics is like browsing through our history, while communicating across time and space with great writers into thinking and feelings. It bestows spiritual nutrition as well as aesthetic relish upon readers from generation to generation.

China Translation and Publishing Corporation (CTPC), with a publishing mission oriented toward readings of Chinese and foreign languages learning as well as cultural exchange, has been dedicated to providing spiritual feasts which not only optimize language aptitude but also nourish heart and soul. Along with the development of Internet and digital publication, readers have easier access to reading classic works. Nevertheless, well-designed printed books remain favorite readings for most readers.

“After perusing three hundred Tang poems, a learner can at least utter some verses, if cannot proficiently write a poem.” That is true for learning Chinese, more so for learning a foreign language. To master a language, we must read comprehensively, not only for taking in lingual competence, but also for catching the unique cultural essence implied in the language. “World Literary Classics (English originals)” can surely serve as a series of readings with everlasting edifying significance.

作家与作品

西奥多·德莱塞 (1871—1945) 是美国小说家;曾任美国作家协会主席。德莱塞出生在美国印第安纳州特雷霍特镇,他父亲原是德国的纺织工人,于1846年逃避兵役到了美国,开过纺织工场。德莱塞出生不久恰逢父亲失业,童年在困苦生活中度过。他12岁时就辍学开始自谋生计,先后当过报童、店员、洗碗工等,18岁时,由小时候的一个女教师资助进印第安纳大学学习了一年,接着又继续从事各种繁重的劳动。1892年,德莱塞进入报界,开始记者生涯,先后在芝加哥《环球报》、圣路易斯《环球—民主报》和《共和报》任职。1895年,德莱塞寓居纽约,正式从事写作,同时编辑杂志,经常往来于芝加哥、圣路易斯、托莱多、克利夫兰、匹兹堡各大城市之间,更为深广地接触到当时现实生活中的各个不同层面。主要作品有:揭露美国社会贫富悬殊、道德沦丧的长篇小说《嘉莉妹妹》(1900)、《珍妮姑娘》(1911);揭露金融资产阶级的发家及其必然灭亡的长篇小说《欲望三部曲》(第一部《金融家》,1912,第二部《巨人》,1914,第三部《斯多葛》,1947);1925年发表其代表作长篇小说《美国的悲剧》。德莱塞的第一部长篇小说《嘉莉妹妹》在美国文坛上一出现,就产生强烈反响,其代表作《美国的悲剧》出版后,立即轰动全国。他的创作,在1928年访苏前属于批判现实主义范畴,在1928年访苏后,随着政治立场的转变,开始走向社会主义的现实主义道路;后一时期的作品有《德莱塞访苏印象记》(1928),政论集《悲剧的美国》(1931),短篇小说

集《妇女群像》(1929)等。1945年8月,德莱塞加入美国共产党,同年12月28日病逝。他既是20世纪美国文学中第一位杰出的作家,也是美国现代小说的先驱,他如实描写了新的美国城市生活,拥有许多忠实的追随者,美国评论家认为,德莱塞忠于生活、大胆创新,突破了美国文坛上传统思想的禁锢,解放了美国的小说,给美国文学带来了一场革命,因此把他跟福克纳、海明威并列为第一次世界大战后美国仅有的三大小说家。

《美国的悲剧》以一个普通美国青年克莱德·格里菲斯短促的一生为线索,将美国现代社会生活的众多画面交织进去。主人公克莱德是堪萨斯市一个穷牧师的儿子,从小跟父母流落街头布道卖唱,一心追求奢侈的生活。他对那种穷小子也能发财的美国式“传奇式的奇迹”入了迷。他到一家豪华旅馆当仆役,在那里,巨商大贾挥金如土,他们以吃喝玩乐为中心的生活方式、以损人利己为准则的处世哲学、以尔虞我诈为手段的生财之道,都给克莱德以极深的影响。后来,他因卷入一起严重车祸事件逃往芝加哥。他在伯父开的衬衣领子厂充当工头,不久,他与穷女工洛蓓塔有了私情,并使她有了身孕。嗣后,他又向大厂主的女儿桑德拉大献殷勤,企图同富家女结亲以实现飞黄腾达的美梦。为此,他对洛蓓塔起了杀心,他精心策划,骗她去湖上泛舟,小船意外地翻了,洛蓓塔落水身亡。事发,克莱德被捕,司法界对他进行审判,并把他送上了电椅,当时他才22岁。

小说通过克莱德“美国梦”的产生和幻灭,他利己主义人生观和享乐思想的形成和发展,他的苦闷、挣扎、堕落和毁灭,对资本主义社会提出了强烈而沉痛的控诉。这部悲剧与其说是人格与人性的悲剧,不如说是一个以利己主义为基础的时代和国家的悲剧。

CONTENTS

++ ++

BOOK ONE

Chapter 1	1
Chapter 2	7
Chapter 3	13
Chapter 4	21
Chapter 5	29
Chapter 6	35
Chapter 7	42
Chapter 8	48
Chapter 9	51
Chapter 10	61
Chapter 11	65
Chapter 12	75
Chapter 13	81
Chapter 14	95
Chapter 15	102
Chapter 16	111
Chapter 17	117
Chapter 18	124
Chapter 19	132

BOOK TWO

Chapter 1	142
-----------	-----

Chapter 2	149
Chapter 3	155
Chapter 4	166
Chapter 5	173
Chapter 6	186
Chapter 7	192
Chapter 8	196
Chapter 9	204
Chapter 10	215
Chapter 11	221
Chapter 12	231
Chapter 13	241
Chapter 14	246
Chapter 15	252
Chapter 16	260
Chapter 17	268
Chapter 18	273
Chapter 19	280
Chapter 20	285
Chapter 21	291
Chapter 22	297
Chapter 23	301
Chapter 24	307

Chapter 25	314
Chapter 26	322
Chapter 27	328
Chapter 28	334
Chapter 29	340
Chapter 30	349
Chapter 31	353
Chapter 32	361
Chapter 33	366
Chapter 34	374
Chapter 35	379
Chapter 36	388
Chapter 37	394
Chapter 38	407
Chapter 39	419
Chapter 40	425
Chapter 41	429
Chapter 42	432
Chapter 43	442
Chapter 44	451
Chapter 45	463
Chapter 46	472
Chapter 47	480

BOOK THREE

Chapter 1	495
Chapter 2	498
Chapter 3	503
Chapter 4	509
Chapter 5	519

Chapter 6	527
Chapter 7	533
Chapter 8	543
Chapter 9	556
Chapter 10	567
Chapter 11	573
Chapter 12	577
Chapter 13	586
Chapter 14	590
Chapter 15	599
Chapter 16	608
Chapter 17	615
Chapter 18	626
Chapter 19	631
Chapter 20	640
Chapter 21	650
Chapter 22	657
Chapter 23	666
Chapter 24	675
Chapter 25	705
Chapter 26	737
Chapter 27	745
Chapter 28	752
Chapter 29	763
Chapter 30	768
Chapter 31	778
Chapter 32	787
Chapter 33	795
Chapter 34	805
Souvenir	816

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I



Dusk—of a summer night.

And the tall walls of the commercial heart of an American city of perhaps 400,000 inhabitants—such walls as in time may linger as a mere fable.

And up the broad street, now comparatively hushed, a little band of six,—a man of about fifty, short, stout, with bushy hair protruding from under a round black felt hat, a most unimportant-looking person, who carried a small portable organ such as is customarily used by street preachers and singers. And with him a woman perhaps five years his junior, taller, not so broad, but solid of frame and vigorous, very plain in face and dress, and yet not homely, leading with one hand a small boy of seven and in the other carrying a Bible and several hymn books. With these three, but walking independently behind, was a girl of fifteen, a boy of twelve and another girl of nine, all following obediently, but not too enthusiastically, in the wake of the others.

It was hot, yet with a sweet languor about it all.

Crossing at right angles the great thoroughfare on which they walked, was a second canyon-like way, threaded by throngs and vehicles and various lines of cars which clanged their bells and made such progress as they might amid swiftly moving streams of traffic. Yet the little group seemed unconscious of anything save a set purpose to make its way between the contending lines of traffic and pedestrians which flowed by them.

Having reached an intersection this side of the second principal thoroughfare—really just an alley between two tall structures—now quite bare of life of any kind, the man put down the organ, which the woman immediately opened, setting up a music rack upon which she placed a wide flat hymn book. Then handing the Bible to the man, she fell back in line

with him, while the twelve-year-old boy put down a small camp-stool in front of the organ. The man—the father, as he chanced to be—looked about him with seeming wide-eyed assurance, and announced, without appearing to care whether he had any auditors or not:

“We will first sing a hymn of praise, so that any who may wish to acknowledge the Lord may join us. Will you oblige, Hester?”

At this the eldest girl, who until now had attempted to appear as unconscious and unaffected as possible, bestowed her rather slim and as yet undeveloped figure upon the camp chair and turned the leaves of the hymn book, pumping the organ while her mother observed:

“I should think it might be nice to sing twenty-seven tonight—‘How Sweet the Balm of Jesus’ Love.’”

By this time various homeward-bound individuals of diverse grades and walks of life, noticing the small group disposing itself in this fashion, hesitated for a moment to eye them askance or paused to ascertain the character of their work. This hesitancy, construed by the man apparently to constitute attention, however mobile, was seized upon by him and he began addressing them as though they were specifically here to hear him.

“Let us all sing twenty-seven, then—‘How Sweet the Balm of Jesus’ Love.’”

At this the young girl began to interpret the melody upon the organ, emitting a thin though correct strain, at the same time joining her rather high soprano with that of her mother, together with the rather dubious baritone of the father. The other children piped weakly along, the boy and girl having taken hymn books from the small pile stacked upon the organ. As they sang, this nondescript and indifferent street audience gazed, held by the peculiarity of such an unimportant-looking family publicly raising its collective voice against the vast skepticism and apathy of life. Some were interested or moved sympathetically by the rather tame and inadequate figure of the girl at the organ, others by the impractical and materially inefficient texture of the father, whose weak blue eyes and rather flabby but poorly-clothed figure bespoke more of failure than anything else. Of the group the mother alone stood out as having that force and determination which, however blind or erroneous, makes for self-preservation, if not success in life. She, more than any of the others, stood up with an ignorant, yet somehow respectable air of conviction. If you had watched her, her hymn book dropped to her side, her glance directed straight before her

into space, you would have said: "Well, here is one who, whatever her defects, probably does what she believes as nearly as possible." A kind of hard, fighting faith in the wisdom and mercy of that definite overruling and watchful power which she proclaimed, was written in her every feature and gesture.

*"The love of Jesus saves me whole,
The love of God my steps control,"*

she sang resonantly, if slightly nasally, between the towering walls of the adjacent buildings.

The boy moved restlessly from one foot to the other, keeping his eyes down, and for the most part only half singing. A tall and as yet slight figure, surmounted by an interesting head and face—white skin, dark hair—he seemed more keenly observant and decidedly more sensitive than most of the others—appeared indeed to resent and even to suffer from the position in which he found himself. Plainly pagan rather than religious, life interested him, although as yet he was not fully aware of this. All that could be truly said of him now was that there was no definite appeal in all this for him. He was too young, his mind much too responsive to phases of beauty and pleasure which had little, if anything, to do with the remote and cloudy romance which swayed the minds of his mother and father.

Indeed the home life of which this boy found himself a part and the various contacts, material and psychic, which thus far had been his, did not tend to convince him of the reality and force of all that his mother and father seemed so certainly to believe and say. Rather, they seemed more or less troubled in their lives, at least materially. His father was always reading the Bible and speaking in meeting at different places, especially in the "mission," which he and his mother conducted not so far from this corner. At the same time, as he understood it, they collected money from various interested or charitably inclined business men here and there who appeared to believe in such philanthropic work. Yet the family was always "hard up," never very well clothed, and deprived of many comforts and pleasures which seemed common enough to others. And his father and mother were constantly proclaiming the love and mercy and care of God for him and for all. Plainly there was something wrong somewhere. He could not get it all straight, but still he could not help respecting his mother, a woman whose

force and earnestness, as well as her sweetness, appealed to him. Despite much mission work and family cares, she managed to be fairly cheerful, or at least sustaining, often declaring most emphatically "God will provide" or "God will show the way," especially in times of too great stress about food or clothes. Yet apparently, in spite of this, as he and all the other children could see, God did not show any very clear way, even though there was always an extreme necessity for His favorable intervention in their affairs.

To-night, walking up the great street with his sisters and brother, he wished that they need not do this any more, or at least that he need not be a part of it. Other boys did not do such things, and besides, somehow it seemed shabby and even degrading. On more than one occasion, before he had been taken on the street in this fashion, other boys had called to him and made fun of his father, because he was always publicly emphasizing his religious beliefs or convictions. Thus in one neighborhood in which they had lived, when he was but a child of seven, his father, having always preluded every conversation with "Praise the Lord," he heard boys call "Here comes the old Praise-the-Lord Griffiths." Or they would call out after him "Hey, you're the fellow whose sister plays the organ. Is there anything else she can play?"

"What does he always want to go around saying, 'Praise the Lord' for? Other people don't do it."

It was that old mass yearning for a likeness in all things that troubled them, and him. Neither his father nor his mother was like other people, because they were always making so much of religion, and now at last they were making a business of it.

On this night in this great street with its cars and crowds and tall buildings, he felt ashamed, dragged out of normal life, to be made a show and jest of. The handsome automobiles that sped by, the loitering pedestrians moving off to what interests and comforts he could only surmise; the gay pairs of young people, laughing and jesting and the "kids" staring, all troubled him with a sense of something different, better, more beautiful than his, or rather their life.

And now units of this vagrom and unstable street throng, which was forever shifting and changing about them, seemed to sense the psychologic error of all this in so far as these children were concerned, for they would nudge one another, the more sophisticated and indifferent lifting an eyebrow and smiling contemptuously, the more sympathetic or experienced

commenting on the useless presence of these children.

"I see these people around here nearly every night now—two or three times a week, anyhow," this from a young clerk who had just met his girl and was escorting her toward a restaurant. "They're just working some religious dodge or other, I guess."

"That oldest boy don't wanta be here. He feels outa place, I can see that. It ain't right to make a kid like that come out unless he wants to. He can't understand all this stuff, anyhow." This from an idler and loafer of about forty, one of those odd hangers-on about the commercial heart of a city, addressing a pausing and seemingly amiable stranger.

"Yeh, I guess that's so," the other assented, taking in the peculiar cast of the boy's head and face. In view of the uneasy and self-conscious expression upon the face whenever it was lifted, one might have intelligently suggested that it was a little unkind as well as idle to thus publicly force upon a temperament as yet unfitted to absorb their import, religious and psychic services best suited to reflective temperaments of maturer years.

Yet so it was.

As for the remainder of the family, both the youngest girl and boy were too small to really understand much of what it was all about or to care. The eldest girl at the organ appeared not so much to mind, as to enjoy the attention and comment her presence and singing evoked, for more than once, not only strangers, but her mother and father, had assured her that she had an appealing and compelling voice, which was only partially true. It was not a good voice. They did not really understand music. Physically, she was of a pale, emasculate and unimportant structure, with no real mental force or depth, and was easily made to feel that this was an excellent field in which to distinguish herself and attract a little attention. As for the parents, they were determined upon spiritualizing the world as much as possible, and, once the hymn was concluded, the father launched into one of those hackneyed descriptions of the delights of a release, via self-realization of the mercy of God and the love of Christ and the will of God toward sinners, from the burdensome cares of an evil conscience.

"All men are sinners in the light of the Lord," he declared. "Unless they repent, unless they accept Christ, His love and forgiveness of them, they can never know the happiness of being spiritually whole and clean. Oh, my friends! If you could but know the peace and content that comes with the knowledge, the inward understanding, that Christ lived and died

for you and that He walks with you every day and hour, by light and by dark, at dawn and at dusk, to keep and strengthen you for the tasks and cares of the world that are ever before you. Of, the snares and pitfalls that beset us all! And then the soothing realization that Christ is ever with us, to counsel, to aid, to hearten, to bind up our wounds and make us whole! Oh, the peace, the satisfaction, the comfort, the glory of that!"

"Amen!" asseverated his wife, and the daughter, Hester, or Esta, as she was called by the family, moved by the need of as much public support as possible for all of them—echoed it after her.

Clyde, the eldest boy, and the two younger children merely gazed at the ground, or occasionally at their father, with a feeling that possibly it was all true and important, yet somehow not as significant or inviting as some of the other things which life held. They heard so much of this, and to their young and eager minds life was made for something more than street and mission hall protestations of this sort.

Finally, after a second hymn and an address by Mrs. Griffiths, during which she took occasion to refer to the mission work jointly conducted by them in a near-by street, and their services to the cause of Christ in general, a third hymn was indulged in, and then some tracts describing the mission rescue work being distributed, such voluntary gifts as were forthcoming were taken up by Asa—the father. The small organ was closed, the camp chair folded up and given to Clyde, the Bible and hymn books picked up by Mrs. Griffiths, and with the organ supported by a leather strap passed over the shoulder of Griffiths, senior, the missionward march was taken up.

During all this time Clyde was saying to himself that he did not wish to do this any more, that he and his parents looked foolish and less than normal—"cheap" was the word he would have used if he could have brought himself to express his full measure of resentment at being compelled to participate in this way—and that he would not do it any more if he could help. What good did it do them to have him along? His life should not be like this. Other boys did not have to do as he did. He meditated now more determinedly than ever a rebellion by which he would rid himself of the need of going out in this way. Let his elder sister go if she chose; she liked it. His younger sister and brother might be too young to care. But he—

"They seemed a little more attentive than usual to-night, I thought," commented Griffiths to his wife as they walked along, the seductive

quality of the summer evening air softening him into a more generous interpretation of the customary indifferent spirit of the passer-by.

"Yes; twenty-seven took tracts to-night as against eighteen on Thursday."

"The love of Christ must eventually prevail," comforted the father, as much to hearten himself as his wife. "The pleasures and cares of the world hold a very great many, but when sorrow overtakes them, then some of these seeds will take root."

"I am sure of it. That is the thought which always keeps me up. Sorrow and the weight of sin eventually bring some of them to see the error of their way."

They now entered into the narrow side street from which they had emerged and walking as many as a dozen doors from the corner, entered the door of a yellow single-story wooden building, the large window and the two glass panes in the central door of which had been painted a gray-white. Across both windows and the smaller panels in the double door had been painted: "The Door of Hope. Bethel Independent Mission. Meetings Every Wednesday and Saturday night, 8 to 10. Sundays at 11, 3 and 8. Everybody Welcome." Under this legend on each window were printed the words: "God is Love," and below this again, in smaller type: "How Long Since You Wrote to Mother?"

The small company entered the yellow unprepossessing door and disappeared.

CHAPTER 2



That such a family, thus cursorily presented, might have a different and somewhat peculiar history could well be anticipated, and it would be true. Indeed, this one presented one of those anomalies of psychic and social reflex and motivation such as would tax the skill of not only the psychologist but the chemist and physicist as well, to unravel. To begin with, Asa Griffiths, the father, was one of those poorly integrated

and correlated organisms, the product of an environment and a religious theory, but with no guiding or mental insight of his own, yet sensitive and therefore highly emotional and without any practical sense whatsoever. Indeed it would be hard to make clear just how life appealed to him, or what the true hue of his emotional responses was. On the other hand, as has been indicated, his wife was of a firmer texture but with scarcely any truer or more practical insight into anything.

The history of this man and his wife is of no particular interest here save as it affected their boy of twelve, Clyde Griffiths. This youth, aside from a certain emotionalism and exotic sense of romance which characterized him, and which he took more from his father than from his mother, brought a more vivid and intelligent imagination to things, and was constantly thinking of how he might better himself, if he had a chance; places to which he might go, things he might see, and how differently he might live, if only this, that and the other things were true. The principal thing that troubled Clyde up to his fifteenth year, and for long after in retrospect, was that the calling or profession of his parents was the shabby thing that it appeared to be in the eyes of others. For so often throughout his youth in different cities in which his parents had conducted a mission or spoken on the streets—Grand Rapids, Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago, lastly Kansas City—it had been obvious that people, at least the boys and girls he encountered, looked down upon him and his brothers and sisters for being the children of such parents. On several occasions, and much against the mood of his parents, who never countenanced such exhibitions of temper, he had stopped to fight with one or another of these boys. But always, beaten or victorious, he had been conscious of the fact that the work his parents did was not satisfactory to others,—shabby, trivial. And always he was thinking of what he would do, once he reached the place where he could get away.

For Clyde's parents had proved impractical in the matter of the future of their children. They did not understand the importance or the essential necessity for some form of practical or professional training for each and every one of their young ones. Instead, being wrapped up in the notion of evangelizing the world, they had neglected to keep their children in school in any one place. They had moved here and there, sometimes in the very midst of an advantageous school season, because of a larger and better religious field in which to work. And there were times, when, the