

# *A Practical Survey of Modern Prose Teaching in Middle Schools: On the Aesthetic Appreciation and Innovative Teaching of Autumn in the Old Capital*

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**Abstract:** As a literary text, modern prose bears the main functions of language sense accumulation, emotional experience and aesthetic quality cultivation. However, it is a very common problem that the modern prose teaching ignores the style and confuses the subject and the object in the text. Based on the thinking of the current situation of modern prose teaching, this paper returns to the teaching site and makes a teaching research on the theme of "sadness is beauty" and language appreciation in Autumn in the Old Capital. This paper makes an aesthetic analysis of the material selection in the text, which is rich in the tranquility of the countryside, the painting of scenery with sadness as beauty, and the attitude of the compatibility of elegance and vulgarity. It also uses "the restoration of artistic perception" as a teaching example to guide students to carry out Chinese practice activities under the concept of core accomplishment and appreciate the beauty of prose language.

## 1. Introduction

Modern prose is one of the most important styles in Chinese reading teaching in middle schools. It is a necessary lesson for Chinese teachers to make clear the teaching focus of modern prose. Of course, we should also be aware of possible misunderstandings in modern prose teaching. After sorting out, it is found that there are two main problems in modern prose teaching: one is ignoring the text style of prose; Secondly, it confuses the subject and the object in modern prose. As a kind of prose style, it often contains two kinds of elements: subject and object. The people described in the prose, the scenery and the objects described are all the objects by which the author expresses his thoughts, that is, the "objects" in the prose. For prose teaching, we should not only pay attention to the "object" in the author's eyes, but also pay attention to the author's feeling, experience, and thought. The focus of Autumn in the Old Capital is not only in autumn scenery, but also on Yu Dafu's taste of "taking sadness as beauty". As a kind of prose style, it is the only way to improve students' aesthetic experience and enrich their life experience to guide students to realize the author's highly personal thoughts. Based on the current situation of prose teaching, this article takes the classic text as an example to explore the teaching and research process of the classic text, interpret the core points of the text that are most worthy of teaching, provide the teaching application method of "restoration of artistic perception", and ultimately improve the students' aesthetic reading ability.[1]

## 2. Review: Three Questions in Teaching Research

### 2.1. Is the theme of the article sad or beautiful?

Autumn in the Old Capital is a famous essay in middle school. Its teaching content presents various forms. In the classroom teaching, the emotional tone is sensed through reading aloud; Understand the author by means of "knowing people and discussing the world"; With the theme of "Love for Autumn in the Old Capital", tasting autumn scenery through language analysis has always been the main teaching content of this article. Among them, the understanding of the theme and emotional tone of Autumn in the Old Capital is different. Some teachers, through the first paragraph, let the students summarize the general characteristics of autumn in the old capital—"Silence and sadness", and then guide the students to look for "evidence" from several autumn scenery to prove the general characteristics of autumn. The design of classroom activities has always been connected with "Sad Autumn". It finally leads the students to attribute the theme of this article to follow the ancient tradition of "Sad Autumn" in China and express their loneliness, anguish and sadness through autumn scenery. Or combined with the author's writing background and life experience, the theme is finally attributed to the implication of cold and cheerless, silence and desolation and the writer's lonely mood under the white terror.

With the in-depth interpretation of the text, teachers have also begun to further improve the implementation of the classroom teaching of the text, especially in the grasp of the theme, generally tend to Qian Liqun, Sun Shaozhen and other famous scholars' interpretation and analysis of Autumn in the Old Capital. The teachers no longer verified the theme of the text with Yu Dafu's life experience, nor used "scene blending" to analyze the author's emotion towards autumn, the old capital, in a systematic way, and finally reached a consensus on the cognition of the theme and emotional tone. In other words, although this article is written about the desolation of autumn, it expresses not sorrow and sadness, but an appreciation of the decline and fall of autumn. This is actually a kind of aesthetic taste that regards sadness as beauty, and an elegant realm of enjoying the sad autumn.[2]

### 2.2. Is it appropriate to explain sad feelings based on the background of the work and the writer's life?

In the early days, understanding the author's loneliness, and desolation with the help of "knowing people and discussing the world" became the main problem in the classroom. When interpreting the main idea of the text, teachers will guide students to contact the author's writing background and understand the reason why Yu Dafu loves autumn.

#### 2.2.1. In interpreting the theme, dig deep into the era background of this article's creation

Why is the author sad? After September 18, 1931, due to the threat of white terror, Yu Dafu had no choice but to stay in Hangzhou. During this period, he wrote a large number of poems expressing his love for the mountains and rivers, in order to relieve the depression in his heart. At that time, he was wanted by the authorities many times. He was middle-aged and "had no home to return to". In July 1934, Yu Dafu "traveled thousands of miles" from Hangzhou to Peiping via Qingdao. he once again experienced the autumn "flavor" of his old capital and wrote this famous article with unique aesthetic taste.[3]

#### 2.2.2. Interpreting the Text from the Author's Experience and Personality Traits

In life, Yu Dafu has no place to live in and has been displaced from place to place. He has suffered from the sorrow and grief of life. During his ten years studying and living in Japan, he suffered

humiliation and discrimination. This kind of long-term humiliating life experience has shaped his depressed and sensitive character, which has directly produced Yu Dafu's unique literary and aesthetic view—he advocated "quiet literature" and his works are also "still literature like water". Therefore, the "desolation" in the heart described by the author is not only the view of the old capital, but also the feeling of the whole life. Combining with Yu Dafu's special life experience, this paper deduces the style of his works—the overall style of the article is low and full of frustrated and depressed feelings.

The analysis of the above themes all confirms that the theme of Autumn in the Old Capital is "Sad Autumn" and its emotional tone is "sad". If we do not rely on any background information and start from the text alone, it is very difficult for us to read out the heavy sorrow from Yu Dafu's language. On the contrary, what we read out is a kind of leisure and elegance, a kind of enjoyment of autumn flavor. Qian Liqun once criticized the simple logic of knowing people and discussing the world—"The times are depressing—the writer must be immersed in a single absolute depression everywhere—and every work he writes must be full of a single feeling of depression." Sun Shaozhen further pointed out that the ancient people in China expressed their sorrow in autumn as a kind of sorrow in life. In Yu Dafu's Autumn in the Old Capital, there was a little change in the traditional theme of sorrow in autumn, that is, the sadness of autumn, and the death brought by autumn is beautiful in itself. The poet was immersed in it, but it was not a kind of sorrow but a kind of enjoyment of life. Feeling the decline of autumn and death is an elegant realm of life ".It can be seen that the reason why Yu Dafu chose the decaying scenery to depict is not the true reflection of life's bumpy experience, but the elegant interest pursued by the literati rich in classical culture. It is a leisurely and elegant mood to face up to and appreciate the decline of life, and it is also the embodiment of the unique aesthetic interest with sadness as beauty.[4]

### 2.3. Is it appropriate to use scenery to prove the theme of sadness?

Autumn in the Old Capital, as a classic work of prose, appreciation of its exquisite language is an important teaching content. In the actual teaching process of language appreciation, there are still some problems worth reflection. Artistic feature is an important teaching content in prose reading teaching. The artistic charm of Autumn in the Old Capital is not only reflected in the unique viewing angle, but also reflected in the aesthetic taste of taking sadness as beauty. However, many classrooms are restricted by the fixed thinking of "blending scene with scene", relying on a large amount of background information of "knowing people and discussing the world", tightly wrapping the author, the times and nature together, which is also the simple logic of "knowing people and discussing the world" criticized by Qian Liqun. Under this kind of simple logic, many classrooms only stay on the surface of the objects, and do not base themselves on the text, dig out the deep meaning of the language, and realize the aesthetic taste behind the language.

As for the language of the text, the traditional teaching approach is to read the first paragraph, summarize the overall characteristics of the autumn in the old capital, take a subtitle for each Qiu Jingtū, appreciate it by pictures and look for objects, and use the objects to prove the overall characteristics of the autumn in the old capital, i.e. to analyze where the characteristics of "Qing, Jing and Bei" are embodied. The teaching idea only follows the author's "what has been written" and does not pay attention to the author's "why has it been written like this"; Only looking for images (or "evidence") in the text to confirm the "clear, quiet, sad" characteristics. This kind of classroom is not only boring and uninteresting, but also can't arouse students' aesthetic experience and lose the artistic beauty of prose. Under the concept of the new curriculum standard, many teachers have begun to pay attention to the appreciation of language. For example, they not only pay attention to the autumn objects in autumn scenery, but also guide students to find subjective sentences in the text, which enables students to enter Yu Dafu's attention and experience of self. Other teachers rely on Yu Dafu's

writing characteristics when he returned to Hangzhou to guide students to experience the fresh and light language style and the author's carefree and pure mood.

### 3. Interpretation: analysis of the core value of the text

#### 3.1. Material Selection—Quietness in Rural Areas

The first paragraph of Autumn in the Old Capital points out the autumn missed by Yu Dafu, which is "silent, quiet and sad". This is an overall description of the characteristics of autumn scenery. In Yu Dafu's memory, autumn scenery in Peiping is not a bustling street scene, a campus overflowing with youth, or a scenic spot that makes one forget to return, but a quiet Taoran Pavilion, Yuquan, moonlit night, ordinary reed flowers and insect songs. The bell of Tanzhe Temple gives us a sense of tranquility, remoteness and antiquity. There are also scattered autumn grasses, a kind of tranquility far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, and an interest in avoiding the bustling countryside of the city. The autumn color that Yu Dafu misses is not as vivid and moving as the autumn in Laohan's works. Instead, he deliberately evades the bright color and strives for a kind of elegant beyond the common customs.[5]

#### 3.2. Painting Scenery-Beauty of Sadness

In the choice of autumn scenery, Yu Dafu chose the scenery far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, which was full of the coolness and tranquility of the countryside. On the painting scene, Yu Dafu writes down the unique "desolation" with exquisite and lonely strokes. This autumn's "desolation" is written about the sad scene, but it expresses not sadness, nor sentiment, nor the decline, but the love for the sad autumn, which is based on the aesthetic sentiment of sadness as beauty, and is the leisurely mood of "not enjoying fully".

This kind of aesthetic appeal, which regards sadness as beauty, is the leisure and elegant interest of renting a broken house. Here, Yu Dafu chose to "rent a house with broken rafters". Why rent a house with broken rafters? With the "broken house" is not to erase the elegance of the literati? Obviously, we have not read out tackiness, but we have read out detachment from worldly affairs. Only by using "the contrast between aesthetic value and practical value" put forward by Sun Shaozhen can we realize the elegance beyond the common customs. A beautiful house only has practical value, while a broken house only has the sense of vicissitudes and has more aesthetic value. The long history and culture accumulated in the ancient capital "may not necessarily be found in the well-known places of historic interest and scenic beauty, but may only be found in the dilapidated houses". In this dilapidated house, enjoying strong tea, looking at the green sky, listening to the flying sound of pigeons and counting down a little bit of sunlight, this is the leisure that only belongs to Yu Dafu.

Of course, this kind of literati's elegant interest, which takes sadness as beauty, is even more appreciation of the disastrous life. The locust tree in North China has fallen into blossom, and the author wrote "fallen blossom" and "residual sound", which are just symbols of the decline and fall of life. The falling of the stamen touched the author's delicate and keen heart, and gave him the touch of stepping on the stamen. Observing the silk lines left by the fallen stamens on the dust, this is the trace of the death of life. Behind these lines, we can also feel the care and sufferings of street sweepers. The author conveys a profound understanding of the death of life with delicate and lonely strokes, which belongs to Yu Dafu alone. It can be said that Yu Dafu's appreciation of the disastrous life is not so much the author's close attention to nature and life as his own inner feelings when depicting autumn scenery, which is a very personal aesthetic.[6]

### 3.3. Posture–Compatibility of Elegance and Vulgarity

Both the materials drawn from autumn scenery and the exquisite description of autumn scenery reflect the unique classical cultural accomplishment as a scholar, and are also permeated with the leisure and elegance of a scholar. The elegance and interest here are not diametrically opposed to the secular world, but they are blended into the secular life of the city to achieve the state of compatibility between elegance and vulgarity. This is especially evident when depicting "idle people in the city". The idle people in the city mentioned in the article are dressed in plain and traditional clothes and have a completely different idle attitude from busy cities. The "slow leisure" and "slight sigh" of idle people in this city are exactly the corresponding to Yu Dafu's leisurely mood. In other words, "the emotional appeal of the literati is reflected in the rhythm of the secular people's life, and the secular people reflect the emotional appeal of the literati, which achieves the blend of vulgar and good, refined and popular".

More subtly, the author expresses his experience and pondering over the dreary autumn by borrowing the sighs and answers of idle people in the city. The article reads: "isn't it? A layer of autumn rain and a layer of cold"! What is the difference between "a burst of autumn rain and a burst of cold"? Here, the autumn rain is silent. How do we perceive the coming of the autumn rain and how do we perceive the coldness of autumn? With the help of the word "layer", Yu Dafu wrote the texture of autumn meaning-the cold brought by the autumn rain, not for a short time, but a layer after layer, which is the texture spread layer by layer. It is the slight sigh of the idle people in the city after the rain, but also the cool autumn in Yu Dafu's eyes.

## 4. Teaching: "the restoration of artistic perception" in the classroom

After clarifying the core aesthetic implication of Autumn in the Old Capital and knowing the problems existing in the real classroom, we should think about how to develop a true and effective appreciation of prose reading. This part combines the text analysis of Autumn in the Old Capital, based on the current teaching situation, and puts forward teaching suggestions for appreciation of text language.

### 4.1. Analysis of Students

Combined with students' cognitive development level, we may have doubts: Yu Dafu's personal aesthetic taste of "taking sadness as beauty" is far from students' life experience and emotional experience. How to Guide Students to Understand "Why is Autumn Beautiful in Yu Dafu's Works?" "Why can the sadness of autumn give birth to beautiful feelings?" . In order to solve students' cognitive contradiction, make up for students' life experience, language experience and arouse students' aesthetic taste, we can help students appreciate the language of prose with the help of "restoration of artistic perception" proposed by Sun Shaozhen. "Because the works presented by the author are unified, this unification is the result of the objective life being assimilated by the author's emotion. In interpreting the text, we can only perceive the subtle mystery of the text by restoring the original state of the image and analyzing the differences and contradictions between the original state and the artistic image. "

### 4.2. "Reduction" teaching method of classroom use strategies

We can restore the language in the text that is not easy to be found by students and understood by students to the "native state" and analyze the contradictions with the help of comparison. For example, for the first paragraph of "Autumn in the Old Capital", the traditional classroom only focuses on the

overall summary of autumn in the old capital-let the students read the first paragraph and find out the overall characteristics of autumn in the old capital, which are "silent, quiet and sad". Besides, is there nothing worth analyzing in this paragraph? We know that Yu Dafu expressed his nostalgia and appreciation for the old capital of autumn in the first paragraph. How did the language of that first paragraph express this kind of emotion? What are the characteristics of its language narration? Through the reduction of sentences, we can guide students to read the first paragraph and appreciate the emotional tone and the characteristics of the narrative language. We can restore the first paragraph to its original state: no matter where the autumn is good, but the autumn in northern China is especially clear, quiet and dreary. The reason why I traveled thousands of miles from Hangzhou to catch up with Qingdao and then Peiping was just to taste the autumn flavor of this old capital. By comparing the feeling of reading the original sentence with the feeling of changing the sentence, the students clearly perceive the difference-the original sentence is a short sentence with slow and carefree intonation, and the language contains meditation, loneliness and deep attachment and love for autumn, the old capital; However, the revised sentence is rather long and appears to be hurried to read. It is like catching a late train. It is only an objective description of the facts and has no aesthetic feeling of prose at all.

### 4.3. "Contrast" teaching methods of classroom use strategies

Similar teaching methods can also be used in the classroom. For example, when reading "Autumn Sophora Blossoms", the student union would ask: Why not write Sophora and write "Blossoms"? Yu Dafu "feels at leisure" and "feels a little lonely" subconsciously. What does he associate subconsciously? Is it sadness and desolation over the loss of life? Here, we can link Su Shi's "Nostalgia with Zi You in Mianchi" with the poem "See the claw and nail prints by chance mud and snow bear. Will the flying swan care what it has left blow?" In "The Song of Funeral Flowers", the saying goes, "Handle the flowers and hoe them out of the embroidered curtain, and endure to tread on the fallen flowers." In the novel "Song for White Hair", the writer said, "The color of flowers will change this year, but who will see the flowers bloom again next year?" Of course, it is necessary to guide students to understand that Yu Dafu's feelings towards Luo Rui are different from those of these poems. The difference lies in Yu Dafu's appreciation of the declining scene of autumn under the aesthetic taste of "taking sadness as beauty" rather than just feeling lonely about the decaying life, which is a kind of leisure and elegant realm of enjoying the sad autumn.

## 5. Conclusion

Both the analysis of the text and the extraction of the teaching value of prose should be based on the language of prose. Guide students to carry out Chinese practical activities under the concept of core accomplishment, make up for the lack of students' life experience by means of "restoration" and "contrast", improve their aesthetic reading ability and realize the emotion of prose.

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