

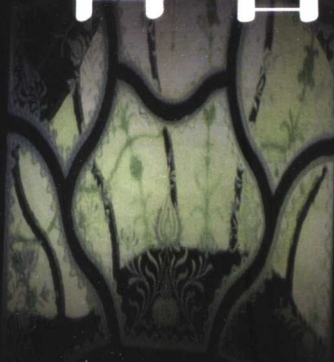
英美文学

名著赏析

主编 刘涪波

Volume One

上册



华南理工大学出版社

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S 英美文学
Selected Readings in
名著赏析
British and American Literature

Volume One

上册

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The Authors October, 2004



PREFACE



Literature is a cultural heritage. Its importance can never be exaggerated. First, literature is a key to knowledge and wisdom. We encounter new ideas and concepts in literary works. Secondly, literature helps us understand people around us and in different parts of the world by recognizing the diverse points of view. Thirdly, literature can be a tool to teach. Socrates believed that the effect of good literature is to lead the youth to follow the correct path permitted by the laws. Last but not least, literature, when used in language classes, helps us increase our vocabulary, master idiomatic expressions, enhance our cultural awareness, and promote our intercultural communication.

British and American literature are among the best of the world literary heritage. They represent the imagination and creativity of British and American writers. To master the English language and to improve our understanding of its culture, it is necessary to study some works of British and American literature.

It is with this in mind that we compiled this textbook, which is divided into two volumes: *Selected Readings of British Literature* and *Selected Readings of American Literature*. Each volume includes 19 writers, with an individual writer as a unit. Each unit includes "About the Author", "The Story", "Selected Reading", "Notes", "Remarks" and "Questions for Discussion". The emphasis is laid on the reading, appreciation and analysis of the original texts with a view to helping students understand the richness of these works in their humanistic implications and artistic beauty.

It was the joint efforts of both the editors and the authors that have brought about the publication of the book, but each individual was assigned with a specific chapter or chapters. More specifically, Liu Jianbo designed the framework, read the whole book carefully and meticulously and has made corrections where appropriate. Hu Nanping is in charge of Introduction, William Shakespeare, John Milton, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Emily Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and the Appendix; Chen Yu is in charge of Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Robert Burns, William Wordsworth, George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and Jane Austen.

The book is far from perfect. We sincerely welcome comments so that improvements could be made in future editions.



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INTRODUCTION



English literature, with a long history and tradition, has undergone great changes and development during different historical periods. The following is a brief account of the development of English literature.

I. Early and Medieval Literature

The earliest forms of English literature, which are still preserved as the relics of the Anglo-Saxons, are poems originated from the collective efforts of the people. These poems or songs are partly historical stories and partly legendary stories passed orally from generation to generation. Among these poems, *Beowulf* has generally been considered the monumental work in English poetry of the Anglo-Saxon period, or the national epic of the English people.

This poem is about the deeds of the Teutonic hero Beowulf, who fights against the monster and eventually cuts off the head of the old monster with a magic sword, and at last fights with a fire dragon for his own people. *Beowulf*, in its remote ideas, allusive style and story-telling form, towers above all other literary works in Anglo-Saxon, chiefly because it is a powerful poem about a people's grand hero who is eager to help others in distress, faithful to his people, and ready to sacrifice his own life for their welfare. Even now, it is generally assigned in the study of English poetry.

During the Middle Ages, the most prevailing kind of literature was the romantic verse and prose. The romance or medieval stories usually tell the adventures of some heroes of chivalry. The heroes are the knights, and the qualities they are expected to have include courage, honour, courtesy, and devotion to the weak and helpless and to the service of women. Their loyalty to the church and the king is the corner stone of feudal morality.

With the rapid development of capitalism in England after the 14th century, English gained its dominance and popularity, thus providing conditions for the emergence of outstanding literary works. Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 - 1400), with his broad and intimate acquaintance with people high and low in all walks of life, acquired an abundant knowledge of the world, which had profound influence upon his writing. He was at home in his own choice of subjects, his own grasp of characters and his own diction and plots,



all of which has been found in his masterpiece *The Canterbury Tales*. The poem describes the pilgrims from various parts of feudal England and stories narrated by them, thus creating a strikingly brilliant and picturesque panorama of his time and country. That is why he has been regarded as "the founder of English realism". Chaucer was the first great poet to write in the English language and his works had a great influence on making the dialect of London the standard for modern English speech.

II. The Renaissance Literature

During the 16th century in England, feudalism collapsed and the foundation of capitalism was established. The rise of the bourgeoisie resulted in an intellectual movement better known as the Renaissance. The most important characteristic of this movement is the exaltation of man and an absorption in earthly life. People were no longer interested in living for God and in life after death. Hence humanism, which reflected the outlook of the rising bourgeoisie, came into being. The humanists believed that man "could mould the world according to his desires, and attain happiness by removing all external checks by the exercise of human intellect". Among these humanists were Thomas Moore (1478 - 1535), Francis Bacon (1561 - 1626), Edmund Spenser (1552 - 1599), Christopher Marlowe (1564 - 1593), and William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616). Thomas Moore wrote *Utopia* (1516) which gives a profound and vivid description of the social evils of England and presents utopian socialism describing in detail Moore's ideal of the future society, Utopia.

Francis Bacon was a great scientist, thinker, philosopher and an essayist. His essays are enlightening. They are Bacon's reflections and comments on rather abstract subjects.

Edmund Spenser was considered as a "poet's poet". *The Faerie Queene* is his masterpiece and one of the greatest poems in the English language. The Faerie Queene represents Queen Elizabeth, and thus sings praises to "that greatest glorious queen of Faery Land".

Christopher Marlowe was the greatest pioneer of English drama. He reformed the English drama and perfected the language and verse of dramatic works. He was the first to make blank verse the principal instrument of English drama. His works include *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Doctor Faustus*. *Doctor Faustus* is based on a German legend, but Marlowe adapted it to suit his needs to express the man's desire for infinite power through knowledge.

III. Literature in the Period of English Bourgeois Revolution and Restoration

In the 17th century the absolute monarchy seriously hindered the development of



capitalism and the clashes between the feudal system and the bourgeoisie escalated. This inevitably resulted in a revolution. A civil war broke out in 1642, which ended in 1649 with the execution of Charles by the opposition forces led by Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell imposed military dictatorship in 1653 and established the Commonwealth. Two years after his death in 1658, the monarchy was restored and Charles II became the king. This is known as the Restoration. When James II threatened to restore the absolute monarchy, the bourgeoisie expelled him and invited Prince William of Orange to be King of England in 1688. This is known as the "Glorious Revolution" because it was bloodless. The state structure of England was thus settled.

Literature of this period reflected these social upheavals. Milton and Bunyan used their pens to defend the English Commonwealth. Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, which won him immediate fame and success after its publication in 1667 and was considered as a classic of English literature, the greatest epic in the English language. Milton wrote the epic to "justify the ways of God to men" and to glorify his country and his language. Bunyan was the most popular writer during that period, whose great work *The Pilgrim's Progress* published in 1678 was written in the old-fashioned, medieval form of allegory and dream. It became an immediate success upon its publication. *The Pilgrim's Progress* depicts the Puritan struggle for freedom of worship, the eternal struggle of man to find unity with God.

However, there were also other poets whose poems expressed quite different ideas and sentiments. They were the Metaphysical Poets and the Cavalier Poets. The characteristics of the Metaphysical poems are usually mystical in content and fantastical in form.

IV. Eighteenth Century Literature

After the 17th century, England entered a period of peace and unity. The "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 marked the end of the long struggle for political freedom in England. Thereafter, England became a constitutional monarchy. In the early 18th century, Neo-classicism came into fashion. Writers modeled themselves after Greek and Latin authors, and tried to control literary creation by some fixed laws and rules drawn from Greek and Latin works. They strove to repress all emotion and enthusiasm, and to use only precise and elegant methods of expression. Joseph Addison (1672 - 1719), Richard Steele (1672 - 1729), Alexander Pope (1688 - 1744) and Samuel Johnson (1709 - 1784) belonged to this school. Jonathan Swift (1667 - 1745), with his direct, simple and vigorous style, was one of the greatest satirist and prose writers in English literature. His masterpiece *Gulliver's Travel* was not only an interesting adventure story for young readers, but also a merciless



satire on the crude vices of the English society. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* marked an epoch in the study of English language and the end of English writers' reliance on the patronage of noblemen for support.

With the rise of the modern novel, the eighteenth century is also referred to as an age of prose. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* describes Robinson's life and struggle on an uninhabited island, reflecting the rising bourgeoisie at the earliest stage of its development. The book won him the credit as "Father of the English novel". Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* was a series of letters telling the trials, tribulations, and the final happy marriage of a young maiden. With its emphasis on the inner world of a plain girl, the book was claimed as the first English novel in the modern sense. Inspired by the success of *Pamela*, Henry Fielding's (1707 - 1754) first novel *Joseph Andrews* further developed the realistic fiction. His later novel *Tom Jones* gives us pictures of men and women of his own age.

Great changes also took place in rural England. The expropriation of peasants which began in the 15th century was completed in the 18th century. Peasants were ruined and driven off their land. Many writers expressed their lamentation in their sentimental poetry and prose in the middle of this century. Thomas Gray (1716 - 1771), Oliver Goldsmith (1728 - 1774), Laurence Sterne (1713 - 1768), Samuel Richardson (1689 - 1761) were representatives of this school. They were all discontent with the social reality and appealed to "sentiment", to "human heart" and they had sympathy for the poverty-stricken, expropriated peasants. It marks a transition from Neo-classicism to Romanticism in English poetry.

Pre-romanticism in English poetry is marked by a strong protest against the bandage of classicism, by a recognition of the chains of passions and emotion, and by a renewed interest in medieval literature. The most famous writers of this school are William Blake (1757 - 1827) and Robert Burns (1759 - 1796).

V. Literature of Romanticism

It is generally agreed that the first half of the 19th century witnessed the triumph of Romanticism in literature. Motivated by both the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution, literature suddenly developed a new creative spirit, which shows itself in the poetry of William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 - 1834), George Gordon Byron (1788 - 1824), Percy Bysshe Shelly (1792 - 1822), John Keats (1795 - 1821), and in the prose of Walter Scott (1771 - 1832) and Jane Austen (1775 - 1817).



The essence of Romanticism was that "literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way". Samuel Coleridge and William Wordsworth jointly wrote *Lyrical Ballads*, a small collection of poems. The publication of the collection marked the rise of romanticism in English literature. The whole spirit of their work is reflected in two poems: "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abby".

As far as prose is concerned, those of Scott enjoyed the appreciation of a wide-ranged reading audience. The novels of Austen were gradually accepted and appreciated by the public.

VI. Literature in the Victorian Age

The Victorian age (1832 - 1902) was a time of profound change. Expansion of national economy and colonial territory transferred England into a world empire of immense strength. The pivotal city of Western civilization moved from Paris to London at this time.

Literature flourished during this period. Poetry continued to be produced. Two poets rank among the greatest: Alfred Tennyson (1809 - 1892) and Robert Browning (1812 - 1889). Tennyson wrote a wonderful variety of verse, in which he expressed in exquisite melody the voice of the people, their doubts and their faith, their grieves and their triumphs. Browning's poems are dramatic in form, which express some strong personal emotions, or describe some dramatic episodes in human life.

This period is an age of prose. The vitality of the Industrial Revolution brought the Victorian age into a great period of novel in Britain. Out of the vast hosts of novelists, the most prominent include Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870), William Makepeace Thackeray (1811 - 1902), George Eliot (1819 - 1880), and the Brontë Sisters. Charles Dickens was acknowledged as the greatest novelist of England. Among his many novels, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations* tell the stories of orphans, which reflect the author's own boyhood and family. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, with its scene laid in London and Paris at the time of the French Revolution, Dickens reproduced a picture of Victorian English society. William Makepeace Thackeray was another great novelist of the age. His masterpiece, *Vanity Fair*, tells the story of Becky Sharp climbing up the social ladder by every possible means, through which the author attacks the social relationship of the bourgeois world. Also outstanding in the literature of this age were the Brontë Sisters: Charlotte Brontë (1816 - 1855), Emily Brontë (1818 - 1848), and Anne Brontë (1820 - 1849). Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* tells the story of a heroine who struggles strenuously in the men's world to achieve her freedom and independence. Emily Brontë's



best-known work *Wuthering Heights*, with its mystery and horror, is a powerful and fascinating story of love and suffering, passion and grief. George Eliot, the penname of Mary Ann Evans, wrote *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch* which reflect the country life in England. With her representation of the inner struggle, the motives and impulses of characters, she was claimed as the forerunner of the modern psychological novel.

Beginning from the 1870s, a sharp decline occurred with the economic depression, agricultural failures, and the flooding of Australian wool and American wheat. Domestic balance of power was also threatened with the growth of labour as a political and economic force. Class struggle was intensified in the last two decades of the 19th century. Thomas Hardy's (1840 - 1928) early novels present vivid description of the rural people in the south of England. But his late novels are darkened by his gloomy view in the face of modern social conditions. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* tell the tragic stories of rural youth in their desperate situation.

VII. Twentieth Century Literature

In the period of transition between the 19th and 20th centuries, the British Empire in the reign of Queen Victoria fell into a decline from the summit of its worldwide supremacy. The Boer War of 1899 - 1902, between the British colonialists in South Africa and two independent republics of Dutch settlers, marked the rapid decline in Britain's prestige and prosperity. The bankruptcy of British rural economy beginning from the 1870s grew more acute in the early years of the 20th century. In the meantime, the contradictions between the imperialist countries grew into such great tension that it finally led to the outbreak of the devastating First World War (1914 - 1918). The war ended in immense losses on both sides, and the people were disillusioned, distrustful of their leaders and dissatisfied with the shape of society.

As in the Victorian age, literature in the 20th century followed highly diverse courses and strongly reflected the political, social and scientific events of the age. The pessimism of the last few decades in the 19th century was seen in Thomas Hardy. The decadence of Victorian life was best reflected in the works of Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900), who advocated the theory of "art for art's sake". The two world wars left marks of disillusionment and despair, not without severe criticism, in many literary works of the time. T. S. Eliot's (1887 - 1965) *Waste Land* is a spiritual wasteland.

The twenty years after about 1912 saw a transition of the traditional novels to the modern novel. Vitality and interest in technical experimentation with the novel marked this



period. The technique of "stream of consciousness" developed, whereby the authors tried to directly depict events in the continuous and unedited flow of the character's conscious experience through the mind. Virginia Woolf's (1882 - 1941) *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* are two notable examples. D. H. Lawrence (1885 - 1930) seemed to concentrate in his fiction on human relationships, especially on those between a man and a woman with the themes of love and marriage. His major novels *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, combining sexual relations with social criticism, severely attack the industrialized capitalism. Under the influence of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, these novelists demonstrated an increased awareness of the inner workings of the mind. A new view of time developed, coupled with a deeper understanding of the consciousness. One's present was believed to be the sum of his past. Time was no longer presented by the novelist in sequence, but as a continuous flow in the consciousness of the individual. James Joyce (1882 - 1941) is acknowledged as the greatest English writer after Shakespeare. His brilliant work *Ulysses*, through a detailed study of the intricate workings of the hero's conscious and subconscious mind, explores the inmost thought by a man that existed in Dublin on June 16, 1904, thereby presenting to us the very essence of our life and our spiritual world.

The 20th century was also an era of high achievements in the fields of poetry and drama. W. B. Yeats (1865 - 1939) and T. S. Eliot, both Nobel Prize winners, were the two greatest British poets of the century. Since the 1890s, there was a revival of English drama. Several important playwrights were part of a movement known as the Irish Literary Renaissance, which sought to revitalize Irish art and culture. However, the dominant figure in the early 20th century drama was George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950), who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1925.





William Shakespeare

(1564 – 1616)

About the Author

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, northwest of London. He attended the local grammar school and read widely. Shakespeare went to London around 1586 when drama was rapidly becoming popular. After many hardships he became an actor and playwright in one of the leading companies of players. He revised old plays and wrote new ones. His plays always bore traces of the events of contemporary life. Because of this, together with his matured craftsmanship, his plays became extremely popular. From 1590 to 1613, Shakespeare wrote 38 plays in the forms of comedy, tragedy, history and legend, among which the best-known include *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Henry IV, Part I* (1597), *Twelfth Night* (1600), *Hamlet* (1601), *Othello* (1604), *King Lear* (1605), *Macbeth* (1606) *Winter's Tale* (1610), and *The Tempest* (1612). Besides plays, Shakespeare wrote some narrative poems and sonnets. Today some of his sonnets, such as Sonnet 18, Sonnet 73 and Sonnet 116, are regarded as the best in the world of poetry. Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616. He left the world a rich heritage of immortal plays and poems. His contemporary playwright Ben Jonson wrote that "he was not of an age, but for all time!"



8

Romeo and Juliet

The Story

A feud has been raging for many years between the houses of Capulet and Montague. Romeo from Montague notices and is struck by the beauty of Juliet of Capulet at a party given by Capulet. The two young people fall in love. Romeo, reluctant to leave the



grounds of the Capulet household, hides in an orchard where he overhears Juliet, at a window, express her love for him. The two exchange vows and decide to marry the next day. The Friar agrees to marry the couple in hope that the union will bring peace to the feuding families. Tybalt, a relative of Capulet who had recognized Romeo at the party, meets Romeo and hurts Romeo's friend. Romeo then engages Tybalt, kills him, and is banished from Verona. Capulet arranges Juliet to marry Paris. And the marriage is to take place in three days. Juliet attempts to dissuade her parents, but her father threatens to disown her if she will not obey him. Juliet goes to the Friar for advice; he gives her a potion that will produce the effect of death until Romeo can be summoned. Juliet returns home and pretends submission to her parent's wishes. The following morning, the Nurse finds Juliet apparently dead. The intended wedding celebration becomes a funeral. But Romeo has not been informed that Juliet is only apparently dead. Bereaved at the supposed death of Juliet, Romeo buys poison and returns to Verona. At the tomb, he kisses Juliet, drinks the poison, and dies. And when Juliet wakes up and sees Romeo's body, she stabs herself. In the presence of their children's bodies, Capulet and Montague reconcile.

Selected Reading



Act I, Scene V. A Hall in Capulet's House.

Servicemen come forth with napkins.

First Serviceman. Where's Potpan, that he helps not to take away? He shift a trencher!¹
He scrape a trencher!

Second Serviceman. When good manners shall lie all in one or two men's hands, and they unwash'd too, 'tis a foul thing.

First Serviceman. Away with the join-stools,² remove the court-cupboard,³ look to the plate; Good thou, save me a piece of marchpane;⁴ and as thou loves me, let the porter let in Susan Grindstone and Nell. Antony! and Potpan!

Second Serviceman. Ay, boy, ready.

First Serviceman. You are looked for and called for, asked for and sought for in the great chamber.

Third Serviceman. We cannot be here and there too. Cheerly, boys! Be brisk awhile, and the longer liver take all.

Exeunt.

Enter [Capulet, his wife, Juliet, Tybalt, Nurse, and] all the Guests and Gentlewomen to the Maskers.

Capulet. Welcome, gentlemen! Ladies that have their toes
Unplagu'd with corns will walk a bout⁵ with you.
Ah ha, my mistresses! which of you all
Will now deny⁶ to dance? She that makes dainty,⁷
She I'll swear hath corns. Am I come near you now?
Welcome, gentlemen! I have seen the day
That I have worn a visard; and could tell
A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear,
Such as would please; 'Tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone.
You are welcome, gentlemen! Come, musicians, play.



10

Music plays, and they dance.

A hall, a hall!⁸ Give room! And foot it, girls.
More light, you knaves; and turn the tables up,
And quench the fire, the room is grown too hot.
Ah, sirrah, this unlook'd-for sport⁹ comes well.
Nay, sit, nay, sit, good cousin Capulet;
For you and I are past our dancing days.
How long is't now since last yourself and I
Were in a mask?

Second Capulet. By'r Lady, thirty years.

Capulet. What, man? 'Tis not so much, 'tis not so much;

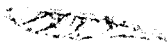
'Tis since the nuptial of Lucentio,

Come Pentecost as quickly as it will,

Some five-and-twenty years; and then we masked.

Second Capulet. 'Tis more, 'tis more. His son is elder, sir;

His son is thirty.



Capulet. Will you tell me that?

His son was but a ward¹⁰ two years ago.

Romeo. [*To a Serviceman*]

What lady is that, which doth enrich the hand
Of yonder knight?

Serviceman. I know not, sir.

Romeo. O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear —
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude¹¹ hand.
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

Tybalt. This, by his voice, should be a Montague.

Fetch me my rapier, boy: What! Dares the slave
Come hither, cover'd with an antic face,¹²
To fleer¹³ and scorn at our solemnity?
Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,
To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.

Capulet. Why, how now, kinsman? Wherefore storm you so?

Tybalt. Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe,

A villain, that is hither come in spite¹⁴
To scorn at our solemnity this night.

Capulet. Young Romeo, is it?

Tybalt. 'Tis he, that villain, Romeo.

Capulet. Content thee, gentle coz, let him alone.

'A bears him like a portly¹⁵ gentleman,
And, to say truth, Verona brags of him
To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth.
I would not for the wealth of all the town
Here in my house do him disparagement.
Therefore be patient, take no note of him.

