英美文学（上）

高等教育应用型本科重点专业精品规划教材（外语类）

English and American Literature (Volume 1)

丛书总主编　冯光华

张　慧　李　杨　罗　莉　主编

天津大学出版社
TIANJIN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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前 言

《英美文学》是一本在新的社会历史文化语境下编写的、供独立学院英语专业本科生使用的教材。目前我国社会和高校对文学以及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学时数、内容、手段和方法、教材编写与使用等都提出了更高的要求。随着时代的发展和文学观念的更新，国内外对于英美文学的认识也亟待更新，所以为中国大学生编写一本架构新颖、内容翔实的英美文学教材，成为了一项十分重要的任务。

为适应新时代高校文学教学的要求和文学史观的特点，也为了充分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，教材要反映出学科研究的整体水平，包含学科研究的主要内容。本教材的编写主要依据国外教材——耶鲁大学英语文学教授亨利·A．比尔斯（Henry A. Beers）为英语专业学生编写的《英美文学简史教程》（*Brief History of English and American Literature*）。《英美文学简史教程》的英文原版读本不仅能帮助国内学生全面系统地学习英语，同时，通过阅读书中的故事与文学作品，可以更好地感受英美历史文化，培养良好的阅读兴趣与品位，感受英语语言的魅力。国内的英美文学教材大多以作家为主，介绍他们的生平和作品以及对作品进行分析，很少有专门针对独立学院英语专业学生编写的英美文学教材。

第二，《英美文学》教材的编写要考虑独立学院的学生未来考研或出国深造的需求。此教材的编写不仅应体现文学常识的传授、作家作品的赏析以及文学修养的提高，还要注重不断激发和强化学习者的学习兴趣。因此，教材内容的选择以及练习的内容和方式应该符合学习者的认知过程和学习欲望，既要提供必要的文学常识和文本内容，又要提供大量的、充分的练习。练习是获得技能和能力的主要途径之一，是教材的主要部分，所以练习题的设计应生动有趣、形式多样。

第三，由于独立学院的学生学习的具体情况存在差异，因而教材的编写还要考虑学生的文化程度、学习目的、学习起点和教学学时。英语专业的培养目标是适应社会主义市场经济建设需要，培养具有扎实英语语言基础和较深厚英美文化知识的外语专业人才，因此，教材的编写还必须考虑学生未来就业的需要，让学生掌握必要的文学常识，学会赏析并评价外国文学名著。通过此项能力的培养，使学生能够将自己的学习能力自觉地应用于工作实践，有效地参与和英语相关的工作岗位，成为优秀的应用型和复合型高级专门人才。

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综上所述，编写一本反映英美文学研究的主要内容、适合独立学院学生水平、符合英语专业培养目标、满足学生自主学习要求的《英美文学》教材势在必行。

本教材的主要特色是通过运用各种文学手段，比如小说的要素、诗歌的要素、戏剧的要素、修辞的讲解，使学生更好地理解外国文学原著，提供英美文学相关考试试题的解答技巧，提供文学课程论文和相关毕业论文的撰写思路。鉴于以上编写原则，本书的编写结构如下：每章包括背景介绍、作家及其作品和小结；每小节包括作者生平、主要作品、写作特色、作品节选及评论、思考问题、论文题目、小节测试、推荐读物、参考文献。

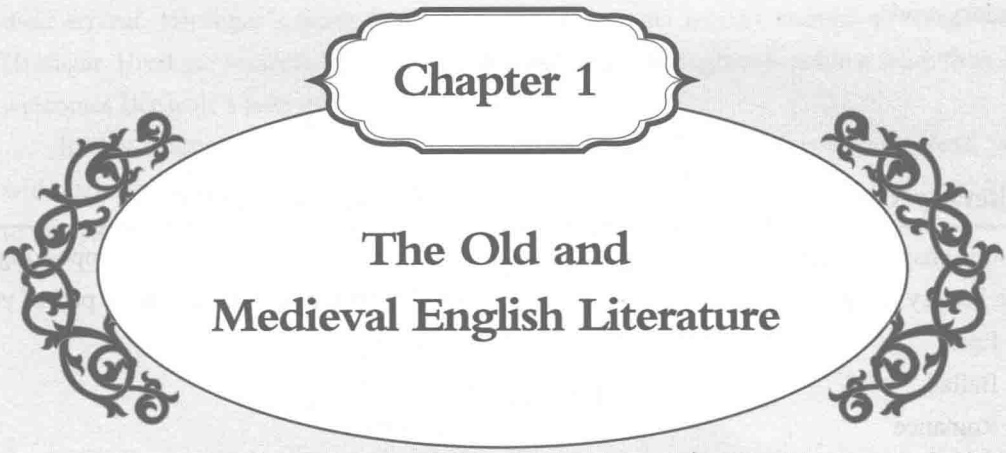
本教材由武汉工程科技学院外国语学院院长冯光华教授牵头，带领本校英语专业的优秀中青年骨干教师共同编写。参编人员包括张慧、李杨、罗莉、张培芳、刘丽、胡玲、黄亚楠、薛海琴、梅蓉、周凤华、殷彩桥。参加编写的副主编为长江大学外国语学院的杨泽雯。

英美文学具有独特的发展规律，成就辉煌，经典作品层出不穷。这也正是文学的独特魅力，但同时也给编者带来了不少困扰，比如文学史阶段的划分、作家和作品的取舍、文学流派的归属等问题。我们在借鉴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、作品选择和问题设计以及解答等方面都能体现新的时代特点。但是由于时间仓促，部分资料难寻，编者学术水平有限，不足之处敬请广大师生和学者批评指正。

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Chapter 1

The Old and Medieval English Literature

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

Identify the old and medieval English literature;

Recognize the background information, literary terms, authors' life experiences, etc. ;

Analyze artistic features, diction, plots, characters, or comments of the literary works;

Realize the importance and impact of the literary works.

Chapter Outline

The following are the main sections in this chapter:

1. The Anglo-Saxon Period(449-1066)
2. The Medieval Period(1066-ca.1485)
3. Geoffrey Chaucer(1340/1344-1400)

Literary Terms

In this chapter, you will learn the meanings of the literary terms listed below:

- Epic
- Ballad
- Romance

Academic Vocabulary

Listed below are some words appearing in this chapter that you should make part of your vocabulary:

- Religious
- Secular
- Civilization
- Christianity
- Genealogy
- Conquer
- Dwell in
- Terminate
- Assault
- Mighty
- Mingle
- Myth
- Legend

Looking Ahead

Beowulf begins with a brief genealogy of the Danes. Scyld Scefing is the first great king of the Danes, known for his ability to conquer enemies. Scyld becomes the great-grandfather of Hrothgar, the king of the Danes during the events of Beowulf. Hrothgar, like his ancestors before him, is a good king, and he wishes to celebrate his reign by building a grand hall called Heorot. Once the hall is finished, Hrothgar holds a large feast. The revelry attracts the attention of the monster Grendel, who decides to attack during the night. In the morning, Hrothgar and his thanes discover the bloodshed and mourn the lost warriors. This begins Grendel's assault upon the Danes. Twelve years pass. Eventually the news of Grendel's aggression on the Danes reaches the Geats, another tribe. A geat thane, Beowulf, decides to help the Danes; he sails to the land of the Danes with his best warriors. Upon their arrival, Hrothgar's thane Wulfgar judges the Geats worthy enough to speak with Hrothgar. Hrothgar remembers he helped Beowulf's father Ecgtheow settle a feud; thus, he welcomes Beowulf's help gladly…

In this chapter, you will learn the background information of this period. Next, you will learn several writers and their literary works in this period. Finally, you will learn how to analyze artistic features, diction, plots, characters of their literary works.

Introduction

As for England, where the early inhabitants were Celts, since historical times, it had been conquered three times. It was conquered by the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Normans. England was not much affected by the Roman Conquest, but she felt the full weight of the other two conquests. The Anglo-Saxons brought to England the Germanic language and culture, while the Normans brought a fresh wave of Mediterranean civilization, which includes Greek culture, Roman law, and Christian religion. It is the cultural influences of these two conquests that provided the source for the rise and growth of English literature.



1. The Anglo-Saxon Period (449-1066)

Ⅰ. Historical background

The island was primitively settled by Celtic tribes from Middle Asia prior to the invasion by the Romans. Some of the Celts were called barbaric people, fled west over the mountains to what is now Wales and further over to Ireland. The rest of them dwelled and intermarried with the invading Romans. The Romans brought architecture, art, civilization, Christianity and most importantly, literacy.

They dwelled in the land, constructing cities that were named as London at the present and Winchester, but during the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Romans left, leaving the now-softened Celts.

The neighboring Picts (known as Scotland today) and Jutes (a Germanic tribe) planned to attack the Celts after the Romans' leaving. To resist foreign aggression, the Celts requested help from the Anglos and Saxons, tribes from the area that is modern Germany-Denmark area. The Anglos and Saxons saved the Celts, but then betrayed them and settled in England, becoming the Anglo-Saxons who lived in Angle-Land (England).

The three tribes:Anglos, Saxons and Jutes gradually integrated into a nation who was termed English. They spoke a language, which belonged to the Germanic language family, called Old English today. They also developed a specific poetic convention, the formal character of which remained surprisingly constant when the Norman-French invaders terminated their rule after six centuries.

The native Anglo-Saxons were pagan. They worshipped originally Heaven and Earth, which were regarded by them as Father and Mother of all things. But the Romans brought Christianity to the land, and it was not until around 650 AD that England was fully Christianized.

Ⅱ. Anglo-Saxon poetry

Generally speaking, all the old English poetry that has survived can be divided into two groups: the religious and the secular.

The religious group

The religious group of poetry is mainly on biblical themes or on saints' lives. *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Phoenix* are the typical works of the religious group. Such religious poems suggest that the true function of arts, the church and its poets believed, should not be simple to release men's feelings but also to teach them and to enhance their devotion.

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The secular group

In addition to these religious poems, old English poets produced the national epic poem, *Beowulf*, and other shorter poems, which do not contain specific Christian doctrines and which evoke the Anglo-Saxon sense of the severity of circumstance and the sadness of human. *The Wanderer*, *Deor*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Wife*'s *Complaint* are among the most beautiful ones of this group. Most of the secular poems are laments, the lament of an exile, a masterless bard, a hungry sailor on the wintry sea, or a wife parted from her husband. The harsh climate of North Sea strongly affected the tone or mood of the poets. The life is sorrowful, and the speakers are fatalistic, though at the same time courageous and determined.

Artistic features of old English poetry

There are a number of qualities found in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Firstly, old English poetry is composed without rhyme; its lines are usually divided into two halves with a pause in between, and each half line has two strongly stressed syllables which give musical effects to the poem with an indeterminate number of unstressed ones. Secondly, almost all the poetry is strongly characterized with structural alliteration. Thirdly, to set the verse apart from normal speech and mark it out as a special mode of discourse, it makes use of vivid poetic diction and parallel expressions for a single idea, such as "swan-road" or "whale-path" for sea, "sea-wood" or "wave-floater" for ship, "shield-bearer", "battle-hero" or "spear-fighter" for soldier. All these qualities of form and spirit are exemplified in the epic poem *Beowulf*.

Beowulf

Beowulf is the first great English literary work and is regarded today as the national epic of the Anglo-Saxons. However, the hero and the setting of *Beowulf* have nothing to do with England, for the story took place in Scandinavia, where a society that was highly civilized and rather newly Christian existed. In the poem, *Beowulf*, a hero of the Geats, battled three antagonists: Grendel, who has been attacking the resident warriors of the mead hall of Hrothgar (the king of the Danes), Grendel's mother, and a fire-breathing dragon. The last battle took place later, Beowulf was the king of the Geats. In the final battle, Beowulf is fatally wounded. After his death his retainers buried him in a tumulus in Geatland.

In these sequences Beowulf is shown not only as a glorious hero but as a protector of the people. Thematically the poem presents a vivid picture of how the primitive people wage heroic struggles against the hostile forces of the natural world under a wise and mighty leader. The poem is also an example of the mingling of natural myths and heroic legends.

Ⅱ. Selected readings—*Beowulf*

(Excerpts from *Beowulf* in modern English translated by Burton Raffel)

Beowulf's Fight with Grendel

Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty
Hills and bogs, bearing God's hatred,
Grendel came, hoping to kill
Anyone he could trap on this trip to high Herot.
He moved quickly through the cloudy night,
Up from his swampland, sliding silently
Toward that gold-shining hall. He had visited Hrothgar's
Home before, knew the way—
But never, before nor after that night,
Found Herot defended so firmly, his reception
So harsh. He journeyed, forever joyless,
Straight to the door, then snapped it open,
Tore its iron fasteners with a touch,
And rushed angrily over the threshold.
He strode quickly across the inlaid
Floor, snarling and fierce: His eyes
Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome
Light. Then he stopped, seeing the hall
Crowded with sleeping warriors, stuffed
With rows of young soldiers resting together.
And his heart laughed, he relished the sight,
Intended to tear the life from those bodies
By morning; the monster's mind was hot
With the thought of food and the feasting his belly
Would soon know. But fate, that night, intended
Grendel to gnaw the broken bones
Of his last human supper. Human
Eyes were watching his evil steps,
Waiting to see his swift hard claws.
Grendel snatched at the first Geat
He came to, ripped him apart, cut
His body to bits with powerful jaws,
Drank the blood from his veins, and bolted
Him down, hands and feet; death
And Grendel's great teeth came together,
Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another

Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
—And was instantly seized himself, claws
Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm.
That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime,
Knew at once that nowhere on earth
Had he met a man whose hands were harder;
His mind was flooded with fear—but nothing
Could take his talons and himself from that tight
Hard grip. Grendel's one thought was to run
From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and hide there:
This was a different Herot than the hall he had emptied.
But Higlac's follower remembered his final
Boast and, standing erect, stopped
The monster's flight, fastened those claws
In his fists till they cracked, clutched Grendel
Closer. The infamous killer fought
For his freedom, wanting no flesh but retreat,
Desiring nothing but escape; his claws
Had been caught, he was trapped. That trip to Herot
Was a miserable journey for the writhing monster!
The high hall rang, its roof boards swayed,
And Danes shook with terror. Down
The aisles the battle swept, angry
And wild. Herot trembled, wonderfully
Built to withstand the blows, the struggling
Great bodies beating at its beautiful walls;
Shaped and fastened with iron, inside
And out, artfully worked, the building
Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell
To the floor, gold-covered boards grating
As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them.
Hrothgar's wise men had fashioned Herot
To stand forever; only fire,
They had planned, could shatter what such skill had put
Together, swallow in hot flames such splendor
Of ivory and iron and wood. Suddenly
The sounds changed, the Danes started

In new terror, cowering in their beds as the terrible
Screams of the Almighty's enemy sang
In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain
And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's
Taut throat, hell's captive caught in the arms
Of him who of all the men on earth
Was the strongest.
That mighty protector of men
Meant to hold the monster till its life
Leaped out, knowing the fiend was no use
To anyone in Denmark. All of Beowulf's
Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral
Swords raised and ready, determined
To protect their prince if they could. Their courage
Was great but all wasted: They could hack at Grendel
From every side, trying to open
A path for his evil soul, but their points
Could not hurt him, the sharpest and hardest iron
Could not scratch at his skin, for that sin-stained demon
Had bewitched all men's weapons, laid spells
That blunted every mortal man's blade.
And yet his time had come, his days
Were over, his death near; down
To hell he would go, swept groaning and helpless
To the waiting hands of still worse fiends.
Now he discovered—once the afflictor
Of men, tormentor of their days—what it meant
To feud with Almighty God: Grendel
Saw that his strength was deserting him, his claws
Bound fast, Higlac's brave follower tearing at
His hands. The monster's hatred rose higher,
But his power had gone. He twisted in pain,
And the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder
Snapped, muscle and bone split
And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf
Had been granted new glory: Grendel escaped,
But wounded as he was could flee to his den,
His miserable hole at the bottom of the marsh,

Only to die, to wait for the end
Of all his days. And after that bloody
Combat the Danes laughed with delight.
He who had come to them from across the sea,
Bold and strong-minded, had driven affliction
Off, purged Herot clean. He was happy,
Now, with that night's fierce work; the Danes
Had been served as he'd boasted he'd serve them; Beowulf,
A prince of the Geats, had killed Grendel,
Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
Forced on Hrothgar's helpless people
By a bloodthirsty fiend. No Dane doubted
The victory, for the proof, hanging high
From the rafters where Beowulf had hung it, was the monster's
Arm, claw and shoulder and all.

Comments

The song of *Beowulf* is the representative achievement of Anglo-Saxon period.

The song of *Beowulf* is England's national epic. It was written by an unknown scribe at the beginning of the 10th century and was discovered in 1705. It reflects events which took place approximately at the beginning of the 6th century.

The epic consists of 3,182 lines and is to be divided into four parts.

The writing features of the poem are:

(1) It is not a Christian but a pagan poem. The whole poem presents an all-round picture of the tribal society and pagan culture, incorporating myth, legend, folk tale and history, which is of national significance.

(2) The use of the strong stresses and the predominance of consonants are very notable in this poem. Each line is divided into two halves, and each half has two heavy stresses.

(3) The use of the alliteration is another notable feature. Four stresses of the whole line are made even more emphatic by the use of alliteration.

(4) A lot of metaphors and understatements are used in the poem. For example, the sea is called "the whale road" or "the swan road"; the soldiers are called "shield-men"; the chieftains are called the "treasure keepers"; the human-body is referred to as "the bone-house"; God is called "wonder-wielder"; Monster is referred to as "soul-destroyer".

Its chief significance lies in the vivid portrayal of a great national hero, who is brave, courageous, selfless, and ever helpful to his people and his kinsfolk.

2. The Medieval Period (1066-ca.1485)

Ⅰ. Historical background

In 1066, William, a energetic Duke of Normandy, invaded England with his strong army. A fierce battle was fought near Hastings between the English and the Norman armies. As the English were divided and irresolute, they lost their decisive battle and their leader Harold was killed. Thus, William, the conqueror, became the king of England.

The Norman Conquest brought England more than a change of rulers. Politically, a feudalist system was established in England; religiously, the Rome-backed Catholic Church had a much stronger control over the country; great changes also took place in languages. After the conquest, three languages co-existed in England. French became the official language used by the king and the Norman lords; Latin became the principal tongue of church affairs and was used by the clergymen and scholars in universities; Old English was spoken only by the common English people. The conquest opened up England to the whole European continent, so that with the introduction of the culture and literature of France, Italy and other European countries, a fresh wave of Mediterranean civilization came into England.

Ⅱ. The medieval English literature

This period covers about four centuries. Great writers like Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, John Gower belong to this period. In comparison with Old English literature, Middle English literature deals with a wider range of subjects, which is uttered by more voices and is presented in a greater diversity of styles, tones and genres. The most prevailing literary form during this period is Romance and Ballad. Besides, the Middle English literature strongly reflects the principles of the medieval Christian doctrines, which are primarily concerned with the issues of personal salvation.

Among the three great Middle English poets, the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the one who produced the best romance of the period; while William Langland is a more realistic writer who dealt with the religious and social issues of his days in *Piers Plowman*. However, it is Chaucer alone who, as the greatest writer of this period, for the first time in English literature, presented us a comprehensive realistic picture of the English society of his time and created a whole gallery of vivid characters from all walks of life in his masterpiece *The Canterbury Tales*.

Romance

Romance, which uses narrative verse or prose to sing knightly adventures or other heroic deeds, is a popular literary form in the Middle Ages. The hero is usually the knight, who sets

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