


英语文学系列教材

美国文学史




华中师范大学出版社

王卓 李权文 主编

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王卓 李权文 主编

邓绪新 苏宜梅 杨梅 副主编



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前 言

《美国文学史》是一部在新的社会文化历史语境下编写的供英语专业高年级本科生或研究生使用的教材,也是一部文学研究者的参考书。当历史进入国家十二五规划时期,我国社会和高校对文学以及高校英语专业文学教育的观念发生了巨大变化,对英语专业文学课程的教学时数、内容、手段和方法、教材编写与使用等都提出了新的要求。随着时代的发展和文学观念的更新,国内外对于美国文学的认识也亟待更新,同时,21 世纪的美国文学的发展也呈现出新的趋势。在这些新的形势下,编写一部架构新颖、理念先进、内容翔实的美国文学史,成为了一项十分有意义的任务。

为了适应新时代高校文学教学的要求和文学史观的特点,也为了更充分地体现教材在文学教学和学术研究中的意义和价值,我们根据下列原则编写了本书:第一,力求体现新形势下研究型教学的要求和探究式学习的特点。问题意识是本书贯穿始终的精神和灵魂。本书在对美国文学史进行梳理和介绍的基础之上,结合不同作家和作品的特点、不同文学思潮的特征、不同文学流派的区别等设置了相关思考题,以便更好地配合教学,引导学生阅读、思考和研究。第二,注重教材内容的时代性。在作家作品的选择上兼顾学界关于文学经典的传统的和当下的观点,内容的分布则强调现当代部分,兼及 21 世纪美国文学。第三,适度打破传统文学史的时间框架,按照文学流派和文学体裁建构章节,帮助学生更好地把握作家作品的共性与个性。第四,教材性与资料性并重。本书选材丰富、内容系统、体系完整,适度超出教学时数的限制,供教师根据实际选择使用和供学生进行拓展学习,同时也可供文学研究者参考使用。

本着以上编写原则,本书与同类教材相比具有如下特点:第一,体系合理。全书共分为五章:早期美国文学、浪漫主义时期美国文学、自然主义和现实主义时期美国文学、两次世界大战期间的美国文学、1945 年之后的美国文学。该体系以代表作家、作品为点,以历史时间为线,以文学现象、思潮为面,点线面结合,线索清楚、重点突出。第二,略古详今。鉴于 20 世纪美国文学的辉煌成就,本教材加大了 20 世纪美国

文学的分量,对当代作家和作品给予了足够关注。第三,问题意识。本教材不但在编写过程中贯穿着问题意识,而且在每一节之后均设有思考题供学生和教师学习和检测。第四,概括性强。鉴于美国文学史浩繁庞杂,本书在编写过程中注重概括、引领和总结,各章、各节均有“导论”部分,且不同层级的“导论”各有侧重,具有概括性,便于教师和学生掌握精髓和要点。

本书由来自国内近10所高校的专业教师共同编写而成。第一章由邓绪新负责、第二章由杨梅负责、第三章由郭晶晶负责、第四章由苏宜梅负责、第五章由李权文负责。此外,罗良功、何庆机、王卓、周昕、张生珍、张海霞、潘蕾、桂宏军、杨柳、赵晶、丁玫、易立君、李云霞、岳丽、肖文、曹蓉蓉、姜文泉、覃金菊、朱红、朱方芳、张甜、史丽玲、刘永莉、苏珊珊等老师也参加了编写。本书统稿工作由王卓、李权文共同完成。本书的编辑出版得到了华中师范大学出版社范军社长、段维总编、曾巍副社长以及高校教材编辑室刘晓嘉主任、李郭倩编辑等的大力支持,我们在此一并致谢。

美国文学具有独特的发展规律,且成就辉煌,优秀作家和经典作品层出不穷。这是美国文学的魅力所在,但同时也给编写者带来了不少困扰:在文学史阶段的划分、作家和作品的取舍与详略、文学流派的归属等问题上,往往众说纷纭、莫衷一是。我们在学习国内外同类教材和相关著作的经验和优点的同时,也力图在视角、结构、体系、作家作品选择、问题设计等方面都能体现新时代的特点和我们自己的学术观点。但是由于时间仓促、资料难寻、编者学养有限,不足之处在所难免,敬请广大师生和学者批评指正。

编者

2010年6月

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Chapter 1 Early American Literature (1620—1810)

1. Introduction

Before the colonial period, forms of American literature were the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales, and lyrics of Indian cultures. There was no written literature among the more than 500 different Indian languages and tribal cultures that existed in North America before the first Europeans arrived. However, American literature was not based on native Indian culture. It was a descendant of European literature. At the beginning of the 17th century, the vast continental area that was to become the United States had been probed only slightly by English and European explorers. At last, early in the 17th century, the English settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts began the mainstream of what we recognize as the American national history.

The story of a nation's literature ordinarily had its beginning far back in the remoter history of that nation, obscured by the uncertainties of an age of which no trustworthy records had been preserved. The earliest writings of a people were usually the first efforts at literary production of a race in its childhood; and as these compositions developed, they recorded the intellectual and artistic growth of the race. The conditions which attended the development of literature in America, therefore, were peculiar.

After the discovery of the New World, the European powers sent many explorers to the new continents and they began to compete against each other in occupying the New World. The period of colonization covered the years from 1607 to 1776, that is, from the first settlement of English colonists to the independence

of the U. S. . During its early history, America was a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present-day United States. Therefore, its literary tradition began as linked to the broader tradition of English literature. However, unique American characteristics and the breadth of its production usually now cause it to be considered a separate path and tradition. Early Americans sparsely populated, with large land development for the realization of personal ideals with a lot of possibilities.

Some of the earliest forms of American literature were pamphlets and writings extolling the benefits of the colonies to both European and colonist audience. Captain John Smith could be considered as the first American author with his works: *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as Happened in Virginia and The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*. Other writers of this manner included Daniel Denton, Thomas Ashe, William Penn, George Percy, William Strachey, Daniel Coxe, Gabriel Thomas, and John Lawson.

The religious disputes that prompted settlement in America were also topics of early writings. A journal written by John Winthrop discussed the religious foundations of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Edward Winslow also recorded a diary of the first years after the Mayflower's arrival. Other religiously influenced writers included Increase Mather and William Bradford, author of the journal published as *A History of Plymouth Plantation*. Others like Roger Williams and Nathaniel Ward more fiercely argued about state and church separation.

Some poetry also existed. Michael Wigglesworth wrote a best-selling poem, *The Day of Doom*, describing the time of judgment. Nicholas Noyes was also known for his doggerel verse. Among them, Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor were especially noted. Anne Bradstreet was a Puritan poet who wrote "ponderous verses of interminable, inter-locking poems" on the four elements; the constitutions of man, the ages of man, the seasons of the year, and the chief empires of the ancient world. Her poems made such a stir in England that she became known as the "Tenth Muse" who appeared in America. Edward Taylor was a meditative poet. In his elaborate metaphor he was reminiscent of Richard Crashaw, and George Herbert. In his splendid, exotic images, Taylor came nearest

to the English baroque poets^①.

Other late writings described conflicts and interaction with the Indians, as seen in writings by Daniel Gookin, Alexander Whitaker, John Mason, Benjamin Church, and Mary Rowlandson. John Eliot translated the Bible into the Algonquin language. Thomas Shepard described the conversion work of John Eliot among the Naticks, a Massachusetts branch of the Algonquians, which included the establishment of independent Indian communities of converted “Praying Indians” schools, and seminaries. Gookin wrote two books on the Indians: *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* (completed in 1674, published in 1792), and *The Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians* (completed in 1677, published in 1836). He also wrote *A History of New England*, but only portions of this have survived.

Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield represented the Great Awakening^②, a religious revival in the early 18th century that asserted strict Calvinism. Other Puritan and religious writers included, Thomas Shepard, John Wise, and Samuel Willard. Less strict and serious writers included Samuel Sewall, Sarah Kemble Knight, and William Byrd. While Shepard’s sermons were more well-known in his day, his modern reputation rested upon his journal, published in this collection. The journal dealt with the fundamental question in Puritan life: “How do I know that I am saved?” To explicate the answer, Shepard recited his own conversion journey, pointing out that dangers, such as Indians and Antinomian heresies, were chances for God to deliver him safely.

Despite such a large number of puritan writings, there were challenges to the Puritan oligarchy. A woman, Anne Hutchinson whom Winthrop himself described in his journal as being “of wit and bold spirit,” insisted that good works were not

① Chang Yaixin. *A Survey of American Literature*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1990. pp. 22-23.

② *The Great Awakening* was a time of religious advances leading to changes mainly in the American colonies with increased religious activity, particularly in New England. Baptist and Methodist preachers converted both whites and blacks, enslaved and free. The Baptists especially welcomed blacks into active roles in congregations, including as preachers. George Whitefield probably sparked the religious conflagration, while Jonathan Edwards’ new style of preaching found in “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” was copied by numerous imitators both lay and clerical. They became itinerant preachers themselves, spreading the Great Awakening from New England to Georgia, among rich and poor, educated and illiterate, and in the back-country as well as in seaboard towns and cities.

singing of God's blessing. Since the elect were guaranteed salvation, she argued, the mediating role of the church between God and man became obsolete. This represented a serious challenge to the power of the Puritan oligarchy, which of course had Winthrop at its head. It could hardly be countenanced by them and so, eventually, Hutchinson was banished. Along with banishment went argument: Winthrop clearly believed that he had to meet the challenge posed by Hutchinson in other ways. William Bradford also had to face challenges, threats to the purity and integrity of his colony; and Anne Hutchinson was not the only, or perhaps the most serious, challenge to the project announced on board the *Arbella*^①.

The revolutionary period also contained political writings, including those by colonists like Samuel Adams, Josiah Quincy, John Dickinson, and Joseph Galloway, a loyalist to the crown. Two key figures were Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine. Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac* and *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* were esteemed works with their wit and influence toward the formation of a budding American identity. Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* and *The American Crisis* writings were seen as playing a key role in influencing the political tone of the period. During the revolution itself, poems and songs such as "Yankee Doodle" and "Nathan Hale" were popular. Major satirists included John Trumbull and Francis Hopkinson. Philip Morin Freneau also wrote poems about the war's course^②.

It is possible to see Jonathan Edwards as a distillation of one side of the Puritan inheritance: that is, the spiritual, even mystical strain in Puritan thought that emphasized the inner life, the pursuit of personal redemption, and the ineffable characteristics of God's grace. In that case, it is equally possible to see Edwards' great contemporary, Benjamin Franklin, as a distillation and development of another side: the tendency in Puritanism that stressed the outer life, hard work and good conduct, and the freedom of the individual will. Edwards, to an extent, took up the idealistic, sometimes pessimistic strain in Puritanism that claimed people were helpless, focused on death as the determining event in life, and set its sights

① Richard Gary. *A History of American Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004. pp. 36-37.

② Wikipedia: "Colonial Literature," under the G. N. U. Free Documentation License.

on what lay beyond this world. The world from this viewpoint, was a forest of symbols, signs given by God to teach people the ways of providence. In Franklin, by contrast, we see traces of a quite different strain, which said that people should strive mightily, focused on personal behavior as the decisive factor in human experience, and made its immediate target a community of visible saints. The world taken from this approach, was a matter of fact, a place where everyone proved their worth by adherence to the work ethic and the practice of such eminently social virtues as sobriety, self-control and charity^①.

However, the voices from native Indians can not be ignored, which also contributed to the entire early American literature, although it hasn't been taken much consideration into. At the moment when the inhabitants of the Old World and the New World first met and began to describe the meeting, there were more than ten million Native Americans speaking more than 350 languages. There are still two million of their descendants living in the United States and in North America there may be as many as 200 languages still spoken. Columbus left a written record and had others leave written accounts for him. The Yuchis told tales to each other that were passed from one generation to the next as they were transplanted from their home on the southern Appalachians to the new territory west of the Mississippi in the notorious removals of the 1830s. For Europeans, encounter with Native Americans may have coincided with the age of the book, but for Native Americans, literature remained a matter of speech and performance. Although it might resonate with certain common themes and a shared idiom, each song or tale had its own verbal particularity each time it was sung or spoken. And although it might be modulated by a framework of expectations and prescribed ritual, each performance was unrepeatable, unique. What we read now, when we read a Native American story, is the result of an act of textualization, something that necessarily rips the story out of the living tissue of the world in which it was formed and changed. It is no longer part of a communal dialogue, a continuous process of mythmaking, but a text set in the apparent authority and fixity of print. What we read now is also the result of an act of translation; any version we have of a Native

^① Richard Gary. *A History of American Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004. pp. 68-69.

American tale is precisely, a version shaped by the use of a written alphabet if not also by prevailing notions of what is appropriately literary. Quite apart from problems of textualization and transcription, there were those of historical and geographical differences. The stories varied, of course, according to a people's way of life, the place where they lived, the food they ate and the way they got it. The world of the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest, for instance, was bounded by four sacred mountains, where holy men still journey on pilgrimages to gather herbs and pray for rain. Their lives were governed by the rhythms of planting and harvesting, the coming of corn and the changing seasons, and they told tales very different from those of the nomadic buffalo hunters of the Plains—or the people of the Northwest who made their living from the sea and filled their stories with ocean monsters, heroic boat builders and harpooners.

When we read the Native American text, however, with all due acknowledgement that what we are reading is a text and a translation, certain themes and preoccupations tend to recur. There are stories of world creation and the evolution of the sun, moon and stars; there are tales of human and cultural emergence, involving the discovery of rituals or resources such as corn, buffalo, horses, salt, tobacco or peyote vital to the tribe; there are legends of culture heroes, sometimes related to history such as Hiawatha, sometimes purely mythic like the recurring figures of twin brothers; and, not unrelated to this, there are stories of tricksters, such as Coyote, Rabbit and Spider Man. There are, invariably, tales of love and war, animals and spirits, mythic versions of a particular tribal history and mythic explanations of the geography, the place where the tribe now lives. Along with myths of origin, the evolution of the world out of water and primal mud, there are also myths of ending, although very often the ending is simply the prelude to another beginning. In one tale told among the Brule Sioux, for example, the "Creating Power" was thinking of other endings and beginnings even while he was creating our present world and telling the people "what tribes they belonged to." "This is the third world I have made," he declared. "The second world I made was bad too. I burned it up." "If you make this world bad and ugly," he warned the men and women he had fashioned out of