



美国文学名篇导读

曹曼 编著

A Guide to the Best Works in American Literature



武汉大学出版社

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前 言

众所周知，美国文学有近 400 年的历史。在这期间出现了大批著名的文学家，他们以自己优秀的作品奠定了美国文学在世界文学中的重要地位。追溯历史，美国文学经历了从传统的新古典主义、浪漫主义、现实主义、自然主义到现代主义文学的发展过程。如果说，17 世纪殖民地时期的文学是移民清教徒的文学，18 世纪开发新大陆的文学是政治色彩浓厚的新古典主义文学，那么，19 世纪浪漫主义文学才集中地体现了美国民族主义精神。19 世纪浪漫主义文学家提倡表现个人见解，抒发个人感情，强调想象力。爱默生的《论自助》、惠特曼的《自我之歌》等作品就是这个时期杰出的范例。随着社会的发展，工业革命带来的社会变革为作家提供了描写社会生活各方面的新题材。19 世纪末，美国现实主义文学发展到高峰。最杰出的现实主义小说家马克·吐温最先成功地在小说中运用了普通美国人的语言，从而使作品的真实感大为增强。20 世纪初，自然主义文学家着眼于分析下层阶级人物以及人们在困境中的表现，斯蒂芬·克莱恩就是主要代表人物之一。20 世纪的美国文学呈现出多元性。从 1918 年起第二次世界大战结束，出现了海明威、安德森、福克纳等一批杰出的文学家。新一代的作家给小说、诗歌、文学批评等各方面带来了非凡的繁荣景象。

为了帮助美国文学研究人员、文学爱好者和广大英语学习者阅读这些作品，更好地了解、学习和研究美国文学，编者根据自

己多年研究的成果，并结合教学中的经验，参考和收集了国内外诸多的美国文学资料，编写了《美国文学名篇导读》（以下简称《导读》）。

《导读》以历史发展的先后顺序来介绍作家和作品。全书分为六章，介绍了美国各个不同时期的 19 位著名的作家以及他们的 35 篇优秀作品。编者在选编时，不仅注意了作家作品的代表性，还注意了文学体裁的广泛性，选入了小说、故事、诗歌、散文和议论文等不同文体、并具有一定影响的作品。如：马克·吐温的《卡拉韦拉县驰名的跳蛙》、杰弗逊的《独立宣言》、林肯的《第二次就职演说》、爱伦·坡的《阿娜贝尔·李》、库珀的《打鹿将》、爱默生的《论自助》、舍伍德·安德森的《成年》等。

本书的重点放在对作品的导读上。各章节内容均包括作家简介、作品选篇、中文注释和赏析思考题四大部分。全书以英文为主，在作家简介中，编者分别用中、英文概括性地介绍了作家生平、作品及其写作风格。在作品的选篇上，编者力图较为全面地反映作家的思想和风格。除了对长篇小说节选其部分章节和片段外，其余作品均采用全文。编者对作品的历史背景、文化典故以及部分语言难点进行了注释。在每一篇选文之后，编者还针对性地提出问题，并在书后附有参考答案。

与其他文学读本相比，本书的主要特点在于，不仅对作品原文加以注释，而且还以问答的形式，对作品的内容、作家的意图和作品的意蕴一一进行了分析；既考虑到对作品语言文字上的导读，也注意了对作品的思想内容和艺术风格的评析。编者认为这样将有助于读者更好地学习和鉴赏各个时期的作家及其作品，了解美国文学的发展历史，窥探美国社会思潮以至整个文化发展的脉络，进而深入地了解美国这个民族，寻找到比表面现象要深刻得多的东西，即这个民族的真正的思想、感情，甚至灵魂。《导读》还能使读者在对美国文学及其语言的学习与了解的同时，加强文学修养，增添文学兴趣，提高自己的英语语言能力、理解能

力和欣赏水平。

本书可作为高等学校英语专业本科生的美国文学教材及参考书，研究生及进修生的辅助读本，亦可作为非英语专业的大学生的文学课外读物以及广大文学爱好者的赏析读本。

由于编者的能力水平不及，加之时间及篇幅所限，对所选作品只能择要浅注，评析也只是一家之见，还有些重要作家及作品未能收入本书，在此，编者恳切希望读者批评指正。

编 者

1998 年 9 月

Introduction

Compared with the literature of England, France, and other countries, American literature is young. In about 400 years it has progressed from a scattering of letters and journals to a body of writing read and admired the world over. The first American literature is generally considered to be certain accounts of discoveries and explorations in America that frequently display the largeness of vision and vigor of style characteristic of contemporary Elizabethan writers (1558—1603). Such qualities are evident in the work of Captain John Smith, the first great figure in American letters. His work *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624) had the enormous vitality of much English prose in the epoch of the King James Bible (1611). These writers expounded the point of view of an early rebel against Puritanism. Other early American writings are accounts of Native American Wars and of captivities.

With the 18th century, interest moved to more secular, practical problems. Two writers commonly associated with provincial life illustrate the growing secularism of American letters. The first is William Byrd, a plantation owner; his *History of the Dividing Line* (1841) is a humorous masterpiece. The other, greater figure is Ben-

jamin Franklin, whose unfinished *Autobiography* has become a classic of the world literature. Franklin's letters, satires, "bagatelles", almanacs, and scientific writings are also recognized as important documents. Toward the end of the century, several notable literary personalities emerged amid the tumult of the American Revolution (1775—1783), particularly the political philosopher Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776) and 16 issues of *The Crisis* (1776—1783) awakened American enthusiasm for independence.

Thomas Jefferson was in his early thirties when he drafted *the Declaration of Independence*. When he died, the nation which he had helped establish was well on the way to achieving the continental destiny of which the Founding Fathers had dreamed. Great American writers emerged in this Romantic Period — Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe. Unlike Franklin, Paine, Jefferson, and their contemporaries, whose chief purpose in writing was utilitarian, the object of these later writers was to entertain. Their best writings were imaginative. Instead of factual articles and speeches meant to persuade the readers, for the most part they wrote short stories, poetry, and novels. Around the 1840s American Romanticism reached its height. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the leading figure of "Transcendentalism", had a uniquely American viewpoint. He exercised a most seminal influence on the development of an independent American culture. Henry David Thoreau's writings may have been less broad in range than Emerson's, but *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854) is presently more widely read than anything of Emerson. Walt Whitman tried to write poetry describing the native American experience. Emily Dickinson wrote about the life of her time in her

completely original way. Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote his best-known novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Many 19th-century readers took Hawthorne at his own ironic valuation as a dreamy romantic. Herman Melville was against the optimistic trend of his times. As with Hawthorne, the problem of evil is central to Melville's work, as is shown in some portions of his famous work, *MobyDick*. The poet, critic, and short-story writer Edgar Allan Poe was one of the major figures. In his criticism Poe was capable of extreme partiality and extreme severity. His poetry profoundly affected the development of French symbolist verse, and his short stories are among the triumphs of romantic horror.

President Abraham Lincoln humorously described Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), as "the little woman who caused this big war". The work was powerful as propaganda and expressed the deep antislavery feelings in the North. Lincoln himself can be included in the roster of significant American writers because of the measured succinctness of his occasional prose. Profoundly moved by the tragic conflict of the American Civil War (1861—1865), he turned American traditional oratory away from the ornate rhetoric to the inspirational simplicity of his 1863 Gettysburg Address and of his second inaugural address in 1865. Few other American public figures have quite equaled Lincoln's command of forceful, accurate, and inspiring prose.

Out of the tradition emerged the most powerful literary personality, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, known as Mark Twain. His first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches* (1867), retains the characteristics of the oral tale; successes such as *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872), and *Life on the Mississippi* (1881) waver between journal-

ism and literature; but with the novels *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) Mark Twain transcended his own tradition of satire and created two master pictures of life on and along the Mississippi River. In these works Mark Twain's genius was his understanding of the moral realism of childhood. Mark Twain's later fictional works, such as *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg* (1900), the compelling *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), and philosophical works such as *What Is Man?* (1906), express the pessimism already evident in his earlier book *The Gilded Age* (1873).

Mark Twain's friend and mentor, the novelist and critic William Dean Howells expressed in theory and practice the philosophy that literary art ought to mirror the facts of human life. Using his literary influence, Howells promoted the work of other realists and naturalists, notably the novelists and short-story writers Hamlin Garland (*Main-Travelled Roads*, 1890), Stephen Crane (*The Red Badge of Courage*, 1895), and Frank Norris (*McTeague*, 1899; *The Octopus*, 1901). Their successors in the early years of the next century were novelists such as Jack London (*The Sea Wolf*, 1904); David Graham Phillips (*Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise*; 1917); and Upton Sinclair (*The Jungle*, 1906). The novelist and journalist Theodore Dreiser, who began as a writer in the naturalist style and ended as a religious mystic, was also a leading writer of the time. His novel *Sister Carrie* (1900) was withdrawn from sale as immoral; better received were his novels *The Financier* (1912) and *The Titan* (1914), which trace the career of a ruthless businessman. Dreiser's best-known novel, *An American Tragedy* (1925), is, like Norris's *McTeague*, one of the most representative American novels of naturalism. Dreiser's dedication to truth and his com-

passionate insights into American society have made his novels endure.

While realists and naturalists argued about the degree to which human actions are determined by forces external to individual will, the novelist Henry James concentrated on subjective experience and personal relationships. His major theme, the conflict between European and American values, is explored in novels such as *The American* (1877), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). As he moved toward even greater subtlety of insight and precision of statement, James developed a uniquely complex style that has as many detractors as devotees. James was a master of the short novel, his criticism is impressive, and the prefaces to the famous New York edition of his books (1907—1916), later gathered into *The Art of the Novel* (1934), were the first full revelation in American literature of the psychology of literary creation.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most major black writers came from the black middle class. The sociologist and writer W. E. B. Du Bois, author of the essay collection *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and the novel *The Quest for the Silver Fleece* (1911), appealed to this successful group, which he called “the talented tenth”, to lead the fight for equality for all black Americans. Much of their literature reflects struggle and anger.

With the 20th-century communications revolution, the advent of motion pictures, radio, and, later, television, books became a secondary source of amusement and enlightenment. With new modes of transportation, American society became more mobile and homogeneous; as a consequence, regionalism, the dominant mode of 19th-century literature, all but vanished, except in the work of

some Southern writers. At the same time, American writers began to exert a major influence on world literature.

At the turn of the century, the reaction against 19th-century romanticism was given great impetus by the searing experience of World War I (1914—1918). The horrors and brutal reality of the war had a lasting impact on the American imagination. Novels such as William Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay* (1926) and Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) portray war as a symbol of human life savage and ignoble. The fiction of the 20th century emerged from World War I on a realistic and antiromantic path, and it has seldom strayed significantly since. American writers, especially, became more and more firmly committed to the replacement of sentimentality by new psychological insights.

The decade after World War I is often referred to as the Jazz Age or the Roaring Twenties. Rapid changes took place in society, as Americans rebelled against the strictures of Puritanism and the Victorian age. Rapid changes also occurred in literature, most notably in fiction. The powerful fiction of Sherwood Anderson, including *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), a collection of psychologically penetrating short stories, was extremely influential. F. Scott Fitzgerald turned a satiric eye on upper-class society in novels such as *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and *The Great Gatsby* (1925); critics have called the latter, a commentary on the American dream of the acquisition of wealth and power, a "perfect" novel. Sinclair Lewis, the first American writer to win a Nobel Prize in literature (1930), brilliantly satirized the "get-rich-quick" business culture of the age in the novels *Main Street* (1920) and *Dodsworth* (1929). Gertrude Stein, an American author resident in Paris, gave the

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Moses (1942) and *Collected Stories* (1950). Faulkner, who won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1949, was a leader of the group. He kept southern regional writing alive through the next three decades.

The novels of World War II seemed to emphasize individuality and the novels written in the decades following continued that emphasis. Authors, determined to assert their individuality, worked in a wide range of styles and dealt with an even wider range of material. The novel *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger is both a humorous and a terrifyingly precise observation of rebellious adolescence; written in 1951, it remains enormously popular. So too does *Catch-22* (1961), a novel by Joseph Heller about World War II. A statement about authority, it employs a sardonic, wildly imaginative style that has come to be known as black humor.

In the early years of the 20th century, the poets who called themselves Imagists believed that poetry should treat its subject directly, without a lot of comment. The movement initiated by the poets Amy Lowell (*Men, Women, and Ghosts*, 1916) and Ezra Pound (*Ripostes*, 1912). Imagists set out to revolutionize poetic style, but two other phases of the poetic revival of the early 20th century were more popular: the work of an Illinois group, including the poets Vachel Lindsay (*The Congo and Other Poems*, 1914), Edgar Lee Masters (*Spoon River Anthology*, 1915), and Carl Sandburg (*Chicago Poems*, 1915); and the work of a New England group, including Edwin Arlington Robinson (*The Town Down the River*, 1910) and Robert Frost (*North of Boston*, 1914). Frost and Sandburg, during their long careers, produced works that became especially beloved and were regarded as authentic expressions of an American poetic spirit.

The publication of the complex poem *The Waste Land* (1922)

by the Anglo-American poet T. S. Eliot marked a turning point in American poetry. The tendency to the esoteric in verse forms, language, and symbolism was augmented by Pound's *Cantos* (published between 1925 and 1970). Both Eliot and Pound, through their poetry as well as their critical writings, had an immense influence on the course of 20th-century poetry. Experiments with verse employing complex, often difficult imagery and symbolism were also carried on by Hart Crane, best known for his epic *The Bridge* (1930); Wallace Stevens' *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, (1937); and Marianne Moore's *Collected Poems*, (1951). The highly inventive work of E. E. Cummings, from *Is 5* (1926) to *73 Poems* (1963), played with typographical form and aural imagery.

This book intends to offer a bird's-eye view of , or a guide to the best works of American literature. We have divided the American literature into six periods, which are shown in six chapters in this book, in which various best-known writers and their works are introduced. The emphasis is chiefly placed on the nineteenth-century writers and their works. We have introduced to the readers 19 great writers. For each writer, a brief account of his (her) life, works and comments both in Chinese and in English is given. In order to help the readers to understand better, we have offered 35 pieces of literary works written by those great authors. There are short stories; essays; poems and excerpts from the novels, each of which well pictures the American scene, mirrors the American way of life and voices the American spirit. For smooth reading and better understanding, notes, questions and suggested answers are also offered. The readers will be able to understand the authors and their works, to trace the development of this literature from the time of the early settlers to the present, to gain a better understanding of

the style of those great authors, to learn the language and to appreciate the great works in American literature.

Cao Man

September 1998

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