

# Teaching Practice and Effectiveness Evaluation of Literary Classics in College English Courses

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**Abstract:** With the deepening of globalization, the importance of English as an international lingua franca has become increasingly prominent. The application of literary classics in college English courses not only helps improve students' language proficiency but also cultivates their literary literacy and critical thinking. This study aims to explore the practical application and effects of literary classics in college English teaching. By analyzing teaching objectives, methods, and resources, and evaluating teaching effectiveness, the study finds that literary classics significantly enhance students' language proficiency, literary literacy, and critical thinking. This research provides theoretical support and practical guidance for the innovation and improvement of college English teaching.

**Keywords:** College English Courses, Literary Classics, Teaching Practice, Effectiveness Evaluation, Language Proficiency, Literary Literacy, Critical Thinking

## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalization, the importance of English as an international lingua franca is increasingly evident. College English courses not only undertake the task of cultivating students' language proficiency but also bear the responsibility of enhancing their overall literacy. Literary classics, as important carriers of culture and thought, have become vital resources in college English teaching due to their rich linguistic expression and profound ideological content.

In current college English teaching, there is a common phenomenon of emphasizing language skills training while neglecting the cultivation of cultural and thinking abilities, which to some extent limits the improvement of students' overall literacy. Therefore, integrating literary classics into college English courses can enrich teaching content, improve students' language proficiency, and cultivate their literary literacy and critical thinking. This study aims to explore the teaching practice and effectiveness evaluation of literary classics, providing theoretical support and practical references for the innovation and development of college English courses.

## 2. Importance of Literary Classics in English Teaching

### 2.1 Enhancing Language Proficiency

Literary classics are the essence of language and the crystallization of culture and thought. Through reading and analyzing these works, students can learn and master English in authentic, complex contexts, thereby improving their language proficiency. Specifically, literary classics play the following roles in enhancing language proficiency:

Firstly, enriching vocabulary. The vocabulary used in classic literary works is often more diverse and complex than that in ordinary textbooks. These works contain many high-frequency words as well as some lesser-known expressions. By reading these works, students can encounter a large number of new words and phrases, expanding their vocabulary and mastering more expressions. For example, by reading Dickens' novel "Great Expectations," students can learn many terms related to Victorian society and understand some common expressions in daily life, greatly enriching their vocabulary reserve.<sup>[1]</sup>

Secondly, deepening grammatical understanding. The sentence structures in classic literary works are diverse and complex. By analyzing these sentences, students can deepen their understanding of grammatical rules and enhance their syntactic analysis abilities. For example, when reading Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," students can encounter complex subordinate clauses, inverted sentences, and various rhetorical devices. By analyzing these complex sentences, students can more proficiently master

English grammatical rules, improving their accuracy and fluency in practical language use.

Lastly, improving reading comprehension. Classic literary works typically have high language difficulty and complex text structures. By reading these works, students can practice understanding and inferring meanings in complex contexts, improving their reading comprehension skills. This includes not only understanding the literal meaning but also grasping the implied meaning, authorial intent, and cultural background. For instance, through reading William Faulkner's "As I Lay Dying," students need to deal with nonlinear narrative and multi-perspective descriptions, which poses higher demands on their reading comprehension skills. Through such reading practice, students can enhance their ability to extract and integrate information in complex texts, deepening their understanding of the text.

## ***2.2 Cultivating Literary Literacy***

Literary classics are not only carriers of language but also reflections of culture and thought. By reading and studying these works, students can cultivate their literary literacy while learning the language. The cultivation of literary literacy is reflected in the following aspects:

Firstly, accumulating literary knowledge. Classic literary works cover a wide range of subjects and themes. By reading these works, students can learn about the characteristics and styles of different literary periods and accumulate rich literary knowledge. For example, through reading Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales," students can understand the social landscape and literary style of medieval England; through reading Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," they can experience the spirit of the "Jazz Age" in early 20th century America. This literary knowledge not only helps students understand the works themselves but also provides a broader historical and cultural context.<sup>[2]</sup>

Secondly, enhancing literary appreciation skills. Classic literary works typically have profound ideological content and exquisite artistic expression. Through analyzing and discussing these works, students can learn how to appreciate and evaluate literary works, enhancing their literary appreciation skills. For example, when reading Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre," students can analyze narrative strategies, character development, and thematic expression in the novel, thereby understanding its unique literary value and artistic charm. Through such in-depth analysis, students can appreciate not only the surface content of literary works but also uncover their deeper ideological content and artistic essence.

Lastly, enhancing cultural understanding. Literary classics reflect the social realities and humanistic spirit of different historical periods and cultural backgrounds. By reading these works, students can gain a deeper understanding of British and American cultures and histories, enhancing their cultural understanding. For example, through reading Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," students can understand the social conditions and racial issues after the American Civil War; through reading Toni Morrison's "Beloved," they can feel the suffering and struggle in African American history. These works not only provide specific cultural and historical backgrounds but also, through vivid characters and plots, allow students to have a more profound and emotional understanding of these cultures and histories.<sup>[3]</sup>

## ***2.3 Promoting Critical Thinking***

Critical thinking is one of the important goals of university education. By reading and analyzing literary classics, students can cultivate and enhance their critical thinking abilities in the following aspects:

Firstly, cultivating analytical skills. Classic literary works are often structurally complex and thematically profound. Through in-depth analysis of the works, students can learn how to interpret complex texts, cultivating their analytical skills. Secondly, improving argumentation skills. In the process of literary analysis, students need to present their viewpoints and argue with textual evidence. This process helps improve their argumentation skills and logical thinking abilities. Lastly, promoting multi-perspective thinking. Classic literary works often have ambiguity. Through different interpretations of the works, students can learn how to think from multiple perspectives, cultivating an open and diverse way of thinking.

In summary, the importance of literary classics in English teaching is not only reflected in enhancing language proficiency but also in cultivating students' literary literacy and critical thinking abilities. The improvement of these abilities not only helps students in their English learning but also has a profound impact on their overall quality and comprehensive ability cultivation. By integrating literary classics into college English courses, we can achieve an organic combination of language learning and humanistic quality cultivation, promoting the all-round development of students.<sup>[4]</sup>

### **3. Teaching Practice of Literary Classics in College English Courses**

#### ***3.1 Teaching Objectives and Content Selection***

Introducing literary classics into college English courses should have clear and multi-level teaching objectives. The primary goal is to enhance language proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Through reading and analyzing classic literary works, students can engage with rich language expressions and complex grammatical structures, thereby enhancing their language application abilities. The second objective is to cultivate literary literacy. By deeply understanding and appreciating literary works, students can accumulate literary knowledge and improve their literary appreciation skills. The third objective is to foster critical thinking. Through analyzing themes, characters, and plots in the works, students can learn to think and argue from multiple perspectives, improving their logical thinking and critical abilities.

In terms of content selection, appropriate literary classics should be chosen based on teaching objectives and students' actual proficiency levels. The selected works should consider the language difficulty, literary value, and cultural background. For example, Shakespeare's plays, Jane Austen's novels, and Charles Dickens' works are all classics with beautiful language, rich content, and profound cultural connotations. Additionally, representative works from different literary periods and genres should be included to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the development and characteristics of British and American literature.

#### ***3.2 Teaching Methods and Strategies***

In college English courses, the teaching methods and strategies for literary classics should be flexible and varied, focusing on interactivity and participation. Here are some effective teaching methods and strategies:

**Reading and Text Analysis:** Teachers should organize students for intensive and extensive reading, combined with reading guides to help them understand the content and linguistic features of the texts. Through text analysis, teachers can discuss themes, character portrayals, plot structures, and writing techniques, fostering students' analytical and appreciation skills.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Classroom Discussions and Debates:** Teachers should stimulate students' interest and thinking about literary works through group discussions and class debates. Teachers can design open-ended questions to encourage students to express their views, cultivating their critical thinking and expression skills. Teachers should, for example, discuss moral and ethical issues, social criticism, and depictions of human nature in the works.

**Writing and Feedback:** Teachers should assign writing tasks related to the reading and analysis of literary works, such as reflections, work analyses, and role-playing. Writing helps students deepen their understanding of the works and practice their writing skills. Teachers should provide timely feedback and guidance to help students improve their writing levels.

**Multimedia Teaching:** Teachers should use multimedia technology, such as films, documentaries, and audio materials, to enrich teaching methods and enhance teaching effectiveness. For example, by watching film adaptations of literary works, students can more intuitively understand the content and background of the texts, stimulating their learning interest.

#### ***3.3 Teaching Resources and Tools***

Teaching literary classics relies on rich teaching resources and tools. Here are some primary teaching resources and tools:

**Textbooks and Supplementary Readings:** Teachers should choose authoritative anthologies of literary works and professional literary textbooks as primary teaching resources. Additionally, they should recommend supplementary readings such as literary critiques, work analysis guides, and related academic papers to help students better understand and analyze the works.

**Multimedia Resources:** Teachers should utilize online platforms and digital resource libraries to access rich multimedia resources such as audio, video, and e-books of literary works. These resources can help students engage with and learn literary works in a multisensory way, enhancing their learning experience.

**Online Platforms and Tools:** Teachers should use online learning platforms like Moodle and Canvas to conduct blended online and offline teaching. Through these platforms, teachers can distribute teaching materials, assign homework, and conduct online discussions and Q&A sessions. Additionally, online tools like dictionaries, translation software, and text analysis tools can help students more effectively understand and master literary works during reading and learning.

**Library Resources:** Teachers should make full use of school library resources, including original editions of literary classics, reference books, and journal articles, encouraging students to borrow and read independently to broaden their knowledge and reading horizons.

In summary, with clear teaching objectives, flexible and varied teaching methods, and rich teaching resources, literary classics can be effectively integrated into college English courses. This integration enhances students' language proficiency, literary literacy, and critical thinking, achieving the overall goal of improving comprehensive quality.

#### **4. Actual Effects of Literary Classics in College English Teaching**

##### ***4.1 Enhancement of Language Proficiency***

Through the reading and analysis of literary classics, students' language proficiency has been significantly improved, mainly in the following aspects:

**Expansion of Vocabulary:** Literary classics contain a wealth of advanced vocabulary and phrases. During reading, students naturally encounter and learn these words, enriching their vocabulary. For example, by reading Shakespeare's plays and Dickens' novels, students can learn many uncommon words and expressions.

**Deepening of Grammar Knowledge:** Classic literary works typically include complex sentence structures and diverse grammatical phenomena. By analyzing these sentences, students can deepen their understanding of English grammar rules and improve their grammatical application skills. For instance, students can master the use of various subordinate clauses and rhetorical devices by analyzing the complex sentences in Jane Austen's works.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Improvement of Reading Comprehension:** The complex text structures and intricate plot designs of classic literary works help students enhance their reading speed and depth of understanding, improving their ability to handle long and difficult texts. For example, by reading Faulkner's works, students can practice capturing key information in complex narrative structures, thereby improving the accuracy of their reading comprehension.

##### ***4.2 Cultivation of Literary Literacy***

The application of literary classics in college English teaching not only enhances students' language proficiency but also significantly cultivates their literary literacy, specifically reflected in:

**Accumulation of Literary Knowledge:** By systematically reading and studying classic literary works, students can accumulate rich literary knowledge, understanding different literary genres, authors' styles, and the historical backgrounds of the works. For example, students can grasp the characteristics and representative works of different literary genres such as Romanticism, Realism, and Modernism.

**Improvement of Literary Appreciation Skills:** Under the guidance of teachers, students gradually improve their literary appreciation skills by analyzing themes, character portrayals, plot development, and writing techniques in the works. They learn to appreciate the artistic value and ideological depth of literary works. For instance, by analyzing the symbolic techniques and narrative skills in "The Great Gatsby," students can gain a deeper understanding of the work's connotations and aesthetic value.

**Enhancement of Cultural Understanding:** Literary classics reflect the social and cultural backgrounds of specific historical periods. By reading these works, students can better understand and appreciate British and American cultures. For example, through studying "Wuthering Heights" and "The Scarlet Letter," students can deeply understand the cultures and values of the Victorian era and Puritan society, enhancing their intercultural understanding and communication abilities.

### **4.3 Promotion of Critical Thinking**

The application of literary classics in college English teaching plays an important role in cultivating students' critical thinking. This is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

**Cultivation of Analytical Skills:** Classic literary works are rich in content and complex in structure. During the reading and analysis process, students need to employ critical thinking to interpret the deeper meanings of the texts. This analytical process helps develop students' logical thinking and critical thinking abilities. For example, through the analysis of characters' psychology and social backgrounds in "The Catcher in the Rye," students can deeply explore the themes and the author's intentions, cultivating meticulous analytical skills.

**Improvement of Argumentation Skills:** In literary discussions and writing, students need to present their own viewpoints and argue them using textual evidence. This process helps improve their argumentation skills and logical thinking. For instance, by writing essays on "1984," students need to find evidence from the text to support their viewpoints and conduct well-reasoned arguments, enhancing their argumentation and writing abilities.

**Enhancement of Multi-Perspective Thinking:** Classic literary works often have multiple meanings. Through different interpretations of the works, students can learn to think about issues from multiple perspectives, fostering an open and diverse way of thinking. For example, by analyzing the symbolic meanings of "Moby-Dick" from multiple angles, students can understand the rich connotations of the work from different perspectives, enhancing their multi-perspective thinking ability.

In summary, systematic study and in-depth analysis of literary classics in college English courses not only improve students' language proficiency but also significantly cultivate their literary literacy and critical thinking abilities. The enhancement of these comprehensive abilities not only aids in students' English learning but also has a profound impact on their overall development and future career prospects.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study, through the teaching practice and effectiveness evaluation of literary classics in college English courses, draws the following main conclusions:

**Enhancement of Language Proficiency:** Literary classics provide rich language material, helping students learn and use English in authentic contexts, significantly improving their comprehensive listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

**Cultivation of Literary Literacy:** Through reading and analyzing classic works, students accumulate a wealth of literary knowledge and enhance their literary appreciation skills and cultural literacy.

**Promotion of Critical Thinking:** Literary classics guide students to think deeply and analyze, cultivating their critical thinking and logical argumentation abilities.

Future research directions should focus on the following aspects:

**Further Optimization of Teaching Methods:** Explore more diverse and interactive teaching methods to enhance students' interest and participation in learning.

**Development and Sharing of Teaching Resources:** Develop more teaching resources for literary classics that cater to different learning needs and share them through online platforms to promote widespread application of these resources.

**Establishment of Long-Term Evaluation Mechanisms:** Establish scientific long-term evaluation mechanisms to continuously track and assess the application effects of literary classics in college English teaching, constantly improving and refining teaching practices.

Through these efforts, the application of literary classics in college English courses will continue to deepen, providing a solid foundation for the comprehensive improvement of students' language proficiency and overall literacy.

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