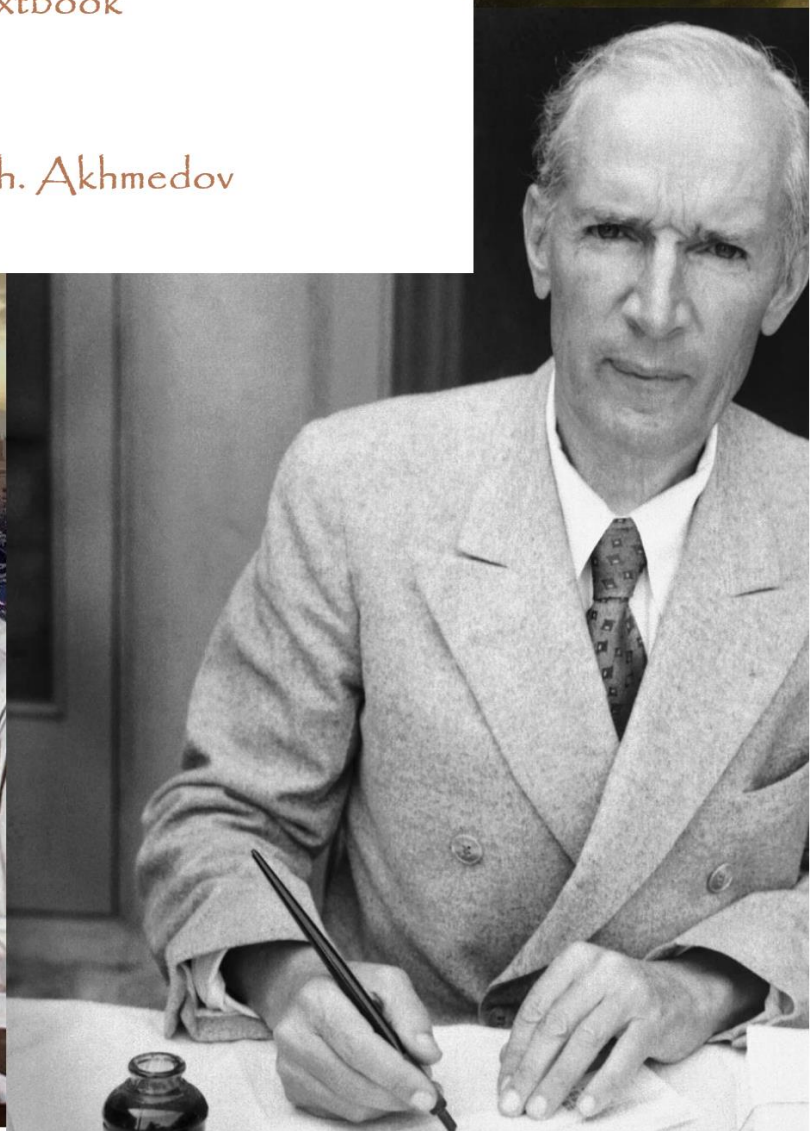
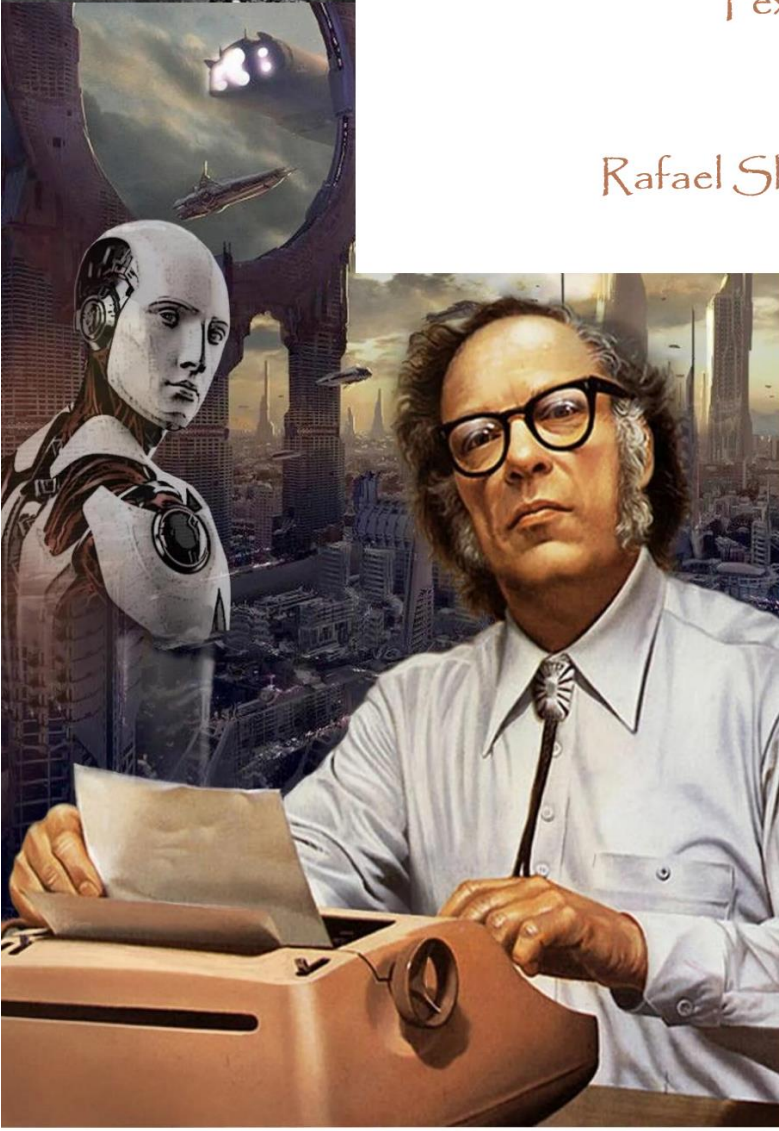


# AMERICAN LITERATURE

Textbook

Rafael Sh. Akhmedov



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A95

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American Literature is a tutorial for the students of specialties: 60111800 - Foreign language and literature (English), 60230100 - Philology and teaching languages (English) and 60230200 - Theory and practice of translation (English). In this tutorial the author has tried to be responsive to the immense changes that have occurred over the past 20 years in the study of American literature. In particular, the author has tried to register the plurality of American culture and American writing: the continued inventing of communities, and the sustained imagining of nations, that constitute the literary history of the United States. This tutorial is compiled on the basis of model curriculum on “The Literature of the Countries of the Target Language” registered by the Council of Gulistan State University (Minutes No.1, August 30, 2023).

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Rafael Sh. Akhmedov** (B.A. - Gulistan State University, 2005; M.A. - Uzbekistan State World Languages University, 2007) is currently teaching World Literature, Introduction to Literary Theory and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Literature at Gulistan State University. Highly interested in literature in general, and in science fiction particularly, the author of the given tutorial has been analyzing artistic and literary peculiarities of a well-known representative of SF literature - Isaac Asimov - for a long time. In 2017 the research topic of Rafael Sh. Akhmedov's thesis was broadened and now it is devoted to social-philosophical subject of American science fiction. Rafael Sh. Akhmedov is the author of many scientific articles published in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Japan, Indonesia, India, Russia, the UK, and USA; organizer of the

“*English Book Club*” for the students (Faculty of Philology, Gulistan State University), who are eager to get acquainted with English-speaking writers and their books written in English; member of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, 2014-2015); reviewer in *International Journal of Culture and History* (Las Vegas, USA) and *International Journal of Literature and Arts* (New York, USA), editor and corrector in *Bulletin of Gulistan State University* (Gulistan, Uzbekistan); participant of various international scientific-practical and scientific-theoretical conferences, seminars and trainings; author of monograph “*Science Fiction of Isaac Asimov*” and methodological complex on English and American literature.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have accumulated some debts in the course of working on this book. In particular, I would like to thank my colleagues at Gulistan State University and at other universities of Uzbekistan and the United States. Among my colleagues in the Department of the English Language and Literature, I owe a special debt of thanks to Mr. Kanimkul Tadzhev, an assistant-professor, for motivating me, for helping and supporting so much and so efficiently with the research and preparation, and for his wise and invaluable advice. Special thanks are also due to James Gunn, American science fiction writer, editor, scholar, former professor emeritus of English at the University of Kansas and the founding director of the Center for the Study of Science Fiction, and Emad El-Din Aysha, a member of the Egyptian association of science fiction writers, a scientist and journalist, for making me believe in possibility to create such tutorial. I am also grateful to Anatoliy Stepanovich Likhodzievskiy, professor at Uzbekistan State World Languages University, for proving himself to be such thoughtful, meticulous, and creative copyeditor, and to my students for making a first-class job of proofreading and the compilation of the index. On a more personal note, I would like to thank my parents and wife for their quick wit, warmth, intelligence, and understanding, for their thoughtfulness, courage, commitment, and good company. Sincere thanks are also due to the very best of editors for steering this book to completion. Finally, I would like to thank all those at publishing house whose names I do not know, but who help turn the electronic files into the book reality that you hold today.

## PREFACE

You are holding in your hands actually the revised edition of “*American Literature*”, a tutorial, the preprint of which was published locally in 2016 and was itself an updated and expanded version of *Great American Writers*, a course of lectures published in 2014 by Gulistan State University Press (Uzbekistan). Expanding on the coverage of these earlier works, the present edition contains 20 chapters and more than 100 entries, divided nearly evenly between entries on writers and literary works. The scope of the tutorial spans recorded American literature’s history and reaches up to the present. From the beginning of time, stories have fascinated humans in every society. Because storytellers grasp certain social and psychological phenomena within their societies which others do not, and are able to interpret those phenomena and bring them to life, their status is unique.

“American Literature” presents a list of American visionaries and their masterpieces, covering many years from the earliest recorded writings of the 1<sup>st</sup> settlers to the latest representatives of multicultural literature of the U.S. Entries include list of the most prominent works of American writers, their biographies and short analysis of their masterpieces. Each entry is followed by study questions, test quizzes, and selected sources. The main considerations that ruled the selection of writers and works were not only their presence in the sample program of the subject but their intrinsic value, their interest for young contemporary scholars, and their geographic and linguistic diversity.

In this tutorial, I have tried to be responsive to the immense changes that have occurred over the past 20 years in the study of American literature. In particular, I have tried to register the plurality of American culture and American writing: the continued inventing of communities, and the sustained imagining of nations, that constitute the literary history of the United States.

I wish the readers a pleasant and exciting voyage into the realm of the American writers and their writings. It is my hope that this tutorial will stimulate readers to further explore the masterpieces for the essence and exquisiteness that in this textbook can only be suggested.

*Rafael Akhmedov*

## CHAPTER I. COLONIAL PERIOD OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

### Plan:

- 1.1. Periodization of American Literature
- 1.2. Native American Oral Literature
- 1.3. Basic Traits of Early American Literature
- 1.4. William Bradford
- 1.5. Anne Bradstreet

### 1.1. Periodization of American Literature

American literature doesn't easily lend itself to classification by time period. Given the size of the U.S. and its varied population, there are often several literary movements happening at the same time. However, this hasn't stopped literary scholars from attempting. Here are some of the most commonly agreed upon periods of American literature from the colonial period to the present.

**1. The Colonial Period (1607-1775):** This period encompasses the founding of Jamestown up to the Revolutionary War. The majority of writings were historical, practical, or religious in nature. Some writers of this period include Phillis Wheatley, Cotton Mather, William Bradford, Anne Bradstreet, and John Winthrop. The 1<sup>st</sup> Slave Narrative, "*A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man*", was published in Boston in 1760.

**2. The Revolutionary Age (1765-1790):** Beginning a decade before the Revolutionary War and ending about 25 years later, this period includes the writings of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. This is arguably the richest period of political writing since classical antiquity. Important works include the "*Declaration of Independence*," "*The Federalist Papers*" and the poetry of Joel Barlow and Philip Freneau.

**3. The Early National Period (1775-1828):** This era in American Literature is responsible for some notable works, such as the 1<sup>st</sup> American comedy written for the stage ("*The Contrast*" by Royall Tyler, 1787) and the 1<sup>st</sup> American Novel ("*The Power of Sympathy*" by William Hill, 1789). Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper and Charles Brockden Brown are credited with creating distinctly American fiction, while Edgar Allan Poe and William Cullen Bryant began writing poetry that was markedly different from that of the English tradition.

**4. The American Renaissance (1828-1865):** Also known as the Romantic Period in America and the Age of Transcendentalism, this period is commonly accepted to be the greatest of American literature. Major writers include Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville. Emerson, Thoreau and Margaret Fuller are credited with shaping the literature and ideals of many later writers. Other major contributions include the poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the short stories of Melville, Poe, Hawthorne and Harriet Beecher Stowe. In addition, this era is the inauguration point of American Literary Criticism, led by Poe, James Russell Lowell and William Gilmore

Simms. The years 1853 and 1859 brought the 1<sup>st</sup> African-American novels (“*Clotel*” and “*Our Nig*”).

**5. The Realistic Period (1865-1900):** As a result of the American Civil War, Reconstruction and the age of Industrialism, American ideals and self-awareness changed in profound ways, and American literature responded. Certain romantic notions of the American Renaissance are replaced by realistic descriptions of American life, such as those represented in the works of William Dean Howells, Henry James and Mark Twain.

This period also gave rise to regional writing, such as the works of Sarah Orne Jewett, Kate Chopin, Bret Harte, Mary Wilkins Freeman and George W. Cable. In addition to Walt Whitman, another master poet, Emily Dickinson, appeared at this time.

**6. The Naturalist Period (1900 - 1914):** This relatively short period is defined by its insistence on recreating life as life really is, even more so than the realists had been doing in the decades before. American Naturalist writers such as Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London created some of the most powerfully raw novels in American literary history. Their characters are victims who fall prey to their own base instincts and to economic and sociological factors. Edith Wharton wrote some of her most beloved classics, such as “*The Custom of the Country*” (1913), “*Ethan Frome*” (1911) and “*House of Mirth*” (1905) during this time period.

**7. The Modern Period (1914 - 1939):** After the American Renaissance, the Modern Period is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most influential and artistically rich age of American writing. Its major writers include such powerhouse poets as E.E. Cummings, Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens and Edna St. Vincent Millay. Novelists and other prose writers of the time include Willa Cather, John Dos Passos, Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Gertrude Stein, Sinclair Lewis, Thomas Wolfe and Sherwood Anderson. The Modern Period contains within it certain major movements including the Jazz Age, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Lost Generation. Many of these writers were influenced by World War I and the disillusionment that followed, especially the expatriates of the Lost Generation. Furthermore, the Great Depression and the New Deal resulted in some of America’s greatest social issue writing, such as the novels of Faulkner and Steinbeck, and the drama of Eugene O’Neill.

**8. The Beat Generation (1944 - 1962):** Beat writers, such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, were devoted to anti-traditional literature, in poetry and prose, and anti-establishment politics. This time period saw a rise in confessional poetry in literature, which resulted in legal challenges and debates over censorship in America. William S. Burroughs and Henry Miller are two writers whose works faced censorship challenges and who, along with other writers of the time, inspired the counterculture movements of the next two decades.

**9. The Contemporary Period (1939 - Present):** After World War II, American literature becomes broad and varied in terms of theme, mode, and purpose. Currently, there is little consensus as to how to go about classifying the last 80 years into periods or movements - more time must pass, perhaps, before scholars can make these determinations. That being said, there are a number of important writers since



1939 whose works may already be considered “classic” and who are likely to become canonized. Some of these are: Kurt Vonnegut, Amy Tan, John Updike, Eudora Welty, James Baldwin, Sylvia Plath, Arthur Miller, Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, Joan Didion, Thomas Pynchon, Elizabeth Bishop, Tennessee Williams, Sandra Cisneros, Richard Wright, Tony Kushner, Adrienne Rich, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Joyce Carol Oates, Thornton Wilder, Alice Walker, Edward Albee, Norman Mailer, John Barth, Maya Angelou and Robert Penn Warren.

### **Study Questions:**

1. List representatives of the Colonial Period in the development of American literature.
2. Define the role of the Revolutionary Period in the development of American literature.
3. Who are representatives of the Early National Period? Reveal main traits of the Period.
4. What do you know about the American Renaissance.
5. Name representatives of the Realistic Period in the development of American literature. What are specific features of the Period?
6. Who are representatives of the Naturalism in American literature? Why this period is called Naturalist Period?
7. List representatives of the Modern Period in the development of American literature. What literary movements and genres were developing during this period?
8. Name representatives of the Beat Generation.
9. What do you know about the Contemporary Period in the development of American literature?

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Lindsey, H., Carlson, C.C. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
2. Besserman, L. *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. NY: Garland, 2016.

## **1.2. Native American Oral Literature**

The foundation of American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales, and lyrics (always songs) of Indian cultures. Native American oral tradition is quite diverse. Indian stories glow with reverence for nature as a spiritual, as well as physical, mother. Nature is alive and endowed with spiritual forces; main characters may be animals or plants, often totems associated with a tribe, group, or individual. The Indian contribution to America is greater than is often believed. The hundreds of Indian words in everyday American English include “canoe,” “tobacco,” “potato,” “moccasin,” “moose,” “persimmon,” “raccoon,” “tomahawk,” and “totem.”

Contemporary Native American literature is grounded in the oral traditions of the various indigenous groups of peoples who have and who do live on the American

continent. While the differences among cultural groups are great, there are commonalities as well among these orally based traditions. The following is a general overview of the Native American oral tradition which also includes the works of contemporary Indian writers.

### **Markers of Native American oral tradition:**

1. Oral literature is a performance. Storytellers, within the specific culture's structure established for myth, song or ceremony, have the freedom to create their own interpretations of the traditional stories; the versions must be acceptable to the entire community, the specific performance appropriate to the situation and the desired result of the performance achieved. Most traditions usually consider there to be one valid version of a story with the inevitable changes adding allusions to recent events. Important to the telling are specific gestures and vocal techniques to dramatize contents or to prompt a response from the audience.

2. The sense of community is integral to the oral tradition. The stories and their context are community centered; they both are products of the community and are told for its sake rather than for the individual telling the stories or for those outside the community.

3. Oral literature is a living tradition. Simon Ortiz, an Acoma Pueblo poet, stated in a 1990 interview that for him and those that have grown up in it, "the oral tradition... is that whole process... of that society in terms of its history, its culture, its language, its values, and subsequently, its literature".

4. A love of language and playing with language marks oral literature; a native audience can note the puns, metaphors, and humor which are integral to an oral tradition's telling of its history, its place in the world and the values important to the community.

### **Categories of Native American oral literature:**

1. **Narratives**, as in every culture, are employed to entertain and to teach; it is the means of passing on beliefs and history to children and to remind adults about their place in their world. These narratives are of various types, and their categorization varies between tribes as well as between tribes and scholars talking about these stories. Most tribes contrast the *sacred* from the *non-sacred* stories; this designation controls who can tell which stories and under what circumstances they can be told. Scholars have tended to divide the stories into myths (are said by the tribal group to be true of the prehistoric past) or tales (are seen as either true or fictional in the historic past).

This categorization is complicated by the way different groups of people divide their own history; for instance, a number of tribes pose 3 separate time periods. The 1<sup>st</sup> is designated the mythic, that time in which the primal world with animal spirits exist in human form and there are monsters; the 2<sup>nd</sup> is the age of transformation in which it is said the world as we know it today took its final shape, the animal people turned into animals and other beings transformed into natural geographical landmarks. The final, the historical age, is that in which all events are said to have occurred in human memory.

The plots of these stories are compressed and episodic and the settings are simple. The characters are often one dimensional, rarely expressing thoughts or emotions; their behavior only advances the activity in the story and there are frequently

inconsistencies in time, logic and detail. Humor is often a central element in these narratives and one that is most often lost in translations. These references along with the inconsistencies noted above are accepted by the audience.

These narratives can be grouped as stories of creation or tribal cultural heroes with a good number that do not seem to fit in the other two categories.

Creation stories relate how the 1<sup>st</sup> parents came to be or tell the story of a mythic hero who creates the universe. These stories relate the ways humans got to the earth's surface and then, in some cases, migrated to the home place. While those of the southwest U.S. are the most complex (i.e., "*Diné Bahané*" of the Navajo), the most common type on the North American continent, the earth diver, tells of a flood after the creation of the earth and the process of recreating the world with the combined efforts of a spiritual entity and animals.

Tribal cultural hero stories include those of the mythological characters who create the world as we know it now; they usually give to humans the resources and rituals that are needed to survive. This character defeats the enemies of humans and, possesses the power to shape aspects of nature into their final form. This hero (most often male, though not always) is usually of divine birth (i.e., frequently the mother is human while the father can be the sun, wind or stone). One fascinating variety of this hero is that of the trickster figure; this cultural hero relies on tricks and cunning to achieve his goals; they are creatures of extreme with enormous appetites for food, and they are known for breaking taboos. We see trickster most often in animal form, such as Coyote, Raven, Hare, Wolverine or Jay. These narratives teach the results of improper behavior and provide an outlet for this behavior for the audience and can point out problems in the community. They are sources of great entertainment.

Other narratives, which do not categorize easily, include the "*Orpheus*" tales, so called because they deal with traveling to the land of the dead and the attempt to return to the land of the living and the "star husband" stories, which combine elements found in many creation and cultural-hero myths.

2. **Autobiographical stories** are not traditionally the "life stories" as in Western European culture, but rather specific incidences of the teller that would benefit the whole group. This element is seen in the relating of courageous deeds by warriors to the community in the coup tales as a means of both boasting of one's individual prowess or courage and of assuring the warrior's place in the community. In this category are also the "as told to" stories from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries ("*Black Hawk*", "*Pretty Shield*", "*Black Elk*", etc.). Contemporary examples are included in the work of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Wilma Mankiller.

3. **Ritual drama** is the most complex because it combines song, story and oratory and dance. These ritual dramas are termed chants, chantways, ceremonies or rituals by the Indian people. Specific individuals or societies in the community oversee the rituals (priests, singers or shamans) and serve to order the spiritual and physical worlds. The power of the spoken word is considered the instrument of change, for it is through the appropriate words, properly spoken by the right person in proper circumstances, that harmony is accomplished. Not only is an individual's goal addressed (to mark important occasions, to heal body and mind, or to ensure a good

harvest), but also unification of the community as the participants and spectators collaborate in effecting the change

4. **Songs** are a vital part of the ceremonies and of all aspects of Indian life and constitute the largest part of Indian oral literatures. The basic instrument is the human voice accompanied with drum or flute. What constitutes a "good singer" varies from tribe to tribe. Some songs are thought to have been given by the creator and then passed down through teachers; these are vital elements of the legends and rituals. Some songs originate through contact between a supernatural being and a human and some are received from spiritual entities, as in vision or dreams or originate in religious movements, (i.e., *the Ghost Dance songs* from the late nineteenth-century); some are composed by an individual or a specific society within the community. There are as well personal songs telling of loss or of love. An interesting contemporary creation, the "49 songs" had their origin at an Oklahoma carnival sideshow called "*Days of 49rs*", which portrayed the story of the California gold rush. Because Indians were not allowed in the sideshow, the young people who attended the carnival created their own songs for their own entertainment. Today they can be heard at powwows, usually sung by young people. The importance of singing and the place it occupies is seen in the comments of Lucy Tapahonso, a Navajo writer, that singing is a part of everyday life for everyone, not just for those who have a trained voice.

5. **Oratory** was very important in Native American societies before non-Indians arrived. Those skilled in oratory were respected and held in high regard by the community. It is a skill that is still admired and respected.

There are always specific customs involved with the telling of stories; etiquette might demand a gift from the audience or the listeners might be obligated to respond with specific phrases at points in the story. Some stories require special languages or terms not used in ordinary life.

#### **Common themes:**

1. It is considered important that human beings live in harmony with physical and spiritual universe; this may be achieved through the power of thought and of words (i.e., rituals can bring rain, keep evil away or heal relationships). Words, the, should be spoken with great care, and there is the deliberate use of silence at times.

2. People must hold a deep reverence for the land. Traditional accounts of a tribe's origin and history can include references to specific places, especially the sacred places in the homeland. In Storyteller, Silko use photos of the landscape, which is explained in terms of the traditional stories, and she makes frequent mention of the places where important and/or remembered events took place and their significance today. Momaday says in "*The Way to Rainy Mountain*":

*Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures that are there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colors of dawn and dusk.*

3. Directions and the idea of circularity appear and are significant in stories.

4. The strong sense of community is found ever present in tribal literatures as they stress the need for cooperation and good relations of individuals within and with group. High value is placed on the characteristics of generosity, helpfulness and respect for age and experience. These traits are seen not only as desirable but as essential for survival of the individuals of the group and the culture itself.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What are the markers of Native American oral tradition?
2. How many categories of Native American oral literature do you know? Name them. Explain their specific role for people.
3. What are common themes of Native American oral literature?

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Hobson, G. *The People Who Stayed: Southeastern Indian Writing After Removal*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2010.
2. Owings, A. *Indian Voices: Listening to Native Americans*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2011.
3. Teuton, Ch.B. *Deep Waters: The Textual Continuum in American Indian Literature*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010.

## **1.3. Basic Traits of Early American Literature**

**The Age of Exploration and Adventure Literature.** Columbus is often regarded as the 1<sup>st</sup> European explorer reached America. However, the name of New Land is not taken from him. The “America” is derived from the name Amerigo Vespucci; the 1<sup>st</sup> explorer arrived at the mainland of New World, who recognized the existence of a New World. Amerigo Vespucci has strong exploration spirit, that’s why in his writing he says, “Let it be said in whisper, experience is certainly worth more than theory”. The important of experience is also being the main belief among other European Explorers. Thus, in this era, the literature mostly about exploration, experience, adventure in form of narrative persuasive pamphlet, ordinary pamphlet, note, etc.

Note of the journey was popular this day. Giovanni da Verrazano wrote “*Letter to the King*” in 1524. This narrative describes his voyage across the North American seaboard from North Carolina to Maine. Verrazano was similar to Columbus, wished to reach coastal Asia through his journey. In fact, both arrive at New Land. Verrazano besides wrote about his journey; he also wrote about the idyllic of the New Land.

There are many other notes, voyage narrative, and pamphlet written by European Explorer about the New Land. It contents theory and personal experiments. Thomas Harriot records the exploration of Roanoke (1<sup>st</sup> colony at Roanoke set up in 1585, off the coast of North Carolina, that disappeared) in “*A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*” (1588). It is published for over 200 years and translated in many languages include Latin, French, and German.

**1<sup>st</sup> American Writers.** It is Captain John Smith who is the 1<sup>st</sup> American writer in literature and explorer of this land. The reason is Smith has capability to make English Language and American experience became inseparably united. As history describes that other countries (French, Spain, and Dutch) had already constructed a New World Literature, while the English contributed minimally. John Smith struggles to trigger the contribution of English through his own writing.

Captain John Smith writes “*A True Relation*” (1608), “*A map of Virginia*” (1612), and “*The General history of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isle*” (1624). Smith also writes pamphlet to attract potential colonist to America. His writing concerns to “unbelievable wealth” of the New World.

One of the famous writing of John Smith is the story of “*Pocahontas*”. Pocahontas is princess of one of Indian tribe who saved John Smith’s life. Later, Pocahontas got married with John Rolfe and this marriage led the temporary peace between colonist and Indian for Pocahontas had successfully impressed English with her attractiveness, kindness, cleverness and charisma.

**The Colonial Literature Period.** The literature of colonial era contains sermon, histories, journals, speeches, pamphlet, political document, prose, and poetry. The literature is growing after the 1<sup>st</sup> printer established in at Cambridge 1639 and it is operated by Stephen Day. Afterward, this printer is spread through other colonies.

At this era, the differences appear among literature in New England and the literature in the south, and literature in middle colonies.

“The 1<sup>st</sup> settlers who became the founding fathers of American were quite a few of them Puritans. They came to America out of various reasons. But they were a group of serious religious people, advocating highly religious and moral principles. They carried with them to America a code of values, a philosophy of life, and a point of view, and what is became known as “American Puritanism”. New England literature was closer to *the Puritanism* belief that good writing is that brought full awareness of the significance of worshipping. The puritan is intellectual colonist who had ability of self-education and hard-working. And the existences of book were useful tools for teaching and to convey religious truth or to give sound on immediate practical issues, political, social or economic because they were confident that such work was essential for the building of a vigorous and virtuous state. The New England colonial literature starts with the story of the 1<sup>st</sup> day arriving of the colonist: William Bradford, John Winthrop (used the phrase “city upon a hill” to describe the new settlement), Cotton Mather, Samuel Sewall, Samuel Willards.

In his “*History of Plymouth Plantation*” - the story of the founding, the development and the decline of the colony between 1620 and 1650, William Bradford gave the 1<sup>st</sup> expression of to the idea that America was a scene of a unique experiment. William Bradford was, without doubt, the key figure in the Plantation at Plymouth.

John Winthrop was his counterpart in the Massachusetts colony. In his work “*A Model of Christian Charity*”. Winthrop says that, the puritans should be in a situation of visibility: “For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us.”

Cotton Mather was a prolific writer, among his works; “*Magnalia Christi America*” is his best known production, a “pastiche of brilliance, beauty, and botch-

work which, comprises 7 books to describe the history of the New England settlements, the lives of governors, the magistrates and '6 famous divines' as well as what he called the 'wars of the Lord' against Satan, witches, Quakers and Indians".

Most famous Ballad in this period was Michael Wigglesworth's "*Day of Doom*", a sensitive poetic expression account of the judgment day. Anne Bradstreet is the female poet with one of her best poetry is "*To my Dear and Loving Husband*".

The writers of the south are different with the writers in the New England. They were turned the attention to external life of the colony.

Southern writers had rarely written poetry and prose. They more concerns with the thought than the behavior. They are also more interested in political and social issues than metaphysic. One of the famous southern writers is William Bird who writes "*The History of the Dividing Line Run in the Year 1728*". Another southern writing is Alexander Whitaker's "*Good News from Virginia*" (1613).

While the Americans were intent upon large questions about God's purpose and the processes the history, each was no less preoccupied with the condition of his own soul. 3 writers - Thomas Hookern, Mary Rowlandson, and Samuel Sewall reflected this habit of strenuous self-searching and the compelling reasons that lead to it.

**Common themes** in American Puritan writings were: idealism - both religious and political, and pragmatism - practicality and purposiveness.

**Plain Style.** Puritans lived a simple life based on the concepts of humility and simplicity. This influence comes from their religious beliefs. Wearing elaborate clothing or having conceited thoughts offended Puritans. Puritan writing mimics these cultural values in its plain writing style. Puritans wrote directly to the point, and avoided much of the elaborate writing style that became popular in Europe. Simple sentences with common language allowed Puritans to communicate information without feeling like they were drawing attention to themselves.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Who is considered to be the 1<sup>st</sup> American writer in literature?
2. What are the differences among literature in New England and the literature in the south, and literature in middle colonies?
3. What are the main purposes of myth and story in Native American literature?
4. Define some of the basic concepts of Puritan ideology and illustrate their significance in specific works. Choose from among the following: (a) "new world" consciousness, (b) covenant theology, (c) typology, (d) innate depravity, and (e) irresistible grace. A few writers address some of these concepts: (a) Bradford and Bradstreet; (b) Bradford, Wigglesworth, and Edwards; (c) Bradstreet (in "*Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House*"), Taylor, Winthrop, and Wigglesworth; (d) Taylor, Wigglesworth, and Edwards; and (e) Winthrop and Edwards. Find out in Internet or other sources, what concepts each of the above mentioned authors address to.
5. Slavery is an issue of conscience for some colonial and early American writers; for others it is fraught with ambivalence. Discuss the issue with references to several specific texts.

6. Discuss the major similarities and differences between “The Mayflower Compact” and “The Arbella Covenant”.
7. Do library research: “How do Salem Witch Trials reflect the process of literature development in America of that period?”.

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Early, J. *Adventures in American Literature*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 2008.
2. Elliot, E. *Columbia Literary History of the United States*. NY: Columbia UP, 2008.
3. Gray, R. *A History of American Literature*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. NY: Blackwell, 2012.
4. Schweitzer, I. *Early American Literature* // "Review." No.23 (2): March, 2010.
5. Skipp, F.E. *American Literature*. Barron's Educational, 2012.
6. Spiller, R.E. *Literary History of the United States: History*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. NY: Macmillan Publishing Co, Inc., 2004.
7. Vann Spanckeren, K. *Outline of American Literature*. Revised Edition. US: US Department of State, 2004.

### **1.4. William Bradford (1590-1657)**

**Primary Works:** “*Of Plymouth Plantation*” (1630-1651), re-edited as “*History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*”.

### **A Brief Biography of William Bradford**

William Bradford (March 29, 1590, Austerfield, Yorkshire, England - May 9, 1657, N.Y., U.S.) was an English Separatist. He moved to Leiden in Holland in order to escape persecution from King James I of England, and then emigrated to the Plymouth Colony on the *Mayflower* in 1620. He was a signatory to the *Mayflower Compact* and went on to serve as Governor of the Plymouth Colony intermittently for about 30 years between 1621 and 1657.

His greatest contribution to early writing is his journal “*History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*”. It is a detailed history in journal form about the founding of the Plymouth Colony and the lives of the colonists from 1621 to 1646. Bradford's journal is described as a retrospective account of his recollections and observations. The 1<sup>st</sup> work was written in 1630; the 2<sup>nd</sup> was never finished, but between 1646 and 1650, he brought the account of the colony's struggles and achievements through the year 1646. Bradford writes most of his history out of his nostalgia, long after the decline of Pilgrim fervor and commitment had become apparent. Both the early annals which express his confidence in the Pilgrim mission and the later annals, some of which reveal his dismay and disappointment, were written at about the same time. In “*Of Plymouth Plantation*”, Bradford drew deep parallels between everyday life and the events of the Bible. Bradford hoped to demonstrate the workings of divine providence for the edification of future generations.

Bradford's history is a blend of fact and interpretation. The journal records not



only the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> 30 years but also the reactions of the colonists. The Bradford journal is regarded by historians as the preeminent work of 17<sup>th</sup> century America.

In 1888, Charles F. Richardson referred to Bradford as a "forerunner of literature" and "a story-teller of considerable power". Moses Coit Tyler called him "the father of American history". Many American authors have cited his work in their writings; for example, Cotton Mather referred to it in "*Magnalia Christi Americana*" and Thomas Prince referred to it in "*A Chronological History of New-England in the Form of Annals*". Even today it is considered a valuable piece of American literature, included in anthologies and studied in literature and history classes.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the contribution of W. Bradford to the further development of American literature?
2. What are the main events described in the "*History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*"?

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Donohue, B.B. *Bradford's Indian Book: Being the True Roote & Rise of American Letters as Revealed by the Native Text Embedded in "Of Plimouth Plantation"*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2011.
2. Gomez-Galisteo, M.C. *Early Visions and Representations of America: Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's "Naufragios" and William Bradford's "Of Plymouth Plantation"*. NY: Bloomsbury, 2013.

#### **1.5. Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672). "To My Dear and Loving Husband"**

**Primary Works:** "*The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*" (1650), "*Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning*" (1632-1678), "*Upon a Fit of Sickness*" (1642-1678), "*To Her Most Honoured Father Thomas Dudley*" (1650), "*The Foure Elements*" (1650), "*A Dialogue between Old England and New...*" (1650), "*To My Dear and Loving Husband*" (1641-1678), "*To My Dear Children*" (1656-1867), "*Contemplations*" (1669-1678).

### **A Brief Biography of Anne Bradstreet**

Anne Bradstreet, née Anne Dudley (1612, Northampton, England - September 16, 1672, Andover, Massachusetts Bay Colony, U.S.), one of the 1<sup>st</sup> poets to write English verse in the American colonies. Long considered primarily of historical interest, she won critical acceptance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a writer of enduring verse, particularly for her sequence of religious poems, "*Contemplations*," written for her family and not published until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Anne Dudley was the daughter of Thomas Dudley, chief steward to Theophilus Clinton, the Puritan Earl of Lincoln. She married Simon Bradstreet, another protégé of

the earl's, when she was 16, and 2 years later she, her husband, and her parents sailed with other Puritans to settle on Massachusetts Bay.

She wrote her poems while rearing 8 children, functioning as a hostess, and performing other domestic duties. The Bradstreets moved frequently in the Massachusetts colony, 1<sup>st</sup> - to Cambridge, then to Ipswich, and 2<sup>nd</sup> - to Andover, which became their permanent home. Bradstreet's brother-in-law, without her knowledge, took her poems to England, where they were published as "*The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*" (1650). The 1<sup>st</sup> American edition of "*The Tenth Muse*" was published in revised and expanded form as "*Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning*" (1678).

Most of the poems in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition are long and rather dully imitative works based on the standard poetic conventions of the time, but the last 2 poems - "*Of the Vanity of All Worldly Creatures*" and "*David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan*" - are individual and genuine in their recapitulation of her own feelings.

Her later poems, written for her family, show her spiritual growth as she came fully to accept the Puritan creed. She also wrote more personal poems of considerable beauty, treating in them such subjects as her thoughts before childbirth and her response to the death of a grandchild. These shorter poems benefit from their lack of imitation and didacticism. Her prose works include "*Meditations*," a collection of succinct and pithy aphorisms. In 1956 the poet John Berryman paid tribute to her in "*Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*", a long poem that incorporates many phrases from her writings.

### ***"To My Dear and Loving Husband" (1641-1678)***

*If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me ye women if you can.  
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay;  
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,  
That when we live no more we may live ever.*

**Analysis.** The poet speaks to her husband, celebrating their unity and saying that there is no man in the world whose wife loves him more. If there was ever a wife happier with her husband, the poet asks those women to compare themselves to her. She prizes her husband's love more than gold or the riches of the East. Rivers cannot quench her love and no love but his can ever satisfy her. There is no way she can ever repay him for his love. She believes they should love each other so much that when they die, their love will live on.

Anne Bradstreet's passionate love poems to her husband are some of the memorable in her canon because of the rawness of her expression. "*To my Dear and Loving Husband*" resembles a Shakespearean sonnet and is 12 lines long. The poem begins with Bradstreet describing herself and her husband as one being. She states that there is no other woman in the world who is as happy with her husband as she is. She then offers examples of material wealth and beauty, but she prizes her husband's love more than gold and all the riches of the East. She describes her love as thirst by writing that Rivers cannot quench her yearning. She needs his love and cannot live without it - she claims that only his love can "give re-competence".

Then, Bradstreet shifts into a spiritual perspective, writing that there is no way she can repay her husband for his love and that she hopes Heaven will "reward thee manifold". She believes that while she and her husband are living on Earth, they should love each other as fully as possible so that when they ascend to Heaven, their love will be eternal as well.

Marriage was a central relationship in Puritan society. Men and women married young and were expected to remain together until they died. Puritan society did not tolerate divorce or adultery, although cases of both are certainly present in the historical record.

Robert J. Richardson writes that the development in "*To My Dear and Loving Husband*" is "clear and logical". The poet's husband loves her so much that in order to find something that equals it, she must turn her sights Heavenward. The lovers' union in Heaven "is the outcome of their Earthly love" which is an emblem of what awaits the saved. As in many of Bradstreet's poems, Earth and Heaven "validate each other" because "Love is the way to Heaven, and the best image of Heaven is a realm of eternal Love". Bradstreet aspires to ascend to Heaven, and expects that the love that she shares with her husband will exist in the afterlife.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Discuss the extent to which Bradstreet's poetry reflects Puritan thinking.
2. Analyze the contrast between form and feeling in Bradstreet's work.
3. What does Anne Bradstreet's poetry reveal about Puritan ideas of the family and love?

### **Selected Sources:**

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2. Nichols, H. *Anne Bradstreet*. Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2016.

## CHAPTER II. THE PERIOD OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

### Plan:

#### 2.1. Specific Features of American Enlightenment

2.2. Philip Morin Freneau - 1<sup>st</sup> American National Poet. "*The House of Night*". "*The Wild Honey-Suckle*"

2.3. Charles Brockden Brown - Father of the American Novel "*Edgar Huntly: Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*"

2.4. Benjamin Franklin. "*Poor Richard Almanack*". Development of Didactic Genre. "*Autobiography*"

2.5. Thomas Paine. "*Common Sense*"

### 2.1. Specific Features of American Enlightenment (1776-1820)

In America the literature of the Enlightenment is closely connected with the War for Independence against the British Empire. It lasted for 8 years (1776-1783). The war ended in adopting the *Declaration of Independence*. A Federative Democratic Republic - the U.S.A. - was founded. This event was extremely significant for the further development of the country, as it gave freedom and independence to the American colonies. But the Bourgeois Revolution had its drawbacks. It did not abolish slavery, nor did it improve the life of American colonists, the working people and farmers. The progressive writers of that time protested against the injustice of slavery and the growth of reaction.

**Sense of Being American in the Literature of New Republic.** The self-awareness and question about national identity rise sooner after the Declaration of independence. This is followed by the period of American Enlightenment. American enlightenment is the movement signed by an importance of rationality rather than tradition and enlightenment thinkers has belief on the principles of justice, liberty, and equality. This enlightenment supports building the national identity of America. Benjamin Franklin is the American enlightenment figure. One of his well-known works is "*Poor Richard Almanac*" that share to the American about the useful of hard work to reach the wealth, the importance of independence, and the value of being health and wise. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur is another enlightenment writer. By writing "*Letters from an American Farmer*" (1782), he launched information to the Europe about wealth, peace, beautiful, and pride in America. In this period, political pamphlet and essays were so broadly distributed. One of well-known pamphlet is Thomas Paine's "*Common sense*" that talks about the idea of American exceptionalism.

In the literary field, the uncomfortable situation emerges with American literature dependence on English literary model. The American readers want well-known European literary work than Americans. The way to build independent national American literature is by increasing amount of printing presses, newspaper, magazines, schools, book shop, and library, improvement of ambitious writer with suitable subject, increasing the original fresh idea of America. This way affects a lot in

the American romanticism period. National writers were born. They are James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, and Edgar Allan Poe etc.

**Representatives of American Enlightenment.** American literature of the Enlightenment period is characterized by its fighting character. The writers of that time wrote political pamphlets and revolutionary poetry. The most popular writers of the time were Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, and the poet Philip Freneau.

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was the most democratic representative of the American Enlightenment movement. In 1775 he published his pamphlet “*Common Sense*” which urged the separation of the American colonies from England. During the War of Independence, he wrote “*The Crisis*” (1776-1783), a series of pamphlets, containing his comments on the events of the war against England. While in France he wrote “*The Rights of Man*” (1791-1792), a political essay.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was a writer of the revolutionary period in America. Besides he was a lawyer, philosopher, architect, statesman. In 1776 as a member of the Continental Congress he was in the committee of 5 to draft the Declaration of Independence. He outlined the principles of revolutionary bourgeois democracy. In 1800 Jefferson won the elections and served 2 terms as President of the U.S.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) is the most significant representative of the Enlightenment period in American literature. He distinguished himself as a great statesman, a scientist, a journalist, an economist, and a philosopher. Franklin's most important pamphlets and essays were published in his famous “*Poor Richard's Almanac*” (1732-1757) which played a very important role in spreading ideas of the Enlightenment period. Franklin made a fundamental contribution to the Declaration of Independence.

Philip Freneau (1752-1832) was the most outstanding poet of the Revolution. He wrote political poems. A “*Poem of the Rising Glory of America*” (1772) was full of belief in the birth of a new world where freedom would reign. In the poem “*To the Americans*” (1775) the poet called for a rebellion against the British rule. “*The Republican Genius of Europe*” welcomed the French Revolution. In his poems Freneau described his disappointment with the revolution as he thought that the American Bourgeois Revolution had not satisfied the demands of the people. Though Freneau's political verse was his most important contribution to American poetry, he wrote also lyrical poems of which “*The Indian Burying Ground*” and “*The Wild Honey Suckle*” are the best. Freneau also wrote prose. He published some letters and essays. Philip Freneau is considered to be one of the 1<sup>st</sup> truly American poets. He was the poet of American independence. He was the poet-journalist of contemporary affairs. All his life he fought for freedom in America.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Who are the main representatives of American Enlightenment?
2. Who is the most democratic representative of American Enlightenment?

## Selected Sources:

1. Greeson, J. *American Enlightenment: The New World and Modern Western Thought*. American Literary History, 2013.
2. Israel, J. *A Revolution of the Mind - Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*. Princeton UP, 2013.
3. Nelson, C. *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*. Penguin, 2017.
4. Winterer, C. *American Enlightenments: Pursuing Happiness in the Age of Reason*. Yale UP, 2016.

### 2.2. Philip Morin Freneau (1752-1832) - 1<sup>st</sup> American National Poet. “*The House of Night*”

**Primary Works:** “*The House of Night*” (1779), “*The Wild Honey-Suckle*” (1786), “*The Indian Burying Ground*” (1787), “*The Dying Indian: Tomo Chequi*” (1784), “*The Millennium*” (1797), “*On a Honey Bee*” (1809), “*To a Caty-Did*” (1815), “*On the Universality and Other Attributes of the God of Nature*” (1815), “*On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature*” (1815), “*On the Religion of Nature*” (1815).

#### A Brief Biography of Philip Freneau

Philip Morin Freneau (January 2, 1752, N.Y., U.S. - December 18, 1832, Monmouth county, N.J., U.S.) is an American poet, essayist, and editor, known as the “poet of the American Revolution”. After graduating from Princeton University in 1771, Freneau taught school and studied for the ministry until the outbreak of the American Revolution, when he began to write vitriolic satire against the British and Tories. Not until his return from 2 years in the Caribbean islands, where he produced 2 of his most ambitious poems, “*The Beauties of Santa Cruz*” and “*The House of Night*,” did he become an active participant in the war, joining the New Jersey militia in 1778 and sailing through the British blockade as a privateer to the West Indies. Captured and imprisoned by the British in 1780, Freneau wrote in verse bitterly, on his release, “*The British Prison-Ship*” (1781). During the next several years he contributed to *The Freeman’s Journal* in Philadelphia. Freneau became a sea captain until 1790, when he again entered partisan journalism, ultimately as editor (1791-1793) of the *National Gazette* in Philadelphia. Freneau alternated quiet periods at sea with periods of active newspaper work, until he retired early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to his farm in Monmouth county. Well-schooled in the classics and in the Neoclassical English poetry of the period, Freneau strove for a fresh idiom that would be unmistakably American, but, except in a few poems, he failed to achieve it.

**Freneau as Leader of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Naturalism:** 1. Fresh interest in nature. 2. The belief that nature is a revelation of God. 3. Humanitarian sympathy for the humble and oppressed. 4. The faith that people are naturally good. 5. That they lived idyllic and benevolent lives in a primitive past before the advent of civilization. 6. The

radical doctrine that the golden age will dawn again when social institutions are modified, since they are responsible for existing evil.

### **Aspects of Freneau:**

1. Poet of American Independence: Freneau provides incentive and inspiration to the revolution by writing such poems as "*The Rising Glory of America*" and "*Pictures of Columbus*".

2. Journalist: Freneau was editor and contributor of *The Freeman's Journal* (Philadelphia) from 1781-1784. In his writings, he advocated the essence of what is known as Jeffersonian democracy - decentralization of government, equality for the masses, etc.

3. Freneau as Father of American Poetry: His major themes are death, nature, transition, and the human in nature. All of these themes become important in 19<sup>th</sup> century writing. His famous poems are "*The Wild Honey-Suckle*" (1786), "*The Indian Burying Ground*" (1787), "*The Dying Indian: Tomo Chequi*" (1784), "*The Millennium*" (1797), "*On a Honey Bee*" (1809), "*To a Caty-Did*" (1815), "*On the Universality and Other Attributes of the God of Nature*", "*On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature*", and "*On the Religion of Nature*" (the last three written in 1815).

### **"The House of Night" (1779)**

"*The House of Night*" is one of the most famous of Freneau pieces. The poem consists of 136 quatrains (stanzas, 816 lines) with an ABCB rhyme scheme. The narrator relates the tale of a spooky adventure that befell him when he was out walking one night. He wanders into a garden and then into a house where Death himself lays dying. Our narrator speaks with Death for a while, who fears his approaching demise as he is worried that he won't get into heaven. The poem ends with a description of Death's funeral and all the spooks that attend. It's not one of the best poems of that time in terms of style, but readers may enjoy the supernatural subject matter. The narrator views the death of Death as a good thing, but reader is not sure it wouldn't result in zombie apocalypse. Freneau is the 1<sup>st</sup> truly American author on this list, which is pleasant because when our narrator describes the trilling of a bird, it is a North American bird and he mentions the Chesapeake, which is a body of water that we know. In an "*Advertisement*" (an authorial statement), Freneau indicates that the poem was founded upon Scripture ("the last enemy that shall be conquered is death"); he sets the poem at midnight in a solitary place that was once "beautiful and joyous" - perfectly suited for "the death of Death". The poem concludes "with a few reflexions on the impropriety of a too great attachment to the present life". Throughout his life, Freneau toyed with the poem, adding lines and removing stanzas until, in its 1786 version, the death of Death was totally expunged. This remarkable composition was the 1<sup>st</sup> significant American poem to be written on the abstraction Death. It anticipates Poe in its pervasive Romanticism, its tone and atmosphere, though it is also in a direct line of descent from the "*graveyard poets*" of Britain of the immediately preceding years.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Analyze Freneau's *"To Sir Toby"*, which is ostensibly about a sugar planter on the island of Jamaica, examine the poem for evidence that Freneau is also writing about southern slavery. Locate references to slavery in his other anthologized poems and summarize the way slavery, for Freneau, contradicts 18<sup>th</sup>-century principles of reason and human rights.
2. Evaluate the language of Freneau's historical poems against specific passages in Paine or Jefferson, and discuss the relative effectiveness of political and poetic voices within the context of American Revolution.

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Blakemore, S. *Literature, Intertextuality, and the American Revolution: From Common Sense to 'Rip Van Winkle'*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2012.
2. Goudie, S.X. *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2016.

### **2.3. Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) - Father of the American Novel. "Edgar Huntly: Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker"**

**Primary Works:** *"Wieland"* (1798), *"Ormond"* (1799), *"Edgar Huntly: Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker"* (1799), and *"Arthur Mervyn"* (1799-1800).

#### **A Brief Biography of Charles Brockden Brown**

Charles Brockden Brown, (January 17, 1771, Philadelphia, U.S. - February 22, 1810, Philadelphia, U.S.) is a writer known as the "father of the American novel". His gothic romances in American settings were the 1<sup>st</sup> in a tradition adapted by 2 of the greatest early American authors, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Brown called himself a "story-telling moralist." Although his writings exploit horror and terror, they reflect a thoughtful liberalism. The son of Quaker parents, Brown was of delicate constitution, and he early devoted himself to study. He was apprenticed to a Philadelphia lawyer in 1787, but he had a strong interest in writing that led him to help found a literary society. In 1793 he gave up the law entirely to pursue a literary career in Philadelphia and New York City.

His 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *"Wieland"* (1798), a minor masterpiece in American fiction, shows the ease with which mental balance is lost when the test of common sense is not applied to strange experiences. The story concerns Theodore Wieland, whose father died by spontaneous combustion apparently for violating a vow to God. The younger Wieland, also a religious enthusiast seeking direct communication with divinity, misguidedly assumes that a ventriloquist's utterances are supernatural in origin; driven insane, he acts upon the prompting of this "inner voice" and murders his wife and children. When apprised of his error, he kills himself. Brown also wrote *"Ormond"* (1799), *"Edgar Huntly"* (1799), and *"Arthur Mervyn"* (1799-1800), as well as a number of less well known novels and a book on the rights of women. Despite this literary output, Brown engaged in trade throughout his life to support his family.



## **“Edgar Huntly: Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker” (1799-1801)**

“*Edgar Huntly: or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker*”, published in 1799 by Charles Brockden Brown, is one of the earliest work of American fiction, and the 1<sup>st</sup> to depict the tense relationship between Americans and Indians on the frontier. Adapting some of the European Gothic literary tradition, Brown replaced castles and crypts with the jagged mountains, deep vales, and echoing caverns of the hostile American wilderness.

Although the novel is in some ways a detective story, it is also very complex in its examination of gender relations, frontier violence, religious and ethnic clashes, and the complicated psychology of its titular character. One of the most famous literary critics, Paul Allen, wrote that the novel is "the account of a young man who begins by looking for guilt in others and ends up finding it in himself; who starts out in search of answers but is finally satisfied with having defined a deeper riddle than those he attempted to solve".

Like his main character, Brown was a Quaker. He was intimately familiar with rebellions (the American Revolution, Haiti, Ireland), frontier violence, commerce and trade, and disputed land claims. Waldegrave was based off his close friend Elihu Hubbard Smith, a deist and an abolitionist who died prematurely.

Brown's writing took place in the context of his involvement with the New York group of *The Friendly Club*, comprised of males and females who valued progressive intellectual exchange and friendship. There, Brown was exposed to Enlightenment thought, but his novels always remained firmly rooted in the American experience. In the 1790s, the country was in upheaval over the *Alien and Sedition Acts*, as well as concomitant counter-subversive fears and fantasies about conspiratorial groups like the *Illuminati*. Gender tensions and issues over the extension of democracy created a threatening atmosphere in the new republic that was reflected in the text of “*Edgar Huntly*”.

One of the most discussed elements of Brown's book is its focus on sleepwalking. Brown read a great deal on the subject, collecting information through Smith's help, and then using it in several works. He also addressed the contemporary issues of imperialism, expansion of the frontier and the extermination of the Delaware, and Quaker involvement with the Irish and the Indians.

Like Brown's other novels, “*Edgar Huntly*” did not make much money when it was published. It was only a moderate critical success. It has attracted a great deal of critical interest and writing since, however, and is often included in college and university courses about the American novel and American history.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Why Charles Brockden Brown is called “the father of American novel”?
2. Find and discuss gothic features of his novels.

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Allen, P. *The Late Charles Brockden Brown*. Edited by Robert E. Hemenway and Joseph Katz. Columbia, S.C.: J. Faust, 2016.
2. Axelrod, A. *Charles Brockden Brown: An American Tale*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2013.
3. Barnard, Ph., Shapiro, S., Kamrath, M.L. *Revising Charles Brockden Brown*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2014.
4. Christopherson, B. *The Apparition in the Glass: Charles Brockden Brown's American Gothic*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2013.

#### **2.4. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790). "Poor Richard Almanack". Development of Didactic Genre. "The Autobiography"**

**Primary Works:** "Dogood Papers" (1722), "Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity" (1725), "Poor Richard's Almanack" (1732-1757), "Plain Truth" (1747), "The Way to Wealth" (1757), "The Autobiography" (1771-1790), "The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin" (1793).

#### **A Brief Biography of Benjamin Franklin**

Benjamin Franklin (January 17, 1706, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. - April 17, 1790, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.) - American printer and publisher, author, inventor and scientist, and diplomat. 1 of the foremost of the Founding Fathers, Franklin helped draft the Declaration of Independence and was 1 of its signers, represented the U.S. in France during the American Revolution, and was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. He made important contributions to science, especially in the understanding of electricity, and is remembered for the wit, wisdom, and elegance of his writing.

Franklin was born the 10th son of the 17 children of a man who made soap and candles, one of the lowliest of the artisan crafts. He was 10 when he started working in his father's shop. Later Benjamin was apprenticed to his brother James, a printer. Benjamin soon argued with James and in 1723 he went to Philadelphia where he found a job in a print shop. In 1724 Franklin went to London to buy print equipment, returned to Philadelphia and started his own printing business. He prospered, married, and bought a newspaper *The Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1730. In 1732 he began publishing "Poor Richard's Almanac".

Franklin also invented a kind of metal stove in 1742. In 1752 he carried out a famous experiment with a kite in a thunderstorm which proved lightning is a form of electricity. In 1757-1762 and 1764-1775 Franklin was in England as a diplomat as relations between Britain and the North American colonies deteriorated. Franklin was elected to the Second Continental Congress and he signed the *Declaration of Independence*. At the end of 1776 Franklin was sent to France as a diplomat. France declared war on Britain in support of the colonies in 1778. Franklin returned to France in 1785.

Some imaginative writers, such as E.A. Poe, H.D. Thoreau, H. Melville, M. Twain, and D.H. Lawrence, attacked Franklin as a symbol of America's middle-class moneymaking business values. Indeed, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Franklin was the

perfect exemplar of the “Protestant ethic” and the modern capitalistic spirit. Franklin indeed became a wealthy tradesman by his early 40s, but during his lifetime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century he was not identified as a self-made businessman or a budding capitalist. That image was a creation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But as long as America continues to be pictured as the land of enterprise and opportunity, where striving and hard work can lead to success, then that image of Franklin is the one that is likely to endure.

**Major Themes in Franklin's Writing:** 1. Interest in the individual and society; the creation of an American national identity. 2. Tension between aristocracy and democracy; the awareness of America as distinct in values and interests from those of England. 3. Tension between appearance and reality; shift. 4. Tension between romantic idealism and pragmatic rationalism; theory should be tested primarily by experience not logic; reason should be tested pragmatically. 5. Discussion of racial themes. 6. Love and emotion between men and women. 7. Discussion of the inspirational use of nature.

### **“Poor Richard Almanack” (1732-1758)**

“*Poor Richard's Almanack*” (sometimes “*Almanac*”) was a yearly almanac published by Benjamin Franklin, who adopted the pseudonym of “Poor Richard” or “Richard Saunders” for this purpose. The publication appeared continually from 1732 to 1758. It was a best seller for a pamphlet published in the American colonies; print runs reached 10000 per year. Franklin, the American inventor, statesman, and publisher, achieved success with “*Poor Richard's Almanack*”. Almanacks were very popular books in colonial America, offering a mixture of seasonal weather forecasts, practical household hints, puzzles, and other amusements. “*Poor Richard's Almanack*” was also popular for its extensive use of wordplay, and some of the witty phrases coined in the work survive in the contemporary American vernacular.

“*The Almanack*” contained the calendar, weather, poems, sayings and astronomical and astrological information that a typical almanac of the period would contain. Franklin also included the occasional mathematical exercise, and the Almanack from 1750 features an early example of demographics. It is chiefly remembered, however, for being a repository of Franklin's aphorisms and proverbs, many of which live on in American English. These maxims typically counsel thrift and courtesy, with a dash of cynicism.

In the spaces that occurred between noted calendar days, Franklin included proverbial sentences about industry and frugality. Several of these sayings were borrowed from an earlier writer, Lord Halifax, many of whose aphorisms sprang from “...a basic skepticism directed against the motives of men, manners, and the age.” In 1757, Franklin made a selection of these and prefixed them to the almanac as the address of an old man to the people attending an auction. This was later published as “*The Way to Wealth*”, and was popular in both America and England.

“*The Almanack*” was also a reflection of the norms and social mores of his times, rather than a philosophical document setting a path for new-freedoms, as the works of Franklin's contemporaries, Jefferson, Adams, or Paine were. Historian Howard Zinn offers, as an example, the adage “Let thy maidservant be faithful, strong, and homely”

as indication of Franklin's belief in the legitimacy of controlling the personal lives of servants for the economic benefit of their masters.

### **“The Autobiography” (1771-1790)**

“*The Autobiography*” of Benjamin Franklin is the traditional name for the unfinished record of his own life written by Benjamin Franklin from 1771 to 1790; however, Franklin himself appears to have called the work his Memoirs. Although it had a tortuous publication history after Franklin's death, this work has become one of the most famous and influential examples of an autobiography ever written.

Franklin's account of his life is divided into 4 parts, reflecting the different periods at which he wrote them. There are actual breaks in the narrative between the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 parts, but Part 3's narrative continues into Part 4 without an authorial break. In the "Introduction" of the 1916 publication of “*The Autobiography*”, editor F.W. Pine wrote that Franklin's biography provided the "most remarkable of all the remarkable histories of our self-made men" with Franklin as the greatest exemplar.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. Why is Ben Franklin considered the most important personality of the Age of Reason?
2. Discuss several permanent contributions Franklin has made to American life, ranging from the practical to the theoretical.
3. Explain why the eighteenth century was called the Age of Experiment and consider the relevance of this term as a description of Franklin's writing.
4. Choose any single section or aspect of “*The Autobiography*” as the basis for analysis.

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2. Gates, H.L. Jr. *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers*. NY: Basic Civitas, 2013.
3. Isaacson, W. *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 2013.
4. Lemay, J.A.L. *The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 1: Journalist, 1706-1730; Volume 2: Printer and Publisher, 1730-1747*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2016.

### **2.5. Thomas Paine (1737-1809). “Common Sense”**

**Primary Works:** “*African Slavery in America*” (1775), “*Common Sense*” (1776), “*American Crisis papers*” in 16 papers (1776-1783), “*The Crisis Extraordinary*” (1780), “*A Supernumerary Crisis*” (1783), “*The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology*” in 2 parts (1794-1795).

## A Brief Biography of Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine (January 29, 1737, Thetford, Norfolk, England - June 8, 1809, N.Y., U.S.), as a son of a Quaker. After a short basic education, he started to work for his father, and later - as an officer of the excise. During this occupation Thomas Paine was an unsuccessful man, and was twice dismissed from his post. In 1774, he met Benjamin Franklin in London, who advised him to emigrate to America, giving him letters of recommendation.

Paine landed at Philadelphia on November 30, 1774. Starting over as a publicist, he 1<sup>st</sup> published his "*African Slavery in America*", in the spring of 1775, criticizing slavery in America as being unjust and inhumane. At this time, he also had become co-editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*. On arriving in Philadelphia, Paine had sensed the rise of tension, and the spirit of rebellion, that had steadily mounted in the Colonies after the Boston Tea Party and when the fighting had started, in April 1775, with the battles of Lexington and Concord. In Paine's view the Colonies had all the right to revolt against a government that imposed taxes on them but which did not give them the right of representation in the Parliament at Westminster. But he went even further: for him there was no reason for the Colonies to stay dependent on England. On January 10, 1776 Paine formulated his ideas on American independence in his pamphlet "*Common Sense*".

In his "*Common Sense*", Paine states that sooner or later independence from England must come, because America had lost touch with the mother country. In his words, all the arguments for separation of England are based on nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments and common sense. Government was necessary evil that could only become safe when it was representative and altered by frequent elections. The function of government in society ought to be only regulating and therefore as simple as possible. Not surprisingly, but nevertheless remarkable was his call for a declaration of independence. Due to the many copies sold (500000) Paine's influence on the *Declaration of Independence* of July 4, 1776 is eminent. Another sign of his great influence is the number of loyalist reactions to "*Common Sense*".

During the *War of Independence* Paine volunteered in the Continental Army and started with the writing of his highly influential 16 "*American Crisis papers*" (1776-1783). In 1777 he became Secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in Congress, but already in 1779 he was forced to resign because he had disclosed secret information. In the following 9 years he worked as a clerk at the Pennsylvania Assembly and published several of his writings.

In 1787 Thomas Paine left for England. In numerous editions of "*Rights of Man*" (1791-1792) he defended the French Revolution and analyzed the roots of the discontent in Europe, which he laid in arbitrary government, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and war. The book was banned in England because it opposed to monarchy, Paine failed to be arrested because he was already on his way to France, having been elected in the National Convention. Though a true republican, he was imprisoned in 1793 under Robespierre, because he had voted against the execution of the dethroned king Louis XVI. During his imprisonment the publication of his "*Age of Reason*" started. "*Age of Reason*" was written in praise of the achievements of the Age

of Enlightenment, and it was on this book that he was accused of being an atheist. After his release he stayed in France until 1802, when he sailed back to America, after an invitation by Thomas Jefferson who had met him before when he was minister in Paris and who admired him. Back in the U.S. he learned that he was seen as a great infidel, or simply forgotten for what he had done for America. He continued his critical writings, for instance against the Federalists and on religious superstition.

After his death the newspapers read: “*He had lived long, did some good and much harm*”, which time judged to be an unworthy epitaph.

### **“Common Sense” (1776)**

“*Common Sense*” is a pamphlet written by T. Paine in 1775-1776 that inspired people in the Thirteen Colonies to declare and fight for independence from Great Britain. The pamphlet explained the advantages of and the need for immediate independence in clear, simple language. It was published anonymously in 1776, at the beginning of the American Revolution, and became an immediate sensation. It was sold and distributed widely and read aloud at taverns and meeting places. Washington had it read to all his troops, which at the time were surrounding the British army in Boston. In proportion to the population of the colonies at that time (2.5 million), it had the largest sale and circulation of any book published in American history. As of 2006, it remains the all-time best selling American title. “*Common Sense*” presented the American colonists with an argument for freedom from British rule at a time when the question of whether or not to seek independence was the central issue of the day. Paine wrote and reasoned in an easily understood style. Historian Gordon S. Wood described “*Common Sense*” as “the most incendiary and popular pamphlet of the entire revolutionary era”.

**Paine's arguments against British rule:** 1) It was absurd for an island to rule a continent; 2) America was not a “British nation”; but was composed of influences and peoples from all of Europe; 3) Even if Britain were the “mother country” of America, that made her actions all the more horrendous, for no mother would harm her children so brutally; 4) Being a part of Britain would drag America into unnecessary European wars, and keep her from the international commerce at which America excelled; 5) The distance between the 2 nations made governing the colonies from England unwieldy. If some wrong were to be petitioned to Parliament, it would take a year before the colonies received a response; 6) The New World was discovered shortly before the Reformation. The Puritans believed that God wanted to give them a safe haven from the persecution of British rule; 7) Britain ruled the colonies for her own benefit, and did not consider the best interests of the colonists in governing Britain.

There were at least 2 reasons why Paine's brief pamphlet is believed to be “the most incendiary and popular pamphlet of the entire revolutionary era”. 1<sup>st</sup>, while the average colonist was more educated than their European counterpart, European and colonial elites agreed that common people had no place in government or political debates. “*Common Sense*” targeted a popular audience and was written in a straightforward and simple way, so Paine's political ideas were made tangible and

available to a common audience. The 2<sup>nd</sup> reason involves the way the vast majority of colonists felt about the idea of independence from British rule. Before “*Common Sense*” was published, except for a few radical thinkers, the people of the American colonies were "on the fence" about independence. Individuals were in conflict with themselves, and there were those who leaned toward reconciliation with the British crown.

The impact of “*Common Sense*” was to influence American colonists, both educated and uneducated, to come down from their fences, to feel they were part of a greater whole, and to embrace independence from the British monarchy.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What are the main themes of T. Paine works?
2. Analyze the structure of “*Common Sense*”. How many parts are there? What are the basic events of each part?
3. Reveal the role of “*Common Sense*” in further life of American people.
4. Find and analyze Paine’s arguments against British rule in “*Common Sense*”.

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## CHAPTER III. AMERICAN ROMANTICISM. THE RISE OF NATIONAL LITERATURE

### Plan:

#### 3.1. Basic Traits of American Romanticism

#### 3.2. Washington Irving. "Rip Van Winkle"

#### 3.3. James Fennimore Cooper. "The Leatherstocking Tales"

#### 3.4. Gothic Romanticism. Edgar Allan Poe. "Raven". "Tamerlane and Other Poems"

#### 3.5. Nathaniel Hawthorne. "The Scarlet Letter"

#### 3.6. Herman Melville. "Moby-Dick"

### 3.1. Basic Traits of American Romanticism (19<sup>th</sup> Century to 1865)

**Elements of Romanticism:** 1. Frontier: vast expanse, freedom, no geographic limitations. 2. Optimism: greater than in Europe because of the presence of frontier. 3. Experimentation: in science, in institutions. 4. Mingling of races: immigrants in large numbers arrive to the U.S. 5. Growth of industrialization: polarization of north and south; north becomes industrialized, south remains agricultural.

**Romantic Subject Matter:** 1. The quest for beauty: non-didactic, "pure beauty"; 2. The use of the far-away and non-normal - antique and fanciful: a) In historical perspective: antiquarianism; antiquing or artificially aging; interest in the past; b) Characterization and mood: grotesque, Gothicism, sense of terror, fear; use of the odd and queer; 3. Escapism - from American problems; 4. Interest in external nature - for itself, for beauty: a) Nature as source for the knowledge of the primitive; b) Nature as refuge; c) Nature as revelation of God to the individual.

**Romantic Attitudes:** 1. Appeals to imagination; use of the "willing suspension of disbelief." 2. Stress on emotion rather than reason; optimism, geniality. 3. Subjectivity: in form and meaning.

**Romantic Techniques:** 1. Remoteness of settings in time and space. 2. Improbable plots. 3. Inadequate or unlikely characterization. 4. Authorial subjectivity. 5. Socially "harmful morality"; a world of "lies". 6. Organic principle in writing: form rises out of content, non-formal. 7. Experimentation in new forms: picking up and using obsolete patterns. 8. Cultivation of the individualized, subjective form of writing.

**Philosophical Patterns:** 1. 19<sup>th</sup> century marked by the influence of French revolution of 1789 and its concepts of liberty, fraternity, equality: a) Jacksonian democracy of the frontier; b) Intellectual and spiritual revolution - rise of Unitarianism; c) Middle colonies - utopian experiments like New Harmony, Nashoba, Fourierism, and the Icarian community; 2. America basically middle-class and English - practicing *laissez-faire* (live and let live), modified because of geographical expansion and the need for subsidies for setting up industries, building of railroads, and others; 3. Institution of slavery in the South - myth of the master and slave - William Gilmore Simms' modified references to Greek democracy (Pericles' Athens which was based on a slave proletariat, but provided order, welfare and security for all) as a way of maintaining slavery.



## The Renaissance in or the Flowering of American Literature

The decade of 1850-59 is unique in the annals of literary production. For a variety of reasons American authors, both African and European, published remarkable works in such a concentration of time that this feat, it is safe to say, has not been duplicated in this or any other literary tradition. Given below are the details:

### Works by European American Writers:

Year:	Author:	Title:
1850	Ralph Waldo Emerson	" <i>Representative Men</i> "
1850	Nathaniel Hawthorne	" <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> "
1851	Herman Melville	" <i>Moby-Dick</i> "
1852	Harriet Beecher Stowe	" <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> "
1854	Henry David Thoreau	" <i>Walden</i> "
1855	Walt Whitman	" <i>Leaves of Grass</i> "

### Works by African American Writers:

Year:	Author:	Title:
1853	Frederick Douglass	" <i>Heroic Slave</i> "
1853	William Wells Brown	" <i>Clotel: Or, The President Daughter</i> "
1857	Frank J. Webb	" <i>The Garies and Their Friends</i> "
1859	Martin R. Delany	" <i>Blake: Or, The Huts of America</i> "
1859	Harriet E. Wilson	" <i>Our Nig: Or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black</i> "

### Study Questions:

1. Discuss the elements of romanticism.
2. Analyze the subject matter of romanticism. Try to give examples of literary works on certain themes.
3. Discuss changes in the concept of the American romanticism. Locate your discussion within specific works by Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne.
4. Cite several fundamental differences between early 19<sup>th</sup> century writers and their deist predecessors. Focus on the concept of self-invention and, in specific literary works, discuss the early 19<sup>th</sup> century evolution of this concept.

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1. Brion, M. *Romantic Art*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. NY, 2014.
2. Hoffman, M.J. *The Subversive Vision: American Romanticism in Literature*. Revised Edition. NY, 2016.

### 3.2. Washington Irving (1783-1859). "Rip Van Winkle"

**Primary Works:** "*Salmagundi*" (1808), "*A History of New York...* by Diedrich Knickerbocker" (1809), "*Rip Van Winkle*" (1819), "*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*"

(1820), *"Tales of a Traveler"* (1824), *"The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus"* (1828), *"The Conquest of Granada"* (1829), *"Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus"* (1831), *"The Alhambra"* (1832), *"The Crayon Miscellany"* (1835), *"Astoria"* (1836), *"The Rocky Mountains"* or *"The Adventures of Captain Bonneville"* (1837), *"Biography of Margaret Miller Davidson"* (1841) *"Goldsmith, Mahomet"* (1850), *"Mahomet's Successors"* (1850), *"Wolfert's Roost"* (1855), *"Life of Washington"* (1855).

### **A Brief Biography of Washington Irving**

Washington Irving, (April 3, 1783, N.Y., U.S. - November 28, 1859, Tarrytown, N.Y., U.S.), writer called the "1<sup>st</sup> American man of letters." He is best known for the short stories *"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"* and *"Rip Van Winkle."* The favorite and last of 11 children of an austere father and a genial mother, young, frail Irving grew up in an atmosphere of indulgence. He escaped a college education, which his father required of his older sons, but read intermittently at the law. He wrote a series of whimsically satirical essays over the signature of Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent, published in Peter Irving's newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*, in 1802-1803. He made several trips up the Hudson, another into Canada for his health, and took an extended tour of Europe. On his return he set up as a lawyer. But during 1807-1808 his chief occupation was to collaborate with his brother William and James K. Paulding in the writing of a series of 20 periodical essays entitled *"Salmagundi"*. Concerned primarily with passing phases of contemporary society, the essays retain significance as an index to the social milieu. His *"A History of New York... by Diedrich Knickerbocker"* (1809) was a comic history of the Dutch regime in New York, prefaced by a mock-pedantic account of the world from creation onward. He prepared an American edition of Thomas Campbell's poems, edited the *Analectic Magazine*, and acquired a staff colonelcy during the War of 1812. In 1815 he went to Liverpool to look after the interests of his brothers' firm. In London he met Sir Walter Scott, who encouraged him to renewed effort. The result was *"The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent"* (1819-1820), a collection of stories and essays that mix satire and whimsicality with fact and fiction. Most of the book's 30-odd pieces concern Irving's impressions of England, but 6 chapters concern American subjects. Of these, the tales *"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"* and *"Rip Van Winkle"* have been called the 1<sup>st</sup> American short stories. They are both Americanized versions of German folktales. The main character of *"Rip Van Winkle"* is a henpecked husband who sleeps for 20 years and awakes as an old man to find his wife dead, his daughter happily married, and America now an independent country. The tremendous success of *"The Sketch Book"* in both England and the U.S. assured Irving that he could live by his pen. In 1822 he produced *"Bracebridge Hall"*, a sequel to *"The Sketch Book"*. He traveled in Germany, Austria, France, Spain, the British Isles, and later in his own country.

Early in 1826 he accepted the invitation of Alexander H. Everett to attach himself to the American legation in Spain, where he wrote his *"Columbus"* (1828), followed by *"The Companions of Columbus"* (1831). Meanwhile, Irving had become absorbed in

the legends of the Moorish past and wrote “*A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada*” (1829) and “*The Alhambra*” (1832), a Spanish counterpart of “*The Sketch Book*”.

After a 17-year absence Irving returned to New York in 1832, where he was warmly received. He made a journey west and produced in rapid succession “*A Tour of the Prairies*” (1835), “*Astoria*” (1836), and “*The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*” (1837). Except for 4 years (1842-46) as minister to Spain, Irving spent the remainder of his life at his home, Sunnyside, in Tarrytown, on the Hudson River, where he devoted himself to literary pursuits.

**Achievements:** 1. Irving is the 1<sup>st</sup> belletrist in American literature, writing for pleasure at a time when writing was practical and for useful purposes. 2. He is the 1<sup>st</sup> American literary humorist. 3. He has written the 1<sup>st</sup> modern short stories. 4. He is the 1<sup>st</sup> to write history and biography as entertainment. 5. He introduced the nonfiction prose as a literary genre. 6. His use of the gothic looks forward to Poe.

### “*Rip Van Winkle*” (1819)

“*Rip Van Winkle*” is a short story by W. Irving as well as the name of the story's fictional protagonist. Written while Irving was living in Birmingham, England, it was part of a collection entitled “*The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*”. Although the story is set in New York's Catskill Mountains, Irving later admitted, “When I wrote the story, I had never been on the Catskills.”

The story of Rip Van Winkle is set in the years before and after the American Revolutionary War. In a pleasant village, at the foot of New York's Catskill Mountains, lives kindly Rip Van Winkle, a colonial British-American villager of Dutch ancestry. Van Winkle enjoys solitary activities in the wilderness, but he is also loved by all in town - especially the children to whom he tells stories and gives toys. However, he tends to shirk hard work, to his nagging wife's dismay, which has caused his home and farm to fall into disarray. One autumn day, to escape his wife's nagging, Van Winkle wanders up the mountains with his dog, Wolf. Hearing his name called out, Rip sees a man wearing antiquated Dutch clothing; he is carrying a keg up the mountain and requires help. Together, they proceed to a hollow in which Rip discovers the source of thunderous noises: a group of ornately dressed, silent, bearded men who are playing nine-pins. Rip does not ask who they are or how they know his name. Instead, he begins to drink some of their moonshine and soon falls asleep. He awakes to discover shocking changes. His musket is rotting and rusty, his beard is a foot long, and his dog is nowhere to be found. Van Winkle returns to his village where he recognizes no one. He discovers that his wife has died and that his close friends have fallen in a war or moved away. He gets into trouble when he proclaims himself a loyal subject of King George III, not aware that the American Revolution has taken place. King George's portrait in the inn has been replaced with one of George Washington. Rip Van Winkle is also disturbed to find another man called Rip Van Winkle. It is his son, now grown up. Rip Van Winkle learns that the men he met in the mountains are rumored to be the ghosts of Hendrick (Henry) Hudson's crew, which had vanished long ago. Rip learns he has been away from the village for at least 20 years. However, an old resident recognizes him and Rip's grown daughter takes him in. He resumes his usual idleness, and his

strange tale is solemnly taken to heart by the Dutch settlers. Other henpecked men wish they could have shared in Rip's good luck and had the luxury of sleeping through the hardships of the American Revolution.

**Literary forerunners.** In many ways the story is a classic European faerie tale of a man who is actually rewarded for helping the faeries move their barrel. They advance him to a time in life where he is free of his nagging wife and is now old enough for it be respectable for him to take it easy and play with children, working when he wants to instead of when he has to, supported by his loving, grown children.

Author Joe Gioia suggests the basic plot strongly resembles, and may have originated with, an upstate New York Seneca legend of a young squirrel hunter who encounters the mystic *little people*, and after a night with them returns to his village to find it overgrown by forest and everyone gone: that single night had lasted a year.

The story is similar to the German folktale "*Peter Klaus*" by Johann Karl Christoph Nachtigal, which is a shorter story set in a German village.

The story is also similar to the ancient Jewish Talmudic story about Honi M'agel who falls asleep after asking a man why he is planting a carob tree which traditionally takes 70 years to mature, making it virtually impossible to ever benefit from the tree's fruit. After this exchange, he falls asleep on the ground and is miraculously covered by a rock and remains out of sight for 70 years. When he awakens, he finds a fully mature tree and that he has a grandson.

In Christian tradition there is the well-known story of "*The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*". The tale recounts a group of people who hid in a cave about 250 AD to escape the persecution of Christians during the reign of the Roman emperor Decius. They fell into a miraculous sleep and woke some 200 years later.

Similar story appears in a famous Sura of the Koran, "*Sura Al-Kahf*". The story recalls a group of young monotheists escaping from persecution within a cave and emerging hundreds of years later. Irving, who wrote a biography of Muhammad, may have been familiar with the story.

The story is also similar to a 3rd-century AD Chinese tale of Ranka, as retold by Lionel Giles in "*A Gallery of Chinese Immortals*", and an 8<sup>th</sup> century Japanese tale, "*Urashima Tarō*".

### Study Questions:

1. Compare and contrast Freneau's and Irving's uses of the historical situation as the subject of imaginative literature. What makes Irving more successful, and why is he more successful?
2. Discuss several different ways in which "*Rip Van Winkle*" addresses versions of the American dream.
3. Compare Rip Van Winkle with Franklin's Father Abraham in "*The Way to Wealth*". What do the two have in common?
4. "*Rip Van Winkle*" is an early work that casts the American woman as the cultural villain. Analyze the character of Dame Van Winkle in the story and discuss the significance Irving attributes to her death.

5. Although Irving's "*Rip Van Winkle*" and "*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*" may make it appear that Irving wrote primarily fiction, a reading of the longer "*Sketch-Book*", in which these stories 1<sup>st</sup> appeared, makes it clear that for Irving himself writing the literary sketch both preceded and made it possible for him to write works we now consider stories. For an out-of-class essay, read "*The Sketch-Book*" and write an essay in which you describe the various literary genres that Irving uses in the book. Then focus on either "*Rip Van Winkle*" or "*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*" and explore both what the story's form shares with the other works in "*The Sketch-Book*" and how it deviates from them. Speculate on what, in either story, makes it possible for Irving to cross over into fiction.

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### **3.3. James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851). "*The Leatherstocking Tales*"**

**Primary Works:** "*Precaution*" (1820), "*The Spy*" (1821), "*The Pioneers*" (1823), "*The Pilot*" (1824), "*Lionel Lincoln*" (1824), "*The Last of the Mohicans*" (1826), "*The Prairie*" (1827), "*The Red Rover*" (1828), "*The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*" (1829), "*The Water Witch*" (1830), "*The Bravo*" (1831), "*The Heidenmauer*" (1832), "*The Headsman*" (1833), "*The Monikins*" (1835), "*Homeward Bound*" (1838), "*Home as Found*" (1838), "*Mercedes of Castile*" (1840), "*The Pathfinder*" (1840), "*The Deerslayer*" (1841), "*The Two Admirals*" (1842), "*The Wing-and-Wing*" (1842), "*Le Mouchoir; an Autobiographical Romance*" (1843), "*Ned Myers*" (1843), "*Wyandotte*" (1843), "*Afloat and Ashore*" (1844), "*Miles Wallingford: A Sequel to Afloat and Ashore*" (1844), "*Satanstoe*" (1845), "*The Chain Bearer*" (1845), "*The Redskins*" (1846), "*The Crater*" (1847), "*Jack Tier*" (1848), "*Oak Openings*" (1849), "*The Sea Lions*" (1849), "*The Ways of the Hour*" (1850).

### **A Brief Biography of James F. Cooper**

James F. Cooper (September 15, 1789, Burlington, N.J., U.S. - September 14, 1851, Cooperstown, N.Y., U.S.) was the 11<sup>th</sup> of 12 children of William Cooper, a pioneering landowner and developer in New Jersey and New York. When James was 14 months old, his father moved the family to a vast tract of wilderness at the headwaters of the Susquehanna River in New York State where he had established the village of Cooperstown at the foot of Otsego Lake. Here, in the Manor House, later known as Otsego Hall, Cooper grew up, the privileged son of the "squire" of a primitive community. He enjoyed reading about the Native Americans and about life in the Old World in the novels of Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen. The lore of the wilderness learned from excursions into the surrounding forests and from local trappers and hunters, the stories of life in the great estates of neighboring Dutch patroons and English patentees, and the gossip of revolution-torn Europe brought by refugees of all classes furnished him with materials for his later novels, histories, and commentaries. Cooper was a vigorous and obstreperous young man who was sent away to be educated, 1<sup>st</sup> by a clergyman in Albany, and then at Yale, from which he was dismissed for a student prank. His father next arranged for him to go to sea, 1<sup>st</sup> in a merchant vessel to England and Spain, and then in the Navy; these experiences stimulated at least a 3<sup>rd</sup> of his later imaginative writing. When Cooper returned to civilian life in 1811, he married Susan Augusta DeLancey of a formerly wealthy New York Tory family and established himself in Westchester County overlooking Long Island Sound. It was here, at the age of 30, that he published his 1<sup>st</sup> novel, written on a challenge from his wife.

Novelist and social critic James F. Cooper (1789-1865) was the 1<sup>st</sup> major American writer to deal imaginatively with American life, notably in his 5 "*Leather-Stocking Tales*". He was also a critic of the political, social, and religious problems of the day.

**1<sup>st</sup> Period.** "*Precaution*" was an attempt to outdo the English domestic novels Cooper had been reading, which he imitated in choice of theme, scene, and manner. But he soon realized his mistake, and the next year, in "*The Spy*", he deliberately attempted to correct it by choosing the American Revolution for subject, the country around New York City he knew so well for scene, and the historical romance of Scott for model. Thereafter, although many of his novels combined the novel of manners with the historical romance, as well as with other currently popular fictional modes, he never again departed from his concern for American facts and opinions, even though for some of his tales he chose, in the spirit of comparative analysis, scenes in foreign lands and waters.

All of the novels of the 1<sup>st</sup> period of Cooper's literary career (1820-1828) were as experimental as the 1<sup>st</sup> two. 3 novels dealt with the frontier and Native American life ("*The Pioneers*", "*The Last of the Mohicans*", and "*The Prairie*"), 3 - with the sea ("*The Pilot*", "*The Red Rover*", and "*The Water Witch*"), and 3 - with American history ("*The Spy*", "*Lionel Lincoln*", and "*The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*").

**2<sup>nd</sup> Period.** His reputation as a popular novelist established, Cooper went abroad in 1826 to arrange for the translation and foreign publication of his works and to give his family the advantages of European residence and travel. He stayed 7 years, during which he completed 2 more romances, but thereafter, until 1840, he devoted most of his energy to political and social criticism - he wrote a defense of American life and institutions in a mock travel book, "*Notions of the Americans Picked Up by a*

*Travelling Bachelor*" (1828). One product of this interest was a trio of novels on European political themes: "*The Bravo*", "*The Heidenmauer*", and "*The Headsman*", but the American press was so hostile to them that Cooper finally declared, in his "*A Letter to His Countrymen*" (1834), that he would write no more fiction. This resolution, however, lasted only long enough to produce 5 volumes of epistolary travel essay and commentary on Europe. In 1833 Cooper returned to America, renovated Otsego Hall in Cooperstown, and settled his family there for the rest of his life. There is much autobiography in his novels "*Homeward Bound*" and "*Home as Found*" (1838), in which he reversed himself to attack the people and institutions of his own land with the same keen critical insight that he had applied to Europe. One reason for this was that a series of libel suits against Whig editors helped personalize his quarrel with the equalitarian and leveling tendencies of the Jacksonian era. He won the suits but lost many friends and much of his reading public. His social and political position is succinctly summed up in "*The American Democrat*" (1838).

**3<sup>rd</sup> Period.** The 3<sup>rd</sup> period of Cooper's literary career began in 1840-1841 with his return to the Leather-Stocking series and 2 more chapters in the life of Natty Bumppo, "*The Pathfinder*", in which Cooper used his own experiences on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812, and "*The Deerslayer*", which fills in the young manhood of his hero. These romances were followed by equally vigorous tales of the sea, "*The Two Admirals*" and "*Wing-and-Wing*".

But the most significant development of this period was Cooper's final success in blending the romantic novel of action and the open spaces with the novel of manners and social concern. Returning for subject to the scenes of his 1<sup>st</sup> interest, the estates and villages of early upstate New York, he wrote 5 novels in 2 series: "*Afloat and Ashore*" (1844) and its sequel, "*Miles Wallingford*", and the "*Littlepage Manuscripts*" (1845-1846), depicting in a trilogy: "*Satanstoe*", "*The Chainbearer*", and "*The Redskins*" - the 4-generation history of a landed family from their 1<sup>st</sup> days of settlement to the days of the disintegration of their privileged way of life in the face of rampant, classless democracy. Largely unread and unappreciated in their day, these 5 novels, especially "*Satanstoe*", have since become recognized as Cooper's most successful fulfillment of his intention. He had always wished to write a chronicle of his times in fictional form in order to interpret for his countrymen and the world at large the deeper meanings of the *American experiment* in its formative years.

Meanwhile, Cooper's concerns for individual and social integrity and for change had hardened into moral and religious absolutes, and the novels of his last 4 years were less story and more allegory. The best of these, "*The Crater*" (1847), succeeds where "*The Water-Witch*" and "*The Monikins*" failed, in using symbolism to convey a narrative message.

**Major Themes in Cooper's Writing:** 1. The American Society. 2. The American History. 3. The Backwoods - Frontier. 4. The Sea.

**Contributions of Cooper.** The creation of the famous Leatherstocking saga has cemented his position as American 1<sup>st</sup> great national novelist and his influence pervades American literature. Among his achievements: 1. The 1<sup>st</sup> successful American historical romance in the vein of Sir Walter Scott ("*The Spy*", 1821). 2. The 1<sup>st</sup> sea novel ("*The Pilot*", 1824). 3. The 1<sup>st</sup> attempt at a fully researched historical novel ("*Lionel*

*Lincoln*", 1825). 4. The 1<sup>st</sup> full-scale "*History of the Navy of the United States of America*" (1839). 5. The 1<sup>st</sup> American international novel of manners ("*Homeward Bound*" and "*Home as Found*", 1838). 6. The 1<sup>st</sup> trilogy in American fiction ("*Satanstoe*", 1845; "*The Chainbearer*", 1845; and "*The Redskins*", 1846). 7. The 1<sup>st</sup> and only 5-volume epic romance to carry its mythic hero - Natty Bumppo - from youth to old age.

### **"*The Leatherstocking Tales*" (1823-1841). Discovering the "American Problem"**

*The Leatherstocking Tales*: "*The Pioneers*" (1823), "*The Last of the Mohicans*" (1826), "*The Prairie*" (1827), "*The Pathfinder*" (1840), "*The Deerslayer*" (1841).

The set of 5 historical novels known as "*The Leatherstocking Tales*" is a complex and adventure-packed trip into the lush and unpredictable wilderness of 18<sup>th</sup> Century America. The thread which ties the 5 books together is the life story of a rugged and untamable hunter, Indian fighter and American scout for the British military. Each book of "*The Leatherstocking Tales*" showcases a different phase of the myriad struggles to settle and control this vast and resource-rich land.

The success of his 1<sup>st</sup> America-oriented novel convinced Cooper that he was on the right track, and he decided to turn to his childhood memories for a truthful, if not wholly literal, tale of life on the frontier: "*The Pioneers*" (1823). Though the traditional *novel of manners* deals realistically with a group of people in a closed and stable community using an agreed-upon code of social ethics, Cooper tried to adapt this form to a fluid and open society, thereby illuminating the core of the "*American problem*": how could the original trio of "unalienable rights" - life, liberty, and property (not, as Jefferson had it, the pursuit of happiness) - be applied to a society in which the rights of the Native American possessors of the land were denied by the civilized conqueror who took it from them for his own profit, thus defying the basic ethic of individual integrity and brotherly love? Natty Bumppo (or Leather-Stocking as he is called in the series as a whole) is neither the "natural man" nor the "civilized man" of European theorists such as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau; he is the American individualist who is creating a new society by a code of personal fulfillment under sound moral self-guidance, improvising as he goes along. In "*The Pioneers*" Natty is a somewhat crotchety old man whose chief "gift" is his ability to argue his rights with both Indian John and Judge Temple. The central theme which knits this complex web of people and adventures into the cycle of a single year is the emergence of Leather-Stocking as the "American hero." At this point Cooper was feeling his way toward a definition of his social concern, but in the novel itself the problem is almost submerged in the excitement, action, and vivid description and narrative. In the next of the Leather-Stocking series, "*The Last of the Mohicans*", Natty is younger and the romantic story line takes over, making it the most popular of all Cooper's novels. In "*The Prairie*" Natty in his last days becomes a tragic figure driven west, into the setting sun, in a futile



search for his ideal way of life. To most of Cooper's readers these stories are pure romances of adventure, and their social significance is easily overlooked.

***“The Deerslayer”*** takes place on Otsego Lake, the current site of Cooperstown, N.Y. Set in 1743, long before J. F. Cooper's family established the 1<sup>st</sup> settlement at the southern end of the lake, the story brings the young hunter, Nathaniel Bumppo, and his Delaware brother, Chingachgook, to the lake to rescue Chingachgook's bride-to-be from Iroquois war party. They enlist themselves in a bloody battle to protect a family of settlers from the Iroquois, and the resulting scenes are dramatic and suspenseful, as loves and scalps are won and lost.

***“The Last of the Mohicans”*** is the universal favorite and best known of the series. Cooper builds the story around the historic massacre at Fort William Henry on the shores of Lake George. Natty Bumppo, now in his 30s and known by his Indian name of Hawkeye, joins forces with Chingachgook and Chingachgook's son Uncas to save the lives of the daughters of the fort's commanding officer. Numerous exciting and complicated canoe and trail chases take place over the lakes and through the mountains and forests of Upper York Colony. Full play is given to the treachery of Montcalm, General Webb and the Mingo warrior, Magua, as Cooper describes in heart-rending passages the disaster of the terrible massacre and its aftermath on the lives of both his fictional and historic characters.

***“The Pathfinder”*** is devoted to a love story for Hawkeye. Cooper, fascinated with the use of ships to wage war on the Great Lakes, moves the scene of the action to Fort Oswego, Lake Ontario and the Thousand Islands at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Again, treachery drives the story as an officer of a Scottish regiment sells his loyalty to the French and their Indian sympathizers. Cooper displays a penchant for mystery and intrigue as the characters struggle to identify the traitor and avoid the capture of their island stronghold.

***“The Pioneers”*** returns to the site of *“The Deerslayer”* to portray an era in which the world of the game-rich forests and free roaming hunters and Indian tribes has been supplanted by property rights, civil law and a market economy. Natty Bumppo, now known simply as *“The Leatherstocking”*, is in his 70s. Although he is still a formidable marksman and is not beyond effecting a dramatic rescue of a heroine from the historic Mt. Vision forest fire, society no longer has a place for him or for the skills which made him famous. With a heavy helping of nostalgia, Cooper devotes the book to a fascinating description of the living circumstances and activities of the Americans who built the frontier towns and who made the world of the rootless longhunters obsolete.

The frontier moved westward, and in ***“The Prairie”***, we find Hawkeye removed to the uncharted territory which would become Wyoming and the Dakotas. Having fled the relentless sound of axes hewing down his beloved forests in the east, the Leatherstocking is now in his eighties and has isolated himself in the land of the Pawnee, the Sioux and countless herds of buffalo. Still there is no respite from the relentlessly encroaching settlers, and he finds himself expending the last of his strength and skills in the defense of a group of outcast Kentuckians who are seeking land rights as far as possible from the law. Culminating in a magnificently written death scene, *“The Prairie”* brings the old hunter full circle with images of his youth and

reminiscences of the remarkable life which made him the prototype of the American Hero. Cooper was not a disciplined or stylistically polished writer. His plots spilled uncensored and unedited from his wealth of historical knowledge and folklore, and from his endless fascination with the political and cultural ramifications of creating a new nation. The reader must choose his own level of focus and interest, and may find himself returning to the books many times to absorb the various levels of ideas the books encompass.

**Variety of the “*Leatherstocking Tales*”.** Whether the reader is an historian or a lover of romance, mystery and adventure, there is something for everyone in “*The Leatherstocking Tales*”.

As pure adventure stories the books offer valiant heroes and cruel villains, complicated chase and rescue scenarios ending as often in devastating failure as in triumphant success, colorful military engagements and Indian raids, a touch of romance and a hard look at the dismal realities of frontier life.

For the avid mystery fan, Cooper provides a hero whose strange story must be pieced together from hundreds of subtle clues scattered throughout the 5 books. In addition, although many of the characters are purely fictional, numerous others are identifiable historical characters woven into the fabric of the plots in clever disguises. One can almost sense the author's impish glee as he challenges the reader to puzzle out the identities and so flesh out the background from which Natty Bumppo's strange and conflicting personality evolves.

Historians will find a wealth of material on the complexities of daily life pursued amidst the clashes of civilization and savagery that characterized the birth of the American Dream.

On a more serene level, the lover of nature will find eloquent descriptions of the grandeur of deep and peaceful forests, crystalline lakes, treacherous rapids, and awe-inspiring waterfalls, prairies, mountains and cliffs.

To a reader with an interest in social, political and cultural issues, the lengthy and detailed passages devoted to contrasting moral and ethical values will provide endless thought-provoking consideration.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Characterize the 1<sup>st</sup> period of Cooper's literary career.
2. Characterize the 2<sup>nd</sup> period of Cooper's literary career.
3. Characterize the 3<sup>rd</sup> period of Cooper's literary career.
4. Reveal the main themes and problems of the “*Leatherstocking Tales*”.
5. What can you tell about the variety of information in the “*Leatherstocking Tales*”?

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### **3.4. Gothic Romanticism. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). “Raven”. “Tamerlane and Other Poems”**

**Primary Works:** *“Tamerlane and Other Poems”* (1827), *“Al Aaraaf, Tamarlane, and Minor Poems”* (1829), *“Ms Found in a Bottle”* (1835), *“Politan - A Tragedy”*, play (1835), *“The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket”*, novel (1838), *“Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque”* stories in 2 volumes (1840), *“The Prose Romances”*, stories (1843), *“Tales”*, stories (1845), *“The Raven and Other Poems”* (1845), *“Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe”*, criticism (1848).

#### **A Brief Biography of Edgar Allan Poe**

*All that we see or seem  
Is but a dream within a dream.  
“A Dream within a Dream”, E.A. Poe*

Edgar Poe (January 19, 1809, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. - October 7, 1849, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.) - American short-story writer, poet, critic, and editor who is famous for his cultivation of mystery and the macabre. His tale *“The Murders in the Rue Morgue”* (1841) initiated the modern detective story, and the atmosphere in his tales of horror is unrivaled in American fiction. His *“The Raven”* (1845) numbers among the best-known poems in the national literature.

After the death of his parents Edgar was taken in by Frances and John Allan, a wealthy merchant in Richmond, Virginia. Young Edgar traveled with the Allans to England in 1815 and attended school in Chelsea. In 1820 he was back in Richmond where he attended the University of Virginia and studied Latin and poetry and also loved to swim and act. Then, Poe enlisted in the U.S. army where he served for 2 years. He had been writing poetry for some time and in 1827 his 1<sup>st</sup> book *“Tamerlane and Other Poems”* was published.

In 1829 his 2<sup>nd</sup> book *“Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems”* was published. The same year *“Poems”* (1831) was published Poe moved to Baltimore to live with his aunt Maria Clemm, mother of Virginia Eliza Clemm, who would become his wife at the age of 13. After Virginia and Edgar married in Richmond in 1836 they moved to New York City. Poe’s only completed novel *“The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym”* was published in 1838. The story starts as an adventure for a young Nantucket stowaway on a whaling ship but soon turns into a chilling tale of mutiny, murder, and cannibalism.

Contributing greatly (by "*The Fall of the House of Usher*", 1840) to the genres of horror and science fiction, Poe is now considered the father of the modern detective story and highly lauded as a poet. Walt Whitman, in his essay titled "*Edgar Poe's Significance*" wrote:

*Poe's verses illustrate an intense faculty for technical and abstract beauty, with the rhyming art to excess, an incorrigible propensity toward nocturnal themes, a demoniac undertone behind every page. ... There is an indescribable magnetism about the poet's life and reminiscences, as well as the poems.*

Poe's psychologically thrilling tales examining the depths of the human psyche earned him much fame during his lifetime and after his death. His own life was marred by tragedy at an early age (his parents died before he was 3 years old) and in his oft-quoted works we can see his darkly passionate sensibilities - *a tormented and sometimes neurotic obsession with death and violence and overall appreciation for the beautiful yet tragic mysteries of life. They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night.* ("*Elonora*").

Poe's collection of poetry "*The Raven and Other Poems*" (1845) which gained him attention at home and abroad includes the wildly successful "*The Raven*" and "*Eulalie*" and "*To Helen*".

Poe continued to write poetry, critical essays and short stories including "*Ulalume*", "*Eureka*" and "*The Cask of Amontillado*" (1846):

*It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation.*

There are conflicting accounts surrounding the last days of E.A. Poe and the cause of his death. Some say he died from alcoholism, some claim he was murdered, and various diseases have also been attributed. Most say he was found unconscious in the street and admitted to the Washington College Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. He died in 1849, and was buried unceremoniously in an unmarked grave in the Old Westminster Burying Ground of Baltimore. On this original site now stands a stone with a carving of a raven and the inscription: *Quoth the Raven, Nevermore...*

**Major Themes:** 1. Love - usually of a mourning man for his deceased beloved. 2. Pride - physical and intellectual. 3. Beauty - of a young woman either dying or dead. 4. Death - a source of horror.

**Poe's 4 Types of Short Stories:** 1. Arabesque - strange; use of the supernatural; symbolic fantasies of the human condition; ("*The Fall of the House of Usher*"). 2. Grotesque - heightening of 1 aspect of a character ("*The Man Who Was Used Up*"). 3. Ratiocinative - detective fiction ("*The Purloined Letter*"). 4. Descriptive ("*The Landscape Garden*").

**Poe's Aesthetic Theory of Effect:** 1. "Unity of effect or impression" is of primary importance; the most effective story is one that can be read at a single sitting; 2. The short story writer should deliberately subordinate everything in the story - characters, incidents, style, and tone - to bringing out of a single, preconceived effect; 3. The prose tale may be made a vehicle for a great variety of these effects than even the short poem.

**Paradoxes in Poe:** 1. His life - basically insecure and highly emotional, but his writing is structured. 2. He reflects the paradoxical time - there was the apocalyptic sense of doom combined with the romantic innocence of childhood. 3. Poe was a romantic writer, but he emphasized rationality. 4. He presents realistic details in gothic settings. 5. There is a paradox in Poe's critical thinking - he believed in individual creativity but advocated classical norms - the ideal length of a poem, suggested Poe, is 100 lines.

### **"Raven" (1845)**

"*The Raven*" is the most famous of Poe's poems, notable for its melodic and dramatic qualities. The meter of the poem is mostly trochaic octameter, with 8 stressed-unstressed 2-syllable feet per lines. Combined with the predominating ABCBBB end rhyme scheme and the frequent use of internal rhyme, the trochaic octameter and the refrain of "nothing more" and "nevermore" give the poem a musical lilt when read aloud. Poe also emphasizes the "o" sound in words such as "Lenore" and "nevermore" in order to underline the melancholy and lonely sound of the poem and to establish the overall atmosphere. Finally, the repetition of "nevermore" gives a circular sense to the poem and contributes to what Poe termed the unity of effect, where each word and line adds to the larger meaning of the poem.

The unnamed narrator appears in a typically Gothic setting with a lonely apartment, a dying fire, and a "bleak December" night while wearily studying his books in an attempt to distract himself from his troubles. He thinks occasionally of Lenore but is generally able to control his emotions, although the effort required to do so tires him and makes his words equally slow and outwardly pacified. However, over the course of the narrative, the protagonist becomes more and more agitated both in mind and in action, a progression that he demonstrates through his rationalizations and eventually through his increasingly exclamation-ridden monologue. In every stanza near the end, however, his exclamations are punctuated by the calm desolation of the sentence "Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore,'" reflecting the despair of his soul.

Like a number of Poe's poems such as "*Ulalume*" and "*Annabel Lee*", "*The Raven*" refers to an agonized protagonist's memories of a deceased woman. Through poetry, Lenore's premature death is implicitly made aesthetic, and the narrator is unable to free himself of his reliance upon her memory. He asks the raven if there is "balm in Gilead" and therefore spiritual salvation, or if Lenore truly exists in the afterlife, but the raven confirms his worst suspicions by rejecting his supplications. The fear of death or of oblivion informs much of Poe's writing, and "*The Raven*" is one of his bleakest publications because it provides such a definitively negative answer.

Poe's choice of a raven as the bearer of ill news is appropriate for a number of reasons. Originally, Poe sought only a dumb beast that was capable of producing human-like sounds without understanding the words' meaning, and he claimed that earlier conceptions of "*The Raven*" included the use of a parrot. In this sense, the raven is important because it allows the narrator to be both the deliverer and interpreter of the sinister message, without the existence of a blatantly supernatural intervention. At the same time, the raven's black feather has traditionally been considered a magical

sign of ill omen, and Poe may also be referring to Norse mythology, where the god Odin had 2 ravens named Hugin and Munin, which respectively meant "thought" and "memory." The narrator is a student and thus follows Hugin, but Munin continually interrupts his thoughts and in this case takes a physical form by landing on the bust of Pallas, which alludes to Athena, the Greek goddess of learning.

Due to the late hour of the poem's setting and to the narrator's mental turmoil, the poem calls the narrator's reliability into question. At 1<sup>st</sup>, the narrator attempts to give his experiences a rational explanation, but by the end of the poem, he has ceased to give the raven any interpretation beyond that which he invents in his own head. The raven thus serves as a fragment of his soul and as the animal equivalent of Psyche in the poem "*Ulalume*". Each figure represents its respective character's subconscious that instinctively understands his need to obsess and to mourn. As in "*Ulalume*" the protagonist is unable to avoid the recollection of his beloved, but whereas Psyche of "*Ulalume*" sought to prevent the unearthing of painful memories, the raven actively stimulates his thoughts of Lenore, and he effectively causes his own fate through the medium of a non-sentient animal.

### ***"Tamerlane and Other Poems" (1827)***

*"Tamerlane and Other Poems"* is the 1<sup>st</sup> published work by E.A. Poe. The short collection of poems was 1<sup>st</sup> published in 1827. Today, it is believed only 12 copies of the collection still exist.

In 1827 E.A. Poe paid a printer named Calvin F. S. Thomas to publish several manuscripts. The 40-page collection was called "*Tamerlane and Other Poems*" and didn't include Poe's name. Distribution was limited to 50 copies and it received no critical attention. The poems were largely inspired by Lord Byron, including the long title poem "*Tamerlane*", which depicts an historical conqueror who laments the loss of his 1<sup>st</sup> romance. Like much of Poe's future work, the poems in "*Tamerlane and Other Poems*" include themes of love, death, and pride.

Poe's 1<sup>st</sup> published collection is so rare that after Poe's death, Rufus Wilmot Griswold believed it had never existed until one was found in 1859. It has since been recognized as one of the rarest 1<sup>st</sup> editions in American literature.

**Themes.** The poems, many of which had a theme of youth, were inspired in part by the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The largest inspiration on Poe, however, came from the work of Lord Byron; the character of the title poem "*Tamerlane*" has a daughter named "*Ada*", named after Byron's own daughter Ada Lovelace. Poe admired Byron both for his poetry and for his rebellious personality.

The title poem, "*Tamerlane*", depicts a dying conqueror who regrets leaving his childhood sweetheart and his home to pursue his ambitions. In its original form, "*Tamerlane*", based on the historical Amir Timur, was 406 lines. The choice of an eastern character was unusual for a westerner at the time.

The "other poems", which Poe admitted perhaps savor too much of egotism; but they were written by one too young to have any knowledge of the world but from his own breast. These poems present the poet as solitary figure who was faced some

unnamed transforming childhood event. Poe adopted some of the common themes of the day, including imagery of heavenly bliss and angelic beauty. He steps away from the typical use of didacticism of the time and instead focuses on psychological reverie and symbolist aesthetics, beginning his lifelong poetic refusal to write for the masses. Poe would continue to revisit themes of death, beauty, love, and pride in his later works. He would later rewrite 1 poem, "Imitation", as "A Dream Within a Dream" and use images from "Evening Star" in "Ulalume".

### **Study Questions:**

1. Divide literary career of E.A. Poe into periods. Analyze and describe each of them.
2. Summarize Poe's theory of aesthetics as he expresses it in his works and discuss his application of that philosophy in "The Raven."
3. Explicate a short lyric ("The Lake", "Preface", or "To Helen") and discuss Poe's creation of the persona of the poet.
4. Discuss "The Sleeper", "The Raven", "Annabel Lee", and "Ligeia" in light of Poe's statement, that "...the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world".
5. Explain what Poe means by his attempt to achieve "unity of effect," and trace the particular ways he manages this in "Fall of the House of Usher", "Raven", "The Man of the Crowd", or "The Black Cat."

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### **3.5. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864). "The Scarlet Letter"**

**Primary Works:** "Twice-Told Tales" (1837), "Mosses from an Old Manse" (1846), "The Scarlet Letter" (1850), "The House of Seven Gables" (1851), "The Blithedale Romance" (1852), "The Life of Franklin Pierce" (1852), "The Marble Faun" (1860).

## A Brief Biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne (July 4, 1804, Salem, Massachusetts, U.S. - May 19, 1864, Plymouth, New Hampshire, U.S.) was an American novelist, dark romantic, and short story writer. His parents are Nathaniel Hathorne and the former Elizabeth Clarke Manning. His ancestors include John Hathorne, the only judge involved in the Salem witch trials who never repented of his actions. Nathaniel later added a "w" to make his name "Hawthorne" in order to hide this relation. He entered Bowdoin College in 1821, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1824, and graduated in 1825. He published his 1<sup>st</sup> work in 1828, the novel "*Fanshawe*"; he later tried to suppress it, feeling that it was not equal to the standard of his later work. He published several short stories in periodicals, which he collected in 1837 as "*Twice-Told Tales*". He worked at the Boston Custom House and joined Brook Farm, a transcendentalist community, before marrying Sophia Peabody in 1842. The couple moved to The Old Manse in Concord, Massachusetts, later moving to Salem, the Berkshires, then to The Wayside in Concord. "*The Scarlet Letter*" was published in 1850, followed by a succession of other novels. A political appointment as consul took Hawthorne and family to Europe before their return to Concord in 1860. Hawthorne died on May 19, 1864, and was survived by his wife and their 3 children.

Much of Hawthorne's writing centers on New England, many works featuring moral metaphors with an anti-Puritan inspiration. His fiction works are considered part of the Romantic movement and, more specifically, dark romanticism. His themes often center on the inherent evil and sin of humanity, and his works often have moral messages and deep psychological complexity. His published works include novels, short stories, and a biography of his college friend Franklin Pierce, the 14<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S.

**Reasons for Hawthorne's Current Popularity:** 1. One of the most modern of writers, Hawthorne is relevant in theme and attitude. Hawthorne uses irony, ambiguity, and paradox. 2. Hawthorne rounds off the puritan cycle in American writing - belief in the existence of an active evil (the devil) and in a sense of determinism (the concept of predestination). 3. Hawthorne's use of psychological analysis (pre-Freudian) is of interest today. 4. In themes and style, Hawthorne's writings look ahead to Henry James, William Faulkner, and Robert Penn Warren.

**Major Themes in Hawthorne's Fiction:** 1. Alienation - a character is in a state of isolation because of self-cause, or societal cause, or a combination of both. 2. Initiation - involves the attempts of an alienated character to get rid of his isolated condition. 3. Problem of Guilt - a character's sense of guilt forced by the puritanical heritage or by society; also guilt vs. innocence. 4. Pride - Hawthorne treats pride as evil. He illustrates the following aspects of pride in various characters: physical pride (Robin), spiritual pride (Goodman Brown, Ethan Brand), and intellectual pride (Rappaccini). 5. Puritan New England - used as a background and setting in many tales. 6. Italian background - especially in "*The Marble Faun*". 7. Allegory - Hawthorne's writing is allegorical, didactic and moralistic. 8. Other themes include individual vs.



society, self-fulfillment vs. accommodation or frustration, hypocrisy vs. integrity, love vs. hate, exploitation vs. hurting, and fate vs. free will.

**Hawthorne as a Literary Artist:** 1. 1<sup>st</sup> professional writer - college educated, familiar with the great European writers, and influenced by puritan writers like Cotton Mather. 2. Hawthorne displayed a love for allegory and symbol. He dealt with tensions involving: light versus dark; warmth versus cold; faith versus doubt; heart versus mind; internal versus external worlds. 3. His writing is representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century, and, thus, in the mainstream due to his use of nature, its primitiveness, and as a source of inspiration; also in his use of the exotic, the gothic, and the antiquarian.

### ***“The Scarlet Letter” (1850)***

A bestselling story and a popular read even today, *“The Scarlet Letter”* is a marvelous story that comes from the mind of Nathaniel Hawthorne, a brilliant and legendary writer. *“The Scarlet Letter”* is a story about love and guilt. Written way ahead of its time and set in Puritan era Boston, this is a story about a woman, Hester Prynne, who lives her life like a criminal, yet never ceases to do as much good as she can. Helping the needy people of the society that once shunned her, her image is somewhat restored in society later on, although it may have been too late for that. It takes place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Puritan law was prevalent and going strong, and adultery was equated with a criminal offense.

*“The Scarlet Letter”* is considered Nathaniel Hawthorne's most famous novel and the 1<sup>st</sup> quintessentially American novel in style, theme, and language. The novel centers around the travails of Hester Prynne, who gives birth to a daughter Pearl after an adulterous affair. Hawthorne's novel is concerned with the effects of the affair rather than the affair itself, using Hester's public shaming as a springboard to explore the lingering taboos of Puritan New England in contemporary society.

*“The Scarlet Letter”* was an immediate success for a number of reasons. 1<sup>st</sup> and foremost, the U.S. was still a relatively new society, less than 100 years old at the time of the novel's publication. Indeed, still tied to Britain in its cultural formation, Hawthorne's novel offered a uniquely American style, language, set of characters, and - most importantly - a uniquely American central dilemma. Besides entertainment, then, Hawthorne's novel had the possibility of goading change, since it addressed a topic that was still relatively controversial, even taboo. Certainly Puritan values had eased somewhat by 1850, but not enough to make the novel completely welcome. It was to some degree a career-threatening decision to center his novel around an adulterous affair. But Hawthorne was not concerned with a prurient affair here, though the novel's characters are. Hawthorne chose to leave out the details of the adulterous rendezvous between Hester and Dimmesdale entirely. Instead, he was concerned with the aftermath of the affair - the shaming of Hester, the raising of a child borne of sin, and the values of a society that would allow a sin to continue to be punished long after it would seem reasonable. Hawthorne takes advantage of his greatest assets as a writer - the interiority of his writing, his exploration of thoughts and emotions - and uses them to humanize all the parties involved in the affair, as well as to demonize the thoughts that become consumed by it. Chillingworth, notably, becomes the

embodiment of Puritan values, which led people to lynch and destroy in the name of God but motivated in large measure by their own repressed sins of lust, greed, and envy.

"*The Scarlet Letter*" also became intensely popular upon publication because it had the good fortune of becoming one of America's 1<sup>st</sup> mass-published books.

### Study Questions:

1. Explicate character, theme, language patterns, style, use of point of view, setting, or design in any particular short story or in "*The Scarlet Letter*".
2. Explain what Melville means by Hawthorne's "blackness" in his essay "*Hawthorne and His Mosses*" and discuss it with specific references to any two of the stories in the text (or any three, or with reference to specific characters in "*The Scarlet Letter*").
3. Explore the moral ambiguity in any given Hawthorne character or work. What does reading "*Rappaccini's Daughter*" (or "*The Minister's Black Veil*" or "*Young Goodman Brown*") do to the reader's ability to discern "good" and "evil" characters?
4. Consider Hawthorne's presentation of women in his fiction. What attitudes inform his portraits of Beatrice Rappaccini, or of Hester Prynne?
5. Consider the possibility that each of the major characters in "*The Scarlet Letter*" might also be aspects of the narrator's own persona. Discuss ways in which Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl complement each other thematically.
9. "Certain pervasive themes recur in Hawthorne's stories. These include: the individual's isolation from the community; the influence of the past on the present; the consequence of sin and guilt; the process of initiation; the limitations of self-reliance; the evil of manipulation." Select one of these themes as a means of interpreting any one of Hawthorne's stories discussed during the lesson.
10. Discuss Hawthorne's definition of Romanticism and its expression in his work.
11. If you were asked to write an adaptation of "*The Scarlet Letter*" to current times, laws and religious traditions in the context of our Uzbek culture, what "sin" would you choose to depict? Write a brief summary of how that story would develop.

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### 3.6. Herman Melville (1819-1891). “*Moby-Dick*”

**Primary Works:** “*Typee*” (1846), “*Omoo*” (1847), “*Mardi*” (1849), “*Redburn*” (1849), “*White-Jacket*” (1850), “*Moby-Dick*” (1851), “*Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*” (1852), “*Bartleby, the Scrivener*” (1853), “*Benito Cereno*” (1855), “*Israel Potter*” (1855), “*The Piazza Tales*” (1856), “*The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*” (1857), “*Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*” (1866), “*Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*” (1876), “*John Marr and Other Sailors*” (1888), “*Timoleon*” (1891), “*Billy Budd, Sailor*” (1924).

#### A Brief Biography of Herman Melville

Herman Melville (August 1, 1819, N.Y., U.S. - September 28, 1891, N.Y., U.S.) was born to a rich mercantile family which declined due to great losses in business. A short episode of scarlet fever affected Melville’s eyesight permanently in 1826. After leaving Albany Classical School at the age of 12, Herman worked at several jobs as a clerk, teacher and farmhand. He also studied Shakespeare and other technical, historical and anthropological works despite his bad eyesight.

Melville was thirsty for adventure and in 1839 he set out to sea. In 1841, he sailed on a whaler bound. His adventures continued and in 1842 he was on a ship in the Marquesas Islands. His Polynesian adventures produced his early successful novels, “*Typee*” (1846) and “*Omoo*” (1847). However, his upcoming novel, “*Mardi*” (1849) didn’t do well. He wrote “*Redburn*” (1849) followed by “*White-Jacket*” (1850), a book depicting the tough life of sailors, in the next year. Shortly after “*White-Jacket*”, came “*Moby Dick*” (1851), his distinguished contribution to American literature. “*Moby Dick*”, a whaling fictional narrative symbolically touched the tribulations of American democracy. Sadly, “*Moby Dick*” did not prove to be rewarding for Melville at the time of its publication and instead put him in despair at not receiving any acclamation. He wrote “*Pierre*” in 1852 hoping to advance his career and earn better but the Gothic romantic fiction brought him nothing except disaster both financially and critically.

During the next few years Melville wrote “*Israel Potter*” (1855) and “*The Confidence-Man*” (1857). He also wrote magazine stories in *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine* which revolved around the hypocritical and materialistic nature of man. Some of these stories include “*Scrivener*” (1853), “*The Encantadas*” (1854) and “*Benito Cereno*” (1855). By 1857, Melville had turned his attention towards writing poetry. Since his writing was not supporting him much financially, he took a job as a customs inspector in 1866. He spent the last days of his literary career writing prose and his last work “*Billy Budd*” was not published until after his death. Some other last works of

Melville include “*Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*” (1856), “*John Marr and other Sailors*” (1888) and “*Timoleon*” (1891). Considered an ordinary writer during his lifetime, Herman Melville’s name now enjoys a place of paramount importance in the American literature.

### “*Moby-Dick*” (1851)

The novel “*Moby Dick*” was the 6<sup>th</sup> novel published by H. Melville, a landmark of American literature that mixed a number of literary styles including a fictional adventure story, historical detail and even scientific discussion. The story of the voyage of the whaling ship Pequod, the novel draws at least partially from the experiences of its author while a sailor and a harpooner on whaling ships before settling in New England as a writer.

**Topics:** 1. It is a reliable treatise on whales and the whaling industry. 2. Excellent commentary on the universe and human destiny. 3. It is rich in symbolism - philosophical speculations about God and Nature. 4. The white whale, among others, could represent evil, Melville's Puritan conscience, religion, or the ultimate mystery of the universe. 5. It is an adventure-romance of the sea, an epic quest, a Faustian bargain, and a metaphysical speculation.

#### Study Questions:

1. In Chapter 54 of “*Moby-Dick*”, Ishmael, the narrator, relates a tale of mutiny he once narrated. Examine Melville's later explorations of mutiny or feared mutiny and the characters who develop or refine attributes Melville embodies in Steerkilt and Radney.
2. “*Moby-Dick*” features several characters who seem insane. How does insanity relate to this story? How do these characters contrast with one another?
3. Describe the playlike scenes interspersed throughout *Moby-Dick*. What is the function of these scenes? In what ways do they differ from the rest of the narrative?
4. Describe Ishmael’s method of narration. Is he reliable or unreliable as a narrator? Why is he the one to tell this story? What would the narrative have been like if Ahab were the narrator?
5. Research and explain the theory of romantic organicism in Bryant and Poe, at the same time exploring differences between these two poets.
6. Consider literary portraits of women engaged in heroic struggle or of escaping slaves portrayed as heroic fugitives. Compare and contrast portraits by Stowe, Fuller, Jacobs, and Douglass with Hester Prynne in “*The Scarlet Letter*” or Thoreau's autobiographical narrator in “*Walden*”.
7. Read some of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's lectures, addresses, and letters (not anthologized). Then compare and contrast “*The Declaration of Sentiments*” (1848) with its model, “*The Declaration of Independence*”. Analyze the 19<sup>th</sup> century document with respect to style, imagery, concepts of nature and authority, and relative political effect.
8. Whether or not the earliest American realists wrote in a distinctive and innovative form, they make different choices of language and genre than their contemporaries.

Choose to analyze a text by any of the following writers and explore elements of realism in the work: Longstreet, Stowe, Thorpe, Stoddard, and Davis.

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## CHAPTER IV. AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM

### Plan:

4.1. Boston School of Transcendentalism

4.2. Henry David Thoreau. “Walden”

4.3. Ralph Waldo Emerson. “Nature”. “The American Scholar”. “The Divinity School Address”. “Self-Reliance”

4.4. Innovations to Poetry by Walt Whitman. “Leaves of Grass”

### 4.1. Boston School of Transcendentalism

**Definition of Transcendentalism.** *Transcendentalism* was an idealistic literary and philosophical movement of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning in New England in 1836, various visionaries, intellectuals, scholars, and writers would come together regularly to discuss spiritual ideas. *The Boston newspapers*, which advertised their meetings, called the group the *transcendentalists*. Here, we will explore the main ideas of Transcendentalism, along with some of the key figures of this important American literary movement.

The Transcendentalists were radical thinkers. At the time of their meetings, New England was still holding on to a remnant of Puritanical values. There was a sense that organized religion had authority over one's personal life and individual choices. For the Transcendentalists, this was unacceptable. They were quite critical of conformity, or forcing one's behavior to match social expectations or standards. They were *nonconformists* - people who do not conform to a generally accepted pattern of thought or action.

**Transcendentalist Ideas.** The Transcendentalists believed that for every person there exists a private relationship between the self and the universe. In fact, they believed that each person carries the universe within himself. They thought that every individual has a *universal soul*. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American essayist and poet, was at the center of the Transcendentalist movement. He explained the idea of the universal soul by stating that 'within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty; to which every part and particle is equally related.

In addition to the universal soul, the Transcendentalists believed in *intuitive thought*, which is the ability to know something through instinctive feeling rather than conscious reasoning. They believed that one should guide her life by what he or she feels to be true. We've all had flashes of intuition: grabbing an umbrella on a perfectly sunny day or sensing that someone's about to call right before the phone rings. The Transcendentalists believed that these flashes of intuition were the most fundamental form of knowledge. Intuition should have precedence over the intellect, according to the Transcendentalists, because intuition was provided by the universal soul.

Transcendentalism was really a hodgepodge of ideas. The Transcendentalists were very well read and borrowed from Puritanism (the bits they liked), German Idealism, Eastern religions, and more. They merged and fused concepts, creating a flexible set of values. They valued simplicity, a life not bound to material possessions. They valued self-reliance, or a reliance on one's own powers and resources rather than

those of others, and trust in one's own heart and thoughts. They valued openness, openness to the beauty of the world.

The impact of Transcendentalism on American literature can easily be seen today. For example, I think immediately of Elizabeth Gilbert's bestselling memoir "*Eat, Pray, Love*". In the book, Gilbert goes on a journey both physically and spiritually. Recently divorced, she finds self-reliance. She meditates and comes to value the beauty of the everyday. The Transcendentalists, particularly Emerson, perpetuated the idea that writers are seers. It's the writer's duty to see the world clearly, to summon the world to life. Emerson called poets 'liberating gods.' Literature was a platform to liberate people, to help them see what needs to be seen: nature, spirituality, self-identity, and social injustice. The Transcendentalists were forceful critics of slavery and gender inequality. In transcendental theory, every individual has to be respected because every individual has a universal soul.

Transcendentalists also placed significant emphasis on *imagination*. Imagination allows the mind to be resourceful, to form new ideas that are not present to the senses. As the writer or reader imagines, he transcends himself. This allows him to move beyond his personal experience, his mind and body, to consider something anew. The ability to imagine can effect change. The Transcendentalists wanted their work to have an altering effect on individuals and on society as a whole. For the Transcendentalists, man needed to live in the world, participate in it, look at it closely, and take action.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Define the term "transcendentalism".
2. What are the main traits of American Transcendentalism?
3. Reveal the role of imagination in artistic works of transcendentalists.

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## **4.2. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). "Walden"**

**Primary Works:** "*The Maine Woods*" (1864), "*An Excursion to Canada*" (1853), "*A Natural History of Massachusetts*" (1842), "*Sir Walter Raleigh*" (1843), "*Thomas Carlyle and His Works*" (1847), "*Civil Disobedience*" (1849), "*Walden, Or Life in the*

*Woods*” (1854), “*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*” (1849), “*Walking*” (1861), “*Cape Cod*” (1865).

### **A Brief Biography of Henry David Thoreau**

Henry David Thoreau (July 12, 1817, Concord, Massachusetts, U.S. - May 6, 1862, Concord, Massachusetts, U.S.), American essayist, poet, and practical philosopher renowned for having lived the doctrines of Transcendentalism as recorded in his masterwork, “*Walden*” (1854), and for having been a vigorous advocate of civil liberties, as evidenced in the essay “*Civil Disobedience*” (1849). A man of many talents, H.D. Thoreau marked his name in history as a writer, poet, essayist, philosopher as well as a naturalist. His extremely diverse writings offer an in-depth view into a variety of subjects including Economy, Reading, Winter Animals, and Solitude to name some specifically.

H.D. Thoreau for most of his life stayed in Concord but travelled to other states including New York and Maine. These travels inspired some of his works such as “*The Maine Woods*” (1864). His trip to Canada became an inspiration for “*An Excursion to Canada*” (1853). As a child, Thoreau was close to his older brother who taught at schools to pay for Thoreau’s tuition fees. In 1837, Thoreau graduated from the Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he undertook a scheme of study in classics, Latin, Greek, grammar, composition, science, English, history, philosophy and mathematics. His years at Harvard exposed Thoreau to the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Thoreau spent some time working as a school teacher and tutor. By 1839, Thoreau realized he should build a career in writing and specifically poetry on nature. From 1841 to 1843, Thoreau worked with Ralph Waldo Emerson assisting him to edit and contribute poetry and prose to a magazine entitled, *The Dial*. In 1845, Thoreau moved to a house he built himself in a forest around the shores of Walden Pond. The purpose of this shift was to concentrate on establishing himself as a mature writer. Thoreau spent 2 years at Walden Pond spending a lot of his time to an excessive amount of reading, writing and strolling in nature. Some of Thoreau’s noteworthy writings include “*A Natural History of Massachusetts*” (1842), “*Sir Walter Raleigh*” (1843), and “*Thomas Carlyle and His Works*” (1847), “*Civil Disobedience*” (1849), “*Walden, Or Life in the Woods*” (1854) and others.

Pursuing his interest in nature, Thoreau became a land surveyor in 1850s. The job required him to take long walks which allowed him to engross himself in the natural surroundings and collect both information and ideas for his writing projects. Thoreau wrote excessively. He maintained diaries and journals in which he wrote detailed accounts of his travels. Some interesting examples of these accounts are “*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*” (1849), a description of a trip he took with his brother. In 1861, Thoreau wrote “*Walking*” which was followed by “*Cape Cod*” (1865), an account of a trip he took to the town to study its people, flora and fauna. Thoreau’s literary career produced a great deal of work ranging upon countless essays, anecdotes and poems. Although Thoreau was never able to make a substantial living out of writing, his works have been found to fill more than 20 volumes.



On May 6, 1862, Henry David Thoreau died of tuberculosis. His body rests in a family plot of the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts.

### ***“Walden, Or Life in the Woods” (1854)***

Considered one of the all-time great books, *“Walden, Or Life in the Woods”* is a record of Thoreau's 2-year experiment of living at Walden Pond. The writer's chief emphasis is on the simplifications and enjoyment of life now. In one of the most useful studies of the book - "Five Ways of Looking at *Walden*" - Walter Harding discusses the broad appeal of this masterpiece in terms of at least the following 5 approaches: 1. As a nature book. 2. As a do-it-yourself guide to simple life. 3. As a satirical criticism of modern life and living. 4. As a belletristic achievement. 5. As a spiritual book.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. After reading *“Walden”* consider the feasibility of Thoreau's notions about individualism and self-reliance in terms of modern life. Would he simply be considered weird?
2. Why did Thoreau undertake the experiment at Walden Pond? Consider all the reasons he gives for his move to the pond in the 1<sup>st</sup> two chapters. Are they consistent? Can they all be true? Which of them seems most important in the light of the book as a whole?
3. How tenable is the case for *“Civil Disobedience”*? Is Thoreau arguing that we should break the law whenever we think it unjust? What safeguards against such arbitrary and individualistic politics does he assert or imply?
4. Explain specific ways in which Thoreau's *“Walden”* may be considered "practice" to Emerson's theory.

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5. Sims, M. *The Adventures of Henry Thoreau: A Young Man's Unlikely Path to Walden Pond*. NY: Bloomsbury, 2014.

### **4.3. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). “Nature”. “The American Scholar”. “The Divinity School Address”. “Self-Reliance”**

**Major Essays and Lectures:** *“Nature”*, essay (1836), *“The American Scholar”*, speech (1837), *“The Divinity School Address”*, address (1838), *“Self-Reliance”*, essay (1841).

## A Brief Biography of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson (May 25, 1803, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. - April 27, 1882, Concord, Massachusetts, U.S.) was an American essayist, lecturer, and poet, who led the Transcendentalist movement of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. He was seen as a champion of individualism and a prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society. He was a prolific essayist and speaker. He gave over 1500 public lectures across the U.S.

R.W. Emerson was the son of a Unitarian Minister. His father died when he was 8 and he had to support his education through doing part time jobs. In October 1817, he went to Harvard, where he served as class poet, but he didn't stand out as a student graduating in the middle of his class. After graduation, he went to Florida, seeking warmer climates for his delicate health. Emerson worked as a school master and later as a pastor in Boston's Second Church. However, he gradually moved away from the religious and social beliefs of his contemporaries, formulating and expressing the philosophy of Transcendentalism in his 1836 essay, "*Nature*". Following this ground-breaking work, he gave a speech entitled "*The American Scholar*" in 1837, which Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. considered to be America's *Intellectual Declaration of Independence*. When he was just 18, Emerson married Ellen Louisa Tucker, but she tragically died just 2 years later. In 1838, he was invited to Harvard Divinity School, where he gave a famous address claiming early Christianity and discounting the miracles in the Bible. This radical approach was heavily criticized by members of the establishment.

Emerson wrote most of his important essays as lectures, then revised them for print. His 1<sup>st</sup> two collections of essays - "*Essays: First Series*" and "*Essays: Second Series*", published respectively in 1841 and 1844 - represent the core of his thinking, and include such well-known essays as "*Self-Reliance*", "*The Over-Soul*", "*Circles*", "*The Poet and Experience*". Together with "*Nature*", these essays made the decade from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s Emerson's most fertile period.

Emerson was firmly against slavery. After 1844, he became more involved in the anti-slavery movement. "The South calls slavery an institution... I call it destitution... Emancipation is the demand of civilization" - are his words.

### **Main Elements of Emerson's Teachings:**

- **Individuality and the importance of individual freedom.** To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, - that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense. ("*Self-Reliance*")

- **The unending capacity of the human spirit and human nature.**

- **A willingness to speak your mind whatever the consequences.** To be great is to be misunderstood. ("*Self-Reliance*")

- **The presence of God in all, and the ability of Nature to reveal God.** The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. ("*Nature*")

• **Emerson was influenced by Indian religious thought such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedas, expressing a belief in non-dualism.** Emerson was one of the key figures of Modern American literature. He inspired and encouraged other writers such as Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau.

### ***“Nature” (1836)***

This essay is considered the "gospel" of American Transcendentalism. It has an Introduction and 8 chapters: 1. Nature 2. Commodity 3. Beauty 4. Language 5. Discipline 6. Idealism 7. Spirit 8. Prospects. The major thesis of the essay, in Emerson's words, is that we should now "enjoy an original relation to the universe," and not become dependent on past experiences of others and on holy books, creeds and dogma. It is a beautiful work. Emerson attempts to show the meaning of Nature to the minds of men. It is the production of a spiritualist, subordinating the visible and outward to the inward and invisible. Nature becomes the transparent emblem of the soul. Psyche animates and fills the earth and external things. The book proves to us, that the only true and perfect mind is the poetic. The essay itself seems like a stepping-stone than a stumbling block in Emerson's career; the last of his apprentice exercises rather than the 1<sup>st</sup> of his mature works; a thing that had to be done before he could do something better, to be put behind him before he could go ahead.

### ***"The American Scholar" (1837)***

Delivered as a lecture to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, Harvard College, on August 31, 1837, *"The American Scholar"* is popular and important in expressing the practical aspects of Transcendentalism. Emerson prods the students to become more confident in their abilities and to take pride in native Americanism: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. ... We will walk on our own feet, we will work with our own hands, we will speak our own minds."

### ***"The Divinity School Address" (1838)***

A lecture addressed to the senior class at the Harvard Divinity College on July 15, 1838. The important theme of this lecture is that truth cannot be presented as doctrines or creeds. Emerson says, "It (the truth) cannot be received at 2<sup>nd</sup> hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul". He goes on to tell the graduating class to be original and not imitative.

### ***"Self-Reliance" (1841)***

This essay elaborates further on the familiar thesis by Emerson - trust yourself. This is also a very popular essay written in forceful and memorable language. "There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide ..." "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string."

## Study Questions:

1. What elements of Transcendentalism are evident in the short poem at the beginning of "Nature"?
2. How does Emerson characterize his age? How does he characterize its relation to the past?
3. What is the distinction Emerson makes between Nature and the Soul?
4. How adequate a moral position is the statement, "No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature"?
5. Consider Emerson's argument, in "The Poet" that it is "not metres, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem, ...a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own..."

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### 4.4. Innovations to Poetry by Walt Whitman (1819-1892). "Leaves of Grass"

*Old Walt  
Old Walt Whitman  
Went finding and seeking,  
Finding less than sought  
Seeking more than found,  
Every detail minding  
Of the seeking or the finding.  
Pleased equally  
In seeking as in finding,  
Each detail minding,  
Old Walt went seeking  
And finding.*

Langston Hughes, "A Supermarket in California" (1954)

**Primary Works:** *“Leaves of Grass”* (1855), *“Drum Taps”* (1865), *“Democratic Vistas”* (1877), *“Specimen Days”* (1882).

### **A Brief Biography of Walt Whitman**

Walt Whitman (May 31, 1819, West Hills, Long Island, N.Y., U.S. - March 26, 1892, Camden, New Jersey, U.S.) American poet, journalist, and essayist whose verse collection *“Leaves of Grass”* (1855) is a landmark in the history of American literature. Whitman began working at the early age of 13, having left school the year before. He was an office boy, then a printer's assistant on several of the newspapers around N.Y. Occasionally he contributed articles to the papers, writing some of the earliest reports of baseball games. From 1836-1841 he taught in schools in the Long Island area, then founded and edited the newspaper *The Long Islander* from 1836-1841. During this time, he continued educating himself reading books, contributing to both fiction and commentary magazines and working as editor of the paper *Brooklyn Eagle*, though he was fired because of his antislavery views. As a result, he spent a few months in New Orleans for 3 months writing for the *New Orleans Crescent*. It wasn't until 1848 that he began to seriously apply himself to poetry, self-publishing *“Leaves of Grass”*, a compilation of 12 of his poems. This drew the praise of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who proclaimed in a letter to Whitman: "I greet you at the beginning of a new career," which Whitman, in 1856, included on the cover of a larger 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. *“Leaves of Grass”* was an intensely personal, free-flowing verse of poetry with frank intimate allusions and therefore regarded by much of the public and critics as both scandalous and too radically different - a quality that got him fired from a subsequent job at the Department of Interior when they discovered he was the author of that book of poetry. He published volume of poems, *“Drum Taps”*, in 1865, better received by the public. During his life he also wrote 2 prose works, *“Democratic Vistas”*, in 1877, and *“Specimen Days”* in 1882. Whitman died in Camden in 1892.

### ***“Leaves of Grass”* (1855)**

*“Leaves of Grass”* is a poetry collection. Though the 1<sup>st</sup> edition was published in 1855, Whitman spent most of his professional life writing and re-writing *“Leaves of Grass”*, revising it multiple times until his death. This resulted in vastly different editions over 4 decades: the 1<sup>st</sup> - a small book of 12 poems and the last - a compilation of over 400 poems. Whitman compared the finished book to a cathedral long under construction, and on another occasion to a tree, with its cumulative rings of growth. Both metaphors are misleading, however, because he did not construct his book unit by unit or by successive layers but constantly altered titles, diction, and even motifs and shifted poems - omitting, adding, separating, and combining.

The poems of *“Leaves of Grass”* are loosely connected and each represents Whitman's celebration of his philosophy of life and humanity. This book is notable for its discussion of delight in sensual pleasures during a time when such candid displays were considered immoral. Where much previous poetry, especially English, relied on symbolism, allegory, and meditation on the religious and spiritual, *“Leaves of Grass”*

exalted the body and the material world. Influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalist movement, itself an offshoot of Romanticism, Whitman's poetry praises nature and the individual human's role in it. However, much like Emerson, Whitman does not diminish the role of the mind or the spirit; rather, he elevates the human form and the human mind, deeming both worthy of poetic praise.

With one exception, the poems do not rhyme or follow standard rules for meter and line length. Among the poems in the collection are "*Song of Myself*", "*I Sing the Body Electric*", "*Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*". Later editions included Whitman's elegy to the assassinated President Abraham Lincoln, "*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*".

Whitman's greatest theme is a symbolic identification of the regenerative power of nature with the deathless divinity of the soul. His poems are filled with a religious faith in the processes of life and nature: grass, birds, vegetation, the maternal ocean, and planets in formation. The poetic "I" of "*Leaves of Grass*" transcends time and space, binding the past with the present and intuiting the future, illustrating Whitman's belief that poetry is a form of knowledge, the supreme wisdom of humankind.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Reveal innovative techniques and themes in the poetry of Walt Whitman. In what way it is absolutely new? In what way it resembles previous poets?
2. Whitman has often been accused of being egoistical. Discuss his use of "I" and its relation to the country at large. Why does he appear egotistic? What is his purpose?
3. What is Whitman's view of his physical self? Why does he stress it so much?
4. Discuss Whitman's poetry as a culmination point in the development of American identity. How does Whitman contribute to the ongoing evolution of self-reliance? Of human freedom? Of concepts of democracy?

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## CHAPTER V. AMERICAN ABOLITIONISM

### Plan:

#### 5.1. The Notion of Abolitionism

#### 5.2. Harriet Beecher Stowe. *“Uncle Tom’s Cabin”*

#### 5.3. Henry Wordsworth Longfellow. *“Poems on Slavery”*. The Theme of Nature and American Indians in Longfellow’s Lyrics. *“The Song of Hiawatha”*. *“The Arrow and the Song”*

### 5.1. The Notion of Abolitionism

Abolitionism is a general term which describes the movement to end slavery. This term can be used formally or informally. In Western Europe and the Americas, abolitionism is a historical movement in effort to end the African and Indian slave trade and set slaves free. Abolitionist literature, art, and poetry depicted the life of the slave and became a political tool used effectively to sway sentiment toward someone’s position. Nationally, men like John Greenleaf Whittier, who became the poet of the abolitionist movement, and Ezekiel Bigelow, a satirist, used their literary skill to bring the slavery issue to national attention. Slave narratives also inspired change in the attitudes of northern whites. These autobiographies described and vividly detailed their experience in thralldom, their daily lives, their feelings toward their family, their disappointments, their moments of happiness, and their pain.

#### 8 Influential Abolitionist Texts:

One of the most important and useful means that has been employed by abolitionists is the written word. Free people across the globe advocated for the abolition of slavery, but perhaps the most inspiring stories have come from slaves themselves, who were self-taught or abounding with determination to learn to read and write from any source possible, as was the case with Frederick Douglass. Such texts have had a profound effect in shaping the majority of the modern world’s perspective against implementing the abhorrent institution of slavery by describing the inhumane cruelty that slaves have suffered in the past. They have also inspired oppressed groups to rise up and fight for equality in the face of discrimination.

#### 1. *“Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly” (1851-52). H.B. Stowe.*

Perhaps the most famous text to come from pre-Civil War America, *“Uncle Tom’s Cabin”* was published serially in 1851-1852 and had a profound effect upon American culture. Some have gone as far as to deem it as one of the causes of the Civil War. Authored by Harriet Beecher Stowe, a passionate abolitionist, the novel sold roughly 300.000 copies in its 1<sup>st</sup> year. Its denouncement of slavery fueled the already confrontational spirit between the North and South, who embraced and shunned the novel, respectively. Although the text today has been widely criticized for enforcing unwarranted stereotypes, it is imperative to realize the importance of a book promulgating the need to abolish slavery in such a volatile time in American history. Stowe’s efforts went far in the fight for the abolition of slavery, and her novel is still widely read and remembered today.

**2. “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself” (1845). Frederick Douglass.**

This 1<sup>st</sup> publication of Frederick Douglass’s often revised autobiography serves as one of the most read primary sources on American slavery today as well as in its own time. It follows Douglass from his early years in life as a slave, noting the fact that he - like most slaves - never knew with certainty whom his father was and that he had only met his mother a handful of times. Throughout the text, Douglass highlights the fact that the sufferings he endured at the hands of slave-owners were no different than those of his fellow slaves, excepting that when he was moved from a plantation to the city, he realized that being a city slave was almost as good as being free in comparison. It was during that time in his life that he came to understand the importance of earning an education and thus spent the rest of his life in pursuit of knowledge, which afforded him the ability to escape to freedom and to become a renowned abolitionist. Once free, he lectured abroad and served as an aide to President Lincoln during the Civil War. For more than a century, his narrative continued to inspire reformers and activists to fight for civil rights for the oppressed in America.

**3. “Appeal...to the Colored Citizens of the World...” (1829). David Walker.**

Distributed to slaves via copies inserted into the pockets of clothes that he sold to sailors heading to the South, David Walker’s “Appeal...to the Colored Citizens of the World...” caused outrage and fear in slave-owners as he called for slaves to actively fight for their freedom and to rise up and revolt against their owners. He also claimed that America was more of the slaves’ country than the whites’ since it was their blood and toil that had built it from the ground up. His violent language inspired objections by even the most ardent white abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, and led to legislation being passed that prohibited slaves from learning to read or write. The Appeal was so radical that it may have cost Walker his life, since his body was found, commonly believed to be poisoned, near his shop soon after its publication. Though loaded with the support of violence, Walker’s appeal was widely reprinted after his death and served to illuminate the intensity with which some slaves were ready to combat slavery.

**4. “Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave” (1847). W.W. Brown.**

William Wells Brown’s “Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave” was greeted with immediate popularity when published in 1847, being the 2<sup>nd</sup> most read slave narrative of its time (behind that of Frederick Douglass). His autobiographical narrative exposed the struggles that mixed-race individuals such as himself faced (as he was conceived by a white man and an enslaved woman), documented the debased treatment of slaves, and decried the institution itself for forcing slaves to resort to deceitful and dishonest measures in order to abet their survival. After gaining his freedom in 1834 and earning acclaim for his slave narrative, Brown was able to tour overseas and became the 1<sup>st</sup> African American to publish a novel, play, and travel book.

**5. “The Liberator” (1831-1865). W.L. Garrison.**

“The Liberator”, founded by the ardent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, had a paid circulation of roughly 3,000 in the North. However, its message sprawled across



the nation as it was spread by word of mouth or handed down copies to those who couldn't afford a subscription. Published in Boston, the periodical espoused the need to abolish slavery in America for 35 years, making it the most influential antislavery newspaper in the pre-Civil War era of the U.S. It continually challenged reformers to apply the principles put forth in the *Declaration of Independence* to all people, regardless of the color of their skin. It also praised abolitionism as the only means to end slavery - instead of supporting the idea of African colonization - with the aim of achieving full citizenship for would-be freed slaves, including endowing them with the right to vote. Thus, Garrison's influence through "*The Liberator*" played an indispensable role in gaining freedom for slaves.

**6. "*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano; or, Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*" (1789). O. Equiano.**

Known as the originator of the slave narrative, Olaudah Equiano published his autobiography in 1789 in order to capture the humiliations suffered by slaves at the hands of their owners as well as to condemn the slave trade as an inhumane institution. Although some recent evidence has called into question whether he was truly born in Africa, as he claims in the text, his words nonetheless captured the brutalities and realism of traveling across the Atlantic on a slave ship and the struggles and luck that go into obtaining one's freedom. He spent most of his time as a slave on ships, sailing from place to place visiting different cultures and learning the various ways in which slaves were treated, which allowed him to gain insight into the dynamics of the slavery to depict them accurately in his narrative. «*The Interesting Narrative*» was translated into Dutch, German, and Russian.

**7. "*Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave*" (1688). A. Behn.**

Penned by the 1<sup>st</sup> English woman known to have earned a living through her writing (Aphra Behn), "*Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave*" was published in 1688, at which time, in the nascent years of abolitionism, it was viewed as a progressive antislavery text. The novel follows an African prince as he is tricked into slavery by "civilized" English slave traders, who thus sell him to an owner in a South American colony of the British. There he's reunited with his love, who he thought to be dead at the hands of his former African king, and is recognized by his white owner to be of royalty and noble descent. However, acquiring his and his lover's freedom proves impossible after he is perpetually told that the decision is not up the owner but instead rests on the governor, who is back in England. The plot thus unravels in a tragic and grotesque resolution, leaving the reader questioning the morality as well as the rationality of the slave trade.

**8. "*12 Years a Slave*" (1853). S. Northup.**

Recently popularized by the Steve McQueen, "*12 Years a Slave*" (2013) was originally published in 1853 after being dictated by Solomon Northup to a white lawyer and legislator by the name of David Wilson, who maintained to offer "a faithful history of Solomon Northup's life, as [I] received it from his lips". The narrative recounts the tragic drugging and kidnapping of Northup, a free Northern black man, into Southern slavery, in which he remained for 12 years in the Louisiana Bayou Boeuf plantation region. He suffered through sadistic owners as well as some "kind" ones, until a Canadian abolitionist, whom he met on his owner's farm, helped Northup to arrange

his escape to his rightful place in the North. After the book's publication, Northup went on tour around the country to promote his book, which sold over 30.000 copies.

### Study Questions:

1. Give general definition to the notion of "Abolitionism" in American literature.
2. In your opinion why "*Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*" is considered to be the most influential literary work of Abolitionism?
3. Comment some of non-fiction works, presenting Abolitionism.
4. Choose 1 of the 8 most influential abolitionist texts of American writers and prepare presentation.

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## 5.2. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896). "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*"

**Primary Works:** "*The Mayflower; or, Sketches of Scenes and Characters Among the Descendants of the Pilgrims*" (1843), "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (1852), "*The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (1853), "*Dred*" (1856), "*The Minister's Wooing*" (1859), "*The Pearl of Orr's Island*" (1862), "*Oldtown Folks*" (1969), "*Lady Byron Vindicated*" (1870), "*Pink and White Tyranny*" (1871), "*Sam Lawson's Oldtown Fireside Stories*" (1872), "*Pogonuc People*" (1878).

### A Brief Biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe, née Harriet Elizabeth Beecher (June 14, 1811, Litchfield, Connecticut, U.S. - July 1, 1896, Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.), American writer and philanthropist, the author of the novel "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*", which contributed so much to popular feeling against slavery that it is cited among the causes of the American Civil War.

Harriet Beecher was a member of one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's most remarkable families. The daughter of the prominent Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher, she grew up in an atmosphere of learning and moral earnestness. She wrote continually

and published *“The Mayflower; or, Sketches of Scenes and Characters Among the Descendants of the Pilgrims”*.

Stowe lived for 18 years in Cincinnati, separated only by the Ohio River from a slave-holding community; she came in contact with fugitive slaves and learned about life in the South from friends and from her own visits there. In 1850 her husband became professor at Bowdoin College and the family moved to Brunswick. Harriet Stowe began to write a long tale of slavery, based on her reading of abolitionist literature and on her personal observations in Ohio and Kentucky. Her tale was published serially (1851-1852) in the *National Era*, an antislavery paper of Washington, D.C.; in 1852 it appeared in book form as *“Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly”*. The book was an immediate sensation and was taken up eagerly by abolitionists. The book was translated widely and several times dramatized. Stowe was enthusiastically received on a visit to England in 1853, and there she formed friendships with many leading literary figures. In that same year she published *“A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin”*, a compilation of documents and testimonies in support of disputed details of her indictment of slavery.

In 1856 she published *“Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp”*, in which she depicted the deterioration of a society resting on a slave basis. She wrote for any newspapers. Later she led the life of a woman of letters, writing novels, of which *“The Minister’s Wooing”* (1859) is best known, many studies of social life in both fiction and essay, and a small volume of religious poems. Stowe had moved to Hartford in 1864, and she largely remained there until her death.

### ***“Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly” (1851)***

*“Uncle Tom’s Cabin”* was Stowe’s 1<sup>st</sup> novel. Initially printed by installments in the *National Era*, an antislavery weekly published in Washington, D.C., from June 5, 1851, to April 1, 1852, it was a best-selling book of previously unheard of proportions. It is not easy, however, to make a clear judgment of the merits of *“Uncle Tom’s Cabin”*.

Tom, a broad-chested, strong slave who lives with his wife and children in a small hut near the house of his master in Kentucky, is sold by his master in order to pay off debts. Tom is sold “down the river” and expects the worst: to work on a Southern plantation. On the boat, he meets Eva, a perfect, angelic child. She persuades her father, Augustine St. Clare, to buy Tom, who is bought as Eva’s playmate and keeper. Eva dies and makes her father promise to free his slaves, but before he signs the papers, St. Clare dies and thus inadvertently sets in motion Tom’s demise. Tom is sold to Simon Legree, who tortures and finally kills Tom because he is unwilling to betray 2 fellow slaves, Cassey and Emmelina, who fled from their brutal, abusive master. Tom’s death is a direct result of his aggressive nonviolence. Numerous subplots and their respective characters depict various aspects and views of slavery and miscegenation.

Those who exclude works that cater to the taste of the masses from the realm of high culture have difficulty describing its artistry in positive terms. Moreover, Stowe has been criticized for her depiction and characterization of black people, which led to numerous stereotypical and trivial imitations on the stage, in almanacs, in songs and poems, and even in paintings. Stowe’s depiction of women has often been objectionable

to modern sensibilities, because they seem to be restricted to moral issues as they play themselves out in the domestic sphere. If one accepts the standards set by male writers of the American tradition, which depicted masculine confrontation with nature, as exemplified in the frontier myth of the American male, Stowe's novel seems naïvely visionary, lacking in complex philosophical content, overly melodramatic, and awkwardly plotted. It was earmarked as a book for women and children. It was not until critics such as Jane Tompkins reexamined the novel that Stowe's efforts to reorganize society from a woman's point of view came to be recognized.

The book appeared amid a growing controversy over race and religion. The author wrote in reaction to the Compromise of 1850, which admitted California to the Union as a free state, abolished the slave trade in Washington, D.C., organized the New Mexico and Utah territories without prohibiting slavery, and enacted the Fugitive Slave Law, which forced Northerners to assist in returning fugitive slaves to their owners. Although Stowe was hardly the 1<sup>st</sup> to point to slavery's destruction of both black and white families, her novel presented a very effective fusion of the sentimental novel with the rhetoric of an antislavery polemic.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What makes a literary work "good"? Can ideas of what is good change over time? Why in our own century was Stowe ignored in favor of other writers?
2. What's the role of emotion in understanding a work of literature? Is Stowe's writing too emotional?
3. From its origins in Harriet Beecher Stowe, regionalism as a genre took women characters and women's values seriously. Analyze Stowe's portraits of Eliza in "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" and Huldy in "*The Minister's Housekeeper*" and discuss the values explicit in Stowe's work.
4. What was Stowe's specific attitude to slavery? Try to find some unique traits in her literary works.

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**5.3. Henry Wordsworth Longfellow (1807-1882). “Poems on Slavery”.  
The Theme of Nature and American Indians in Longfellow’s Lyrics. “The  
Song of Hiawatha”. “The Arrow and the Song”**

**Primary Works:** “Voices of the Night” (1839), “Ballads and Other Poems” (1841), “Poems on Slavery” (1842), “The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems” (1845), “Evangeline” (1847), “Kavanagh”, fiction (1849), “The Song of Hiawatha” (1855), “The Courtship of Miles Standish” (1856), “Tales of a Wayside Inn” (1863), “Poems” (1886), “The Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow” (1961).

**A Brief Biography of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (February 27, 1807, Portland, Massachusetts/Maine, U.S. - March 24, 1882, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.) was an American poet and educator whose works include “Paul Revere’s Ride”, “The Song of Hiawatha”, and “Evangeline”. He was also the 1<sup>st</sup> American to translate Dante Alighieri’s “Divine Comedy”, and was one of the 5 *Fireside Poets*.

Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine, which was then a part of Massachusetts. He studied at Bowdoin College. After spending time in Europe he became a professor at Bowdoin and, later, at Harvard College. His 1<sup>st</sup> major poetry collections were “Voices of the Night” (1839) and “Ballads and Other Poems” (1841). Longfellow retired from teaching in 1854, to focus on his writing, living the remainder of his life in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a former Revolutionary War headquarters of George Washington. His 1<sup>st</sup> wife Mary Potter died in 1835, after a miscarriage. His 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Frances Appleton died in 1861, after sustaining burns when her dress caught fire. After her death, Longfellow had difficulty writing poetry for a time and focused on translating works from foreign languages.

Longfellow wrote many lyric poems known for their musicality and often presenting stories of mythology and legend. He became the most popular American poet of his day and also had success overseas. He has been criticized, however, for imitating European styles and writing specifically for the masses.

**“The Song of Hiawatha” (1855)**

“The Song of Hiawatha” is an epic poem, in trochaic tetrameter, featuring a Native American hero. Longfellow’s sources for the legends and ethnography were rich. In sentiment, scope, overall conception, and many particulars, Longfellow’s poem is a work of American Romantic literature, not a representation of Native American oral

tradition. Longfellow insisted, "I can give chapter and verse for these legends. Their chief value is that they are Indian legends".

Hiawatha was a probable historical figure associated with the founding of the League of the Iroquois, the Five Nations then located in present-day New York and Pennsylvania. Because of the poem, however, "Hiawatha" became the namesake for towns, schools, trains and a telephone company in the western Great Lakes region, where no Iroquois nations historically resided.

Longfellow chose to set "*The Song of Hiawatha*" at the Pictured Rocks, one of the locations along the south shore of Lake Superior. The Song presents a legend of Hiawatha and his lover Minnehaha in 22 chapters (and an Introduction). Hiawatha is not introduced until Chapter III.

In Chapter I, Hiawatha's arrival is prophesied by a "mighty" peace-bringing leader named Gitche Manito.

Chapter II tells a legend of how the warrior Mudjekeewis became Father of the Four Winds by slaying the Great Bear of the mountains, Mishe-Mokwa. His son Wabun, the East Wind, falls in love with a maiden whom he turns into the Morning Star, Wabun-Annung. Wabun's brother, Kabibonokka, the North Wind, bringer of autumn and winter, attacks Shingebis, "the diver". Shingebis repels him by burning firewood, and then in a wrestling match. A 3<sup>rd</sup> brother, Shawondasee, the South Wind, falls in love with a dandelion, mistaking it for a golden-haired maiden.

In Chapter III, in "unremembered ages", a woman named Nokomis falls from the moon. Nokomis gives birth to Wenonah, who grows to be a beautiful young woman. She falls in love with the West Wind (Mudjekeewis), becomes pregnant and bears Hiawatha.

In the ensuing chapters, Hiawatha has childhood adventures, falls in love with Minnehaha, slays the evil magician Pearl-Feather, invents written language, discovers corn and other episodes. Minnehaha dies in a severe winter.

The poem closes with the approach of a birch canoe with Christian missionaries to Hiawatha's village. Hiawatha and the chiefs welcome them joyously and accept the Christian message. At the end Hiawatha launches his canoe for the last time westward toward the sunset and departs forever.

### ***"The Arrow and the Song" (1845)***

The message of "*The Arrow and the Song*" is actually fairly simple. The arrow represents careless and angry words thrown out, that while surely infertile, yielding no fruit, are capable of sticking in someone's craw for a long time. They are not forgotten, but they are also perhaps sterile. On the other hand, words of kindness and joy, as represented via the song, are just the opposite. They can spread to everyone, just like planting a seed. In this sense, the poem is simply a short moral tale urging us to share joyful words, as opposed to getting angry and shouting at someone.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. Find different translations of “*The Arrow and the Song*” and say whether you agree or disagree with these translations. Do they reflect the message?
2. What are Longfellow's favorite words in poems?
2. How did Longfellow express his essential view of life in “*The Song of Hiawatha*”?

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## CHAPTER VI. AMERICAN REALISM IN LATE XIX - EARLY XX CENTURIES

### Plan:

**6.1. Basic Traits of Realism. The Local Color Movement**

**6.2. William Dean Howells. "A Modern Instance"**

**6.3. Henry James. "The Portrait of a Lady"**

**6.4. Critical Realism. Mark Twain and his Satire. "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer". "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn". "The Prince and the Pauper". "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court"**

**6.5. Social Life in Stories of O. Henry. "A Gift of the Magi"**

**6.6. Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie". "American Tragedy". "Jenny Gerhardt"**

**6.7. Francis Brett Hart. "The Luck of Roaring Camp"**

### 6.1. Basic Traits of Realism. The Local Color Movement

*"Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material."*

- William Dean Howells

American Realism was a turn of the century idea in art, music and literature that showed through these different types of work, reflections of the time period. Whether it was a cultural portrayal, or a scenic view of downtown New York City, these images and works of music depicted a contemporary view of what was happening; an attempt at defining what was real. In this chapter, writers alike will be discussed for their contribution to the idea of realism in the American setting. Each though slightly different in concept or subject was defining what was going on in front of his or her eyes, without imagining a past or a future.

In some scientific articles, it is stated that American Realism was a Neoclassical movement borrowing from ancient classical interpretations of art and architecture. We think that this statement is false. American Realism was actually the quite opposite, and instead of reflecting back to antiquities, artists and musicians were concerned with the grit and reality of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1860, most Americans lived on farms or in small villages, but by 1919 half of the population was concentrated in about 12 cities. Problems of urbanization and industrialization appeared: poor and overcrowded housing, unsanitary conditions, low pay, difficult working conditions, and inadequate restraints on business. Labor unions grew, and strikes brought the plight of working people to national awareness. The farmer gradually became an object of ridicule, lampooned as an unsophisticated "hick" or "rube." American Realism was a turn of the century idea in art, music and literature that showed through these different types of work, reflections of the time period. Whether it was a cultural portrayal, or a scenic view of downtown New York City, these images and works of literature depicted a contemporary view of what was happening; an attempt at defining what was real.



**Principles of Realism:** 1. Insistence upon and defense of "the experienced commonplace". 2. Character more important than plot. 3. Attack upon romanticism and romantic writers. 4. Emphasis upon morality often self-realized and upon an examination of idealism. 5. Concept of realism as a realization of democracy.

**Identifying Characteristics of Realistic Writing:** 1. The philosophy of Realism is known as "descendental" or non-transcendental. The purpose of writing is to instruct and to entertain. Realists were pragmatic, relativistic, democratic, and experimental. 2. The subject matter of Realism is drawn from "our experience," - it treated the common, the average, the non-extreme, the representative, the probable. 3. The morality of Realism is intrinsic, integral, relativistic - relations between people and society are explored. 4. The style of Realism is the vehicle which carries realistic philosophy, subject matter, and morality. Emphasis is placed upon scenic presentation, de-emphasizing authorial comment and evaluation. There is an objection towards the omniscient point of view.

**Realistic Complexity and Multiplicity.** Complexity refers to the interwoven, entangled density of experience; multiplicity indicates the simultaneous existence of different levels of reality or of many truths, equally "true" from some point of view.

**Realistic Characterization.** There is the belief among the Realists that humans control their destinies; characters act on their environment rather than simply reacting to it. Character is superior to circumstance.

**The Use of Symbolism and Imagery.** The Realists generally reject the kind of symbolism suggested by Emerson when he said "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact." Their use of symbolism is controlled and limited; they depend more on the use of images.

**Realistic Techniques:** 1. Settings thoroughly familiar to the writer. 2. Plots emphasizing the norm of daily experience. 3. Ordinary characters, studied in depth. 4. Complete authorial objectivity. 5. Responsible morality; a world truly reported.

### **The Local Color Movement (1865-1880)**

The pervasive optimism of American devotion to personal success accounts for other bridging novels of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Novels of local color or of regionalism capture the essence of different geographic areas of American life, which were beginning to erode as the U.S. was bound together by transportation and communication.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw America becoming increasingly self-conscious at the very time regional writers began to write about its various aspects. American wanted to know what their country looked like, and how the varied races which made up their growing population lived and talked. It was the age of the 1<sup>st</sup> mapping and surveying of the West; it was the age of the 1<sup>st</sup> transcontinental railroad that bound East and West.

The **East** asked what kinds of people leading, what kinds of life are at the end of those bands of iron?

The **Western** regionalists answered: Men and women like yourselves, but dressed differently, speaking differently, with different social ways: fantastic deserts,

mile deep canyons, mountains high enough to bear snow the year round, forests with trees as wide as man can stretch and wider, villages where the only woman was the town whore, camps where the only currency was gold-dust.

Writers of the **South** told of swamps where the cypress grew out the green-scummed water and the moss grew down into it, and of the cities where the obsessive blood-consciousness of its inhabitants testified to the mingling of the races.

**Mid-Western** authors narrated the tales of the plains where a man could be lost in the dust or ruined by hailstorm; of cities where fortunes were made or lost in a day's trading on the beef or grain exchanges.

The literary map of America, so long a small corner of light in the east, with a glimmer on the southern coast, began to be totally illuminated.

Critics tend to group all local-color writers in a quaint or nostalgic subgenre. In fact, there are distinct differences among the local colorists. Bret Harte and Mark Twain brought in California, Nevada, and Missouri; Edward Eggleston - the hills of Indiana; George W. Cable and William Harben - the Delta county and North Georgia; Mary Noailles Murfree - the mountains of Tennessee; Sarah O. Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman - the back country of New England; Harold Frederick - the upstate valleys of New York; E. W. Howe - the village life of Kansas; Hamlin Garland - the towns and plains of the Dakotas and Wisconsin; Henry Blake Fuller - the cement cliffs of Chicago; Henry Harland - the tenements of Manhattan.

The stories of Bret Harte (1836-1902) in the West, George Washington Cable (1844-1925) in Creole Louisiana, Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) in the South, and Mark Twain in the Midwest capture the rambunctious character of life in these regions with dialect and flamboyance. New England's local-color female writers, discussed previously, pay serious attention to social structure and the business of daily life. Their use of parochial dialect and event portrays one area's character without claiming superiority. Their work also tends to avoid the irony and satire that pervade most literature produced by men in this school.

Willa Cather's fiction embodies the serious attention to local detail these women engendered in their view of New England's rapidly shifting economic landscape. Although written later, her novels "*O Pioneers!*", "*The Song of the Lark*" (1915), and "*My Ántonia*" chronicle events of an earlier time that all depend on the character of frontier life. Even later, Eudora Welty (1909-2001) and William Faulkner (1897-1962) molded their southern heritage into stories and novels that captured the gothic quality of southern life, which had seeped into the twentieth century. Faulkner created his mythic Yoknapatawpha County as an archetypal southern context. Contemporary African American writers Alice Walker (born 1944), in "*The Color Purple*" (1982), and Morrison, in "*Beloved*" (1987), focus on African American southern life with clarity and compassion, bringing local color's emphasis on region and cultural diversity into later twentieth century fiction.

"At its most compelling, **American local-color realism** points towards an imaginative sociology that is at once objective and visionary. The images it yields up compose the fragments of a book of the people, an essential history of their lives' common conditioning. Paradoxically, at this level of realization, the particular local

circumstances begin to appear incidental. The same stories are told, in more or less detail, on all sides".

### Study Questions:

1. Compare and contrast uses of humor in Clemens's "*The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*", Harte's "*The Outcasts of Poker Flat*", and Freeman's "*The Revolt of Mother*".
2. Writers following the Civil War introduced a new strain of pessimism and despair into American literature. Compare and contrast evidence of this mood in Bierce's "*Chickamauga*" and Stephen Crane's "*An Episode of War*".
3. Although frequently grouped together as local color writers, Bret Harte and Hamlin Garland reflect quite different concerns in their work than do Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman. Examine the use of point of view in a male and a female writer from this group. Does the narrator look at or with the characters? What characters are excluded from sharing the point of view? What effect does this have on the fiction?
4. Discuss one of the following groups of works, with the goal of explaining differences between regionalist, realist, and naturalist writers: (a) Freeman's "*A New England Nun*", James's "*Daisy Miller*", and Dreiser's "*Old Rogaum and His Theresa*"; (b) Jewett's "*The Foreigner*", Wharton's "*Ethan Frome*", and Crane's "*The Blue Hotel*"; and (c) Austin's "*The Walking Woman*", Howell's "*Editha*", and Crane's "*The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*".
5. Unlike many of their early 19<sup>th</sup>-century predecessors, writers following the Civil War depicted people and places that might have been real by means of referential language. Others continued to use dream imagery in their work. Analyze Bierce's "*Chickamauga*", Jewett's "*A White Heron*", Gilman's "*The Yellow Wallpaper*", focusing on how the use of dream, vision, or altered perception affects the realism of the fiction.
6. Many late-19<sup>th</sup>-century writers wrote in response to social conditions. Present a composite picture of their concerns by discussing the following group of texts: Clemens's "*Letter IV*", Garland's "*Under the Lion's Paw*", and Washington's "*The Atlanta Exposition Address*".
7. Reexamine the poems of Whitman or Dickinson in light of the focus on fiction by most post-1865 writers. Choose any single lyric poem and consider its patterns of language or symbolism in light of similar patterns in fiction by local color, regionalist, or realist writers.
8. Research literary history of the post-1865 period and find other poets besides Whitman, Dickinson, and Crane. Write an essay analyzing individual poems and describing the larger context of work by a white woman such as Lydia Huntley Sigourney or a black woman such as Frances E. W. Harper.
9. Research a regional writer from your home country. Write an essay analyzing one of the sketches or stories by this writer.
10. Turn-of-the-century critics used the phrase "new realists" to describe the work of naturalists Crane, Dreiser, Norris, and London. Choose a work of fiction by any of these

writers and consider the accuracy of the phrase. Based on your analysis, would you identify naturalism as a new genre or a derivative one?

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### **6.2. William Dean Howells (1837-1920). "A Modern Instance"**

**Primary Works:** *"Their Wedding Journey"* (1872), *"A Chance Acquaintance"* (1873), *"A Modern Instance"* (1882), *"The Rise of Silas Lapham"* (1885), *"Annie Kilburn"* (1888), *"A Hazard of New Fortunes"* (1890), *"Venetian Life"* (1866), *"Out of the Question"* (1877), *"Indian Summer"* (1886), *"April Hopes"* (1888), *"The Shadow of a Dream"* (1890), *"A Traveler from Altruria"* (1894), *"Years of My Youth"* (1916).

#### **A Brief Biography of William Dean Howells**

*A prolific writer, Howells is regarded as "the father of American Realism." Although not an exciting writer, he broke new grounds which led to the achievements of Mark Twain and Henry James. In Howells' view, writing should be "simple, natural, and honest" and should not delve into "romantic exaggeration."*

William Dean Howells (March 1, 1837, Martins Ferry, Ohio, U.S. - died May 11, 1920, N.Y., U.S.) - novelist and critic, the dean of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American letters, the champion of literary realism, and the close friend and adviser of Mark Twain and Henry James.

The son of a newspaper editor, Howells grew up in various Ohio towns and began work early as a typesetter and later as a reporter. Meanwhile, he taught himself languages, becoming well read in German, Spanish, and English classics, and began contributing poems to *The Atlantic Monthly*. His campaign biography of Abraham Lincoln (1860) financed a trip to New England, where he met the great men of the literary establishment, James Russell Lowell, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Hawthorne, and Emerson. On Lincoln's victory he was rewarded with a consulship at Venice (1861-65), which enabled him to marry. On his return to the U.S. he became assistant editor (1866-71), then editor (1871-81), of *The Atlantic Monthly*, in which he began publishing reviews and articles that interpreted American writers. He was a shrewd judge of his contemporaries. He immediately recognized the worth of Henry James, and he was the 1<sup>st</sup> to take Mark Twain seriously as an artist.

*"Their Wedding Journey"* (1872) and *"A Chance Acquaintance"* (1873) were his 1<sup>st</sup> realistic novels of uneventful middle-class life. There followed some international

novels, contrasting American and European manners. Howells' best work depicts the American scene as it changed from a simple, egalitarian society where luck and pluck were rewarded to one in which social and economic gulfs were becoming unbridgeable, and the individual's fate was ruled by chance. He wrote "*A Modern Instance*" (1882), the story of the disintegration of a marriage, which is considered his strongest novel. His best known work, "*The Rise of Silas Lapham*" (1885), deals with a self-made businessman's efforts to fit into Boston society. In 1887 he risked both livelihood and reputation with his plea for clemency for the condemned Haymarket anarchists on the grounds that they had been convicted for their political beliefs. In 1888 he left Boston for New York.

His deeply shaken social faith is reflected in the novels of his New York period, such as the strongly pro-labor "*Annie Kilburn*" (1888) and "*A Hazard of New Fortunes*" (1890), generally considered his finest work, which dramatizes the teeming, competitive life of New York, where a representative group of characters try to establish a magazine.

Howells' critical writings of this period welcomed the young Naturalistic novelists Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris and promoted the European authors Turgenev, Ibsen, Zola, Pérez Galdós, Verga, and above all Tolstoy.

Long before his death Howells was out of fashion. Later critics have more fairly evaluated his enormous influence, and readers have rediscovered the style, humor, and honesty of his best works.

### **"*A Modern Instance*" (1882)**

"*A Modern Instance*" is a realistic novel written by W.D. Howells, and published in 1882 by J. R. Osgood & Co. The novel is about the deterioration of a once loving marriage under the influence of capitalistic greed. It is the 1<sup>st</sup> American novel by a canonical author to seriously consider divorce as a realistic outcome of marriage.

The novel explores the deterioration of what could have been an otherwise healthy marriage through industrial enterprise and capitalistic greed. The story chronicles the rise and fall of the romance between Bartley Hubbard and Marcia Gaylord, who migrate from Equity, Maine, to Boston, Massachusetts, following their marriage. The reader believes at the beginning of the story that their love for each other is unbreakable, but as the plot advances, more and more troubles arise, alienating the couple. Soon their entire marriage collapses, inundated with problems from a wide array of areas. Marcia Hubbard, lost and desolate in the gloom of her husband's abandonment, is offered solace in the comforting touch of her friend Ben Halleck, who secretly is attracted to her. However, he worries that she may reject him, unable to move on from her previous partner. The story concludes in a meaningless vortex of isolation representing modern society. Marcia Hubbard, still attached to Bartley, confines herself to her father's home in Equity, Maine, from which she never leaves. Bartley, on the other hand, has died. Ben Halleck stands hesitantly, unable to determine whether or not he should seize the chance and propose to her.

"*A Modern Instance*", the 1<sup>st</sup> complete treatment of divorce in a serious American novel, was the most intense study of American society that Howells had done up to that

point in his writing career. In the novel, Howells uses the divorce theme to portray the widening cultural divisions in American society, and in this way, “*A Modern Instance*” anticipates many of Howells’s later novels in both its style and preoccupations. Old and new, rural and urban, life in the West and life in the East, and traditional orthodoxy and modern intellectual skepticism are compared in a series of contrasts which reveal Howells’s concern with the social and economic problems of his time. Characteristically, minor characters are used as a chorus to discuss, debate, and analyze issues and questions raised as the story develops.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Discuss the role of W.D. Howells in the development of American Realism.
2. Analyze one of the passages from "A Modern Instance" from the point of view of writer’s style.

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### **6.3. Henry James (1843-1916). “The Portrait of a Lady”**

**Primary Works:** “*Roderick Hudson*” (1876), “*The American*” (1877), “*Daisy Miller*” (1878), “*The Europeans*” (1878), “*Hawthorne*” (1879), “*Washington Square*” (1880), “*The Portrait of a Lady*” (1881), “*The Art of Fiction*”, essay (1884), “*The Bostonians*” (1886), “*The Turn of the Screw*” (1898), “*What Maisie Knew*” (1897), “*The Wings of Dove*” (1902), “*The Ambassadors*” (1903), “*The Beast in the Jungle*” (1903), “*The Golden Bowl*” (1904), “*The Outcry*” (1911).

#### **A Brief Biography of Henry James**

Henry James (April 15, 1843, N.Y., N.Y., U.S. - February 28, 1916, London, England) - American novelist and, as a naturalized English citizen from 1915, a great figure in the transatlantic culture. His fundamental theme was the innocence and exuberance of the New World in clash with the corruption and wisdom of the Old, as

illustrated in such works as “*Daisy Miller*” (1879), “*The Portrait of a Lady*” (1881), “*The Bostonians*” (1886), and “*The Ambassadors*” (1903).

Although his work did not gain much recognition during his lifetime, Henry James now has a standing amongst the most significant writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century realism. Henry’s critique, short stories and novels are heavily influenced by European history and culture. His interest in Europe’s upper class and their formal traditions is evident in his writing. Henry’s engaging stories of Americans exploring the prim and proper lifestyle of the Europeans have gained him immense popularity. James wrote 22 novels, more than a 100 short stories, autobiographical works, several plays and critical essays.

The writer’s broadmindedness came from his extensive traveling between America and Europe in his younger years. The exposure he received at this time later reflected in his literary work. Also he was tutored by different teachers in Geneva, London, Paris, Bologna, and Bonn. At the age of 19 he attended Harvard Law School for a short period of time before quitting to pursue studying literature. Although he wished to be a playwright and spent a large portion of his literary career writing plays, his plays never gained the success his novels did and he eventually stopped writing for the theater and even transformed some of his plays into novels.

Critics and analysts have divided Henry’s work into 3 phases. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase constitutes of his early work which is direct and simplistic. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of his career, Henry James worked mainly on dramatics and short stories moving on to the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase where his work comprises of long extensively written novels.

Henry James is well known for his works such as “*Daisy Miller*” (1879), a story about a young American girl who finds it difficult to fit in with the sophistication of European traditions. “*The Portrait of a Lady*” (1881) is also another masterpiece focusing again on an American woman traveling in Europe. “*The Bostonians*” (1886) depicts the rising of feminist movement. “*What Maisie Knew*” (1897) is also about a young girl who makes a choice between her parents and an old governess. “*The Wings of Dove*” (1902) a beautifully written love story became a noted contribution of Henry James to American literature. However, he considered “*The Ambassadors*” (1903) to be his best work. Another noted novella by Henry James is “*The Turn of the Screw*” which is a ghost story. Some of these Henry James’s novels have also been adapted to screen. “*The Wings of the Dove*”, “*Washington Square*”, and “*The Portrait of a Lady*” are some popular movies based on his novels.

In 1916, Henry James departed this life due to pneumonia and a stroke he suffered a few months earlier.

### **“*The Portrait of Lady*” (1881)**

“*The Portrait of a Lady*” explores the conflict between the individual and society by examining the life of Isabel Archer, a young American woman who must choose between her independent spirit and the demands of social convention. After professing and longing to be an independent woman, autonomous and answerable only to herself, Isabel falls in love with and marries the sinister Gilbert Osmond, who wants her only for her money and who treats her as an object, almost as part of his art collection. Isabel

must then decide whether to honor her marriage vows and preserve social propriety or to leave her miserable marriage and escape to a happier, more independent life, possibly with her American suitor Caspar Goodwood. In the end, after the death of her cousin Ralph, the staunchest advocate of her independence, Isabel chooses to return to Osmond and maintain her marriage. She is motivated partly by a sense of social duty, partly by a sense of pride, and partly by the love of her stepdaughter.

**Themes:** Independence, Identity, Contrasting Regions, Possession, Suffering, Pride, Wealth, Love, Lies and Deceit.

As the title of the novel indicates, Isabel is the principal character of the book, and the main focus of the novel is on presenting, explaining, and developing her character. James is one of America's great psychological realists, and he uses all his creative powers to ensure that Isabel's conflict is the natural product of a believable mind, and not merely an abstract philosophical consideration. In brief, Isabel's independence of spirit is largely a result of her childhood, when she was generally neglected by her father and allowed to read any book in her grandmother's library; in this way, she supervised her own haphazard education and allowed her mind to develop without discipline or order.

### **Study Questions:**

1. In *"The Art of Fiction"*, James writes, "A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life". With this quotation as your point of reference, analyze the particular "impression" James is trying to create in "Daisy Miller".
2. James has often been called a psychological realist, more interested in the development of consciousness than in portraying character types and social reality. Discuss the extent to which this observation holds true in his works.
3. Analyze *"The Real Thing"* as a story in which James explicitly chooses to define the word real, and show how James's characterization of the Monarchs evolves a theory of fiction.
4. Bring together evidence of James's interest in convention and social forms from all four anthologized stories and analyze a particular scene from one of them that illustrates James's analysis of social reality.
5. James perfected the use of point of view as a narrative device. Choose one incident from *"The Beast in the Jungle"* and analyze his use of point of view in that story. What does it reveal? What does it conceal? How does it achieve its effectiveness? What is its significance in terms of the story's themes?
6. In Chapter XXII of *"The Turn of the Screw"*, the governess writes: "I could only get on at all by taking 'nature' into my confidence and my account, by treating my monstrous ordeal as a push in a direction unusual, of course, and unpleasant, but demanding, after all, for a fair front, only another turn of the screw of ordinary human virtue." Explore James's use of the term nature for the governess and evaluate how it motivates her "turn of the screw of ordinary human virtue."

### ***"The Portrait of a Lady":***



1. What is the book's ultimate take on America? It is seen alternately as a wide-open, hopeful arena for the future, and as a place of punishment - do we get a final, comprehensive vision of the new world?
2. England represents a kind of friendly middle-ground between America and Europe proper; do you think Isabel could have been happier if she'd just stayed in England, as Henrietta ultimately does?
3. How free is Isabel at the end of the novel?
4. Why does James choose not to show us the more positive 1<sup>st</sup> year of Isabel and Osmond's marriage? Why do you think he largely ignores the issue of the child she had and lost?
5. Could Isabel have escaped with Caspar Goodwood and still remained true to everything we know about her character? Why or why not?
6. Do you think Isabel ever finds true happiness?

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### **6.4. Critical Realism. Mark Twain (1835-1910) and his Satire. "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer". "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn". "The Prince and the Pauper". "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court"**

**Primary Works:** *"The Innocents Abroad"* (1869), *"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer"* (1876), *"A Tramp Abroad"* (1880), *"The Prince and the Pauper"* (1882), *"Life on the Mississippi"* (1883), *"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"* (1885), *"A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court"* (1889), *"Following the Equator"* (1897), *"Autobiography"* (1924).

### **A Brief Biography of Mark Twain**

*"All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called "Huckleberry Finn". If you read it you must stop where the Nigger Jim is stolen... That is the real end. The rest is just cheating. But it's the best book we've had. All American*

*writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."*

- Ernest Hemingway, "*Green Hills of Africa*" (1935)

Mark Twain, pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, (November 30, 1835, Florida, Missouri, U.S. - April 21, 1910, Redding, Connecticut, U.S.), American humorist, journalist, lecturer, and novelist who acquired international fame for his travel narratives, especially "*The Innocents Abroad*" (1869), "*Roughing It*" (1872), and "*Life on the Mississippi*" (1883), and for his adventure stories of boyhood, especially "*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*" (1876) and "*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*" (1885). A gifted raconteur, distinctive humorist, and irascible moralist, he transcended the apparent limitations of his origins to become a popular public figure and one of America's best and most beloved writers.

The death of his father in 1847 left the family in a financial crunch forcing Samuel to drop out of school while studying in grade 5, and set out to work in order to support the family. Among the many jobs Samuel undertook was becoming a printer's apprentice and a journeyman printer. Samuel realized his love of writing while working as a printer and editorial assistant at his brother Orion's newspaper. In 1857 Samuel left for St. Louis where he became a river pilot's apprentice earning a license in 1858. He travelled frequently between St. Louis and New Orleans, with a growing appreciation for the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> longest river which he admiringly illustrates through words in his memoir, "*Life on the Mississippi*" (1883). It was during his days as a river pilot that Samuel acquired the pseudonym, Mark Twain, which is a river term referring to being safe to navigate when the depth of water is 12 feet for the boat to be sounded.

The outbreak of Civil war in 1861 brought the river trade to stand still. Twain began working as a reporter for several newspapers all over the U.S. Some publications he reported for included Territorial Enterprise, The Alta Californian, San Francisco Morning Call, Sacramento Union and The Galaxy. He travelled extensively during this period while prolifically writing short stories such as "*Advice for Little Girls*" (1867) and "*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*" (1867). His 1<sup>st</sup> book, "*The Innocents Abroad*" was published in 1869. Mark Twain married Olivia Langdon in 1870. They had 4 children, one of whom died in infancy and two died in their twenties.

A productive writer, Twain continued to gain recognition as a writer for his work of quality. In 1876, he published "*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*" followed by "*The Adventured of Huckleberry Finn*" in 1885. He was awarded an honorary Masters of Art degree from Yale University in 1888. Twain began a worldwide lecturing tour in 1895. Oxford University also awarded him an honorary Doctorate of letters in 1907. Some notable titles out of the 28 books and numerous short stories, sketches and letters Twain wrote are "*A Tramp Abroad*" (1880), "*The Prince and the Pauper*" (1882), "*The American Claimant*" (1892) and "*Following The Equator*" (1897).

On April 21, 1910, Mark Twain passed away leaving behind his legacy and writings which became an important part of world literature for forever.

### ***"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (1876)***

*“The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”* by Mark Twain is a novel about a young boy growing up along the Mississippi River. It is set in the fictional town of St. Petersburg, inspired by Hannibal, Missouri, where Twain lived. In the novel Twain introduced the 2 immortal characters of Tom and Huckleberry to the "Hall of Fame" of American literature, as well as re-invented the traditional frontier tale.

The novel initially began as a series of letters from Twain to an old friend about their boyhood pranks, schooldays, and childhood mischief. The novel describes the youthful adventures of the young protagonist, who embodies the ideal of American youth during the frontier era that preceded Industrialization. Critics agree that the story is often overshadowed by the novel's sequel, *“The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”*; but there is no doubt that Tom Sawyer is considered among one of the greatest pieces of American fiction, particularly with Twain's exceptional ability to capture the "idylls of boyhood" with such vivid and dramatic detail. This sense of innocence and youthfulness that pervades the work is in extreme contrast with the pessimistic attitude for which Twain was known. Made popular by his sayings and anecdotes as much as his works of literature, the author often doted upon the weak nature of man, citing his inherent selfishness and his obsession with monetary value. As an idealist who saw his ideals betrayed by a morally corrupt society, Twain seems to use Tom as a symbol of the transition between the world of adults and children, the society where justice is served versus a social network lacking all scruples. Similarly, the essence of small-town life is captured perfect in Twain's writing with his use of colloquial syntax and diction. Critics often comment on the accuracy at which Twain was able to record various modes of speech, revealing a patient his keen ear for dialects.

### ***“Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” (1884-1885)***

The novel was 1<sup>st</sup> published in the UK in December 1884 and then in the U.S. in February 1885. Commonly named among the Great American Novels, the work is among the 1<sup>st</sup> in major American literature to be written throughout in vernacular English, characterized by local color regionalism. It is told in the 1<sup>st</sup> person by Huckleberry "Huck" Finn, a friend of Tom Sawyer and narrator of 2 other Twain novels (*“Tom Sawyer Abroad”* and *“Tom Sawyer, Detective”*). It is a direct sequel to *“The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”*.

One of the great writers of American literature, Mark Twain is admired for capturing typical American experiences in a language which is realistic and charming. Most of the critical attention has been given to *“Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”*, author's greatest achievement. This book concerns itself with a number of themes, among them the quest for freedom, the transition from adolescence into adulthood, alienation and initiation, criticism of pre-Civil War southern life. A remarkable achievement of the book is Clemens' use of American humor, folklore, slang, and dialects. There is critical debate, however, concerning the ending of the book - some call it weak and ineffective, others feel it is appropriate and effective.

The book is noted for its colorful description of people and places along the Mississippi River. Set in a Southern antebellum society that had ceased to exist about

20 years before the work was published, the novel is an often scathing satire on entrenched attitudes, particularly racism.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *“The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”* has become famous not only as one of Twain's greatest achievements, but also as a highly controversial piece of literature. In certain Southern states, the novel was banned due to its extensive criticism of the hypocrisy of slavery. Others have argued that the novel is racist due to the many appearances of the word "nigger." But in Twain's time, this word was used often and did not carry as powerful a racist connotation as it does currently. Therefore, in using the word, Twain was simply projecting a realistic portrayal of Southern society. Undoubtedly, *“The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”* is highly significant due to its deep exploration of issues surrounding racism and morality, and continues to provide controversy and debate to this day, evidencing the continued relevance of these concepts.

### ***“The Prince and the Pauper” (1882)***

*“The Prince and the Pauper”*, a novel that satirizes social conventions, concluding that appearances often hide a person's true value. Despite its saccharine plot, the novel succeeds as a critique of legal and moral injustices.

On a lark, 2 identical-looking boys, Prince Edward Tudor of Wales and street urchin Tom Canty, exchange clothes. Edward learns about the problems of commoners, while Tom learns to play the role of a prince and then a king.

### ***“A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court” (1889)***

*“A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court”*, satirical novel by Mark Twain, published in 1889. It is the tale of a commonsensical Yankee who is carried back in time to Britain in the Dark Ages, and it celebrates homespun ingenuity and democratic values in contrast to the superstitious ineptitude of a feudal monarchy. Twain wrote it after reading Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*.

Hank Morgan, a mechanic at a gun factory, is knocked unconscious and awakens in England in the year 528. He is captured and taken to Camelot, where he is put on exhibit before the knights of King Arthur's Round Table. He is condemned to death, but remembering having read of an eclipse on the day of his execution, he amazes the court by predicting the eclipse. Later he concocts some crude gunpowder and uses it to blow up Merlin's tower. It is decided that he is a sorcerer like Merlin, and he is made minister to the ineffectual king. In an effort to bring democratic principles and mechanical knowledge to the kingdom, he strings telephone wire, starts schools, trains mechanics, and teaches journalism. He also falls in love and marries.

But when Hank tries to better the lot of the peasants, he meets opposition from many quarters, including the knights, the church, Merlin, and the sorceress Morgan le Fay. He and Arthur, in disguise, travel among the miserable common folk, are taken captive and sold as slaves, and only at the last 2<sup>nd</sup> are rescued by 500 knights on bicycles. Hank and his family briefly retire to the seaside. When they return they find the kingdom engulfed in civil war, Arthur killed, and Hank's innovations abandoned.

Hank is wounded, and Merlin, pretending to nurse him, casts a spell that puts him to sleep until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the role of Mark Twain in the process of development of American literature? Why some of his works were prohibited?
2. Discuss the stylistic peculiarities of Twain's novels. Analyze specific passage taken from one of his novels.

#### ***"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer":***

1. Discuss the relationship between Tom and the other children in the novel.
2. Discuss the role of friendship in the novel.
3. Discuss the relationship between adult society and children's society in the novel.
4. Discuss the role of Tom's romantic imagination in the novel.
5. Show how Twain uses satire in the Sunday school scene in chapter 4.

#### ***"Adventures of Huckleberry Finn":***

1. Select 5 characters that Twain does not admire in Huck Finn. Name and describe the specific traits that each possesses that makes him or her not an admirable person.
2. Select 5 characters that Twain does admire. Name and discuss the specific traits that each possesses that makes him or her admirable.
3. Mark Twain was able to find humor in situations that most people would regard as serious. Discuss and provide specific references from the novel.
4. Some critics claim that Jim is Huck's "true father." Defend or refute this statement.
5. Discuss the qualities Huck possesses which are necessary for survival on the frontier. Give specific examples from the novel.
6. What is the symbolic importance of the setting of the novel (land vs. river)?
7. What does the reader infer about Twain's attitude toward slavery and racism?
8. What is "civilization" in the mind of Huck?
9. Discuss Huck as an archetype hero.
10. This novel is also a satire on human weaknesses. What human traits does he satirize? Give examples for each.
11. Discuss three recurring motifs (any idea, object, feeling, color, pattern, etc. which repeats itself) in the novel. Give specifics.
12. Discuss the role of superstition in the novel. Explain how Twain criticizes superstitious beliefs and give specific examples.
13. Appearance versus reality is a major theme in Huckleberry Finn. Using specifics from the book, discuss this very prevalent theme.
14. How would you defend Huckleberry Finn against charges of being a racist novel?
15. Huckleberry Finn has been called the "Great American Novel". However, it is the 6<sup>th</sup> most frequently banned book in the U.S. Discuss why this masterpiece is banned.
16. Explain how the American Dream is or is not achieved by three characters in this novel. Begin by explaining what each character holds as his or her American Dream.
17. Analyze and trace the moral maturation of Huck Finn. Discuss the events that disgusted and depressed him, the coping skills that he learned, and his actions and the circumstances for such.

18. "Picaresque" is a word used to describe a character who comes from a low class of society, is poor, lives by his/her wits, travels, and has episodic adventures. Using specific examples and quotes from the novel, explain how Huck is a picaresque figure.
19. Compare and contrast Realism and Romanticism in the novel.
20. What do you think makes this novel an important record of American culture?
21. Point out the weak and strong character traits in Huck. How do his character and personality compare with those of Tom Sawyer?
22. Lionel Trilling says that Huck possesses a sense of humor. Do you think this is so? Site examples for a yes or no answer.
23. A major unifying element in the novel is illusion (pretense) vs. reality. Find examples. Explain their significance to Twain's overall themes.
24. Identify the literary techniques used by Mark Twain in "*Huckleberry Finn*". Consider techniques such as: figures of speech, language, narrative techniques, sentence structure, diction, organization, syntax, detail, structure, imagery, irony, and tone.
24. How does Mark Twain create a humorous effect (exaggeration, irony, satire, understatement)?
25. How does Twain use satire to expose and criticize human failings?
26. Discuss the theme of individual conscience versus society and how it relates to the theme of freedom in the novel.
27. Authors often use dramatic irony to define something. Describe how Mark Twain uses dramatic irony to define "freedom".

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### **6.5. Social Life in Stories of O. Henry (1862-1910). "A Gift of the Magi"**

**Primary Works: Story collections:** "*Cabbages and Kings*" (1904), "*The Four Million*" (1909), "*Options*" (1909), "*Roads of Destiny*" (1909), "*The Trimmed Lamp*" (1910), "*Strictly Business: More Stories of the Four Million*" (1910), "*Whirligigs*"

(1910), "*Sixes and Sevens*" (1911), "*The Gentle Grafter*" (1919), "*Rolling Stones*" (1919).  
**Stories:** "*The Ransom of Red Chief*" (1910), "*The Duplicity of Hargraves*" (1902), "*The Gift of the Magi*" (1905).

### A Brief Biography of O. Henry

O. Henry, pseudonym of William Sydney Porter, original name William Sidney Porter, (September 11, 1862, Greensboro, North Carolina, U.S. - June 5, 1910, N.Y., N.Y., U.S.), American short-story writer whose tales romanticized the commonplace - in particular the life of ordinary people in New York City. His stories expressed the effect of coincidence on character through humour, grim or ironic, and often had surprise endings, a device that became identified with his name and cost him critical favour when its vogue had passed.

William Sidney Porter studied the basics, writing and arithmetic; read classic literature and poetry. He was very clever with a pencil and loved to draw caricatures. At the age of 15 he began working as a clerk in his uncle's store. The combined pharmacy, soda fountain, tobacco shop, and newsstand was the local gathering spot. Porter became immersed in the social scene, entertaining the customers with stories and drawing caricatures of them for which he became well known. He saw the humour in the everyday, and made notes of all the colourful characters he encountered, fodder for his future stories.

Small town life was not to hold him for long, however, and he had developed a persistent cough. Thinking that a change of climate would do him well, he moved to Texas, Austin, began working as a bank teller with the First National Bank and in 1894 launched a humorous weekly magazine *The Rolling Stone*. It featured political and every day satirical articles and cartoons, all by Will himself.

After time spent in Honduras, during which Porter coined the term "banana republic", he had to return to Texas to face charges of embezzlement. After inconsistencies were found with Porter's First National Bank records, Porter was charged with embezzlement. In 1898 he began a 5-year sentence in Columbus, Ohio federal prison. Around this time, he changed his name to Sydney. The following year, in 1899, from prison, Porter began his short story career by contributing "*Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking*" to *McClure's Magazine*. Thereafter a number of his stories written in prison appeared in print, always under a pseudonym, his favourite being "O. Henry". The general public did not know of his prison term until after his death.

After being released from prison in just 3 years, Porter moved on to the next chapter in his life: New York City. This was where he really came into his own and all his previous life's experience served to inspire stories. Porter crafted everyday tales of myriad characters, many recurring, based in New York City with humour, wit, and realism. His stories often have a surprise or twist ending. Porter has been compared to other masters of the short story including Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, Bret Harte, Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain, and French author Guy de Maupassant. Despite many of his works being panned by the critics he was becoming one of America's most popular short story authors. So much so that several collections were published including "*Cabbages and Kings*" (1904), "*The Four Million*" (1909), "*Options*" (1909),

"Roads of Destiny" (1909), "The Trimmed Lamp" (1910), "Strictly Business: More Stories of the Four Million" (1910), "Whirligigs" (1910), "Sixes and Sevens" (1911), "The Gentle Grafter" (1919) and "Rolling Stones" (1919).

Porter was living an extravagant lifestyle amid increasing pressure to keep his commitments to publishers for more and more stories. This stress plus added financial problems led to William Sidney Porter leaving in 1910.

### **"The Gift of the Magi" (1905)**

"The Gift of the Magi" is a short story about a young married couple and how they deal with the challenge of buying secret Christmas gifts for each other with very little money. As a sentimental story with a moral lesson about gift-giving, it has been a popular one for adaptation, especially for presentation at Christmas time. The plot and its "twist ending" are well-known, and the ending is generally considered an example of comic irony. It was allegedly written at Pete's Tavern on Irving Place in New York City.

**Three: A Magic Number.** In "The Gift of the Magi" the number three figures prominently. Consider the following: 1) The story has three characters: Della, Jim, and Madame Sophronie; 2) Della counts her money three times; 3) The narrator says that "Life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles; 4) The story refers three times to the Youngs' supper entree: chops; 5) The story mentions the Queen of Sheba, who gave three types of gifts to King Solomon: spices, gold, and jewels; 6) A sentence in paragraph 5 says, "She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard"; 7) Jim tells Della, I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less; 8) The narrator alliteratively describes Della as speaking with "sudden serious sweetness"; 9) The were three magi: Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar; 10) The magi offered three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh; 11) According to tradition, the magi were kings of Arabia, Persia, and India; 12) The story centers on three valuables: Jim's gold watch, Della's hair, and the love Jim and Della share.

### **Study Questions:**

1. During what century was O. Henry born?
2. O. Henry was an outstanding author of...?
3. In the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Porter was among the most popular writers in the U.S. After reading "The Gift of the Magi" and several other stories by Porter, write an essay that explains why so many Americans read his stories. You might consider the role of the following in his stories: coincidences and surprises, the background of his characters, romance, humor, the structure of his plots, and his ability to capture the mood of a particular time and place.

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### **6.6. Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945). “Sister Carrie”. “American Tragedy”. “Jenny Gerhardt”**

**Primary Works:** “*Sister Carrie*” (1900), “*Jennie Gerhardt*” (1911), “*The Financier*” (1912), “*A Traveler at Forty*” (1913), “*The Titan*” (1914), “*The Genius*” (1915), “*A Hoosier Holiday*” (1916), “*Free and Other Stories*” (1918), “*Twelve Men*” (1919), “*A Book About Myself*” (1922), “*The Color of a Great City*” (1923), “*An American Tragedy*” (1925), “*Moods*” (1926), “*Typhoon*”, short story (1926), “*Chains*” (1927), “*Dreiser Looks at Russia*” (1928), “*A Gallery of Women*” (1929), “*Dawn*” (1931), “*The Bulwark*” (1946), “*The Stoic*” (1947).

#### **A Brief Biography of Theodore Dreiser**

Theodore Dreiser, (August 27, 1871, Terre Haute, Indiana, U.S. - December 28, 1945, Hollywood, California, U.S.), novelist who was the outstanding American practitioner of naturalism. He was the leading figure in a national literary movement that replaced the observance of Victorian notions of propriety with the unflinching presentation of real-life subject matter. Among other themes, his novels explore the new social problems that had arisen in a rapidly industrializing America.

Dreiser began writing his 1<sup>st</sup> novel, “*Sister Carrie*”, in 1899 at the suggestion of a newspaper colleague. Somewhat encouraged by the earlier response to “*Sister Carrie*” in England and the novel’s republication in America, Dreiser returned to writing fiction. The reception accorded his 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, “*Jennie Gerhardt*” (1911), the story of a woman who submits to rich and powerful men to help her poverty-stricken family, lent him further encouragement. The 1<sup>st</sup> two volumes of a projected trilogy of novels based on the life of the American transportation magnate Charles T. Yerkes, “*The Financier*” (1912) and “*The Titan*” (1914), followed. Dreiser recorded his experiences on a trip to Europe in “*A Traveler at Forty*” (1913). In his next major novel, “*The ‘Genius’*” (1915), he transformed his own life and numerous love affairs into a sprawling semiautobiographical chronicle that was censured by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. There ensued 10 years of sustained literary activity during which Dreiser produced a short-story collection, “*Free and Other Stories*” (1918); a book of sketches, “*Twelve Men*” (1919); philosophical essays, “*Hey-Rub-a-Dub-Dub*” (1920); a rhapsodic description of New York, “*The Color of A Great City*” (1923); works of drama, including “*Plays of the Natural and Supernatural*” (1916) and “*The Hand of the Potter*” (1918); and the autobiographical works “*A Hoosier Holiday*” (1916) and “*A Book About Myself*” (1922).

In 1925 “*An American Tragedy*”, based on a celebrated murder case, was published. This book brought Dreiser a degree of critical and commercial success he had never before attained and would not thereafter equal. The book’s highly critical view of the American legal system also made him the adopted champion of social reformers. He became involved in a variety of causes and slackened his literary

production. A visit to Russia in 1927 produced a skeptical critique of that society entitled "*Dreiser Looks at Russia*" (1928). His only other significant publications in the late 1920s were collections of stories and sketches written earlier, "*Chains*" (1927) and "*A Gallery of Women*" (1929), and an unsuccessful collection of poetry, "*Moods, Cadenced and Declaimed*" (1926). The Great Depression of the 1930s ended Dreiser's prosperity and intensified his commitment to social causes. He came to reconsider his opposition to communism and wrote the anticapitalist "*Tragic America*" (1931). His only important literary achievement in this decade was the autobiography of his childhood and teens, "*Dawn*" (1931), one of the most candid self-revelations by any major writer. In the middle and late '30s his growing social consciousness and his interest in science converged to produce a vaguely mystical philosophy.

In 1938 Dreiser moved from New York to Los Angeles with Helen Richardson, who had been his mistress since 1920. In 1942 he began belatedly to rewrite "*The Bulwark*", a novel begun in 1912. The task was completed in 1944, the same year he married Helen. Helen helped him complete most of "*The Stoic*", the long-postponed 3<sup>rd</sup> volume of his Yerkes trilogy, in the weeks before his death. Both "*The Bulwark*" and "*The Stoic*" were published posthumously (1946 and 1947, respectively). A collection of Dreiser's philosophical speculations, "*Notes on Life*", appeared in 1974.

Considered by many as the leader of Naturalism in American writing, Dreiser is also remembered for his stinging criticism of the genteel tradition and of what Howells described as the "smiling aspects of life" typifying America. In his fiction, Dreiser deals with social problems and with characters who struggle to survive. His sympathetic treatment of a "morally loose" woman in "*Sister Carrie*" was called immoral and he suffered at the hands of publishers. One of Dreiser's favorite fictional devices was the use of contrast between the rich and the poor, the urbane and the unsophisticated, and the power brokers and the helpless. While he wrote about "raw" experiences of life in his earlier works, in his later writing he considered the impact of economic society on the lives of people in the remarkable trilogy - "*The Financier*", "*The Titan*", and "*The Stoic*". His best known work is "*An American Tragedy*" which shows a young man trying to succeed in a materialistic society.

### **"*Sister Carrie*" (1900)**

Dreiser's 1<sup>st</sup> novel, "*Sister Carrie*" (1900), is a work of pivotal importance in American literature despite its inauspicious launching. It became a beacon to subsequent American writers whose allegiance was to the realistic treatment of any and all subject matter. "*Sister Carrie*" tells the story of a rudderless but pretty small-town girl who comes to the big city filled with vague ambitions. She is used by men and uses them in turn to become a successful Broadway actress while George Hurstwood, the married man who has run away with her, loses his grip on life and descends into beggary and suicide. "*Sister Carrie*" was the 1<sup>st</sup> masterpiece of the American naturalistic movement in its grittily factual presentation of the vagaries of urban life and in its ingenuous heroine, who goes unpunished for her transgressions against conventional morality. The book's strengths include a brooding but compassionate view of humanity, a memorable cast of characters, and a compelling narrative line. The

emotional disintegration of Hurstwood is a much-praised triumph of psychological analysis.

### ***“An American Tragedy” (1925)***

Dreiser’s longest novel, *“An American Tragedy”* (1925), is a complex and compassionate account of the life and death of a young antihero named Clyde Griffiths. The novel begins with Clyde’s blighted background, recounts his path to success, and culminates in his apprehension, trial, and execution for murder. The book was called by one influential critic “the worst-written great novel in the world”, but its questionable grammar and style are transcended by its narrative power. Dreiser’s labyrinthine speculations on the extent of Clyde’s guilt do not blunt his searing indictment of materialism and the American dream of success.

### ***“Jenny Gerhardt” (1911)***

*“Jennie Gerhardt”* - novel that exemplifies the naturalism of which Dreiser was a proponent, telling the unhappy story of a working-class woman who accepts all the adversity life visits on her and becomes the mistress of 2 wealthy and powerful men in order to help her impoverished family.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Discuss if Dreiser suits more American realism or American naturalism. Prove your point of view with examples from his works.
2. How did life events influence the themes, morality and characters of the works by Theodore Dreiser?

### ***“Sister Carry”:***

1. In what specific ways are Carrie and Hurstwood counterparts? Take into account their personalities, their desires, and their changing views on life. How does Drouet relate to them?
2. Find several passages in the novel where style seems to be particularly important. Does the style ever change?
3. In what ways does Hurstwood contribute to his own downfall? How great a part does fate play?
4. Cite several passages where the season of the year relates to the action of the novel.
5. Select a scene or episode which seems extraneous to the entire action and give your reasons for regarding it as unnecessary to plot development.
6. What are Dreiser's reasons for reintroducing Drouet, Mrs. Hurstwood, Bob Ames, and Mrs. Vance near the end of the novel?
7. Compare the changes that occur in Carrie in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the novel with the changes that occur in her in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. At what point does she seem to have the clearest understanding of herself?
8. How do the titles of the chapters form a commentary on theme and action in the novel?

9. How many different types of irony can you find in the novel?
10. Show how Dreiser makes use of both thematic and narrative foreshadowing. How do later events illuminate earlier events?
11. The novel is begun and bisected by train rides. How do the conditions that surround both train rides differ? Are there any other important train episodes?
12. Make a list of the various types of imagery which appear the sea, the jungle, etc. and discuss the ways in which they reveal Dreiser's philosophy.
13. Who is the central character of the novel - Carrie or Hurstwood? What are your reasons for thinking so?
14. Dreiser once confessed that the scene in which Hurstwood steals the money from the safe at the saloon was the hardest part of the novel to write. Why do you suppose it was so difficult?
15. Explain the thematic relevance of card games and games of chance in the novel.
16. Discuss the techniques and function of Dreiser's management of "compressed" and "extended" time. Why is time so important to the novel?

**“American Tragedy”:**

1. Was Clyde Griffiths guilty of murder in the 1<sup>st</sup> degree?
2. Discuss the American city as a symbol of 20<sup>th</sup>-century materialism.
3. Compare the attitudes of Mason, Burleigh, Heit, Belknap, and Jephson toward the law.
4. Discuss the irony of Clyde Griffiths as a dreamer.
5. What is the meaning of Clyde's several nightmares?
6. Describe the role of Asa Griffiths in terms of the narrative. Is his effect on Clyde more or less significant than that of his wife?
7. How do films influence Clyde?
8. Does Clyde change during the long course of this novel?
9. How does the Reverend McMillan contribute to Clyde's death?
10. Discuss the east-west theme in “*An American Tragedy*”.
11. Analyze Dreiser's style. What are its strong and weak points?
12. How does “*An American Tragedy*” achieve its greatest moments of tension?
13. How does Dreiser attempt to individualize speech? How successful is he?
14. Discuss the regional aspects of Dreiser's novel. Discuss its universal aspects.
22. What is Dreiser's attitude or the attitude of the "implied author" toward the idea of moral purpose in the universe?

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**6.7. Francis Bret Harte (1836-1902). “The Luck of Roaring Camp”**

**Primary Works:** “*Condensed Novels and Other Papers*” (1867), “*Plain Language from Truthful James*” (1870), “*The Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches*” (1870), “*The Tales of the Argonauts*” (1875), “*Gabriel Conroy*” (1876), “*Two Men of Sandy Bar*” (1876), “*Drift from Two Shores*” (1878), “*The Crusade of the Excelsior*” (1887), “*The Argonauts of north Liberty*” (1888), “*A Protégée of Jack Hamlin’s; and Other Stories*” (1894).

### A Brief Biography of Francis Brett Harte

Bret Harte, original name Francis Brett Harte (August 25, 1836, Albany, N.Y., U.S. - May 5, 1902, London, England) - American writer who helped create the local-color school in American fiction.

Harte’s family settled in N.Y. City and Brooklyn in 1845. His education was spotty and irregular, but he inherited a love of books and managed to get some verses published at age 11. In 1854 he left for California and went into mining country on a brief trip that legend has expanded into a lengthy participation in, and intimate knowledge of, camp life. In 1857 he was employed by the *Northern Californian*, a weekly paper. There his support of Indians and Mexicans proved unpopular; after a massacre of Indians in 1860, which he editorially deplored, he found it advisable to leave town.

Returning to San Francisco, he was married and began to write for the *Golden Era*, which published the 1<sup>st</sup> of his “*Condensed Novels*”, brilliant parodies of James Fenimore Cooper, Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo, and others. He then became a clerk in the U.S branch mint, a job that allowed freedom for editorship of the *Californian*, for which he engaged Mark Twain to write weekly articles.

In 1868, after publishing a series of Spanish legends akin to Washington Irving’s *Alhambra*, he was named editor of the *Overland Monthly*. For it he wrote “*The Luck of Roaring Camp*” and “*The Outcasts of Poker Flat.*” Following “*The Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches*” (1870), he found himself world famous. His fame only grew with the poem “*Plain Language from Truthful James*” (1870), better known as “*The Heathen Chinees,*” although it attracted national attention in a manner unintended by Harte, who claimed that its satirical story-about two men, Bill Nye and Ah Sin, trying to cheat each other at cards-showed a form of racial equality. Instead, the poem was taken up by opponents of Chinese immigration.

Flushed with success, Harte in 1871 signed with *The Atlantic Monthly* for \$10,000 for 12 stories a year, the highest figure offered an American writer up to that time. Resigning a professorship at the University of California, Harte left for the East, never to return. In New England he was greeted as an equal by the writers Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and William Dean Howells and was lionized and toasted to the point of spiritual and moral breakdown. With personal and family difficulties, his work slumped. It was at about this time that Harte collaborated with Twain on *Ah Sin*, a play based on “*Plain Language from Truthful James*”; anti-Chinese sentiment was even stronger then (and

would culminate in passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882); the play was performed for only a few months in 1877.

After indifferent success on the lecture circuit, Harte in 1878 accepted consulships in Krefeld, Germany, and later in Glasgow, Scotland. In 1885 he retired to London. His wife and family joined him at wide intervals, but he never returned to the U.S. He found in England a ready audience for his tales of a past or mythical California long after American readers had tired of his formula; examples of those later stories are “*Ingénue of the Sierras*” and “*A Protégée of Jack Hamlin’s*” (both 1893).

### **“*The Luck of Roaring Camp*” (1868)**

It is a short story by Bret Harte, published in 1868 in the *Overland Monthly*, which Harte edited. “The Luck” is a baby boy born to Cherokee Sal, a fallen woman who dies in childbirth at Roaring Camp, a California gold rush settlement. The men of the camp decide to raise the child themselves, and his presence inspires them to stop fighting and gambling and to clean up themselves and the camp. When they discover gold, they believe that the child has brought them the fortune. Tragedy strikes, however, when a flood sweeps the camp, killing both the Luck and his protector. The story is a sentimental tall tale told by an ironic first-person narrator and is notable for its characterizations and wealth of local colour.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. What examples of vivid sensory details can you find in “*The Luck of Roaring Camp*”? What do they contribute to the story?
2. How plausible is the motivation of the characters in “*The Outcasts of Poker Flat*”?
3. What, other than his virtual invention of the genre, were Bret Harte’s contributions to the American Western story?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of Harte’s type of 3<sup>rd</sup>-person narration?
5. What facts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Harte’s life (including extraneous events) best account for his literary decline?

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## CHAPTER VII. AMERICAN NATURALISM

### Plan:

7.1. Naturalism in Late XIX Century of American Literature

7.2. Jack London. *“The Call of the Wild”*. *“White Fang”*. *“Martin Eden”*. Human and Superhuman in London’s Novel *“The Sea-Wolf”*

7.3. Frank Norris. *“The Octopus”*

7.4. Stephen Crane. *“The Red Badge of Courage”*

7.5. Ambrose Bierce. *“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”*

### 7.1. Naturalism in Late XIX Century of American Literature

*Naturalism* was a late 19<sup>th</sup> century movement in theater, film, art and literature that seeks to portray common values of the ordinary individual, as opposed to such movements as Romanticism or Surrealism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment. Naturalism was an outgrowth of Realism. Realism began after Romanticism, in part as a reaction to it. Unlike the Romantic ideal, which focused on the inner life of the (often great) individual, Realism focused on the description of the details of everyday existence as an expression of the social milieu of the characters.

The term *naturalism* describes a type of literature that attempts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. Unlike realism, which focuses on literary technique, naturalism implies a philosophical position. For naturalistic writers, characters can be studied through their relationships to their surroundings.

Naturalistic writers were influenced by the evolution theory of Charles Darwin. They believed that one's heredity and social environment decide one's character. Whereas realism seeks only to describe subjects as they really are, naturalism also attempts to determine "scientifically" the underlying forces (i.e. the environment or heredity) influencing these subjects' actions. They are both opposed to Romanticism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment.

In the U.S., the genre is associated principally with writers such as Abraham Cahan, Ellen Glasgow, David Graham Phillips, Jack London, and most prominently Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser. The term naturalism operates primarily in counter distinction to realism, particularly the mode of realism codified in the 1870s and 1880s, and associated with William Dean Howells and Henry James.

Naturalist fiction often concentrated on the non-Anglo, ethnically marked inhabitants of the growing American cities, many of them immigrants and most belonging to a class-spectrum ranging from the destitute to the lower middle-class. The naturalists were not the 1<sup>st</sup> to concentrate on the industrialized American city, but they were significant in that they believed that the realist tools refined in the 1870s and 1880s were inadequate to represent it. Abraham Cahan, for example, sought both to represent and to address the Jewish community of New York's East Side, of which he was a member. The fiction of Theodore Dreiser, the son of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation

immigrants from Central Europe, features many German and Irish figures. Frank Norris and Stephen Crane, themselves from established middle-class Anglophone families also registered the ethnic mix of the metropolis, though for the most part via reductive and offensive stereotypes. In somewhat different ways, more marginal to the mainstream of naturalism, Ellen Glasgow's version of realism was specifically directed against the mythologizing of the South.

**Key themes of Naturalism in literature:** 1) Survival, determinism, violence, and taboo as key themes; 2) The "brute within" each individual, comprised of strong and often warring emotions: passions, such as lust, greed, or the desire for dominance or pleasure; and the fight for survival in an amoral, indifferent universe. The conflict in naturalistic novels is often "man against nature" or "man against himself" as characters struggle to retain a "veneer of civilization" despite external pressures that threaten to release the "brute within"; 3) Nature as an indifferent force acting on the lives of human beings; 4) The forces of heredity and environment as they affect - and afflict - individual lives; 5) An indifferent, deterministic universe. Naturalistic texts often describe the futile attempts of human beings to exercise free will, often ironically presented, in this universe that reveals free will as an illusion.

**Authors of the Naturalism Movement and their works.** There were quite a few authors that participated in the movement of literary naturalism. They include Edith Wharton (*"The House of Mirth"*, 1905), Ellen Glasgow (*"Barren Ground"*, 1925), John Dos Passos, (*"U.S.A." trilogy*, 1938), James T. Farrell (*"Studs Lonigan"*, 1934), John Steinbeck (*"The Grapes of Wrath"*, 1939), Richard Wright (*"Native Son"*, 1940, *"Black Boy"*, 1945), Norman Mailer (*"The Naked and the Dead"*, 1948), William Styron (*"Lie Down in Darkness"*, 1951), Saul Bellow (*"The Adventures of Augie March"*, 1953), and Jack London. These authors would reshape the way literature was perceived and their impact would spread all over the world.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What are the main features of naturalism? Why did that movement become so popular in literature? How was naturalism reflected in the themes of literary works?
2. Comment Donald Pizer's definition of the word "naturalism". Do you agree or disagree with this definition? Why?
3. Name several authors of naturalism and their works. Choose one of the works and prove its belonging to naturalism finding evidence in the title, characters, plot, idea, motif or image of the work chosen.

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**7.2. Jack London (1876-1916). “The Call of the Wild”. “White Fang”. “Martin Eden”. Human and Superhuman in London’s Novel “The Sea-Wolf”**

**Primary Works: Novels:** “A Daughter of the Snows” (1902), “The Call of the Wild” (1903), “The Sea-Wolf” (1904), “White Fang” (1905), “The Iron Heel (1908)”, “Martin Eden” (1909). **Short Story Collections:** “The Son of the Wolf” (1900), “Children of the Frost” (1902), “The Faith of Men & Other Stories” (1904), “Tales of the Fish Patrol” (1905), “Moon-Face & Other Stories” (1906), “Love of Life & Other Stories” (1907), “Lost Face” (1910), “South Sea Tales” (1911), “The House of Pride & Other Tales of Hawaii” (1912), “The Strength of the Strong” (1914), “The Turtles of Tasman” (1916), “The Red One” (1918).

### A Brief Biography of Jack London

Jack London, pseudonym of John Griffith Chaney (January 12, 1876, San Francisco, California, U.S. - November 22, 1916, Glen Ellen, California, U.S.), American novelist and short-story writer whose best-known works - among them “*The Call of the Wild*” (1903) and “*White Fang*” (1906) - depict elemental struggles for survival. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century he was one of the most extensively translated of American authors.

Deserted by his father, a roving astrologer, he was raised in Oakland, California, by his spiritualist mother and his stepfather, whose surname, London, he took. At age 14 he quit school to escape poverty and gain adventure. He explored San Francisco Bay in his sloop, alternately stealing oysters or working for the government fish patrol. He went to Japan as a sailor and saw much of the U.S. as a hobo riding freight trains and as a member of Charles T. Kelly’s industrial army. London saw depression conditions, was jailed for vagrancy, and in 1894 became a militant socialist.

London educated himself at public libraries. At 19 he crammed a 4-year high school course into 1 year and entered the University of California, Berkeley, but after a year he quit school to seek a fortune in the Klondike gold rush. Returning the next year, still poor and unable to find work, he decided to earn a living as a writer.

London studied magazines and then set himself a daily schedule of producing sonnets, ballads, jokes, anecdotes, adventure stories, or horror stories, steadily increasing his output. The optimism and energy with which he attacked his task are best conveyed in his autobiographical novel “*Martin Eden*” (1909). Within 2 years, stories of his Alaskan adventures began to win acceptance for their fresh subject matter and virile force. His 1<sup>st</sup> book, “*The Son of the Wolf: Tales of the Far North*” (1900), a collection of short stories that he had previously published in magazines, gained a wide audience. London wrote and published steadily, completing some 50 books of fiction and nonfiction in 17 years. Although he became the highest-paid writer in the U.S. at that time, his earnings never matched his expenditures, and he was never freed of the urgency of writing for money. He sailed a ketch to the South Pacific, telling of his

adventures in *“The Cruise of the Snark”* (1911). In 1910 he settled on a ranch near Glen Ellen, California, where he built his grandiose Wolf House. He maintained his socialist beliefs almost to the end of his life.

Jack London’s output, typically hastily written, is of uneven literary quality, though his highly romanticized stories of adventure can be compulsively readable. His Alaskan novels *“Call of the Wild”* (1903), *“White Fang”* (1906), and *“Burning Daylight”* (1910), in which he dramatized in turn atavism, adaptability, and the appeal of the wilderness, are outstanding. His short story *“To Build a Fire”* (1908), set in the Klondike, is a masterly depiction of humankind’s inability to overcome nature. In addition to *“Martin Eden”*, he wrote 2 other autobiographical novels of considerable interest: *“The Road”* (1907) and *“John Barleycorn”* (1913). Other important novels are *“The Sea-Wolf”* (1904), which features a Nietzschean *superman hero*, who battles the vicious Wolf Larsen; and *“The Iron Heel”* (1908), a fantasy of the future that is a terrifying anticipation of fascism.

London’s reputation declined in the U.S. in the 1920s, when a new generation of writers made the pre-World War I writers seem lacking in sophistication. But his popularity remained high throughout the world after World War II, especially in Russia, where a commemorative edition of his works published in 1956 was sold out in 5 hours.

### ***“The Call of the Wild”* (1903)**

*“The Call of the Wild”* is a short adventure novel set in Yukon, Canada during 2016 Klondike Gold Rush, when strong sled dogs were in high demand. The central character of the novel is a dog named Buck. The story opens at a ranch in the Santa Clara Valley of California when Buck is stolen from his home and sold into service as a sled dog in Alaska. He progressively reverts to a wild state in the harsh climate, where he is forced to fight to dominate other dogs. By the end, he sheds the veneer of civilization and relies on primordial instinct and learned experience to emerge as a leader in the wild.

London spent almost a year in the Yukon collecting material for the book. The book’s great popularity and success made a reputation for London. Much of its appeal derives from its simplicity as a tale of survival.

### ***“White Fang”* (1906)**

*“White Fang”* is a novel and the name of the book's eponymous character, a wild wolfdog. 1<sup>st</sup> serialized in *Outing* magazine, it was published in 1906. The story takes place in Yukon Territory, Canada, during the 1890s Klondike Gold Rush and details White Fang's journey to domestication. It is a companion novel (and a thematic mirror) to London's best-known work, *The Call of the Wild*, which is about a kidnapped, domesticated dog embracing his wild ancestry to survive and thrive in the wild.

Much of *“White Fang”* is written from the viewpoint of the titular canine character, enabling London to explore how animals view their world and how they view humans. *“White Fang”* examines the violent world of wild animals and the equally

violent world of humans. The book also explores complex themes including morality and redemption.

### **“*Martin Eden*” (1909)**

“*Martin Eden*” is a novel about a young proletarian autodidact struggling to become a writer. Eden represents writers' frustration with publishers by speculating that when he mails off a manuscript, a "cunning arrangement of cogs" immediately puts it in a new envelope and returns it automatically with a rejection slip. The central theme of Eden's developing artistic sensibilities places the novel in the tradition of the *Künstlerroman*, in which is narrated the formation and development of an artist. Eden differs from London in that Eden rejects socialism, attacking it as "slave morality", and relies on a Nietzschean individualism. In a note to Upton Sinclair, London wrote, "One of my motifs, in this book, was an attack on individualism (in the person of the hero). I must have bungled, for not a single reviewer has discovered it."

### **“*The Sea-Wolf*” (1904)**

“*The Sea-Wolf*” is highly popular novel, which combines elements of naturalism and romantic adventure.

The story concerns Humphrey Van Weyden, a refined castaway who is put to work on the motley schooner *Ghost*. The ship is run by brutal Wolf Larsen, who, despite his intelligence and strength, is antisocial and self-destructive. Hardened by his arduous experiences at sea, Van Weyden develops strength of both body and will, protecting another castaway, Maud Brewster, and facing down the increasingly deranged Larsen.

“*The Sea-Wolf*” is an example of symbolic naturalism, a novel that is simultaneously a study of environmental conditioning and a symbolic tale of initiation, a ritual of death and rebirth. Saved from drowning by Wolf Larsen, Humphrey van Weyden is shanghaied and set to work as a cabin boy. Conditioned by the violent "world of the real" aboard the *Ghost*, van Weyden is transformed from an elitist aesthete into a man of courageous action. In contrast, Wolf Larsen, the bullying materialist, is gradually incapacitated by raging headaches.

The conflict between van Weyden and Larsen is as much a war of ideas as it is a physical battle. Van Weyden is an idealist for whom "life had always seemed a peculiarly sacred thing", but he discovers that on the *Ghost* "it counted for nothing". In contrast, Larsen is a complete materialist who sees life as a "yeast, a ferment, a thing that moves... but that in the end will cease to move". Van Weyden triumphs because he learns to temper his naive idealism without embracing Larsen's misanthropy; thus, London suggests that the true path lies between the extremes.

Larsen displays the isolation and alienation inherent to Nietzschean individualism, and his decline expresses London's belief that modern society's complexity demands interdependence.

“*The Sea-Wolf*” works on several levels: as an adventure, a survival story, a philosophical discussion, an examination of manhood, and a love story.

## Study Questions:

1. What are specific literary qualities of Jack London?
2. Define the notion “superman hero” according to London’s works.
3. Can we consider “*Martin Eden*” as a reliable source of autobiographic facts about Jack London himself?
4. What are the main theme of London’s “*The Northern Stories*”? Choose and Analyze one of the stories. What kind of characters are there? What are their motifs? What is the role of nature description in London’s stories?

### “*White Fang*”:

1. Is White Fang born aggressive, or is he made aggressive? Fully explain your answer.
2. What role does Lip-lip play in White Fang’s development?
3. Does White Fang belong in the city or in the Wild? Support your answer
4. Show how White Fang is different from the other “domesticated” dogs.
5. Which human qualities are attributed to White Fang? Do they benefit him or deter him? Explain you answer.
6. Jim Hall and White Fang share a similar background. Explain how.
7. What are the two major themes of the novel? How are they developed and how are they related?

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### 7.3. Frank Norris (1870-1902). “*The Octopus*”

**Primary Works:** “*Yvernelle*” (1892), “*Moran of Lady Letty*” (1898), “*Blix*” (1899), “*A Man's Woman*” (1899), “*McTeague*” (1899), “*The Octopus*” (1901), “*The Pit*” (1903), “*A Deal in Wheat*” (1903), “*Responsibilities of the Novelist*” (1903), “*The Joyous*” (1906), “*Vandover and the Brute*” (1914).

### A Brief Biography of Frank Norris

Benjamin Frank Norris (March 5, 1870, Chicago, Illinois, U.S. - October 25, 1902, San Francisco, California, U.S.), American author and journalist. He was an American novelist during the Progressive Era, writing predominantly in the naturalist genre. A man of contrasts, born in the East, Norris would soon adopt the West as his spiritual

home, a member of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco during the days of the Gold Rush. He avidly studied Emile Zola and Edgar Allan Poe, experimenting with poetry, short stories and essays.

After having to leave school due to lack of funds when his parents divorced, in 1895 the San Francisco Chronicle sent him to South Africa to write on the Boer conflict. Journalism would be his mainstay while he attempted to have his novels published.

Professor Joseph LeConte and his natural history teachings would have a profound influence on Norris' works including *"Blix"* (1899). *"McTeague"* (1899) is a fascinating yet (at the time) controversial study into the life of the dentist McTeague and his moral downfall from the streets of San Francisco to the wastes of Death Valley, a worthy effort of the naturalism school. The highs and lows on the spectrum of human behavior were playing out all around Norris for which he took great interest. His grasp of the American West is captured in many of his short stories and novels including *"The Octopus: A California Story"* (1901). His notable works include *"McTeague"* (1899) and *"The Pit"* (1903). Although he did not support socialism as a political system, his work nevertheless evinces a socialist mentality and influenced socialist/progressive writers such as Upton Sinclair. Like many of his contemporaries, he was profoundly influenced by the advent of Darwinism. Through many of his novels, notably *"McTeague"*, runs a preoccupation with the notion of the civilized man overcoming the inner "brute," his animalistic tendencies.

Frank Norris died on 25 October 1902 after an attack of appendicitis. He lies buried in the Mountain View Cemetery of Oakland, Alameda County, California. *"The Pit"* (1903) and *"Vandover the Brute"* (1914) were published posthumously.

Like Crane, Frank Norris had a short life but it was rich in creative writing. The overriding theme in Norris' fiction is the impact of industrialization on peaceful agricultural communities and the consequent chaos in the lives of people who lived in these communities. His most glaring metaphor is that of the tentacles of the railway tracks spreading and choking the countryside in the appropriately titled book *"The Octopus"*. The spirit of the turn-of-the-century San Francisco is impressively captured in *McTeague*. Its theme, that of a powerful man failing against unexpected adversity, typifies the thrust of the best of Naturalistic writing.

### ***"The Octopus: A California Story" (1901)***

*"The Octopus: A California Story"* is the 1<sup>st</sup> part of a planned but uncompleted trilogy, *"The Epic of Wheat"*. It describes the raising of wheat in California, and conflict between the wheat growers and a railway company. Norris was inspired by role of the Southern Pacific Railroad in events surrounding the Mussel Slough Tragedy. It depicts the tension between the corrupt railroad and the ranchers and the ranchers' League. The railroad attempts to take possession of the land the farmers have been improving for many years, forcing them to defend themselves. The wheat farmers are represented by Magnus Derrick, the reluctant leader of the ad hoc farmer's League designed to fight for retention of their land and low cost freight rates. S. Behrman serves as the local representative of Pacific and Southwestern railroad. In his attempt at writing his great epic poem, Presley witnesses the disintegration of Annixter, Derrick, Hooven, and their

families. The book emphasized the control of "forces" such as wheat and railroads over individuals.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Analyze the prose style, thematic content, use of narrative point of view, and portrait of human nature that works by Frank Norris convey.
2. Locate Norris's allusions to animals and animal-like behavior in the excerpt from "*Vandover and the Brute*". Analyze what he is trying to say about human motivation and character.

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## **7.4. Stephen Crane (1871-1900). "The Red Badge of Courage"**

**Primary Works:** "*Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*" (1893), "*The Red Badge of Courage*" (1895), "*The Black Riders*" (1895), "*The Black Riders and Other Lines*", poems (1895), "*George's Mother*" (1896), "*The Third Violet*" (1897), "*The Open Boat & Other Tales of Adventure*" (1898), "*War is Kind*", poems (1900).

### **A Brief Biography of Stephen Crane**

Stephen Crane (November 1, 1871, Newark, N.J., U.S. - June 5, 1900, Badenweiler, Baden, Germany), American novelist, poet, and short-story writer, best known for his novels "*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*" (1893) and "*The Red Badge of Courage*" (1895) and the short stories "*The Open Boat*", "*The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*", and "*The Blue Hotel*".

Stephen's father, Jonathan Crane, was a Methodist minister who died in 1880, leaving Stephen, the youngest of 14 children, to be reared by his devout, strong-minded mother. After attending preparatory school, Crane spent less than two years at college and then went to New York City to live in a medical students' boardinghouse while freelancing his way to a literary career. While alternating bohemian student life and explorations of the Bowery slums with visits to genteel relatives in the country near

Port Jervis, N.Y., Crane wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> book, *“Maggie: A Girl of the Streets”* (1893), a sympathetic study of an innocent and abused slum girl’s descent into prostitution and her eventual suicide.

At that time so shocking that Crane published it under a pseudonym and at his own expense, *“Maggie”* left him to struggle as a poor and unknown freelance journalist, until he was befriended by Hamlin Garland and the influential critic William Dean Howells. Suddenly in 1895 the publication of *“The Red Badge of Courage”* and of his 1<sup>st</sup> book of poems, *“The Black Riders”*, brought him international fame. Strikingly different in tone and technique from *“Maggie”*, *“The Red Badge of Courage”* is a subtle impressionistic study of a young soldier trying to find reality amid the conflict of fierce warfare.

After *“The Red Badge of Courage”*, Crane’s few attempts at the novel were of small importance, but he achieved an extraordinary mastery of the short story. He exploited youthful small-town experiences in *“The Monster and Other Stories”* (1899) and *“Whilomville Stories”* (1900); the Bowery again in *“George’s Mother”* (1896); an early trip to the southwest and Mexico in *“The Blue Hotel”* and *“The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky”*; the Civil War again in *“The Little Regiment”* (1896); and war correspondent experiences in *“The Open Boat and Other Tales of Adventure”* (1898) and *“Wounds in the Rain”* (1900). In the best of these tales Crane showed a rare ability to shape colourful settings, dramatic action, and perceptive characterization into ironic explorations of human nature and destiny. In even briefer scope, rhymeless, cadenced and “free” in form, his unique, flashing poetry was extended into *“War Is Kind”* (1899).

Author’s reputation as a war writer, his desire to see if he had guessed right about the psychology of combat, and his fascination with death and danger sent him to Greece and then to Cuba as a war correspondent. The result was one of the world’s great short stories, *“The Open Boat”*.

Crane went to Greece to report the Greco-Turkish War for the *New York Journal*. In 1898 Crane departed to report the Spanish-American War in Cuba, 1<sup>st</sup> for the *New York World* and then for the *New York Journal*. When the war ended, Crane wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of *“Active Service”*, a novel of the Greek war. He finally returned to Cora in England 9 months after his departure and settled in a costly 14<sup>th</sup>-century manor house at Brede Place, Sussex. Here Cora contributed to Crane’s ruin by encouraging his own social ambitions. They ruined themselves financially by entertaining their literary friends -Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, H.G. Wells, Henry James, and Robert Barr, who completed Crane’s Irish romance *“The O’Ruddy”*.

Crane now fought a desperate battle against time, illness, and debts. He died of tuberculosis that was compounded by the recurrent malarial fever he had caught in Cuba.

### ***“The Red Badge of Courage”* (1895)**

Stephen Crane, a 21 old who had never been to war, wrote *“The Red Badge of Courage”* in 1895. Regardless, the book is considered one of the most accurate portrayals of the physical and psychological effects of intense battle. This book covers just 2 days of a heated battle between the Union and Confederate soldiers during the

American Civil War. The novel traces the emotional trajectory of one young recruit, Henry, as he strains to cope with all of the feelings and behaviors of which he is guilty.

The book's hero, Henry Fleming, survives his own fear, cowardice, and vainglory and goes on to discover courage, humility, and perhaps wisdom in the confused combat of an unnamed Civil War battle. Crane, who had as yet seen no war, was widely praised by veterans for his uncanny power to imagine and reproduce the sense of actual combat. Crane intended "*The Red Badge of Courage*" to be "a psychological portrayal of fear," and reviewers rightly praised its psychological realism. The 1<sup>st</sup> nonromantic novel of the Civil War to attain widespread popularity, "*The Red Badge of Courage*" turned the tide of the prevailing convention about war fiction and established a new, if not unprecedented, one. The secret of Crane's success as war correspondent, journalist, novelist, short-story writer, and poet lay in his achieving tensions between irony and pity, illusion and reality, or the double mood of hope contradicted by despair. Crane was a great stylist and a master of the contradictory effect.

Stephen Crane is a master of creating vastly realistic scenes of combat and death, and of the strange and varied emotions that accompany these experiences. Before "*Red Badge*", war novels were generally written from a vantage point in the sky, dealing with issues like tactical movements of large groups of men rather than getting into the psyche of one particular soldier. By doing this, Crane rejected the grandeur and poetry of war and portrayed instead its harsh reality. The novel is known for its important place in the genre of realism, relying on lifelike actions and objects rather than on symbols and allegory. Some argue that it's impressionism rather than realism, but we'll get into that in our discussion of "Genre".

Because Crane dispensed with the pleasant veneer and exposed the brutalities of combat, "*The Red Badge of Courage*" is sometimes known as the 1<sup>st</sup> American anti-war novel. This didn't go over so well with the critics, at least in America. In fact, a U.S. General named Alexander McClurg called it out as an attack on the country and its military. Only after critics in England recognized the value, ingenuity, and literary and psychological merit of "*Red Badge*" did America follow suit.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Explore the relationship between Crane's poems and his fiction. Does Crane's choice of the lyric poem allow him to develop aspects of his major themes that his fiction does not fully explore?
2. Analyze the natural "forces" that the characters struggle against in "*The Open Boat*". How do they deal with their lack of control over those forces?
3. Despite the apparent irrationality of its characters, "*The Blue Hotel*" moves logically and inexorably toward its conclusion. Study the evidence of irrationality in the story's portraits of human behavior; then describe the linear progression by which the Swede's initial comment - "I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room" - comes to control events.
4. In "*The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*", Jack Potter's marriage appears to alter forever Scratchy Wilson's perception of reality. Argue that, for Crane, marriage itself becomes an external force. Does the story's humor mitigate the oppressiveness of this force?



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### 7.5. Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?). “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”

**Primary Works: Stories:** “The Haunted Valley” (1871), “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1890), “A Horseman in the Sky” (1889), “The Eyes of the Panther” (1891), “The Boarded Window” (1891), “The Damned Thing” (1893), “Moxon’s Master” (1899). **Story collections:** “The Fiend’s Delight” (1872), “Nuggets and Dust Panned Out in California” (1872), “Cobwebs from an Empty Skull” (1874), “In the Midst of Life” (1892), “Can Such Things Be?” (1893). **Non-Fiction:** “The Devil’s Dictionary”, or “The Cynic’s Word Book” (1906).

#### A Brief Biography of Ambrose Bierce

Ambrose Bierce, in full Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce (June 24, 1842, Meigs county, Ohio, U.S. - 1914, Mexico?), American newspaperman, wit, satirist, and author of sardonic short stories based on themes of death and horror. His life ended in an unsolved mystery.

Born in Ohio, Bierce participated in the Civil War and a number of battles, including Shiloh and Chickamauga. The war disgusted him, prompting him to see soldiers as little more than paid assassins and, when it ended, he moved to California, where he established a reputation as a brilliant and caustic journalist, contributing to periodicals, particularly the *News Letter*, of which he became editor in 1868. Bierce was soon the literary arbiter of the West Coast. “*The Haunted Valley*” (1871) was his 1<sup>st</sup> story. In 1871 he married Mary Ellen Day, and from 1872 to 1875 the Bierces lived in England, where he wrote for the London magazines *Fun* and *Figaro*, edited the *Lantern*, and published 3 books, “*The Fiend’s Delight*” (1872), “*Nuggets and Dust Panned Out in California*” (1872), and “*Cobwebs from an Empty Skull*” (1874).

Living in England for 4 years, he returned to California. He then published “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians” in 1891, retitled “In the Midst of Life”.

Another collection of stories, “*Can Such Things Be?*”, followed in 1893. More than half the stories in the 1<sup>st</sup> collection, and many in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, deal with the Civil War; they reflect their author’s feelings of revulsion for military life, and his bleak, bitterly comic view of existence in general. In “*A Horseman in the Sky*”, a young Union soldier is forced by circumstances to kill a Confederate officer who happens to be his father.

Others use stream-of-consciousness and suspense endings to explore the subjectivity of time. “*An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*”, for example, presents the fantasy experienced by a man who is being hanged, in the final seconds of his life. And still others deploy a fluid, almost surrealistic prose style and black humor to dramatize physical and emotional violence.

In 1913 Bierce traveled into war-torn Mexico to escape American civilization and to seek, he said, “the good, kind darkness.” He must have found it, for he disappeared. To this day, it is not known when, how, or exactly where he died.

### **“*An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*” (1890)**

Ambrose Bierce participated in numerous major Civil War battles, worked as a military mapmaker, and been severely wounded in the head. He had also stored up enough memories to provide material for 19 short stories about the war. “*An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*” is the most famous of these stories. Despite its unconventional style, this story provided 1 of the 1<sup>st</sup> realistic portrayals of the horrors of the war. Since Bierce served in the War, he coupled his gifted writing abilities with his credible and dramatic stories that brought the complexities of war to life for his readers.

“*An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*” is the story of the hanging of a Confederate civilian, Peyton Farquhar, as punishment for his efforts to sabotage a Union bridge. The story is divided into three sections. The first describes the scene of the hanging, the second provides background to explain how Farquhar came to such a point, and the third details his imagined escape.

The 1<sup>st</sup> section of the story is told mostly in the detached language of an objective observer. A man’s hands are tied behind him and a noose encircles his neck. He stands on a railroad bridge, where he is flanked by Union soldiers quietly preparing to put him to death. The man makes no motion of protest, but remains quiet during the preparations. He is described as a civilian gentleman of 35, a Confederate planter. As the time of his hanging approaches, he begins to consider a way to escape; but in the next moment, the plank he has been standing on is removed.

Before more details of the hanging can be described, the story abruptly shifts to the 2<sup>nd</sup> section, a flashback into Farquhar’s recent life. An ardent supporter of the Confederacy, he is always eager to hear news of the war. When a soldier stops by his plantation one evening, Farquhar presses him for details from the battlefield. This soldier, a Union spy disguised as a Confederate soldier, tells Farquhar about a nearby railroad bridge that is strategically important for the Union. Any civilian caught interfering with it, he says, will be hanged. At Farquhar’s urging, however, he explains that one side of the creek that runs under it is not very well guarded, and that the bridge could easily be destroyed by fire.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> section, instead of telling the story of Farquhar’s attempt to burn the bridge, the narrative returns to the scene of the hanging. When the plank that has supported his weight is removed, Farquhar falls straight through the railroad ties of the bridge (the same bridge he had attempted to destroy) and is “as one already dead”. He is not dead, however; he awakens after losing consciousness, aware of agonizing

pains throughout his body. He falls into the rushing creek below, for the rope that his captors sought to hang him with has broken. After a long struggle, he frees his hands from the cord that tied them and is able to swim to the surface for air. Within moments, the soldiers standing on the bridge begin firing at him, but he manages to dodge their bullets and swim to shore. The rest of his escape takes him through a thick forest to a road he follows all the way to his home. He passes through the gate and sees his beautiful wife waiting for him in front of the house. Just as he reaches to touch her, he feels a blow to his neck and all goes dark. He is dead. Though his mind led him home, his body, with a broken neck, has not escaped from the noose. It hangs from the Owl Creek Bridge.

### **Study Questions:**

#### ***“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”:***

1. Ambrose Bierce was 1 of the only major author to see combat during the Civil War. He served in the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Indiana Volunteers. What evidence can you provide that "he knows what he is talking about" in his telling of the story? Do you detect any bias in his writing, does his favor the Union over the Confederates, or is he seemingly impartial?
2. How does Bierce's methodic writing style of providing detailed descriptions in a quiet, slow, suspenseful manner affect the reader? Provide examples (like how he describes the rifles in "support" position, or the sound of his own watch ticking).
3. Describe Bierce's literary technique using foreshadowing and its effect of fully engaging his reader.
4. Explain the metaphor that "Death is a dignitary" in the first paragraph.
5. What examples of military etiquette or rules of conduct are described in the story? Why are these important?
6. What do the bridge and the fast-moving water below represent? Explain the symbolic meaning of the loose boards and "unsteady footing."
7. Explain what Farquhar's wife represents? Why does he reject what she represents in his reckless mission to suppress Union forces?
8. Do we know whether Farquhar actually burned the bridge? Though we are told the Union scout planted the idea in Farquhar's mind to burn the bridge and then must have reported Farquhar's betrayal which resulted in his sentence to be hanged, how do we know he actually committed the crime and deserves to be hanged?

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## CHAPTER VIII. AMERICAN MODERNISM

### Plan:

#### 8.1. Basic Traits of American Modernism

#### 8.2. Sherwood Anderson - Father of American Modernism. *“Death in the Woods”*

#### 8.3. John Reed. *“Ten Days That Shook the World”*

#### 8.4. Social Realism. Upton Sinclair. *“The Jungle”*

#### 8.5. Sinclair Lewis. *“Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott”*. *“Babbitt”*

#### 8.6. Life of Women in Works of Kate Chopin. *“The Awakening”*

#### 8.7. Carl Sandburg. *“Chicago”*

#### 8.8. Robert Frost. Unique and Common Features of Frost’s Poetry. *“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”*

### 8.1. Basic Traits of American Modernism

*“... the greatest single fact about our modern American writing is our writers' absorption in every last detail of their American world together with their deep and subtle alienation from it.”*

Alfred Kazin, *“On Native Grounds”* (1942)

*“Defining modernism is a difficult task. ... A historical definition would say that modernism is the artistic movement in which the artist's self-consciousness about questions of form and structure became uppermost. ... In brief, modernism asks us to consider what we normally understand by the center and the margins.”*

*“Heath Anthology”*, Vol. 2, 4th ed., 887-888.

Modernism was a cultural wave that originated in Europe and swept the U.S. during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Modernism impacted music, art and literature by radically undoing traditional forms, expressing a sense of modern life as a sharp break from the past and its rigid conventions. In literature, the elements of modernism are thematic, formal and stylistic.

**Destruction.** During the World War I, the world witnessed the chaos and destruction of which modern man was capable. The modernist American literature produced during the time reflects such themes of destruction and chaos. But chaos and destruction are embraced, as they signal a collapse of Western civilization's classical traditions. Literary modernists celebrated the collapse of conventional forms. Modernist novels destroy conventions by reversing traditional norms, such as gender and racial roles, notable in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *“The Great Gatsby”*, for example. They also destroy conventional forms of language by deliberately breaking rules of syntax and structure. William Faulkner's novel *“The Sound and the Fury”*, for instance, boldly rejects the rules of language, as Faulkner invents new words and adopts a 1<sup>st</sup>-person narrative method, interior monologue.

**Fragmentation.** Related to the theme of destruction is the theme of fragmentation. Fragmentation in modernist literature is thematic, as well as formal. Plot, characters, theme, images, and narrative form itself are broken. Take, for instance, T.S. Eliot's "*The Waste Land*", which depicts a modern waste land of crumbled cities. The poem itself is fragmented, consisting of broken stanzas and sentences that resemble the cultural debris and detritus through which the speaker (modern man) wades. William Faulkner's novels, such as "*The Sound and the Fury*" are also fragmented in form, consisting of disjointed and nonlinear narratives. Modernist literature embraces fragmentation as a literary form, since it reinforces the fragmentation of reality and contradicts Hegelian notions of totality and wholeness.

**Cycle.** Modernist literature is concerned with representing modernity, which, by its very definition, supersedes itself. Modernity must, in order to emerge, annihilate the past. Problematically, modernity must annihilate itself the very moment it is actualized, as the moment it emerges, it becomes a part of the past. Modernist literature represents the paradox of modernity through themes of cycle and rejuvenation. Eliot's speaker in "*The Waste Land*" famously declares "these fragments I have shored against my ruins". The speaker must reconstruct meaning by reassembling the pieces of history. Importantly, there is rebirth and rejuvenation in ruin, and modernist literature celebrates the endless cycle of destruction, as it ever gives rise to new forms and creations.

**Loss and Exile.** Modernist literature is also marked by themes of loss and exile. Modernism rejected conventional truths and figures of authority, and modernists moved away from religion. In modernist literature, man is assured that his own sense of morality trumps. But individualism results in feelings of isolation and loss. Themes of loss, isolation and exile from society are particularly apparent in Ernest Hemingway's novels, the protagonists of which adopt rather nihilistic outlooks of the world because they have become so disenfranchised from the human community.

**Narrative Authority.** Another element of modernist literature is the prevalent use of personal pronouns. Authority becomes a matter of perspective. There is no longer an anonymous, omniscient 3<sup>rd</sup>-person narrator, as there is no universal truth, according to the modernists. In fact, many modernist novels feature multiple narrators, as many modernist poems feature multiple speakers. The conflicting perspectives of various narrators and speakers reflect the multiplicities of truth and the diversities of reality that modernism celebrates.

**Social Evils.** Modernist novels did not treat lightly topics about social woes, war and poverty. John Steinbeck's "*Grapes of Wrath*" frankly depicts families plagued by economic hardship and strife, contradicting idyllic depictions of American life represented elsewhere in literature. Modernist novels also reflect a frank awareness of societal ills and of man's capacity for cruelty. Ernest Hemingway's anti-heroic war tales depicted the bloodiness of the battlefields, as he dealt frankly with the horrors of war. Faulkner, particularly in his most famous novel, "*The Sound and the Fury*", also shows how incomprehensibly cruel man can be, especially with regard to racial and class differences.

**The Centers of Modernism:** 1. Stylistic innovations - disruption of traditional syntax and form. 2. Artist's self-consciousness about questions of form and structure.

3. Obsession with primitive material and attitudes. 4. International perspective on cultural matters.

**Modern Attitudes:** 1. The artist is generally less appreciated but more sensitive, even more heroic, than the average person. 2. The artist challenges tradition and reinvigorates it. 3. A breaking away from patterned responses and predictable forms.

**Contradictory Elements:** 1. Democratic and elitist. 2. Traditional and anti-tradition. 3. National jingoism and provinciality versus the celebration of international culture. 4. Puritanical and repressive elements versus freer expression in intimate and political matters.

**Literary Achievements:** 1. Dramatization of the plight of women. 2. Creation of a literature of the urban experience. 3. Continuation of the pastoral or rural spirit. 4. Continuation of regionalism and local color.

**Modern Themes:** 1. Collectivism versus the authority of the individual. 2. The impact of the 1918 Revolution in Russia. 3. The Jazz Age. 4. The passage of 19th Amendment in 1920 giving women the right to vote. 5. Prohibition of the production, sale, and consumption of alcoholic beverages, 1920-33. 6. The stock-market crash of 1929 and the Depression of the 1930s and their impact.

**Modernism and the Self:** 1. In this period, the chief characteristic of the self is one of alienation. The character belongs to a "lost generation" (Gertrude Stein), suffers from a "dissociation of sensibility" (T.S. Eliot), and who has "a Dream deferred" (Langston Hughes). 2. Alienation led to an awareness about one's inner life.

**Modernism and the "New Negro Renaissance" (the Harlem Renaissance):** 1. The relationship between the two is complex. 2. They both share the important motif of alienation. 3. However, American modernism is inspired by the European avant-garde art; the Renaissance represents the unique and distinct experience of black Americans. 4. Modernism borrows from the Renaissance the themes of marginality and the use of folk or the so-called "primitive" material. 5. The use of the blues tradition - important for the Renaissance - is not shared by white modernists; considered too limiting (mere complaint about one's repressed and exploited condition), the blues tradition represents images and themes of liberation and revolt. 6. This relationship requires reevaluation; the Renaissance is important for black and white readers and writers.

### Study Questions:

1. Compare an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century poem (such as Bryant's "*Thanatopsis*") with an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century poem (Frost's "*Directive*"). Discuss the way both poems reflect dramatic radical shifts in paradigm or perspective in their time.
2. Choose any three 20<sup>th</sup>-century works and show how they respond to the following quotation from Wallace Stevens's "*Of Modern Poetry*": The poem of the mind in the act of finding / What will suffice. It has not always had / To find: the scene was set; it repeated what / Was in the script.
3. Read a short story by a British modernist writer, such as Lawrence, Woolf, or Joyce. Compare and contrast it with a story by an American modernist.

4. Many modernist lyric poems are about poetic form itself. Analyze one of the following poems (or any other poems by Frost, Stevens, or Williams) with particular attention to the poet's awareness of form: "*The Wood-Pile*", "*A Quiet Normal Life*", or "*To Elsie*".
5. Analyze the use of poetic forms by modernist poets. Examine the following: Frost's sonnets, "*Mowing*", "*The Oven Bird*", "*Once by the Pacific*", "*Design*", or "*The Gift Outright*" (or find and read all of Frost's sonnets in his complete poems and write about his use of the form); Stevens's use of the ballad stanza in "*Anecdote of the Jar*" or his use of tercet stanza form in "*The Snow Man*" and "*A Quiet Normal Life*"; Williams's near-sonnet "*The Dance*"; Pound's sonnet, "*A Virginal*", or the poem he calls a villanelle although it is not, "*Villanelle: The Psychological Hour*"; or Bishop's nearly perfect villanelle, "*One Art*".
6. Examine modernist poets' use of traditional metric forms. Analyze what Frost does to and with iambic pentameter in "*Desert Places*" or how Stevens uses it in "*The Idea of Order at Key West*".
7. Compare and contrast the realism of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century story with the realism of Clemens, Howells, James, or Wharton. Analyze Sherwood Anderson's "*The Egg*", William Faulkner's "*Barn Burning*", or Ernest Hemingway's "*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*", paying particular attention to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century writer's innovations in point of view or use of symbolism.
8. Although traditionally the period 1914-1945 has focused on modernism, numerous writers during the period wrote political poetry that may have been influenced by modernism but reflects other artistic intent. Analyze representative poems by Genevieve Taggard, Muriel Rukeyser, Sterling Brown, and Langston Hughes for evidence of political intent in poetry, and comment on the relationship between this poetry and what we call modernism.
9. While writers like Pound and Eliot were concerned with tracing the origins of modernist consciousness in classical mythology, other writers were more interested in becoming assimilated into American society. Identify and discuss the issues of concern to writers, fictional characters, or lyric voices who concern themselves with issues of immigration and assimilation.

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### **8.2. Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) - Father of American Modernism. "Death in the Woods"**

**Primary Works:** *“Windy McPherson's Son”* (1916), *“Marching Men”* (1917), *“Winesburg, Ohio”* (1919), *“The Triumph of the Egg”*, short stories (1921), *“Many Marriages”* (1923), *“Horses and Men”*, short stories (1923), *“Dark Laughter”* (1925), *“Death in the Woods”*, short stories (1933), *“Kit Brandon”* (1936).

### **A Brief Biography of Sherwood Anderson**

*An excellent storyteller, Anderson seems to be preoccupied by a need to describe the plight of the "grotesque" - the unsuccessful, the deprived, and the inarticulate. He sensitively describes poverty and eccentricity. His simple style, in the oral tradition of storytelling, influenced writers like Hemingway and Faulkner who, in 1956, acknowledged Anderson as "the father of my generation of American writers and the tradition of American writing which our successors will carry on."*

Sherwood Anderson (September 13, 1876, Camden, Ohio, U.S. - March 8, 1941, Colon, Panama), author who strongly influenced American writing between World Wars I and II, particularly the technique of the short story. His writing had an impact on such notable writers as E. Hemingway and W. Faulkner, both of whom owe the 1<sup>st</sup> publication of their books to his efforts. His prose style, based on everyday speech and derived from the experimental writing of Gertrude Stein, was markedly influential on the early Hemingway - who parodied it cruelly in *“Torrents of Spring”* (1926) to make a clean break and become his own man.

One of 7 children of a day laborer, Anderson attended school intermittently as a youth in Clyde, Ohio, and worked as a newsboy, house painter, farmhand, and racetrack helper. After a year at Wittenberg Academy, a preparatory school in Springfield, Ohio, he worked as an advertising writer in Chicago until 1906, when he went back to Ohio and for the next 6 years sought - without success - to prosper as a businessman while writing fiction in his spare time. A paint manufacturer in Elyria, Ohio, he left his office abruptly one day in 1912 and wandered off, turning up 4 days later in Cleveland, disheveled and mentally distraught. He later said he staged this episode to get away from the business world and devote himself to literature.

Anderson went back to his advertising job in Chicago and remained there until he began to earn enough from his published work to quit. Encouraged by Theodore Dreiser, Floyd Dell, Carl Sandburg, and Ben Hecht - leaders of the Chicago literary movement - he began to contribute experimental verse and short fiction to *“The Little Review”*, *“The Masses”*, the *“Seven Arts”*, and *“Poetry”*. Dell and Dreiser arranged the publication of his 1<sup>st</sup> 2 novels, *“Windy McPherson's Son”* (1916-1921) and *“Marching Men”* (1917), both written while he was still a manufacturer. *“Winesburg, Ohio”* (1919) was his 1<sup>st</sup> mature book and made his reputation as an author. Its interrelated short sketches and tales are told by a newspaper reporter-narrator who is as emotionally stunted in some ways as the people he describes. His novels include *“Many Marriages”* (1923), which stresses the need for love fulfillment; *“Dark Laughter”* (1925), which values the “primitive” over the civilized; and *“Beyond Desire”* (1932), a novel of Southern textile mill labour struggles.



His best work is generally thought to be in his short stories, collected in *Winesburg, Ohio, The Triumph of the Egg* (1921), *Horses and Men* (1923), and *Death in the Woods* (1933). Also valued are the autobiographical sketches *A Story Teller's Story* (1924), *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* (1926), and the posthumous *Memoirs* (1942-1969). A selection of his *Letters* appeared in 1953.

### ***“Death in the Woods” (1933)***

*“Death in the Woods”* is a short story in a form of a recollection of events from the narrator's childhood, as he attempts to explain a death and its relationship to other lives. According to many critics, Anderson's artistic powers were waning at this point in his career; yet *“Death in the Woods”* stands out as a masterpiece, paralleling the brilliance of the stories collected in his best known work, *“Winesburg, Ohio”*.

*“Death in the Woods”* chronicles the deceptively simple story of the life and death of a poor and downtrodden farm woman. The narrator, an adolescent boy at the time of these events, observes her dead body - a formative moment in his development as a man and an artist. He puts together the pieces of her story, which takes on mystery and mythic meaning as he reflects back on it years later.

*“Death in the Woods”* exemplifies Anderson's pared-down writing style and brooding, bittersweet tone. The story is most notable for the stark simplicity of its subject matter and the contrasting intricacy of its self-conscious narration.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. What is contribution of Sherwood Anderson to the development of American literature? By which peculiarities this author is best-known?
2. Discuss *“Death in the Woods”* as a story of initiation.
3. Discuss the symbolism in *“Death in the Woods”*. What is suggested by the narrator's comment that *“The running of the dogs may have been kind of death ceremonial”*? Comment on the almost mystical illumination that the incident, the silent tableau, and the presence of death had for the boy.
4. Do you find Mrs. Grimes from *“Death in the Woods”* a sympathetic character? Why or why not? Cite specific passages from the text to support your point of view.

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2. Lindsay, C. *Such a Rare Thing: The Art of Sherwood Anderson's “Winesburg, Ohio”*. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 2009.
3. Whalan, M. *Race, Manhood, and Modernism in America: The Short Story Cycles of Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2014.

### **8.3. John Reed (1887-1920). *“Ten Days That Shook the World”***

**Primary Works:** *“Insurgent Mexico”* (1914), *“The War in Eastern Europe”* (1916), *“Ten Days that Shook the World”* (1919).

### **A Brief Biography of John Reed**

John Reed (October 22, 1887, Portland, Oregon, U.S. - October 19, 1920, Moscow, Russia) - U.S. poet-adventurer whose short life as a revolutionary writer and activist made him the hero of a generation of radical intellectuals. Reed, a member of a wealthy Portland family, was graduated from Harvard in 1910 and began writing for a Socialist newspaper, *The Masses*, in 1913. In 1914 he covered the revolutionary fighting in Mexico and recorded his impressions in *“Insurgent Mexico”* (1914). Frequently arrested for organizing and defending strikes, he rapidly became established as a radical leader and helped form the Communist Party in the U.S. He covered World War I for *Metropolitan* magazine; out of this experience came *“The War in Eastern Europe”* (1916). He became a close friend of Lenin and was an eyewitness to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, recording this event in his best known book, *“Ten Days That Shook the World”* (1919). When the U.S. Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party split in 1919, Reed became the leader of the latter. Indicted for treason, he escaped to Russia and died of typhus; he was subsequently buried with other Bolshevik heroes beside the Kremlin wall. Following his death, the Communist Party formed many John Reed clubs and associations of writers and artists in U.S. cities.

### ***“Ten Days That Shook the World”* (1919)**

*“Ten Days That Shook the World”* (1919) is a book by American journalist and socialist John Reed about the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, which Reed experienced firsthand. Reed followed many of the prominent Bolshevik leaders closely during his time in Russia. John Reed died in 1920, shortly after the book was finished, and he is one of the few Americans buried at the Kremlin Wall Necropolis in Moscow, a site normally reserved only for the most prominent Russian leaders.

John Reed was on an assignment for *The Masses*, a magazine of socialist politics, when he was reporting the Russian Revolution. Although Reed states that he had "tried to see events with the eye of a conscientious reporter, interested in setting down the truth" during the time of the event, he stated in the preface that "in the struggle my sympathies were not neutral". Upon returning from Russia during April 1918, Reed's trunk of notes and materials on the revolution - which included Russian handbills, newspapers, and speeches - were seized by custom officials. Reed would not receive his materials until 7 months later in November. Max Eastman recalls a meeting with John Reed in the middle of Sheridan Square during the period of time when Reed isolated himself writing the book: ...he wrote *“Ten Days that Shook the World”* - wrote it in another ten days and ten nights or little more.

*“Ten Days That Shook the World”* has received mixed responses since its publication in 1919, resulting in a wide range of critical reviews from negative to positive. However, the book was overall positively received by critics at the time of its 1<sup>st</sup> publication, despite some critics' vocal opposition to Reed's political beliefs.

### Study Questions:

1. Was John Reed's experience as a journalist reflected in his literary works?
2. What John Reed tried to express in his *"Ten Days That Shook the World"*?

### Selected Sources:

1. Charles, J.C. "The John Reed Clubs." in S. Rosendale (Ed.) *American Radical and Reform Writers: First Series*. Detroit: Gale, 2015.
2. Lehman, D.W. *John Reed & the writing of revolution*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2012.

### 8.4. Social Realism. Upton Sinclair (1878-1968). *"The Jungle"*

**Primary Works:** *"The Jungle"* (1906), *"The Brass Check"* (1919), *"I, Governor of California, and How I Ended Poverty"* (1934), *"Lanny Budd"* series (1940-1953), *"The Fasting Cure"* (1911), *"Courtmartialed"* (1898), *"Saved by the Enemy"* (1998), *"The Fighting Squadron"* (1898), *"A Prisoner of Morro"* (1898), *"A Soldier Monk"* (1898), *"A Gauntlet of Fire"* (1899), *"Holding the Fort"* (1899), *"Wolves of the Navy"* (1899), *"Springtime and Harvest"* (1901), *"The Journal of Arthur Stirling"* (1903), *"Off the West Point"* (1903), *"The West Point Rivals"* (1903), *"King Coal"* (1917), *"They Call Me Carpenter: A Tale of the Second Coming"* (1922), *"Mammonart"* (1925), *"Oil!"* (1927), *"Boston"* (1928), *"Roman Holiday"* (1931), *"The Gnomobile"* (1936-1962), *"The Flivver King: A Story of Ford-America"* (1937), *"Little Steel"* (1938), *"World's End"* (1940), *"Between Two Worlds"* (1941), *"Dragon's Teeth"* (1942), *"Wide Is the Gate"* (1943), *"Presidential Agent"* (1944), *"Dragon Harvest"* (1945), *"A World to Win"* (1946), *"A Presidential Mission"* (1947), *"One Clear Call"* (1948), *"O Shepherd, Speak!"* (1949), *"The Return of Lanny Budd"* (1953), *"The Cup of Fury"* (1956), *"The Coal War"* (1976).

### A Brief Biography of Upton Sinclair

Upton Sinclair, in full Upton Beall Sinclair (September 20, 1878, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S. - November 25, 1968, Bound Brook, New Jersey, U.S.), prolific American novelist and polemicist for socialism, health, temperance, free speech, and worker rights, among other causes. His classic muckraking novel *"The Jungle"* (1906) is a landmark among naturalistic proletarian work, one praised by fellow socialist Jack London as "the Uncle Tom's Cabin of wage slavery".

Sinclair's parents were poor but his grandparents were wealthy, and he attributed his exposure to the 2 extremes as the cause of his socialist beliefs. He graduated from the College of the City of New York in 1897 and did graduate work at Columbia University, supporting himself by writing jokes for newspapers and cartoonists and adventure stories for pulp magazines. His 1<sup>st</sup> 4 books - *"King Midas"* (1901, 1<sup>st</sup> published the same year as *Springtime and Harvest*), *"Prince Hagen"* (1903), *"The Journal of Arthur Stirling"* (1903), and a Civil War novel *"Manassas"* (1904) - were well received by the critics but did not sell well.

His public stature changed dramatically in 1905, after Sinclair was sent to investigate conditions in the Chicago stockyards. The result of his 7-week investigation was *“The Jungle”* (1905). Though intended to create sympathy for the exploited and poorly treated immigrant workers in the meatpacking industry, the novel instead aroused widespread public indignation at the low quality of and impurities in processed meats and thus helped bring about the passage of federal food-inspection laws. As Sinclair commented at the time, “I aimed at the public’s heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach”.

Sinclair moved to Pasadena, California, in 1916. His muckraking novels continued with *“King Coal”* (1917), which is about the poor working conditions in the mining industry. With *“The Brass Check”* (1919), Sinclair tackled the financial interests and supposed "free press" principles of major newspapers and the "yellow journalism" they often engaged in to attract readers. His novel *“Oil!”* (1927) was based on the Teapot Dome Scandal, and *“Boston”* (1928) was inspired by the Sacco-Vanzetti case. His searing novel *“The Wet Parade”* (1931) is about the tragedy of alcoholism, and *“The Flivver King”* (1937) tells the story of Henry Ford and how “scientific management” replaced skilled workers in the automotive industry.

During the crisis of the 1930s, Sinclair organized the EPIC (End Poverty in California) socialist reform movement and registered as a Democrat. The campaign was surprisingly popular, helping to inspire Franklin D. Roosevelt’s *New Deal programs*, but once again he lost. He was defeated by a joint propaganda campaign by the conservative business establishment and Hollywood studio bosses, who used admen, media consultants, “fake news” and assorted "dirty tricks". Sinclair recounted the campaign in *“I, Candidate for Governor: And How I Got Licked”* (1935).

Inspired by a tour of the northern California redwoods in 1936, Sinclair wrote a children’s story called *“The Gnomobile”*. It was one of the 1<sup>st</sup> books for children with an environmentalist message, and it was later adapted as a film by Walt Disney in 1967. Sinclair again reached a wide audience with his *“Lanny Budd”* series, 11 contemporary historical novels, beginning with *“World’s End”* (1940), that were constructed around an antifascist hero who witnesses all the events surrounding World War II. For *“Dragon’s Teeth”* (1942), the 3<sup>rd</sup> novel in the series, about the Nazi takeover of Germany in the 1930s, Sinclair won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1943. Of his autobiographical writings, *“American Outpost: A Book of Reminiscences”* (1932; also published as *“Candid Reminiscences: My First Thirty Years”*) was reworked and extended in *“The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair”* (1962). *“My Lifetime in Letters”* (1960) is a collection of letters written to Sinclair.

### ***“The Jungle” (1906)***

The most famous, influential, and enduring of all muckraking novels, *“The Jungle”* was an exposé of conditions in the Chicago stockyards. Because of public response, the U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act was passed and conditions in the slaughterhouses were improved. The novel was written when Sinclair was sent by the socialist weekly newspaper *Appeal to Reason* to investigate working conditions in the meatpacking industry. He wrote pointedly about the exploitation of immigrant

laborers and graphically described the disguising of spoiled and diseased meat and the unsanitary environment in the stockyards. Although Sinclair's chief goal was to expose abusive labor conditions, the American public was most horrified by the lack of sanitation in the meat-processing plants.

"*The Jungle*" was not the 1<sup>st</sup> muckraking novel, although it is easily one of the most influential books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a raw and sometimes nauseating chronicle based on the real incidents of the 1904 stockyard workers' strike in Chicago. A manifesto for social change, it savagely reveals the American dream gone sour. Sinclair strips away the myth of America as a boon to the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free. Instead, the golden land of manifest destiny is shown to be a Dickensian nightmare, where wage slaves can barely survive, where powerless immigrants are chewed up by a capitalist machine oiled by corruption and bald greed.

Sinclair personally sent a copy of his book to then American President Theodore Roosevelt. Often ranked with Harriet Beecher Stowe's "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" in regard to its social impact, "*The Jungle*" was highly lauded by other such esteemed literary figures Jack London, H.L. Mencken, and George Bernard Shaw.

### **Study Question:**

1. What was the reason of Upton Sinclair to investigate social problems of American society? How did the author realize it in his books?
2. Why do you think Jack London praised "*The Jungle*" as "the Uncle Tom's Cabin of wage slavery"?
3. Give general characteristics of Upton Sinclair's muckraking novels.

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Harris, L. "*Upton Sinclair: American Rebel*". 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 2015.
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3. Yoder, J. "*Upton Sinclair*". NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 2015.
4. Salamon, J. "*Upton Sinclair: Revisit to Old Hero Finds He's Still Lively*". NY.: The New York Times Books, 2015.

### **8.5. Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951). "*Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott*" and "*Babbitt*"**

**Primary Works:** "*Our Mr. Wrenn*", the romantic adventures of a gentle man (1914), "*The Trail of the Hawk*" (1915), "*The Job*" (1917), "*The Innocents*" (1917), "*Free Air*" (1919), "*Main Street*" (1920), "*Babbitt*" (1922), "*Arrowsmith*" (1925), "*Mantrap*" (1926), "*Elmer Gantry*" (1927), "*The Man Who Knew Coolidge*" (1928), "*Dodsworth*", a novel (1929), "*Ann Vickers*" (1933), "*Work of Art*" (1934), "*It Can't Happen Here*", a novel (1935), "*The Prodigal Parents*", a novel (1938), "*Bethel Merriday*" (1940), "*Gideon Planish*" (1943), "*Cass Timberlane*", a novel of husbands and wives (1946),

*“Kingsblood Royal”* (1947), *“The God-seeker”*, a novel (1949), *“World So Wide”*, a novel (1951).

### **A Brief Biography of Sinclair Lewis**

*Sinclair Lewis has the distinction of being the 1<sup>st</sup> American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1930) " ...for his vigorous and graphic art of description and his ability to create, with wit and humour, new types of characters..." One of the muckrakers, Lewis's "Main Street" is a devastating indictment of American provincialism; in other works, he satirizes businessmen ("Babbitt") and the medical profession ("Arrowsmith").*

Sinclair Lewis, in full Harry Sinclair Lewis, (February 7, 1885, Sauk Centre, Minn., U.S. - January 10, 1951, Rome, Italy), American novelist and social critic who punctured American complacency with his broadly drawn, widely popular satirical novels. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930, the first given to an American. He graduated from Yale University. He took time off from school to work at a socialist community, Helicon Home Colony, financed by muckraking novelist Upton Sinclair. Lewis's *“Main Street”* (1920) satirized monotonous, hypocritical small-town life in Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. His incisive presentation of American life and his criticism of American materialism, narrowness, and hypocrisy brought him national and international recognition. In 1926, he was offered and declined a Pulitzer Prize for *“Arrowsmith”* (1925), a novel tracing a doctor's efforts to maintain his medical ethics amid greed and corruption. In 1930, he became the 1<sup>st</sup> American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Lewis's other major novels include *“Babbitt”* (1922). George Babbitt is an ordinary businessman living and working in Zenith, an ordinary American town. Babbitt is moral and enterprising, and a believer in business as the new scientific approach to modern life. Becoming restless, he seeks fulfillment but is disillusioned by an affair with a bohemian woman, returns to his wife, and accepts his lot. The novel added a new word to the American language - "babbitry", meaning narrow-minded, complacent, bourgeois ways.

*“Elmer Gantry”* (1927) exposes revivalist religion in the U.S., while *“Cass Timberlane”* (1945) studies the stresses that develop within the marriage of an older judge and his young wife.

#### ***“Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott” (1920)***

*“Main Street”* is a novel by Sinclair Lewis, published in 1920. The story of Main Street is seen through the eyes of Carol Kennicott, a young woman married to a Midwestern doctor who settles in the Minnesota town of Gopher Prairie (modeled on Lewis' hometown of Sauk Center). The power of the book derives from Lewis' careful rendering of local speech, customs, and social amenities. The satire is double-edged-directed against both the townspeople and the superficial intellectualism of those who despise them.

Sinclair Lewis frequently had difficulty in determining in his own mind whether his works were meant as bitterly comic satires of American life and values or whether they were planned as complex novels centering on the lives of the characters he made famous. One of the difficulties of reading Lewis is that these two conflicting sorts of writing are both present in many of his works, and frequently at odds with each other. This is demonstrably true of *“Main Street”*. For all his satire of small-town attitudes and values, Lewis is not unequivocal in his attack. He finds a great many things of value in the best *“Main Street”* has to offer, and he seems to see Carol Kennicott’s reconciliation with the town at the end of the novel as a triumph rather than a failure on her part. Though *“Main Street”* is, as it has been frequently called, a revolt against the village, it is a revolt marked by the complexity of Lewis’s attitude toward Gopher Prairie and toward its real-life counterpart, Sauk Center, Minnesota, where Lewis spent his early years.

### ***“Babbitt”* (1922)**

In *“Babbitt”*, Lewis captures the political and personal unrest of the era, as well as the social rebellion at the heart of *the Roaring Twenties*.

Lewis's depiction of the labor strike, with all of its potential for mass violence, as well as the often-expressed view that immigrants and foreigners are basically sub-human, presents a harrowingly realistic portrait of post-war life in America. Critics have long considered this novel to be an exceptionally truthful work of realism, both in its creation of flesh-and-blood characters and in its accurate documentation of the 1920s.

In addition to being a seminal work of realism, *“Babbitt”* is also a highly effective work of satire. Lewis captures the hypocrisy of the period with a special focus on the distance between public utterance and actual behavior that characterized the decade. The booming alcoholic trade during Prohibition is one obvious example of this hypocrisy. Through tone and sentence structure, Lewis deftly reveals both the hypocrisy of the society and its effect on its members. George Babbitt is an embodiment of this divided mindset. Not only do his actions fail to reflect his beliefs, but even his very thoughts seem to contradict each other. He suffers great confusion between morality and the appearance of it, while America, on the whole, suffers confusion over what morality really means.

Lewis also travels into the underworld of Zenith, where the bohemians and the flappers dance and drink through the night. The novel's portrayal of Tanis Judique's group of friends (the Bunch) and, to a lesser extent, of the Dapplebraus, reveals a key social pattern of the period. In many ways, this was a time when the old restraints on personal freedom and morals were dissolving. Lewis captures the appeal of a freer lifestyle and the loss of control that seems inevitably associated with it.

Lewis rounds out his portrait with several other themes of the time: the lure of nature, the influence of advertising and mass media in shaping public opinion, the growing reverence of science and technology, the stifling (yet comforting) social and commercial conformity, and the decline of religion through its commercialization and through ignorance among religious leaders and Fundamentalists. He captures the

ambivalence of his characters who wish both to participate in and to withdraw from society. Thus it becomes obvious that Babbitt will never be able to resolve the conflict and confusion that make him unable to find meaningful fulfillment. Indeed, this conflict and this confusion define the era.

### Study Questions:

1. Characterize style and thematic direction of books written by Sinclair Lewis.
2. For what exactly Sinclair Lewis won Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930?

#### **“Main Street”:**

1. Do you think Carol should leave Gopher Prairie and make a new life for herself, or should she keep trying to change her perspective and learn to love her life in there? Why?
2. What is it about Will Kennicott that annoys Carol most? Is her criticism fair?
3. What does Carol say in the final pages of this book? What is Will's response and what does it mean for the story's overall message?
4. Who tries to help Carol adjust to Gopher Prairie? Are these efforts harmful or helpful?
5. How effective is Lewis as a satirist in this novel? Are any of the characters in this book similar to people you know in real life?
6. Who is the most difficult person to get along with in Gopher Prairie? Why?

#### **“Babbitt”:**

1. What does Lewis's description of Babbitt's home tell us?
2. Babbitt supports business ethics, but he is unclear what he means by ethics. What does his actual behavior tell us about business ethics in Zenith?
3. The Babbitts throw a dinner party to celebrate Babbitt's business success one spring. Why is it ironic that they should call their guests the "keenest intellects"?
4. How is Riesling different from the typical Zenith businessman?

### Selected Sources:

1. Lingeman, R. *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street*. St. Paul: Borealis, 2015.
2. Bitonti, T.S., Hope, P.M. "Sinclair Lewis. *Nobel Prize Laureates in Literature, Part 3: Lagerkvist-Pontoppidan*. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2017.

## 8.6. Life of Women in Works of Kate Chopin (1851-1904). “*The Awakening*”

**Primary Works:** “*At Fault*” (1890); “*The Story of an Hour*” (1894), “*Bayou Folk*” (1894), “*A Night in Acadie*” (1897), “*The Awakening*” (1899).

### A Brief Biography of Kate Chopin

**Kate Chopin**, née Katherine O’Flaherty (February 8, 1851, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S. - August 22, 1904, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.), American novelist and short-story



writer known as an interpreter of New Orleans culture. There was a revival of interest in Chopin in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century because her concerns about the freedom of women foreshadowed later feminist literary themes.

Katherine O’Flaherty read widely as a girl. In June 1870 she married Oscar Chopin, with whom she lived in his native New Orleans, Louisiana, and later on a plantation near Cloutiersville, Louisiana, until his death in 1882. After he died she began to write about the Creole and Cajun people she had observed in the South. Her 1<sup>st</sup> novel, “*At Fault*” (1890), was undistinguished, but she was later acclaimed for her finely crafted short stories, of which she wrote more than 100. 2 of these stories, “*Désirée’s Baby*” and “*Madame Celestin’s Divorce*”, continue to be widely anthologized.

In 1899 Chopin published “*The Awakening*”, a realistic novel about the awakening of a young wife and mother who abandons her family and eventually commits suicide. This work was roundly condemned in its time because of its intimate frankness and its portrayal of an interracial marriage and went out of print for more than 50 years. When it was rediscovered in the 1950s, critics marveled at the beauty of its writing and its modern sensibility.

Chopin’s work has been categorized within the “local color” genre. Her stories were collected in “*Bayou Folk*” (1894) and “*A Night in Acadie*” (1897).

### **“*The Awakening*” (1899)**

“*The Awakening*”, originally titled “*A Solitary Soul*”, is a novel set in New Orleans and on the Louisiana Gulf coast at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the plot centers on Edna Pontellier and her struggle to reconcile her increasingly unorthodox views on femininity and motherhood with the prevailing social attitudes of the turn-of-the-century American South. It is one of the earliest American novels that focuses on women’s issues without condescension. It is also widely seen as a landmark work of early feminism, generating a mixed reaction from contemporary readers and critics. The novel’s blend of realistic narrative, incisive social commentary, and psychological complexity makes “*The Awakening*” a precursor of American modernist literature; it prefigures the works of American novelists such as Faulkner and Hemingway and echoes the works of contemporaries such as Edith Wharton and Henry James. It can also be considered among the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern works in a tradition that would culminate with the modern masterpieces of Faulkner, Flannery O’Connor, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter, and Tennessee Williams.

Kate Chopin’s narrative style in “*The Awakening*” can be categorized as naturalism. Chopin’s novel bears the hallmarks of Maupassant’s style: a perceptive focus on human behavior and the complexities of social structures. This demonstrates Chopin’s admiration for the French short story writer Guy de Maupassant, yet another example of the enormous influence Maupassant exercised on 19<sup>th</sup>-century literary realism. However, Chopin’s style could more accurately be described as a hybrid that captures contemporary narrative currents and looks forward to various trends in Southern and European literature. Mixed into Chopin’s overarching 19<sup>th</sup>-century realism is an incisive and often humorous skewering of upper-class pretension,

reminiscent of direct contemporaries such as Oscar Wilde, Henry James, Edith Wharton, and George Bernard Shaw. Aspects of Chopin's style also prefigure the intensely lyrical and experimental style of novelists such as Virginia Woolf and the unsentimental focus on female intellectual and emotional growth in the novels of Sigrid Undset and Doris Lessing. Chopin's most important stylistic legacy is the detachment of the narrator.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Discuss Kate Chopin as a writer of local color fiction. To what extent does she appeal to a reader's natural interest in an aspect of regional society and life with which few had personal experience?
2. Count, characterize, and analyze the numerous women of color in "*The Awakening*". What does their presence and their treatment in the novel suggest about Edna's (and Chopin's) attitudes toward human development for nonwhite and poor women?
3. Some readers have described Edna's death in *The Awakening* as suicide; others view it as her attempt at self-realization. Argue the relative truth of both interpretations.

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Callahan, C. *Kin of Another Kind: Transracial Adoption in American Literature*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010.
2. Entzminger, B. *Contemporary Reconfigurations of American Literary Classics: The Origin and Evolution of American Stories*. NY: Routledge, 2013.
3. Ryan, J.E. *Faithful Passages: American Catholicism in Literary Culture, 1844-1931*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P. 2013.
4. Showalter, E. *The Vintage Book of American Women Writers*. NY: Vintage, 2011.

## **8.7. Carl Sandburg (1878-1967). "Chicago"**

**Primary Works:** "*Chicago Poems*" poem collection (1914), "*Chicago*", poem (1914), "*Smoke and Steel*" (1920), "*Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*", biography (1926), "*Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*", biography (1939), "*The American Songbag*", folk songs (1927), "*Good Morning, America*" (1928), "*Remembrance Rock*" (1948), "*New American Songbag*", folk songs (1950), "*Always the Young Strangers*" (1953). "*Prairie-town Boy*" (1955), "*Honey and Salt*" (1963), "*Breathing Tokens*" (1978).

### **A Brief Biography of Carl Sandburg**

Carl Sandburg, (January 6, 1878, Galesburg, Illinois, U.S. - July 22, 1967, Flat Rock, N.C., U.S.), American poet, historian, novelist, and folklorist.

From the age of 11, Sandburg worked in various occupations - as a barbershop porter, a milk truck driver, a brickyard hand, and a harvester in the Kansas wheat fields. When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, he enlisted in the 6<sup>th</sup>

Illinois Infantry. These early years he later described in his autobiography "*Always the Young Strangers*" (1953).

Moving to Chicago in 1913, he became an editor of *System*, a business magazine, and later joined the staff of the *Chicago Daily News*. In 1914 a group of his "*Chicago Poems*" appeared in *Poetry* magazine. In his most famous poem, "*Chicago*", he depicted the city as the laughing, lusty, heedless "Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation". Sandburg's poetry made an instant and favorable impression. In Whitmanesque free verse, he eulogized workers: "Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Gary, they make their steel with men" ("*Smoke and Steel*", 1920).

In "*Good Morning, America*" (1928) Sandburg seemed to have lost some of his faith in democracy, but from the depths of the Great Depression he wrote a poetic testament to the power of the people to go forward, "*The People, Yes*" (1936). The folk songs he sang before delighted audiences were issued in two collections, "*The American Songbag*" (1927) and "*New American Songbag*" (1950). He wrote the popular biography "*Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*", 2 vol. (1926), and "*Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*", 4 vol. (1939; Pulitzer Prize in history, 1940). A journalist by profession, he wrote a massive biography of Abraham Lincoln that is one of the classic works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To many, Sandburg was a latter-day Walt Whitman, writing expansive, evocative urban and patriotic poems and simple, childlike rhymes and ballads. He traveled about reciting and recording his poetry, in a lilting, mellifluously toned voice that was a kind of singing. At heart he was totally unassuming, notwithstanding his national fame. What he wanted from life, he once said, was "to be out of jail... to eat regular... to get what I write printed... a little love at home and a little nice affection hither and yon over the American landscape, (and) to sing every day."

### **"Chicago" (1914)**

"*Chicago*" is a poem in free verse, one without a set meter or rhyme scheme, running twenty-three lines. A fine example of Carl Sandburg's themes and his Whitmanesque style. The title gives the name of the city that the poet is praising, which does not appear elsewhere in the poem. Without the title, this poem could refer to any industrial city, suggesting a universal love of place.

The poem, written in the 1<sup>st</sup> person so that the poet addresses the reader directly, celebrates both the virtues and vices of the city. It begins with a staccato list of occupations found in Chicago (hog butcher, tool maker, stacker of wheat), followed by three adjectives that attach an emotion to those occupations. Carl Sandburg calls them "Stormy, husky, brawling," creating an aura of vitality. This 1<sup>st</sup> section of the poem is abrupt and rapid, like the city being portrayed.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> section departs from the brief phrasing and turns to long, flowing, melodic sentences. Each of the 1<sup>st</sup> three sentences acknowledge a vice of the city in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the sentence. It is wicked, corrupt, and brutal. The poet agrees to each accusation, supplying a specific detail that supports the charge in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the

sentence. There are “painted women,” “gunmen,” and “wanton hunger.” The city does, in fact, have its failings.

### Study Questions:

1. What are basic traits of Sandburg’s writing in style? In vocabulary? In syntax? Find examples in his works.
2. In your opinion can biographies of Lincoln written by Sandburg be considered as fiction? If yes - why? If not - why?

### “Chicago”:

1. Who do you think the speaker of the poem is?
2. What is the effect of all of the personification in the poem?
3. Why does the speaker love everything about Chicago, even the ugly parts? Shouldn't he acknowledge that murder and starvation are majorly bad problems?
4. What is the relationship between Chicago and the rest of America in the poem?
5. Do you think of “Chicago” as a love poem? Why or why not?

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1. Gilbar, S., Dean, S. *Published & Perished: Memoria, Eulogies, & Remembrances of American Writers*. Boston: Godine, 2012.
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## 8.8. Robert Frost (1874-1963). Unique and Common Features of Frost’s Poetry. “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

**Primary Works:** “My Butterfly: An Elegy” (1894), “A Boy’s Will”, collection (1913): “Storm Fear”, “The Tuft of Flowers”, “Mowing”. “North of Boston”, collection (1914): “Mending Wall”, “The Death of the Hired Man”, “Home Burial”, “A Hundred Collars”, “After Apple-Picking”. “Mountain Interval”, collection (1916): “Birches”, “Out, Out”, “The Oven Bird”, “The Road Not Taken”. “New Hampshire”, collection (1923): “Fire and Ice”, “Dust of Snow”, “Nothing Gold Can Stay”, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”. “West-Running Brook”, collection (1928): “Acquainted with the Night”. “A Witness Tree”, collection (1942): “The Gift Outright”, “A Question”, “The Silken Tent”. “A Further Range”, collection (1936): “Desert Places”, “Design”. Others: “In the Clearing”, collection (1962), “Collected Poems”, collection (1930), “Steeple Bush”, collection (1947).

### A Brief Biography of Robert Frost

Robert Lee Frost (March 26, 1874, San Francisco, California, U.S. - January 29, 1963, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.), American poet who was much admired for his depictions of the rural life of New England, his command of American colloquial speech, and his realistic verse portraying ordinary people in everyday situations.

Frost's father was a journalist. After his death from tuberculosis in 1885 Isabelle Moodie Frost had to take her 2 children, Robert and Jeanie, to Lawrence, Massachusetts. Robert graduated from high school in 1892. A top student in his class, he shared valedictorian honors with Elinor White, with whom he had already fallen in love. Robert and Elinor shared a deep interest in poetry. Robert's 1<sup>st</sup> professional publication was in 1894 when *The Independent*, a weekly literary journal, printed his poem "*My Butterfly: An Elegy*". Robert and Elinor married in 1895 but found life difficult, and the young poet supported them by teaching school and farming, neither with notable success. During the next dozen years, 6 children were born, 2 of whom died early, leaving a family of one son and three daughters. Frost resumed his college education at Harvard University in 1897 but left after 2 years' study there. From 1900 to 1909 the family raised poultry on a farm near Derry, New Hampshire. By 1911 Frost was fighting against discouragement. Frost, who was nearly 40 years old, had not published a single book of poems and had seen just a handful appear in magazines. Frost decided to sell the farm and use the proceeds to make a start in London, where publishers were more receptive to new talent.

In August 1912 the Frost family sailed to England. English publishers did indeed prove more receptive to innovative verse, and, through his own vigorous efforts and those of the expatriate American poet Ezra Pound, Frost within a year had published "*A Boy's Will*" (1913). From this 1<sup>st</sup> book, such poems as "*Storm Fear*", "*The Tuft of Flowers*", and "*Mowing*" became standard anthology pieces. In 1914 Frost introduced some of the most popular poems in all of his work, among them "*Mending Wall*", "*The Death of the Hired Man*", "*Home Burial*" and "*After Apple-Picking*". In London, Frost's name was frequently mentioned by those who followed the course of modern literature, and soon American visitors were returning home with news of this unknown poet who was causing a sensation abroad. Without his being aware of it, Frost was on his way to fame.

In 1915 he returned to the U.S. and found himself besieged by magazines seeking to publish his poems. Never before had an American poet achieved such rapid fame after such a disheartening delay. Any remaining doubt about his poetic abilities was dispelled by the collection "*Mountain Interval*" (1916), which continued the high level established by his 1<sup>st</sup> books. His reputation was further enhanced by "*New Hampshire*" (1923), which received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. That prize was also awarded to Frost's "*Collected Poems*" (1930) and to the collections "*A Further Range*" (1936) and "*A Witness Tree*" (1942). His other poetry volumes include "*West-Running Brook*" (1928), "*Steeple Bush*" (1947), and "*In the Clearing*" (1962).

### **Unique and Common Features of Frost's Poetry**

The poems in Frost's early books differ radically from late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romantic verse with its ever-benign view of nature, its didactic emphasis, and its slavish conformity to established verse forms and themes. Critics called them "sad" poems, referring to its portraits of inbred, isolated, and psychologically troubled rural New Englanders. These off-mainstream portraits signaled Frost's departure from the old tradition and his own fresh interest in delineating New England characters and their

formative background. Among these psychological investigations are the alienated life of Silas in *"The Death of the Hired Man"* the inability of Amy in *"Home Burial"* to walk the difficult path from grief back to normality, the rigid mindset of the neighbor in *"Mending Wall"*, and the paralyzing fear that twists the personality of Doctor Magoon in *"A Hundred Collars"*.

The natural world, for Frost, wore 2 faces. Early on he overturned the Emersonian concept of nature as healer and mentor like in a poem entitled *"Storm Fear"*, a grim picture of a blizzard as a raging beast that dares the inhabitants of an isolated house to come outside and be killed. Later, in such poems as *"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"* and *"The Hill Wife"*, the benign surface of nature cloaks potential dangers, and death itself lurks behind dark, mysterious trees. Nature's frolicsome aspect predominates in other poems such as *"Birches"*, where a destructive ice storm is recalled as a thing of memorable beauty. Although Frost is known to many as essentially a "happy" poet, the tragic elements in life continued to mark his poems, from *"Out, Out"* (1916), in which a lad's hand is severed and life ended, to a fine verse entitled *"The Fear of Man"*, in which human release from pervading fear is contained in the image of a breathless dash through the nighttime city from the security of one faint street lamp to another just as faint. Even in his final volume, *"In the Clearing"*, so filled with the stubborn courage of old age, Frost portrays human security as a rather tiny and quite vulnerable opening in a thickly grown forest, a pinpoint of light against which the encroaching trees cast their very real threat of darkness.

Frost demonstrated an enviable versatility of theme, but he most commonly investigated human contacts with the natural world in small encounters that serve as metaphors for larger aspects of the human condition. He often portrayed the human ability to turn even the slightest incident or natural detail to emotional profit, seen at its most economical form in *"Dust of Snow"*:

*The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree  
Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.*

Other poems are portraits of the introspective mind possessed by its own private demons, as in *"Desert Places"*, which could serve to illustrate Frost's celebrated definition of poetry as a "momentary stay against confusion":

*They cannot scare me with their empty spaces  
Between stars-on stars where no human race is.  
I have it in me so much nearer home  
To scare myself with my own desert places.*

Frost was widely admired for his mastery of metrical form, which he often set against the natural rhythms of everyday, unadorned speech. In this way the traditional stanza and metrical line achieved new vigour in his hands. Frost's command of traditional metrics is evident in the tight, older, prescribed patterns of such sonnets as

*Design*” and *The Silken Tent*”. His strongest allegiance probably was to the quatrain with simple rhymes such as *abab* and *abcb*, and within its restrictions he was able to achieve an infinite variety, as in the aforementioned *Dust of Snow*” and *Desert Places*”. Frost was never an enthusiast of free verse and regarded its looseness as something less than ideal, similar to playing tennis without a net. His determination to be “new” but to employ “old ways to be new” set him aside from the radical experimentalism of the advocates of *vers libre* in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. On occasion Frost did employ free verse to advantage, one outstanding example being *After Apple-Picking*”, with its random pattern of long and short lines and its nontraditional use of rhyme. Here he shows his power to stand as a transitional figure between the old and the new in poetry. Frost mastered blank verse (i.e., unrhymed verse in iambic pentameter) for use in such dramatic narratives as *Mending Wall*” and *Home Burial*”, becoming one of the few modern poets to use it both appropriately and well. His chief technical innovation in these dramatic-dialogue poems was to unify the regular pentameter line with the irregular rhythms of conversational speech. Frost’s blank verse has the same terseness and concision that mark his poetry in general.

### **“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” (1923)**

“*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*” is one of Frost’s most popular poems.

**Analysis of Technique.** Any “*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*” analysis must note the classical rhyme scheme. While it calls to mind the troubadours of medieval Europe, the form used is actually closer to a Persian form called the *Rubáiyát* than it is anything else. If you look at the 1<sup>st</sup> stanza of the poem. Lines one, two, and four all rhyme. However, line three is an outlier. But then as we go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza, we see that the outlier carries over into the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza. This pattern is repeated until we get to 4<sup>th</sup> stanza. Using small letters, we can represent the rhyme scheme in the following manner:

*a a b a*

*b b c a*

*c c d c*

*d d d d*

Note, Frost is not faithful the *Rubáiyát* form in the final stanza. Still as in the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza we are dealing with sleep, this seems to fit, as if the narrator is nodding off and missed the rhyme. This helps set the tone of the final stanza. Some have suggested that this rhyme scheme is used to create the feeling of snow. Flakes of snow don’t quite fall straight, and they seem to catch up with one another at times. So the slightly off pacing of the rhymes can be argued to convey this image. Similarly, one could argue that off key rhymes represents the unknown and chaotic essence of nature - which is why when the narrator turns back toward civilization, the 3<sup>rd</sup> line’s rhyme then agrees with all the others. The meter and pacing in the poem is very important. They very much carry one through the poem as if it were a song. Each line is precisely eight syllables, the 1<sup>st</sup> syllable is not accented while the 2<sup>nd</sup> is. So each line comes off like this: *daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM*. This is called a iambic tetrameter. There are basically 4 beats of unstressed syllables followed by stressed syllables. One can argue this rhythmic beat

provokes in us a sense of primeval - and in some ways this fits with various themes of the poem.

Finally, there is some degree of alliteration in the poem. For example, in the 1<sup>st</sup> stanza words beginning with “w” predominate, which is dovetailed nicely by the final rhyme of most lines.

**Analysis of Meaning.** “*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*” is a poem of contrasts that juxtaposes man, as being civilized and guided by custom against nature which is raw and primeval. Man forms civilization via obligations and expectations, but once we go beyond these we confront the great unknown. Man sets up boundaries, taboos, borders not meant to be crossed - and when we journey beyond this we enter the great unknown.

The 1<sup>st</sup> contrast we get is in the 1<sup>st</sup> stanza. In society we own things, yet who can really own nature? Who can really own the “woods”? There’s something illicit going on when the narrator stops to share an intimate experience with these woods, and then glances about nervously as if he might have been seen by the absent owner, who is off in the village. The narrator is sliding out of his civilized veneer and venturing into a more dangerous primeval world. The owner in the village might think he owns the “woods” but has he ever stopped to watch them fill up with snow? His ownership is a superficial thing when compared with the narrator who now sees the woods for what they really are.

The horse, being a creature of man, and fully civilized is like an old superstitious housewife that fears all these primeval forces and can’t but think that something of no good is likely to come from all this intimate exposure to them. This is the darkest part of the year - not just the witching hour, but the creepiest witching hour of the entire year, and here is the narrator out in the thick it. There’s no place for typical human warmness, the lake has frozen over, this is a land as unknown to us as the outer reaches of space. The normal rules do not apply here - only nature’s unreasoning and incomprehensible rules.

The horse sounds the bells of caution - bells of alarm. This is the voice of civilization trying to call the narrator back before he verges too far off course and cannot return. The narrator is at the edge of civilization, and if he goes just a bit farther, he’ll fall completely out of it. Yet, these primeval and chaotic forces of nature clearly act in a seductive manner. The wind makes its whispery call, and the small downy flakes cast a silken spell. There’s something otherworldly happening here. We see now, why at the beginning of the poem, the narrator felt paranoid about being seen. He is breaking taboo - and venturing into areas where he is not supposed to go.

In the end, it is the voice of custom, man’s civilizing voice, that manages to pull back the narrator from the brink. The narrator has things to do, he’s got to fall back into step and fulfill society’s obligations. These are the very obligations that help all of us keep our feet on the ground, so that we don’t fall into the deep, dark unknown. To let go of these obligations and expectations is to fall into alcoholism, abandonment, pure instinct, unvarnished passion, and maybe even at least metaphorically suicide. The narrator is not ready for this total dissolution; his obligations call him back. He’s falling back into the lock step of society, not necessarily a march, but a kind of repetitious dance, that keeps him from falling off the edge.



### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the "sound of sense", and why does Robert Frost use it in his poetry?
2. Why does Frost choose to write about everyday life in a rural environment? What is the effect of this choice on his poetry?
3. How does Frost use poetic form in unusual ways?
4. How did Frost's personal life influence his poetry?
5. How does the familiarity of Frost's poems affect an analysis of their meaning? Is it better or worse that they are well-known?
6. How does Frost discuss the importance of communication in his poems?
7. What are some of the American ideals that are explored in Frost's poems?
8. Which of Frost's poems do you think is the most effective in terms of form and meaning? Why?
9. Does Robert Frost deserve the praise that he has received for his poetry? Why or why not?

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## CHAPTER IX. LOST GENERATION

### Plan:

#### 9.1. The Literature of “Lost Generation”

9.2. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961). His Style of Writing. The Iceberg Theory. “*A Farewell to Arms*”. “*The Old Man and the Sea*”. “*Fiesta*”, or “*The Sun Also Rises*”

9.3. F. Scott Fitzgerald. “*The Great Gatsby*”. “*May Day*”. “*The Rich Boy*”. “*Babylon Revisited*”. The Age of Jazz. Break of American Dream

9.4. John Dos Passos. The “*U.S.A.*” Trilogy. The Theme of the South. “*Manhattan Transfer*”. Polyphonic Montageroman

9.5. William Faulkner. The Snopes Novels. “*The Sound and The Fury*”. “*A Rose for Emily*”

9.6. The Literature of “Great Depression”

9.7. John Steinbeck. “*The Grapes of Wrath*”

9.8. Erskine Caldwell. “*Tobacco Road*”

### 9.1. The Literature of “Lost Generation”

The term “Lost Generation” refers to the generation of people who reached adulthood during or immediately following World War I. Demographers generally consider 1883 to 1900 as the birth year range of the generation.

Key Takeaways:

- 1) The “Lost Generation” reached adulthood during or shortly after World War I.
- 2) Disillusioned by the horrors of war, they rejected the traditions of the older generation.
- 3) Their struggles were characterized in the works of a group of famous American authors and poets including Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and T. S. Eliot.
- 4) Common traits of the “Lost Generation” included decadence, distorted visions of the “American Dream,” and gender confusion.

Lost Generation, a group of American writers who came of age during World War I and established their literary reputations in the 1920s. The term is also used more generally to refer to the post-World War I generation.

The generation was “lost” in the sense that its inherited values were no longer relevant in the postwar world and because of its spiritual alienation from a U.S. that, basking under Pres. Warren G. Harding’s “back to normalcy” policy, seemed to its members to be hopelessly provincial, materialistic, and emotionally barren. The term embraces Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, E.E. Cummings, Archibald MacLeish, Hart Crane, and many other writers who made Paris the center of their literary activities in the 1920s. They were never a literary school.

Gertrude Stein is credited for the term Lost Generation, though Hemingway made it widely known. According to Hemingway’s “*A Moveable Feast*” (1964), she had heard it used by a garage owner in France, who dismissively referred to the younger generation as a “*génération perdue*.” In conversation with Hemingway, she turned that

label on him and declared, “You are all a lost generation.” He used her remark as an epigraph to *“The Sun Also Rises”* (1926), a novel that captures the attitudes of a hard-drinking, fast-living set of disillusioned young expatriates in postwar Paris.

In the 1930s, as these writers turned in different directions, their works lost the distinctive stamp of the postwar period. The last representative works of the era were Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night* (1934) and Dos Passos’s *“The Big Money”* (1936).

Having witnessed what they considered pointless death on such a massive scale during the War, many members of the generation rejected more traditional ideas of proper behavior, morality, and gender roles. They were considered to be “lost” due to their tendency to act aimlessly, even recklessly, often focusing on the hedonistic accumulation of personal wealth.

In literature, the term also refers to a group of well-known American authors and poets including Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and T. S. Eliot, whose works often detailed the internal struggles of the “Lost Generation.”

The term is believed to have come from an actual verbal exchange witnessed by novelist Gertrude Stein during which a garage owner derisively told his young employee, “You are all a lost generation.” Stein’s colleague and pupil Ernest Hemingway popularized the term when he used it as an epigraph to his classic 1926 novel *“The Sun Also Rises.”*

In an interview for *The Hemmingway Project*, Kirk Curnutt, author of several books about the Lost Generation writers suggested that they were expressing mythologized versions of their own lives. “They were convinced they were the products of a generational breach, and they wanted to capture the experience of newness in the world around them,” said Curnutt.

### **Decadent Excesses of the Lost Generation**

Throughout their novels *“The Sun Also Rises”* and *“The Great Gatsby,”* Hemingway and Fitzgerald feature the decadent, self-indulgent lifestyles of their Lost Generation characters. In both *“The Great Gatsby”* and *“Tales of the Jazz Age”* Fitzgerald depicts an endless stream of lavish parties hosted by the main characters.

With their values so completely destroyed by the war, the expatriate American circles of friends in Hemingway’s *“The Sun Also Rises”* and *“A Moveable Feast”* live shallow, hedonistic lifestyles, aimlessly roaming the world while drinking and partying.

### **Fallacy of the Great American Dream**

Members of the Lost Generation viewed the idea of the “American Dream” as a grand deception. This becomes a prominent theme in *“The Great Gatsby”* as the story’s narrator Nick Carraway comes to realize that Gatsby’s vast fortune had been paid for with great misery. To Fitzgerald, the traditional vision of the American Dream - that hard work led to success - had become corrupted. To the Lost Generation, “living the dream” was no longer about simply building a self-sufficient life, but about getting stunningly rich by any means necessary.

### **Belief in an Impossible Future**

Unable or unwilling to come to grips with the horrors of warfare many of the Lost Generation created impossibly unrealistic hopes for the future. This is expressed best in the final lines of *“The Great Gatsby”* in which narrator Nick exposed Gatsby’s idealized vision of Daisy that had always prevented him from seeing her as she really

was: “Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter - tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther.... And one fine morning - So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

The “green light” in the passage is Fitzgerald’s metaphor for the perfect futures we continue to believe in even while watching it get ever farther away from us. In other words, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Lost Generation continued to believe that “one fine day,” their dreams will come true.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What was the Lost Generation’s impact on American literature?
2. Name main authors and works of the Lost Generation literature.

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### **9.2. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961). His of Writing. The Iceberg Theory. “A Farewell to Arms”. “The Old Man and the Sea”. “Fiesta”, or “The Sun Also Rises”**

**Primary Works:** “*The Sun Also Rises*” (1926), “*The Torrents of Spring*” (1926), “*Men Without Women*” (1927), “*The Killers*” (1933), “*The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*” (1933), “*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*” (1933), “*A Farewell to Arms*” (1929), “*Death in the Afternoon*” (1932), “*The Green Hills of Africa*” (1935), “*To Have and Have Not*” (1937), “*For Whom the Bell Tolls*” (1940), “*Across the River and into the Trees*” (1950), “*The Old Man and the Sea*” (1952).

### **A Brief Biography of Ernest Hemingway**

Ernest Hemingway, in full Ernest Miller Hemingway (July 21, 1899, Oak Park, Illinois, U.S. – July 2, 1961, Ketchum, Idaho), American novelist and short-story writer, awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. He was noted both for the intense masculinity of his writing and for his adventurous and widely publicized life. His succinct and lucid prose style exerted a powerful influence on American and British fiction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Ernest Hemingway was born in a suburb of Chicago, was educated in the public schools, began to write in high school, where he was active and outstanding. In 1917, he went to Kansas City, working as a reporter for the *Star*. He was repeatedly rejected for military service because of a defective eye, but he managed to enter World War I as an ambulance driver for the American Red Cross. On July 8, 1918 he was injured on

the Austro-Italian front. Decorated for heroism and hospitalized in Milan, he fell in love with a Red Cross nurse, Agnes von Kurowsky, who declined to marry him. These were experiences he was never to forget.

After recuperating at home, Hemingway his 1<sup>st</sup> important book, a collection of stories called "*In Our Time*" (1925) was published.

In 1926 he published "*The Sun Also Rises*", a novel with which he scored his 1<sup>st</sup> solid success. A pessimistic but sparkling book, it deals with a group of aimless expatriates in France and Spain - members of the postwar Lost Generation, a phrase that Hemingway scorned while making it famous. This work also introduced him to the limelight, which he both craved and resented for the rest of his life. Hemingway's "*The Torrents of Spring*", a parody of the American writer Sherwood Anderson's book "*Dark Laughter*", also appeared in 1926.

Hemingway's position as a master of short fiction had been advanced by "*Men Without Women*" in 1927 and thoroughly established with the stories in "*Winner Take Nothing*" in 1933. Among his finest stories are "*The Killers*", "*The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*" and "*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*".

However, the novel "*A Farewell to Arms*" (1929) overshadowed such works. Reaching back to his experience as a young soldier in Italy, Hemingway developed a grim but lyrical novel of great power, fusing love story with war story. While serving with the Italian ambulance service during World War I, the American lieutenant Frederic Henry falls in love with the English nurse Catherine Barkley, who tends him during his recuperation after being wounded. She becomes pregnant by him, but he must return to his post. Henry deserts during the Italians' disastrous retreat after the Battle of Caporetto, and the reunited couple flee Italy by crossing the border into Switzerland. There, however, Catherine and her baby die during childbirth, and Henry is left desolate at the loss of the great love of his life.

Hemingway's love of Spain and his passion for bullfighting resulted in "*Death in the Afternoon*" (1932), a learned study of a spectacle he saw more as tragic ceremony than as sport. Similarly, a safari he took in 1933-34 in the big-game region of Tanganyika resulted in "*The Green Hills of Africa*" (1935), an account of big-game hunting. A minor novel of 1937 called "*To Have and Have Not*" is about a Caribbean desperado and is set against a background of lower-class violence and upper-class decadence in Key West during the Great Depression.

By now Spain was in the midst of civil war. Still deeply attached to that country, Hemingway made 4 trips there as a correspondent. The harvest of Hemingway's considerable experience of Spain in war and peace was the novel "*For Whom the Bell Tolls*" (1940), a substantial and impressive work that some critics consider his finest novel, in preference to "*A Farewell to Arms*". Set during the Spanish Civil War, it tells of Robert Jordan, an American volunteer who is sent to join a guerrilla band behind the Nationalist lines in the Guadarrama Mountains. Most of the novel concerns Jordan's relations with the varied personalities of the band, including the girl Maria, with whom he falls in love. Through dialogue, flashbacks, and stories, Hemingway offers telling and vivid profiles of the Spanish character and unsparingly depicts the cruelty and inhumanity stirred up by the civil war. Jordan's mission is to blow up a strategic bridge near Segovia in order to aid a coming Republican attack, which he

realizes is doomed to fail. In an atmosphere of impending disaster, he blows up the bridge but is wounded and makes his retreating comrades leave him behind, where he prepares a last-minute resistance to his Nationalist pursuers.

All of his life Hemingway was fascinated by war - in "*A Farewell to Arms*" he focused on its pointlessness, in "*For Whom the Bell Tolls*" on the comradeship it creates - and, as World War II progressed, he made his way to London as a journalist. Following the war in Europe, Hemingway returned to his home in Cuba and began to work seriously again. He also traveled widely, and, on a trip to Africa, he was injured in a plane crash.

In 1953 he received the Pulitzer Prize in fiction for "*The Old Man and the Sea*" (1952), a short heroic novel about an old Cuban fisherman who, after an extended struggle, hooks and boats a giant marlin only to have it eaten by voracious sharks during the long voyage home. This book, which played a role in gaining for Hemingway the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954, was as enthusiastically praised as his previous novel, "*Across the River and into the Trees*" (1950), the story of a professional army officer who dies while on leave in Venice, had been damned.

By 1960 Hemingway had left Cuba and settled in Ketchum, Idaho. He tried to lead his life and do his work as before. For a while he succeeded, but, anxiety-ridden and depressed, he was twice hospitalized at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where he received electroshock treatments. Two days after his return to the house in Ketchum, he took his life with a shotgun.

### **Hemingway's Style of Writing. Iceberg Theory**

Hemingway's characters plainly embody his own values and view of life. The main characters of "*The Sun Also Rises*", "*A Farewell to Arms*", and "*For Whom the Bell Tolls*" are young men whose strength and self-confidence nevertheless coexist with a sensitivity that leaves them deeply scarred by their wartime experiences. War was for Hemingway a potent symbol of the world, which he viewed as complex, filled with moral ambiguities, and offering almost unavoidable pain, hurt, and destruction. To survive in such a world, and perhaps emerge victorious, one must conduct oneself with honor, courage, endurance, and dignity, a set of principles known as "the Hemingway code". To behave well in the lonely, losing battle with life is to show "grace under pressure" and constitutes in itself a kind of victory, a theme clearly established in "*The Old Man and the Sea*".

Hemingway's prose style was probably the most widely imitated of any in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He wished to strip his own use of language of inessentials, ridding it of all traces of verbosity, embellishment, and sentimentality. In striving to be as objective and honest as possible, Hemingway hit upon the device of describing a series of actions by using short, simple sentences from which all comment or emotional rhetoric has been eliminated. These sentences are composed largely of nouns and verbs, have few adjectives and adverbs, and rely on repetition and rhythm for much of their effect. The resulting terse, concentrated prose is concrete and unemotional yet is often resonant and capable of conveying great irony through understatement. Hemingway's use of dialogue was similarly fresh, simple, and natural-sounding. The influence of this style

was felt worldwide wherever novels were written, particularly from the 1930s through the '50s.

A consummately contradictory man, Hemingway achieved a fame surpassed by few, if any, American authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The virile nature of his writing, which attempted to re-create the exact physical sensations he experienced in wartime, big-game hunting, and bullfighting, in fact masked an aesthetic sensibility of great delicacy. He was a celebrity long before he reached middle age, but his popularity continues to be validated by serious critical opinion.

**“The Iceberg Theory”** is the writing style of Ernest Hemingway. Influenced by his journalistic career, Hemingway contended that by omitting superfluous and extraneous matter, writing becomes more interesting. When he became a writer of short stories, he retained this minimalistic style, focusing on surface elements without explicitly discussing the underlying themes. Hemingway believed the true meaning of a piece of writing should not be evident from the surface story, rather, the crux of the story lies below the surface and should be allowed to shine through. Critics such as Jackson Benson claim that his *iceberg theory*, also known as *the theory of omission*, in combination with his distinctive clarity of writing, functioned as a means to distance himself from the characters he created.

Hemingway summarizes his theory as follows: “If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only 1/8 of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing”.

### **“A Farewell to Arms” (1929)**

*“A Farewell to Arms”* is a novel set during the Italian campaign of World War I. The book, published in 1929, is a 1<sup>st</sup>-person account of American Frederic Henry, serving as a Lieutenant (“Tenente”) in the ambulance corps of the Italian Army. The title is taken from a poem by 16<sup>th</sup>-century English dramatist George Peele.

The novel is divided into five books. It is about a love affair between the expatriate American Henry and Catherine Barkley against the backdrop of the World War I, cynical soldiers, fighting and the displacement of populations. The publication of *“A Farewell to Arms”* cemented Hemingway's stature as a modern American writer, became his 1<sup>st</sup> best-seller, and is described by biographer Michael Reynolds as “the premier American war novel from that debacle World War I”.

### **“The Old Man and the Sea” (1952)**

*“The Old Man and the Sea”* is a short novel written in 1951 in Bimini, Bahamas, and published in 1952. It was the last major work of fiction by Hemingway that was published during his lifetime. One of his most famous works, it tells the story of Santiago, an aging Cuban fisherman who struggles with a giant marlin far out in the Gulf Stream off the coast of Florida. In 1953, *“The Old Man and the Sea”* was awarded

the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and it was cited by the Nobel Committee as contributing to their awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Hemingway in 1954.

“*The Old Man and the Sea*” served to reinvigorate Hemingway's literary reputation and prompted a reexamination of his entire body of work. The novel was initially received with much popularity; it restored many readers' confidence in Hemingway's capability as an author. Its publisher, Scribner's, on an early dust jacket, called the novel a "new classic," and many critics favorably compared it with such works as William Faulkner's “*The Bear*” and Herman Melville's “*Moby-Dick*”.

### **“Fiesta” or “The Sun Also Rises” (1926)**

The novel “*Fiesta*” (“*The Sun Also Rises*”) was written by Hemingway within a few months. This literary piece is based on real events from the author's life: his 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to Pamplona bullfight in 1925 with his friends and rivals seeking love of Lady Daff Twisden. The latter became the inspiration for Lady Brett Ashley, novel's main heroine.

Novel's artistic problems are defined by two epigraphs: on the lost generation and on the cycle nature of all things. The main characters of the novel are young people who survived World War I having been seriously injured and having lost their spiritual life values. As it is usual with Hemingway, a developed criticism of the problem is absent here. A life-wise reader is supposed to understand everything without explanation. Hemingway is famously laconic when speaking about important issues. He avoids detailed descriptions and tends rather to enumerate things and events than to introduce their multifaceted revelations. The characters' dialogues are very laconic and quite clear. For instance, Jake's and Brett's feelings for each other can be clearly seen from these 4 simple phrases:

“It's good to see each other.”

“No. I don't think it is.”

“Don't you want to?”

“I have to.”

### **Study Questions:**

1. To what extent Hemingway's life influenced his novels and stories? Prove your answer with examples from his books.
2. Explain what Iceberg Theory means.

#### **“A Farewell to Arms”:**

1. What could Henry mean by thinking, "Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the number of regiments and the dates"? How does this statement relate to the ethics of the prose style of the story?
2. What is the effect of Henry's description of battle? What information do and don't we get? How does this statement compare with other descriptions of warfare you may be familiar with?

#### **“The Old Man and the Sea”:**

1. Describe Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago's relationship with the sea.



2. Is Santiago a prideful man? Why or why not?
3. How does Santiago embody Hemingway's ideals for manhood?
4. In your opinion, is Santiago successful as a fisherman? Why or why not?
5. Discuss Santiago's obsession with being a worthy adversary for the marlin.
6. What is Santiago's view of his own sinfulness?
7. Discuss the importance of the sense of sight to the characters in the novella.
8. How is the figure of Joe DiMaggio used to emphasize Santiago's respect for nature?

**“The Sun Also Rises”:**

1. In what ways are the male and female characters in the novel similar? How are they different? What might Hemingway be saying about love in the post-war world?
2. Compare and contrast Cohn, Mike, and Jake. Consider their wartime experiences, relationships with women, etc. How are they similar? Different?
3. Is Brett a sympathetic character?
4. Is it possible to generalize about whether the characters that served in WWI (Jake, Bill, Mike, the Count, Brett) are different from Cohn, who did not?
5. How would *The Sun Also Rises* be similar or different if narrated by a character other than Jake? How would Cohn tell the story? Brett? Mike?

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**9.3. F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940). “The Great Gatsby”. “May Day”. “The Rich Boy”. “Babylon Revisited”. The Age of Jazz. Break of American Dream**

**Primary Works:** “*This Side of Paradise*” (1920), “*Flappers and Philosophers*” (1921), “*The Beautiful and the Damned*” (1922), “*Tales of the Jazz Age*”, collection (1922):

"*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*", "*The Great Gatsby*" (1925), "*All the Sad Young Men*", collection (1926): "*Rich Boy*", "*Absolution*"; "*Tender is the Night*" (1934).

### **A Brief Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald**

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (September 24, 1896, St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S. – December 21, 1940, Hollywood, California), American short-story writer and novelist famous for his depictions of the Jazz Age (the 1920s), his most brilliant novel being "*The Great Gatsby*" (1925). His private life, with his wife, Zelda, in both America and France, became almost as celebrated as his novels.

Fitzgerald was the only son of an unsuccessful, aristocratic father and an energetic, provincial mother. As a result, he had typically ambivalent American feelings about American life, which seemed to him at once vulgar and dazzlingly promising. He also had an intensely romantic imagination, what he once called "a heightened sensitivity to the promises of life". At both St. Paul Academy and Newman School he tried too hard and made himself unpopular, but at Princeton he came close to realizing his dream of a brilliant success. He became a prominent figure in the literary life of the university and made lifelong friendships with Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop. He became a leading figure in the socially important *Triangle Club*, a dramatic society.

In November 1917 he left to join the army. In July 1918, while he was stationed near Montgomery, Alabama, he met Zelda Sayre, the daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court judge. They fell deeply in love, and, as soon as he could, Fitzgerald headed for New York determined to achieve instant success and to marry Zelda.

"*This Side of Paradise*" was a revelation of the new morality of the young; it made Fitzgerald famous. This sudden prosperity made it possible for him and Zelda to play the roles they were so beautifully equipped for, and Ring Lardner called them the prince and princess of their generation. Though they loved these roles, they were frightened by them, too, as the ending of Fitzgerald's 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, "*The Beautiful and Damned*" (1922), shows. "*The Beautiful and Damned*" describes a handsome young man and his beautiful wife, who gradually degenerate into a shopworn middle age while they wait for the young man to inherit a large fortune. Ironically, they finally get it, when there is nothing of them left worth preserving. To escape the life that they feared, in 1924 the Fitzgeralds moved to the Riviera, where they found themselves a part of a group of American expatriates whose style was largely set by Gerald and Sara Murphy; Fitzgerald described this society in his last completed novel, "*Tender Is the Night*", and modeled its hero on Gerald Murphy.

Considered today as one of the major prose stylist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Fitzgerald celebrates the boom of the 1920s and the crash of the 1930s. His themes combine the hollowness of the American worship of riches and the never-ending dream of love, splendor, and glory. Shortly after their arrival in France, Fitzgerald completed his most brilliant novel, "*The Great Gatsby*" (1925). All of his divided nature is in this novel, the naive Midwesterner afire with the possibilities of the "American Dream" in its hero, Jay Gatsby, and the compassionate Yale gentleman in its narrator, Nick Carraway. "*The Great Gatsby*" is the most profoundly American novel of its time; at its conclusion,

Fitzgerald connects Gatsby's dream, his "Platonic conception of himself", with the dream of the discoverers of America.

Some of Fitzgerald's finest short stories appeared in "*All the Sad Young Men*" (1926), particularly "*The Rich Boy*" and "*Absolution*," but it was not until 8 years later that another novel appeared.

The next decade of the Fitzgeralds' lives was disorderly and unhappy. Fitzgerald began to drink too much, and Zelda had 2 mental breakdowns in 1930 and in 1932, from which she never fully recovered. Fitzgerald did not finish his next novel, "*Tender Is the Night*", until 1934. It is the story of a psychiatrist who marries one of his patients, who, as she slowly recovers, exhausts his vitality until he is, in Fitzgerald's words, *un homme épuisé* ("a man used up"). This is Fitzgerald's most moving book, though it was commercially unsuccessful. By 1937, however, he had come back far enough to become a scriptwriter in Hollywood, and there he met and fell in love with Sheilah Graham, a famous Hollywood gossip columnist. For the rest of his life - except for occasional drunken spells when he became bitter and violent - Fitzgerald lived quietly with her. In October 1939 he began a novel about Hollywood, "*The Last Tycoon*". The career of its hero, Monroe Stahr, is based on that of the producer Irving Thalberg. This is Fitzgerald's final attempt to create his dream of the promises of American life and of the kind of man who could realize them. In the intensity with which it is imagined and in the brilliance of its expression, it is the equal of anything Fitzgerald ever wrote, and it is typical of his luck that he died of a heart attack with his novel only half-finished.

### **"*The Great Gatsby*" (1925)**

F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, "*The Great Gatsby*", follows Jay Gatsby, a man who orders his life around one desire: to be reunited with Daisy Buchanan, the love he lost 5 years earlier. Gatsby's quest leads him from poverty to wealth, into the arms of his beloved, and eventually to death. "*The Great Gatsby*" is a classic piece of American fiction. It is a novel of triumph and tragedy, noted for the remarkable way Fitzgerald captured a cross-section of American society.

The 3 most important aspects of "*The Great Gatsby*":

1. Nick Carraway is the narrator, or storyteller, of "*The Great Gatsby*", but he is not the story's protagonist, or main character. Instead, Jay Gatsby is the protagonist of the novel that bears his name. Tom Buchanan is the book's antagonist, opposing Gatsby's attempts to get what he wants: Tom's wife Daisy.

2. From the gold hat mentioned in the novel's epigram to the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, "*The Great Gatsby*" is filled with things that are gold and green: the colors of money.

3. There are 2 kinds of wealth in "*The Great Gatsby*": the inherited wealth of Daisy and Tom Buchanan, and the newly acquired wealth of Gatsby. The 1<sup>st</sup> kind comes with social standing and protects the Buchanans from punishment, as Daisy literally gets away with murder. Gatsby's kind of wealth, though considerable, leaves its owner vulnerable.

### **"*May Day*" (1922)**

“*May Day*” is a short story. The setting of the story is taken from the May Day riots of 1919 in Ohio, which resulted in 2 deaths and over 100 arrests. The nature of the riot was political: a dispute arose over the use of the Socialist flag by some protesters.

The 3 individual stories dovetail into each other to present a scene across the city of New York: the story of Sterrett, the story of the newspaper offices, and the story of Key and Rose. Each scene links carefully with the next, showing in the imaginative skill of the author the careful construction of a script writer, who meshes together disparate scenes to make a cohesive whole. We see across the democratic whole of American society, and are shown the lowest of each class at the hands of the great leveler: alcohol.

The theme of the text is the conflict between rich and poor.

The introduction of the text is written in high-flown style. The setting is New York City at the end of the World War I. The author shows pathos and triumph which is typical to chronicles and epic narrations with the help of different figures of speech, so he uses a lot of stylistic devices, such as epithets - great and vivid city, triumphal arches, resonant wind of the brasses; inversion - “there had been a war fought and won...”, “thrown flowers of white, red and rose”.

The next part is narrated in the form of dialogue between two young friends. It is full of shortenings such as it’s, I’m, you’d, you’ll, I’ve, won’t, and, and vulgarisms: Every God damn thing..., I’ve made a hell of.... It is told in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. Fitzgerald likes to include a lot of dialogue, not only to keep the reader’s attention, but also to elaborate on what was taking place throughout the story and give a more in-depth look into the lives of the characters in the story.

The author introduced to a wide range of characters, though really there are only two types: the fortunate and the unlucky. He represented them in a contrast. They are described indirectly through their actions, speech, thoughts, appearance.

In conclusion we can mention that F. Scott Fitzgerald is considered a member of the ‘Lost Generation,’ and key terms of Fitzgerald’s works - Jazz Age, Lost Generation and American Dream. The main idea depicts it. This idea is the basis for such phenomenon in American culture as American dream.

### **“*The Rich Boy*” (1926)**

“*The Rich Boy*” was Fitzgerald’s 1<sup>st</sup> serious work after “*The Great Gatsby*”. It appeared in the “*Red Book*” in 1926, and was included in his most famous collection of stories, “*All the Sad Young Men*”, published in the same year. Like “*The Great Gatsby*”, to which it is closely akin in several respects, “*The Rich Boy*” shows us Fitzgerald at the top of his powers, and at the same time in his most characteristic and historically important role - as a critic of the American worship of wealth. Here, as in *Gatsby*, the author probes with remarkable sympathy and insight into the psychology of the very rich.

“*The Rich Boy*” is a study of the effect of large amounts of money on the character of a young man; it contains, on the 1<sup>st</sup> page, Fitzgerald’s famous statement about the born rich: “They are different from you and me”. The essential idea of the story is that hereditary wealth creates a complacency and self-satisfaction in the rich that ruins

them for contact with the reality of life; their crack-up generally comes in the form of a love affair, since true human affection is one of the few things that cannot be bought.

Anson, the hero, is effortlessly successful in his early life as a Yale student, as a Naval aviator, and as a broker and speculator on Wall Street. But he falls in love with 'a conservative and rather proper girl', Paula Lagendre, who after a long courtship rejects him because of his lack of character. Anson, turned cynical by the experience, dabbles in a purely physical affair with the social climber Dolly Karger, but finds that nothing satisfies him, not even his success in the financial world. At the end of the story he reencounters Paula, now happily married and a mother, and realizes for the 1<sup>st</sup> time the extent of the happiness he has missed. A counterplot relates the jealousy of the happiness of his Aunt Edna and her lover Cary Sloane; he eventually drives Sloane to suicide by threatening to expose him".

In this story Fitzgerald addressed himself directly to the matter of "the very rich", and the subtle revelation that the story makes through the character of Anson Hunter, and that a summary statement such as this can only debase, is that not only does their 'carelessness' serve to be brutally destructive of others, but that their ease and pride and self-sufficiency prevent their own fulfillment in human relationships, numb the capacity for love, make personal commitment impossible.

### ***"Babylon Revisited" (1931)***

*"Babylon Revisited"* is the story of a Charlie Wales, a former drunken party-goer who returns to Paris, the site of his former 1920s debauchery, shortly after the stock market crash of 1929. Charlie sees his world with new sober eyes and is both shocked and appalled by the extravagance that characterized his former life. The story is rooted in the financial crisis of its times. Fitzgerald wrote the piece in December of 1930, when the good times of the *Jazz Age* (also called the *"Roaring Twenties"*) had come to an end and America was headed into the Great Depression. Charlie's horror with his own former waste and self-destruction is Fitzgerald's condemnation of a society who drank away the '20s.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. What qualities typify Fitzgerald's modern heroines? Illustrate your response with reference to 3 stories of *"May Day"*.
2. How does Fitzgerald use setting to illustrate contrasts within his stories?
3. F. Scott Fitzgerald has been called one of the great stylists in American fiction. Discuss the prose style, structure, and point of view in *"Babylon Revisited"*.
4. In *"Babylon Revisited"*, how convincing is Charlie Wales in his insistence that he has changed his ways?
5. What view of the social climate in the Jazz age is presented in the stories *"Crazy Sunday"*, *"The Lost Decade"* and *"Babylon Revisited"*?
6. What realistic themes are explored in the fantasy story *"The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"*?
7. How is the film industry portrayed in the short stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald?

### **“Great Gatsby”:**

1. Analyze Fitzgerald's conception of the American Dream. Does he view it as totally dead, or is it possible to revive it?
2. Is Nick a reliable narrator? How does his point of view color the reality of the novel, and what facts or occurrences would he have a vested interest in obscuring?
3. Trace the use of the color white in the novel. When does it falsify a sense of innocence? When does it symbolize true innocence?
4. What does the green light symbolize to Gatsby? To Nick?
5. How does Fitzgerald juxtapose the different regions of America? Does he write more positively about the East or the Midwest?
6. In what ways are Wilson and Gatsby similar? Dissimilar? Who is Nick more sympathetic to?
7. Is Tom most responsible for Gatsby's death? Daisy? Myrtle? Gatsby himself? Give reasons why or why not each character is implicated in the murder.

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### **9.4. John Dos Passos (1896-1970). The “U.S.A.” Trilogy. The Theme of the South. “Manhattan Transfer”. Polyphonic Montageroman**

**Primary Works:** “One Man's Initiation: 1917” (1920), “Three Soldiers” (1921-1912), “A Pushcart at the Curb” (1922), “Rosinante to the Road Again” (1922), “Streets of Night” (1923), “Manhattan Transfer” (1925), “Facing the Chair” (1927), “Orient Express” (1927), “U.S.A.” trilogy (1938): “The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel” (1930) - “Nineteen Nineteen” (1932) - “The Big Money” (1936), “Tour of Duty” (1946), “The Ground We Stand On” (1949), “District of Columbia” trilogy (1952): “Adventures of a Young Man” (1939) - “Number One” (1943) - “The Grand Design” (1949), “Chosen Country” (1951),

*“Most Likely to Succeed”* (1954), *“The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson”* (1954), *“The Theme Is Freedom”* (1956), *“The Men Who Made the Nation”* (1957), *“The Great Days”* (1958), *“Prospects of a Golden Age”* (1959), *“Midcentury”* (1961), *“Mr. Wilson’s War”* (1962), *“Brazil on the Move”* (1963), *“The Best Times: An Informal Memoir”* (1966), *“The Shackles of Power”* (1966), *“The Portugal Story”* (1969). *“Easter Island: Island of Enigmas”* (1970).

### **A Brief Biography of John Dos Passos**

John Roderigo Dos Passos (January 14, 1896 – September 28, 1970) was an American novelist and artist active in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Chicago, Illinois, he graduated from Harvard College in 1916. He was well-traveled, visiting Europe and the Middle East, where he learned about literature, art, and architecture. During World War I he was a member of the American Volunteer Motor Ambulance Corps in Paris and in Italy, later joining the U.S. Army Medical Corps.

In 1920 his 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *“One Man’s Initiation: 1917”*, was published, and in 1925 his novel, *“Manhattan Transfer”*, became a commercial success. In 1928, he went to Russia to study socialism, and later became a leading participator in the 1<sup>st</sup> American Writers Congress (1935) sponsored by League of American Writers. He was in Spain in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War, and led to severing his relationship with fellow writer Ernest Hemingway.

Dos Passos is best known for his *“U.S.A.”* trilogy, which consists of the novels *“The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel”* (1930), *“1919”* (1932), and *“The Big Money”* (1936). In 1998, the Modern Library ranked the *“U.S.A.”* Trilogy 23<sup>rd</sup> on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

An artist as well as a novelist, Dos Passos created his own cover art for his books, was influenced by the Modernist Movement in 1920s Paris, and continued to paint throughout his lifetime. He died on September 28, 1970, in Baltimore.

### **The *“U.S.A.”* Trilogy (1938)**

The *“U.S.A.”* trilogy is a major work of John Dos Passos, comprising the novels *“The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel”* (1930), *“1919”* (1932), and *“The Big Money”* (1936). The 3 books were 1<sup>st</sup> published together in a single volume titled *“U.S.A.”* by Harcourt Brace in January 1938. Dos Passos had added a prologue with the title *“U.S.A.”* to the *Modern Library* edition of *“The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel”* published the previous November, and the same plates were used by Harcourt Brace for the trilogy.

The trilogy employs an experimental technique, incorporating 4 narrative modes: fictional narratives telling the life stories of 12 characters; collages of newspaper clippings and song lyrics labeled *Newsreel*; individually labeled short biographies of public figures of the time such as Woodrow Wilson and Henry Ford and fragments of autobiographical stream of consciousness writing labeled *Camera Eye*. The trilogy covers the historical development of American society during the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1998, the *Modern Library* ranked *“U.S.A.”* 23<sup>rd</sup> on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 4 narrative modes:

1. In the fictional narrative sections, the “U.S.A.” trilogy relates the lives of 12 characters as they struggle to find a place in American society during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each character is presented to the reader from their childhood on and in free indirect speech. While their lives are separate, characters occasionally meet. Some minor characters whose point of view is never given crop up in the background, forming a kind of bridge between the characters.

2. “*The Camera Eye*” sections are written in ‘*stream of consciousness*’ and are an autobiographical *Künstlerroman* of Dos Passos, tracing the author's development from a child to a politically committed writer. *Camera Eye 50* arguably contains the most famous line of the trilogy, when Dos Passos states upon the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti: “all right we are two nations.”

3. The *Newsreels* consist of front page headlines and article fragments from the *Chicago Tribune* for “*The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel*”, the *New York World* for “1919” and “*The Big Money*”, as well as lyrics from popular songs. *Newsreel 66*, preceding *Camera Eye 50*, announcing the Sacco and Vanzetti verdict, contains the lyrics of “*The Internationale*”.

4. The biographies are accounts of historical figures. The most often anthologized of these biographies is “*The Body of an American*”, which tells the story of an unknown soldier who was killed in World War I which concludes “1919”.

The separation between these narrative modes is rather a stylistic than a thematic one. Some critics have pointed out connections between the fictional character Mary French in “*The Big Money*” and journalist Mary Heaton Vorse, calling into question the strict separation between fictional characters and biographies. Coherent quotes from newspaper articles are often woven into the biographies as well, calling into question the strict separation between them and the “*Newsreel*” sections. The fragmented narrative style of the trilogy later influenced the work of British science-fiction novelist John Brunner.

Dos Passos portrays the everyday situations of the characters before, during, and after World War I, with special attention to the social and economic forces that drive them. Those characters who pursue “the big money” without scruple succeed, but are dehumanized by success. Others are destroyed, crushed by capitalism, and ground underfoot. Dos Passos does not show much sympathy for upwardly mobile characters who succeed, but is always sympathetic to the down and out victims of capitalist society. He explores the difficulty faced by winners and losers alike when trying to make a stable living for themselves as well as wanting to settle down in some means.

#### “*Manhattan Transfer*” (1925)

“*Manhattan Transfer*” is a seminal American novel, and yet it is not widely read. John Dos Passos is perennially overlooked in the literary canon in favor of his contemporaries Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Dos Passos was friends with Hemingway and his writing, in turn, has much in common with Fitzgerald's exuberant prose, particularly in its treatment of color and smell and its focus on the surfaces of modern life - the popular songs, the posters, the pin-ups, the ads, the trends.



Yet, for whatever reason, Dos Passos has never achieved the kind of far-reaching popular awareness and critical acclaim Hemingway and Fitzgerald have.

Though best known for his “U.S.A.” trilogy, Dos Passos's 1<sup>st</sup> masterpiece, and the novel which sealed his reputation, is “*Manhattan Transfer*”. As a result of this work, Sinclair Lewis and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others, lavished praise on Dos Passos. Sartre even went so far as to proclaim him, in the 1930s, the greatest writer of the era. Novel’s vignettes, its tapestry of a narrative, its insistently nonlinear structure, and its juxtaposition of prose and poetic forms, proved hugely influential. Though it met with mixed reviews when published in November 1925 by Harper & Brothers, Lewis declared “*Manhattan Transfer*” - “the foundation of a whole new school of novel-writing”.

Indeed, though the influences of Joyce, Cendrars, Flaubert, Zola, Baudelaire, and Eliot on Dos Passos were evident, nothing quite like “*Manhattan Transfer*” - a novel which attempts to do the impossible, that is encompass an entire city and an entire era - had ever been seen. The breadth of its vision and the depth of its concerns distinguish it, along with Dos Passos's jazz-inspired writing style. Along with “U.S.A.” it was one of the milestones of Dos Passos's lengthy and illustrious career, and it is one of the landmarks of American fiction.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What 2 communications media influenced John Dos Passos’s technique in his novels? How successful do you consider these innovations?
2. Is it possible to justify Dos Passos’s relative inattention to character development in his fiction?
4. How does Dos Passos unify the multifarious contents of “U.S.A.”?
5. Analyze Dos Passos's style. Choose any one of the short vignettes involving a nameless character or set of characters, and examine the following: diction, syntax, rhythm, structure, use of poetic devices, ellipsis, and imagery. Explicate the passage as if it were a poem unto itself.
6. “*Manhattan Transfer*” bears many similarities to T.S. Eliot's “*The Waste Land*”. To what extent can the novel be described as poetry? Examine the ways in which Dos Passos blurs the lines between prose and poetry.

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### **9.5. William Faulkner (1897-1962). The Snopes Novels. “*The Sound and The Fury*”. “*A Rose for Emily*”**

**Primary Works:** “*The Marble Faun*” (1924), “*Soldier's Pay*” (1926), “*Mosquitoes*” (1927), “*Sartoris*” (1929), “*The Sound and the Fury*” (1929), “*As I Lay Dying*” (1930), “*Sanctuary*” (1931), “*These 13*” (1931), “*Light in August*” (1932), “*Doctor Martino and*

*Other Stories*” (1934), “*Pylon*” (1935), “*Absalom, Absalom!*” (1936), “*The Unvanquished*” (1938), “*The Wild Palms*” (1939), *The Snopes Clan Novels*: “*The Hamlet*” (1940) - “*The Town*” (1957) - “*The Mansion*” (1959), “*Go Down, Moses*” (1942), “*Intruder in the Dust*” (1948), “*Knight's Gambit*” (1949), “*Collected Stories of William Faulkner*” (1950), “*Requiem for a Nun*” (1951), “*A Fable*” (1954), “*Big Woods*” (1955), “*The Reivers*” (1962).

### **A Brief Biography of William Faulkner**

*"I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past".*

W. Faulkner, in his 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

William Cuthbert Faulkner (September 25, 1897 – July 6, 1962) was an American writer and Nobel Prize laureate from Oxford, Mississippi. Faulkner wrote novels, short stories, a play, poetry, essays, and screenplays. He is primarily known for his novels and short stories set in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, based on Lafayette County, Mississippi, where he spent most of his life. Faulkner created an entire imaginative landscape, Yoknapatawpha County, mentioned in numerous novels, along with several families with interconnections extending back for generations. Yoknapatawpha County, with its capital, Jefferson, is closely modeled on Oxford, Mississippi, and its surroundings. Faulkner re-creates the history of the land and the various races - Indian, African-American, Euro-American, and various mixtures - who have lived on it. An innovative writer, Faulkner experimented brilliantly with narrative chronology, different points of view and voices (including those of outcasts, children, and illiterates), and a rich and demanding baroque style built of extremely long sentences full of complicated subordinate parts.

Faulkner is one of the most celebrated writers in American literature generally and Southern literature specifically. Though his work was published as early as 1919, and largely during the 1920s and 1930s, Faulkner was relatively unknown until receiving the 1949 *Nobel Prize in Literature*, for which he became the only Mississippi-born Nobel laureate. 2 of his works, “*A Fable*” (1954) and his last novel “*The Reivers*” (1962), won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. In 1998, the Modern Library ranked his novel “*The Sound and the Fury*” (1929) 6<sup>th</sup> on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; also on the list were “*As I Lay Dying*” (1930) and “*Light in August*” (1932). “*Absalom, Absalom!*” (1936) is often included on similar lists. “*The Sound and the Fury*” and “*As I Lay Dying*” are two modernist works experimenting with viewpoint and voice to probe southern families under the stress of losing a family member; “*Light in August*” is about complex and violent relations between a white woman and a black man; and “*Absalom, Absalom!*” is about the rise of a self-made plantation owner and his tragic fall through racial prejudice and a failure to love.

Most of these novels use different characters to tell parts of the story and demonstrate how meaning resides in the manner of telling, as much as in the subject at hand. The use of various viewpoints makes Faulkner more self-referential, or "reflexive," than Hemingway or Fitzgerald; each novel reflects upon itself, while it simultaneously unfolds a story of universal interest. Faulkner's themes are southern tradition, family, community, the land, history and the past, race, and the passions of ambition and love. He also created three novels focusing on the rise of a degenerate family, the Snopes clan: "*The Hamlet*" (1940), "*The Town*" (1957), and "*The Mansion*" (1959).

Winner of the 1949 *Nobel Prize for Literature*, Faulkner's recognition as a writer came years after he had written his best work. Today he is regarded as an important interpreter of the universal theme of "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself". Sometimes difficult to read, Faulkner experimented in the use of *stream-of-consciousness technique* and in the dislocation of narrative time. His fiction discusses issues of intimacy, class, race relations, and relations with nature.

### **The Snopes Clan Novels: "*The Hamlet*" (1940), "*The Town*" (1957), "*The Mansion*" (1959)**

Faulkner tells the story of the rise of the Snopes family through 3 novels. It is a stunning cycle of stories depicting the decay of the south as it is overtaken by new social values at odds with the past. At times the story is told by an apparent omniscient narrator. At others it is solely told from the perspective of specific voices, especially the attorney Gavin Stevens, his nephew Chick Mallison, and V.K. Ratcliff, a travelling salesman, vending sewing machines on the installment plan.

The Snopes clan arrives in Yoknapatawpha County in force in the late 1890s, although Faulkner gives us glimpses of the family in "*The Unvanquished*" and "*Sanctuary*". However, Faulkner's ultimate symbol of the changing south appears in the form of Flem Snopes in "*The Hamlet*". Consider Flem Snopes synonymous with amoral greed, the darkest side of capitalism. Flem will rise from sharecropper to banker over the span of 40 years. In an effort to portray himself as a respectable member of Jefferson society, he will rid the town of his own family members, using them for his own purposes until he discards them when they are no longer useful.

In addition to Flem, Faulkner creates more memorable Snopes: Mink, Wallstreet Panic, Montgomery Ward, and Clarence Eggleston Snopes. Then there is Eck Snopes, so innocent, so decent, that V.K. Ratcliff insists he could not have been a Snopes at all, surmising that Eck's mother had improved the family gene pool by trysting with someone outside the Snopes family.

On simple terms, the Snopes trilogy indicates that you can have love or money, but you can't have both. Flem's greatest opportunity comes from his marriage to Eula Varner after she becomes pregnant by a young man from one of the old aristocratic families. He will provide a name to a bastard child. However, he will never be Eula's lover. She will find that comfort from another source. Flem will accept playing the cuckold as long as it serves his purposes.

Gavin Stevens, his nephew Chick, and Ratliff will make it their mission to protect Jefferson from the Snopes clan. This trio represents the decency of democratic progress in the face of southern decay. These men are the moral foils to the amoral greed of Flem Snopes.

The Snopes novels have waxed and waned in their value in the Faulkner Canon through years of critical analysis. For this reader, these novels establish Faulkner's true place in postmodern literature. While maintaining the major aspects of southern literature in the use of legend, myth, time and place, Faulkner's County is a microcosm for a larger universe of human values.

### ***“The Sound and the Fury” (1929)***

*“The Sound and the Fury”* is a Southern Gothic modernist novel written by W. Faulkner. It employs a number of narrative styles, including the technique known as stream of consciousness, pioneered by 20<sup>th</sup> century European novelists such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Published in 1929, *“The Sound and the Fury”* was Faulkner's 4<sup>th</sup> novel, and was not immediately successful. In 1931, however, when Faulkner's 6<sup>th</sup> novel, *“Sanctuary”*, was published - a sensationalist story, which Faulkner later claimed was written only for money - *“The Sound and the Fury”* also became commercially successful, and Faulkner began to receive critical attention.

The novel is set in Jefferson, Mississippi. It centers on the Compson family, former Southern aristocrats who are struggling to deal with the dissolution of their family and its reputation. Over the course of the 30 years or so related in the novel, the family falls into financial ruin, loses its religious faith and the respect of the town of Jefferson, and many of them die tragically.

The novel is separated into 4 distinct sections. The 1<sup>st</sup>, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1928, is written from the perspective of Benjamin "Benjy" Compson, a cognitively disabled 33-year-old man. The characteristics of his disease are not clear, but it is hinted that he suffers from a developmental disability. Benjy's section is characterized by a highly disjointed narrative style with frequent chronological leaps. The 2<sup>nd</sup> section, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1910, focuses on Quentin Compson, Benjy's older brother, and the events leading up to his suicide. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> section, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1928, Faulkner writes from the point of view of Jason, Quentin's cynical younger brother. In the 4<sup>th</sup> and final section, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1928, Faulkner introduces a 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient point of view. The last section primarily focuses on Dilsey, one of the Compsons' black servants. Jason is also a focus in the section, but Faulkner presents glimpses of the thoughts and deeds of everyone in the family.

In 1945, Faulkner wrote a *“Compson Appendix”* to be included with future printings of *“The Sound and the Fury”*. It contains a 30-page history of the Compson family from 1699 to 1945.

The 4 parts of the novel relate many of the same episodes, each from a different point of view and therefore with emphasis on different themes and events. This interweaving and nonlinear structure makes any true synopsis of the novel difficult, especially since the narrators are all unreliable in their own way, making their accounts not necessarily trustworthy at all times. Also in this novel, Faulkner uses italics to

indicate points in each section where the narrative is moving into a significant moment in the past. The use of these italics can be confusing, however, as time shifts are not always marked by the use of italics, and periods of different time in each section do not necessarily stay in italics for the duration of the flashback.

The title of the novel is taken from Macbeth's famous soliloquy of act 5, scene 5 of William Shakespeare's "*Macbeth*":

*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*

Immediately obvious is the notion of a "tale told by an idiot", in this case Benjy, whose view of the Compsons' story opens the novel. The idea can be extended also to Quentin and Jason, whose narratives display their own varieties of idiocy. More to the point, the novel recounts the decline and death of a traditional upper-class Southern family, "the way to dusty death". The last line is, perhaps, the most meaningful; Faulkner said in his speech upon being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature that people must write about things that come from the heart, "universal truths". Otherwise they signify nothing.

*The Sound and the Fury* is a widely influential work of literature. Faulkner has been praised for his ability to recreate the thought process of the human mind. In addition, it is viewed as an essential development in the stream-of-consciousness literary technique. In 1998, the Modern Library ranked "*The Sound and the Fury*" 6<sup>th</sup> on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***"A Rose for Emily" (1930)***

Faulkner's most famous, most popular, and most anthologized short story, "*A Rose for Emily*" evokes the terms Southern gothic and grotesque, 2 types of literature in which the general tone is one of gloom, terror, and understated violence. The story is Faulkner's best example of these forms because it contains unimaginably dark images: a decaying mansion, a corpse, a murder, a mysterious servant who disappears.

Most discussions of the short story center on Miss Emily Grierson, an aristocratic woman deeply admired by a community that places her on a pedestal and sees her as "a tradition, a duty" - or, as the unnamed narrator describes her, "a fallen monument". In contrast to the community's view, we realize eventually that Miss Emily is a woman who not only poisons and kills her lover, Homer Barron, but she keeps his rotting corpse in her bedroom. The ending of the story emphasizes the length of time Miss Emily must have spent with her dead lover: long enough for the townspeople to find "a

long strand of iron-gray hair" lying on the pillow next to "what was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt" and displaying a "profound and fleshless grin."

The contrast between the aristocratic woman and her unspeakable secrets forms the basis of the story. Because the Griersons "held themselves a little too high for what they really were," Miss Emily's father forbids her to date socially, or at least the community thinks so: "None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such". She becomes so terribly desperate for human love that she murders Homer and keeps his dead body. Using her aristocratic position to cover up the murder, ironically she sentences herself to total isolation from the community, embracing the dead for solace.

Although our 1<sup>st</sup> reaction to the short story might be one of horror or disgust, Faulkner uses 2 literary techniques to create a seamless whole that makes the tale too intriguing to stop reading: the suspenseful, jumbled chronology of events, and the narrator's shifting point of view, which emphasizes Miss Emily's strength of purpose, her aloofness, and her pride, and lessens the horror and the repulsion of her actions.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Discuss the narrative structure of "*A Rose for Emily*". Why does Faulkner present the story's events in non-chronological order? Would the story be successful if he had told it in a strictly linear fashion? Why or why not?
2. Compare how the townspeople treat Miss Emily in "*A Rose for Emily*" and Miss Minnie in "*Dry September*".
3. In "*Dry September*", many characters comment on the weather. How does Faulkner characterize the weather? Does it affect people's actions in the story? Has it ever affected yours?
4. How is "*Spotted Horses*" an example of American Old Southwest humor?
5. How does Faulkner use animal imagery in "*Spotted Horses*"? Is it effective? Is it linked especially with any group of people?
6. In his Nobel Prize for literature acceptance speech, Faulkner says that humanity will endure. Do his short stories suggest this optimism? Which of the stories' characters most successfully endure their hardships? Which the least?
7. How does the location in a hunting camp function as an appropriate setting for the themes manifest in the story "*Delta Autumn*"? In what ways is Roth Edmonds meant to function as a representative of contemporary man? How is Uncle Ike different from his kinsman?
8. How many novels and stories are connected to the Snopes family? Why did Faulkner appeal to this clan stories from time to time?
9. In the form of whom does Faulkner's ultimate symbol of the changing south appear in the trilogy about the Snopes? Prove your answer by examples from the novels.

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### **9.6. The Literature of “Great Depression”**

*The Great Depression*, the longest, deepest, and most pervasive depression in American history, lasted from 1929 to 1939. Its effects were felt in virtually all corners of the world, and it is one of the great economic calamities in history.

Ultimately, literature changed a great deal during the *Great Depression*. Authors of the time had a limitless amount of source material to draw from in current events, from World War I to the *Roaring Twenties* to the *Great Depression* itself. While literature does evolve slowly and literary movements tend to last for several decades, the *Great Depression* saw an increasingly social-conscious authorship, most likely due to sympathy with the plight that was almost universally experienced, and also due to the fact that media and literature was being truly mainstreamed and mass produced at a level higher than ever before. The increase in public awareness due to radio innovation and advances in industry combined with the desire for escapism allowed for book sales to skyrocket astronomically, and authors had to take into account what the “average Joe” would want to read due to increased literacy and a more populated reader base. Reading for leisure was no longer restricted to the upper class and higher educated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All of these things playing together intricately led to the changes in literature during the *Great Depression*. 2 works describe the setting of the *Great Depression*. They are “*Of Mice and Men*” by John Steinbeck and “*America's Great Depression*” by Murray N. Rothbard.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. What was the impact of the *Great Depression* on American literature?
2. Name main authors and works of the *Great Depression* period.

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### 9.7. John Steinbeck (1902-1968). “*The Grapes of Wrath*”

**Primary Works:** “*Tortilla Flat*” (1935), “*Cup of Gold, a Life of Sir Henry Morgan, Buccaneer, with Occasional Reference to History*” (1936), “*Of Mice and Men*” (1937), “*In Dubious Battle*” (1939), “*The Grapes of Wrath*” (1939), “*Sea of Cortez*” (1941), “*Cannery Row*” (1945), “*The Red Pony*” (1945), “*The Pearl*” (1945), “*Sweet Thursday*” (1954), “*The Wayward Bus*” (1947), “*East of Eden*” (1952), “*The Pastures of Heaven*” (1956), “*The Long Valley*” (1956), “*The Winter of Our Discontent*” (1961), “*Travels with Charley; in Search of America*” (1962).

#### A Brief Biography of John Steinbeck

*"[The writer's 1<sup>st</sup> duty was to] set down his time as nearly as he can understand it [and serve as] the watch-dog of society... to satirize its silliness, to attack its injustices, to stigmatize its faults." "What we have always wanted is an unchangeable, and we have found that only a compass point, a thought, an individual ideal, does not change."*

J. Steinbeck. From headnote to “*Anthology of American Literature*” and from “*The Sea of Cortez*”.

John Steinbeck, in full John Ernst Steinbeck (February 27, 1902, Salinas, California, U.S. – December 20, 1968, N.Y., U.S.), American novelist, best known for “*The Grapes of Wrath*” (1939), which summed up the bitterness of the *Great Depression* decade and aroused widespread sympathy for the plight of migratory farmworkers. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1962.

Steinbeck attended Stanford University, California, intermittently between 1920 and 1926 but did not take a degree. Before his books attained success, he spent considerable time supporting himself as a manual laborer while writing, and his experiences lent authenticity to his depictions of the lives of the workers in his stories. He spent much of his life in Monterey County, California, which later was the setting of some of his fiction.

Steinbeck’s 1<sup>st</sup> novel, “*Cup of Gold*” (1929), was followed by “*The Pastures of Heaven*” (1932) and “*To a God Unknown*” (1933), none of which were successful. He 1<sup>st</sup> achieved popularity with “*Tortilla Flat*” (1935), an affectionately told story of Mexican Americans. The mood of gentle humor turned to one of unrelenting grimness in his next novel, “*In Dubious Battle*” (1936), a classic account of a strike by agricultural laborers and labor organizers who engineer it. The novella “*Of Mice and Men*” (1937),



which also appeared in play and film versions, is a tragic story about the strange, complex bond between 2 migrant laborers.

*"The Grapes of Wrath"* won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award and was made into a notable film in 1940. The novel is about the migration of a dispossessed family from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to California and describes their subsequent exploitation by a ruthless system of agricultural economics.

After the best-selling success of *"The Grapes of Wrath"*, Steinbeck went to Mexico to collect marine life with the freelance biologist Edward F. Ricketts, and the 2 men collaborated in writing *"Sea of Cortez"* (1941), a study of the fauna of the Gulf of California. During World War II Steinbeck wrote some effective pieces of government propaganda, among them *"The Moon Is Down"* (1942), a novel of Norwegians under the Nazis, and he also served as a war correspondent. His immediate postwar work - *"Cannery Row"* (1945), *"The Pearl"* (1947), and *"The Wayward Bus"* (1947) - contained the familiar elements of his social criticism but were more relaxed in approach and sentimental in tone.

Steinbeck's later writings, which include *"Travels with Charley: In Search of America"* (1962), about Steinbeck's experiences as he drove across the U.S., were interspersed with 3 conscientious attempts to reassert his stature as a major novelist: *"Burning Bright"* (1950), *"East of Eden"* (1952), and *"The Winter of Our Discontent"* (1961). In critical opinion, none equaled his earlier achievement. *"East of Eden"*, an ambitious epic about the moral relations between a California farmer and his 2 sons, was made into a film in 1955. Steinbeck himself wrote the scripts for the film versions of his stories *"The Pearl"* (1948) and *"The Red Pony"* (1949). Outstanding among the scripts he wrote directly for motion pictures were *"Forgotten Village"* (1941) and *"Viva Zapata!"* (1952).

Steinbeck's reputation rests mostly on the naturalistic novels with proletarian themes he wrote in the 1930s; it is in these works that his building of rich symbolic structures and his attempts at conveying mythopoeic and archetypal qualities in his characters are most effective.

### ***"The Grapes of Wrath" (1939)***

*"The Grapes of Wrath"* is an American realist novel by J. Steinbeck. The book won the National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize for fiction, and it was cited prominently when Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1962. Set during the *Great Depression*, the novel focuses on the Joads, a poor family of tenant farmers driven from their Oklahoma home by drought, economic hardship, agricultural industry changes and bank foreclosures forcing tenant farmers out of work. Due to their nearly hopeless situation, and in part because they are trapped in the Dust Bowl, the Joads set out for California. Along with thousands of other "Okies", they seek jobs, land, dignity, and a future. *"The Grapes of Wrath"* is frequently read in American high school and college literature classes due to its historical context and enduring legacy.

When preparing to write the novel, Steinbeck wrote: "I want to put a tag of shame on the greedy bastards who are responsible for this [the *Great Depression* and its effects]". He famously said, "I've done my damndest to rip a reader's nerves to rags".

This work won a large following among the working class due to Steinbeck's sympathy for the migrants and workers' movement, and his accessible prose style.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Discuss the significance of nature in Steinbeck's stories. Do animals have a symbolic function, helping the reader to understand the human characters?
2. What is the nature of John Steinbeck's medieval interest, especially in "*Tortilla Flat*"?
3. What is the basis of the friendship of George and Lennie in "*Of Mice and Men*"?
4. What factors led critics to downgrade Steinbeck's fiction after "*The Grapes of Wrath*"?
5. What conclusions about the U.S. does Steinbeck reach as a result of the journey described in "*Travels with Charley: In Search of America*"?

### **"The Grapes of Wrath":**

1. What is the purpose of the intercalary chapters?
2. How does the economic decline of the Joad family correspond to the disintegration of their family? Are the Joads typical migrant laborers?
3. Describe Tom's spiritual journey from inner, intuitive morality to an outward expression of morality that encompasses all of humanity.
4. Describe briefly the social and historical background in which "*The Grapes of Wrath*" was created. How did this affect the novel's public and critical reception? How has this reception changed as the historical events that shaped the novel have receded into the distant past?
5. Explain the symbolism of the turtle in Chapter 3 in "*The Grapes of Wrath*".

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### **9.8. Erskine Caldwell (1903-1987). "Tobacco Road"**

**Primary Works:** "*Poor Fool*" (1930), "*Tobacco Road*" (1932), "*God's Little Acre*" (1933), "*Journeyman*" (1935), "*Trouble in July*" (1940), "*The Sacrilege of Alan Kent*" (1936), "*North of the Danube*", with Margaret Bourke-White (1939), "*Say! Is This the*

*U.S.A.?* with Margaret Bourke-White (1941), *Georgia Boy* (1943), *Tragic Ground* (1944), *The Sure Hand of God* (1947), *Deep South* (1968), *With All My Might: An Autobiography* (1987).

### **A Brief Biography of Erskine Caldwell**

Erskine Caldwell (December 17, 1903, Coweta County, U.S. – April 11, 1987, Paradise Valley, Arizona) American author whose unadorned novels and stories about the rural poor of the American South mix violence and passion in grotesque tragicomedy. His works achieved a worldwide readership and were particularly esteemed in France and Russia.

Caldwell's father was a home missionary who moved frequently from church to church in the clay hills of central Georgia. While accompanying his father, Caldwell acquired a deep familiarity with the mentality and dialect of the impoverished sharecroppers that his father ministered to. He attended Erskine College, Due West, S.C., and the University of Virginia but did not graduate.

He settled in Maine in 1926, determined to work seriously as a writer of fiction. Fame arrived with *Tobacco Road* (1932), a highly controversial novel whose title grew to be a byword for rural squalor and degradation. A dramatization of *Tobacco Road* by Jack Kirkland in 1934 ran for 7,5 years on the New York stage and became a staple of the American theatre, with its tragicomic picture of Jeeter Lester, his family, and his neighbors. Caldwell's reputation as a novelist largely rests on *Tobacco Road* and on *God's Little Acre* (1933), another best-selling novel featuring a cast of hopelessly poor and degenerate whites in the rural South. Among his other more important works are *Trouble in July* (1940); the episodic narrative *Georgia Boy* (1943), a well-told story of boyhood; the literary autobiography *Call It Experience* (1951); and *In Search of Bisco* (1965).

Caldwell provided the text and his wife-to-be, Margaret Bourke-White, provided the photographs for a powerful documentary book about the rural South entitled *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937). They collaborated on 2 more such picture-and-text books on eastern European countries.

Caldwell worked overseas as a journalist during World War II, wrote screenplays in Hollywood, and continued to produce works of fiction and remembrance in the latter part of his career. Caldwell's later novels attracted little critical interest. Although his fellow - Southern Novelist W. Faulkner considered him among the 5 best contemporary American writers, most American critics generally have been more grudging in their praise.

### ***"Tobacco Road" (1932)***

*"Tobacco Road"* is tragicomic exposé of poverty and ignorance among a family of Georgia sharecroppers during the Depression. It establishes the paradox of Southern poor whites: They are lazy, amoral, shameless, and debased, but at the same time they are innocent, free, and uncontaminated by social hypocrisies. Jeeter Lester, the central character, derives an existential nobility from his unquestioning faith in God's

anticipated (but never realized) beneficence. As spring approaches, he lays plans to plow the fields, if by some miracle he can acquire a mule, seed cotton, and fertilizer. He has made that same plan - and failed to effect it - every year for the past 8, since the landowner left him to fend for himself against eroding soil and falling cotton prices. Lacking either credit or prospects, Jeeter cannot imagine himself apart from the land, so his only action is inaction. He dreams and sleeps, plots and starves, while life goes on unchanged.

The novel was included in *Life Magazine's* list of the 100 outstanding books of 1924-1944.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is background for E. Caldwell's works?
2. Can we say that the author changes his attitude to the rural South from his 1<sup>st</sup> works to the last ones? If you think "yes" - why? If you think "not" - why?

### **"Tobacco Road":**

1. Who is Lov? Why does the novel begin with Lov but quickly begins to revolve around the Lester family? What connection does Lov have with the Lester family? Why does he come to visit them in the beginning of the novel? Does this visit have the desired effect for Lov? Why or why not? Is Lov's problem ever truly solved? Explain.
2. Who is Jeeter Lester? Why is he living on this farm? Who owns the farm? Who once owned the farm? How is that ironic for Jeeter? What does this change in ownership in such a short amount of time say about Jeeter and his father? What does it say for the future of the Lester family? Will things ever change for this family?
3. Who is Sister Bessie Rice? Why does she become focused on Dude? Why does Bessie decide to marry Dude?

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## CHAPTER X. AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

### Plan:

10.1. Harlem Renaissance (1910-1930)

10.2. Langston Hughes. *“Not Without Laughter”*

10.3. Festus Claude McKay. *“America”*. *“Home to Harlem”*

10.4. Booker Taliaferro Washington (1856-1915). *“Up from Slavery”*

10.5. Zora Neale Hurston. *“Their Eyes Were Watching God”*

10.6. Richard Wright. *“Native Son”*. *“Black Boy”*

10.7. James Baldwin. *“Go Tell It on the Mountain”*

10.8. Ralph Waldo Ellison. *“Invisible Man”*

### 10.1. Harlem Renaissance (1910-1930)

*Harlem Renaissance* (HR) is the name given to the period from the end of World War I and through the middle of the 1930s Depression, during which a group of talented African-American writers produced a sizable body of literature in the 4 prominent genres of poetry, fiction, drama, and essay.

The notion of *“twoness”*, a divided awareness of one's identity, was introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the founders of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) and the author of the influential book *“The Souls of Black Folks”* (1903): “One ever feels his two-ness - an American, a Negro; 2 souls, 2 thoughts, 2 unreconciled stirrings: 2 warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder”.

Writers during the Harlem Renaissance that contributed to the 4 publications central to the movement were referred to as the *‘Harlem Renaissance Writers’*. The 4 publications included *“Opportunity”*, *“The Negro World”*, *“The Messenger”* and *“The Crisis”*.

Langston Hughes was a famous poet of the Harlem Renaissance responsible for writing the pieces *“The negro speaks of rivers”*, *“I too”* and *“The Weary Blues”*. Hughes became known as the *Poet Laureate of Harlem* for his work.

Some of the notable books that were written during the Harlem Renaissance by authors of this time include *“Home to Harlem”* (Claude McKay), *“Not Without Laughter”* (Langston Hughes), *“Black No More”* (George Schuyler) and *“Their Eyes Were Watching God”* (Zora Neale Hurston).

Common themes: alienation, marginality, the use of folk material, the use of the blues tradition, the problems of writing for an elite audience.

HR was more than just a literary movement: it included racial consciousness, “the back to Africa” movement led by Marcus Garvey, racial integration, the explosion of music particularly jazz, spirituals and blues, painting, dramatic revues, and others.

#### **Novels of the Harlem Renaissance:**

- Fauset, Jessie Redmon: *“There is Confusion”* (1924), *“Plum Bun”* (1928), *“The Chinaberry Tree”* (1931), *“Comedy, American Style”* (1933).
- Fisher, Rudolph: *“The Walls of Jericho”* (1928), *“The Conjure Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem”* (1932).

- Hughes, Langston: “*Not Without Laughter*” (1930).
- Hurston, Zora Neale: “*Jonah's Gourd Wine*” (1934), “*Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (1937).
- Larsen, Nella: “*Quicksand*” (1928), “*Passing*” (1929).
- McKay, Claude: “*Home to Harlem*” (1927), “*Banjo*” (1929), “*Gingertown*” (1931), “*Banana Bottom*” (1933).
- Schuyler, George: “*Black No More*” (1930), “*Slaves Today*” (1931).
- Thurman, Wallace: “*The Blacker the Berry; a Novel of Negro Life*” (1929), “*Infants of the Spring*” (1932), “*Interne, with Abraham I. Furman*” (1932).
- Toomer, Jean: “*Cane*” (1923).
- Van Vechten, Carl: “*Nigger Heaven*” (1926).
- Walrond, Eric: “*Tropic Death*” (1926).
- White, Walter: “*The Fire in the Flint*” (1924), “*Flight*” (1926).

### Study Questions:

1. Compile an overview of the genesis and development of the *Harlem Renaissance*.
2. What are the causes, events, and changes that brought along the *Harlem Renaissance*?
3. What historical factors influenced the writers of the *Harlem Renaissance*? Support your position.
4. Please explain how the *Harlem Renaissance* contributed to the cultural development of the entire American literature?
5. What is significant about the work of Zora Hurston during the Harlem Renaissance?
6. What role did Duke Ellington have in the *Harlem Renaissance*?
7. How did Modernism affect the literature of the *Harlem Renaissance*?
8. What was the difference between the *Harlem Renaissance* and the *Chicago Renaissance*?
9. What was the main theme of the *Harlem Renaissance*?
10. What is the significance of language and vocabulary in literature during the *Harlem Renaissance*?
11. How did Langston Hughes poems influence the *Harlem Renaissance*?

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5. Huggins, N.I. *Harlem Renaissance*. Oxford UP, 2011.

### 10.2. Langston Hughes (1902-1967). “*Not Without Laughter*”

**Primary Works:** *"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"*, poem (1921), *"Fine Cloths to the Jew"*, poem collection (1927), *"The Ways of White Folks"*, collection of short stories (1934), *"Mulatto"*, play (1935), *"The Big Sea"*, autobiography (1940), *"Laughing to Keep from Crying"* (1952), *"I Wonder as I Wander"*, autobiography (1956), *"Tambourines to Glory"* (1958), *"Not Without Laughter"* (1979). *Stories about Simple: "Simple Speaks His Mind" (1950) - Simple Takes a Wife (1953) - Simple Stakes a Claim (1957) - "The Best of Simple" (1961) - "Simple's Uncle Sam" (1965) - "The Simple Omnibus" (1978) - "The Return of Simple" (1994).*

### **A Brief Biography of Langston Hughes**

*"I knew only the people I had grown up with, and they weren't people whose shoes were always shined, who had been to Harvard, or who had heard Bach."*

L. Hughes

Langston Hughes, in full James Mercer Langston Hughes (February 1, 1902, Joplin, Missouri, U.S. – May 22, 1967, N.Y., U.S.) American writer who was an important figure in the *Harlem Renaissance* and made the African American experience the subject of his writings, which ranged from poetry and plays to novels and newspaper columns.

He was an only child raised by his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas. Langston rarely saw his parents. He had a rather lonesome upbringing because his grandmother wouldn't allow him to play outside with the other children after school. Instead, he was only able to read and do his school work. When Langston was 13 he moved to Lincoln, Illinois with his mother and her new husband. There Langston wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> poem and was declared class poet of his school.

In early 1921, a magazine sponsored by the NAACP entitled *The Brownie's Book* offered Hughes his 1<sup>st</sup> publishing opportunity. 2 of Hughes' poems, *"Winter Sweetness"* and *"Fairies"*. 6 months later, Hughes placed his well-known poem *"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"* in the NAACP's official journal, *The Crisis*. This would only be the beginning of Hughes' frequent and almost exclusive publications in *The Crisis*. One of the most prestigious awards Hughes received was the NAACP's Springarn Medal. He also won 1<sup>st</sup> prize for his poetry in an *Opportunity* magazine contest. Hughes' book *"Simple Speaks His Mind"* was his 1<sup>st</sup> best seller and his play *"Mulatto"* was the longest running Broadway play by an African American author.

Langston Hughes' work is known for its "colorful verses on a wide variety of topics." His works are heavily infused with the typical aspects of African American life and come alive on the page by his implementation of musical and blues rhythms. According to critics, these accounts of rhythm can be specifically accounted for in 2 of his primary works. As readers we are drawn with him into symbolic, ancestral reflections in *"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"* (1921) and into autobiographical accounts of his travels recorded later in *"The Big Sea"*. Sounds, particularly the musical quality of words, pulled him into the cultural repository of African American music where he used the blues for lyric poetry.

A few months after Hughes's graduation, *"Not Without Laughter"* (1930), his 1<sup>st</sup> prose volume, had a cordial reception. In the 1930s he turned his poetry more forcefully toward racial justice and political radicalism. He traveled in the American South in 1931 and decried the Scottsboro case; he then traveled widely in Russia, Haiti, Japan, and elsewhere and served as a newspaper correspondent during the Spanish Civil War. He published a collection of short stories, *"The Ways of White Folks"* (1934), and became deeply involved in theatre.

In 1940 Hughes published *"The Big Sea"*, his autobiography up to age 28. A 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of autobiography, *"I Wonder as I Wander"*, was published in 1956.

Hughes documented African American literature and culture in works such as *"A Pictorial History of the Negro in America"* (1956) and the anthologies *"The Poetry of the Negro"* (1949) and *"The Book of Negro Folklore"* (1958).

Hughes was the 1<sup>st</sup> African American author to support himself through his writing; he produced more than 60 books. He earned critical attention for his portrayal of realistic black characters and he became one of the dominant voices speaking out on issues concerning black culture. He wrote in many genres; starting and continuing with poetry, he turned to fiction, autobiographies, and children's books. His most famous fictional character is Jesse B. Semple, nicknamed Simple, who uses humor to protest and satirize the existing injustices.

Hughes refused to create fantasy stories about life. He wrote what he knew about and felt that was the way he had the most impact on his readers. Today, Hughes still maintains a presence in literary studies, history and core curriculum in the educational system. This presence itself, along with the impressive movement his work creates in each reader can attest to his true value and exceptional talent as a writer and poet. Furthermore, from the time of his literary arrival to the present, Langston Hughes has remained a key figure in the literature that is valued and recognized by most scholarly institutions today. It appears Hughes was aware and conscientious of his goal to make his life experiences and those experiences of other African Americans apparent in his literature and poetry. He took a realist's perspective towards expressing himself, like many of the other African American writers in his time and his talents were recognized and supported by the most renowned authors of the Harlem Renaissance period.

### ***"Not Without Laughter"* (1930).**

*"Not Without Laughter"* portrays African-American life in Kansas in the 1910s, focusing on the effects of class and religion on the community. The main storyline focuses on Sandy's "awakening to the sad and the beautiful realities of black life in a small Kansas town". The major intent of the novel is to portray Sandy's life as he tries to be the best he can be, aspiring to folks such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.

Hughes said that *"Not Without Laughter"* is semi-autobiographical, and that a good portion of the characters and setting included in the novel are based on his memories of growing up in Lawrence, Kansas: "I wanted to write about a typical Negro family in the Middle West, about people like those I had known in Kansas. But mine was not a typical Negro family".



### Study Questions:

1. Langston Hughes' central purpose in writing was, in his own words, "to explain and illuminate the Negro condition in America". How do his poems illustrate his attempt?
2. Discuss what Hughes's poetry tells a reader about his theory of poetry.
3. Traditional critics have not called Hughes's poetry modernist, and yet his poetry reflects modernism both in his themes, his use of the image, and in terms of style. Locate specific points where you can see Hughes's modernism and demonstrate it in an essay.
4. Discuss the plot of the "*Not Without Laughter*". Can we state that events of the book reflect the idea of the author?

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8. Watts, E.K. *Hearing the Hurt: Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and Politics of the New Negro Movement*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2012.

### 10.3. Festus Claude McKay (1889-1948). "America". "Home to Harlem"

**Primary Works:** "America" (1921), "Home to Harlem" (1928), "Banjo" (1929), "Banana Bottom" (1933), "Amiable with Big Teeth: A Novel of the Love Affair Between the Communists and the Poor Black Sheep of Harlem" (1941), "Gingertown", collection of short stories (1932), "A Long Way from Home", autobiographical book (1937), "My Green Hills of Jamaica", autobiographical book (1940), "Harlem: Negro Metropolis" (1940), "Harlem Shadows", poetry collection (1922), "Selected Poems" (1953), "If We Must Die", poem (1942).

### A Brief Biography of Festus Claude McKay

Festus Claudius "Claude" McKay (September 15, 1889 – May 22, 1948) was a Jamaican writer and poet, who was a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance. He wrote 4 novels: "*Home to Harlem*" (1928), a best-seller that won the Harmon Gold Award for Literature, "*Banjo*" (1929), "*Banana Bottom*" (1933), and in 1941 a manuscript called "*Amiable with Big Teeth: A Novel of the Love Affair Between the Communists and the Poor Black Sheep of Harlem*" which remained unpublished until 2017.

McKay also authored collections of poetry, a collection of short stories, "*Gingertown*" (1932), 2 autobiographical books, "*A Long Way from Home*" (1937) and "*My Green Hills of Jamaica*", and a non-fiction, socio-historical treatise entitled "*Harlem: Negro Metropolis*" (1940). His 1922 poetry collection, "*Harlem Shadows*", was among the 1<sup>st</sup> books published during the Harlem Renaissance. His "*Selected Poems*" was published posthumously, in 1953. He published 2 poems in 1917 under the pseudonym Eli Edwards while working on the railways. One of McKay's most well-known poems, was entitled "*If We Must Die*".

McKay's most famous work was published in 1928, "*Home to Harlem*". The novel described the street life in Harlem and would have great impact on Black intellectuals across the globe. However, not everyone was pleased with the book. W.E.B Du Bois did not like the novel because of its depictions of close relations and the night light displayed in it. However, the art in the book showcases the truth about the lives during that time about Black people.

Claude McKay divested himself from many aspects and growing prescriptions of modernism. McKay paved a path of his own as a modernist in 2 ways. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sonnet form had become an antiquated poetic style, but McKay found it an ideal a medium to convey his ideas. Many modernists, however, rejected and criticized his use of the sonnet. Despite their reaction, he persevered and created a significant number of modern sonnets. Moreover, the fascination with African art and its identification with female attractiveness in many of Claude McKay's most notable works was characteristic of modernist and avant-garde primitivism. But, sometimes, McKay critically recalled the experience in various ways. In doing so, he shined a critical light on a cornerstone of modernism and once again pushed back against a system in which he found himself.

McKay became an American citizen in 1940. He died from a heart attack at the age of 59. He is known for influencing other great writers such as James Baldwin and Richard Wright. McKay's poems challenged white authority while celebrating Jamaican culture. He also wrote tales about the trials and tribulations of life as a black man in both Jamaica and America. McKay was not secretive about his hatred for racism. McKay's poetry brought awareness to the racist treatment that many black individuals faced.

With his ability to make art that addressed some of the most important issues of his (and our) time, McKay has proven not only an important influence on later black literature but a significant figure across multiple periods, schools, and genres whose work remains essential reading today.

### **"America" (1921)**

1<sup>st</sup> published in *The Liberator* in 1921, "America" is Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay's powerful reflection on both the attraction and the antagonism he felt toward the nation in which he spent much of his adult life. Written while McKay was planning to visit communist Russia and after he had spent two years abroad, the poem evinces an outsider's keen insight into the many failures and blatant hypocrisies of his adopted country. But structured as a kind of love poem, "America" also reflects McKay's avowed appreciation for America's achievements and his belief in the noble ideals America was meant to represent.

Composed in the "Shakespearean" or English variation, "America" shows McKay employing the full resources of the form for which he is best known, the sonnet. While the sonnet form was uncommon among the "high modernist" poets who were his contemporaries, "America" rewards the same kind of close attention that those poems do, and McKay is also able to infuse new potential into the sonnet by crafting tensions between structure and meaning. Demonstrating an advanced knowledge of English and American culture, the poem's speaker also pushes against the oppressive norms of those cultures, critiquing and reversing racist tropes and presenting a daring and defiant conception of black male virility.

**Tiger (Symbol).** McKay's early comparison of America to a tiger symbolizes the nation's inhuman violence and brutality, particularly towards its minority subjects and to cultural "outsiders." Like the similar comparisons to "mad and hungry dogs" and "monsters" in McKay's *If We Must Die*, this metaphor pointedly reverses racist conceptions to suggest that it is in fact whites and white America that are animalistic and subhuman. However, here the specificity of "tiger" also allows McKay to develop the irony even further, using an "exotic" foreign animal to portray America as the one who is "Other." The tiger's ability to evoke at once predatory violence, otherness, and the stripes of the American flag made it a favorite symbol of McKay's, and he exploits its poetic potential even more readily in his poem "Tiger," declaring that "The white man is a tiger at my throat, / Drinking my blood as my life ebbs away, / And muttering that his terrible striped coat / Is Freedom's and portends the Light of Day."

**"America" and the Tradition of Female Personifications of America.** The central conceit of McKay's poem involves the personification of America as a woman, an important national tradition at the time McKay was writing. Most people today are familiar with "Uncle Sam," the personification of the U.S. government as a man with long white hair, a swallow-tailed coat, top hat, and striped pants. Also well-known is the personification "Lady Liberty," embodied by the Statue of Liberty and famously described as "a mighty woman with a torch" and "mother of exiles" in Emma Lazarus's poem *The New Colossus*.

Although McKay's sonnet never mentions Lady Liberty or Columbia directly, we can see how "America" takes up some of these aspects of America's self-conception. The poem's early invocation of a "youth" being fed by a female figure undoubtedly evokes the idea of a "mother country," but here McKay depicts not a Columbia-like figure welcoming and defending immigrants but a ruthless animal attacking the speaker and "stealing" his life away. This image of a "tiger" in particular replaces

Columbia's stars and stripes with the stripes of an "exotic," foreign animal, implying that in her violent oppression of minorities America herself becomes the true "Other."

### **“Home to Harlem” (1928)**

“*Home to Harlem*” is the 1<sup>st</sup> novel by Claude McKay. In it and its sequel, “*Banjo*”, McKay attempted to capture the vitality of the black vagabonds of urban America and Europe.

Jake Brown, the protagonist of “*Home to Harlem*”, deserts the U.S. Army during World War I and lives in London until a race riot inspires him to return to Harlem. On his 1<sup>st</sup> night home, he meets the drab Felice, for whom he spends much of the rest of the novel searching. Amid his adventures in Harlem, a gallery of rough, lusty, heavy-drinking characters appear to vivid effect. While working as a dining-car waiter, Jake encounters another point of view in Ray, a pessimistic college-educated Haitian immigrant who advocates behavior based on racial pride.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. What are two reasons to call McKay - “modernist” writer?
2. Analyze the influence of McKay on other writers of *Harlem Renaissance*.

#### **“Home to Harlem”:**

1. Compare and contrast the characters of Ray and Jake in Claude McKay's “*Home to Harlem*”.
2. Discuss Jake's trip to France and London, England. How does Jake end up in London's East End? Why does Jake decide to return to Harlem? Could he have had a good life in London?
3. Discuss Jake's obsession with the brown woman he meets at the Baltimore cabaret. What makes the so-called long-lost brown woman so special to Jake?
4. Discuss Jake's relationship to Rose. Is Jake ever in love with Rose? Is he just using her?
5. Discuss Jake and Zeddy's approach to women. Why does Zeddy view Jake as more successful with women?
6. Discuss the use of alcohol by Jake and his friends. Do they drink too much? How does alcohol affect Jake's health?

#### **“America”:**

1. How and why does McKay subvert aspects of the traditional sonnet structure in “*America*”?
2. How does the poem call attention to America's failures and hypocrisy?

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3. McKay, C. *A Long Way from Home*. Rutgers UP, 2017.
4. Platt, L. *Modernism and Race*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.

#### **10.4. Booker Taliaferro Washington (1856-1915). “Up from Slavery”**

**Primary Works:** “*The Story of My Life and Work*” (1900), “*Up from Slavery*” (1901), “*The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery*” in 2 volumes (1909), “*My Larger Education*” (1911), “*The Man Farthest Down*” (1912).

#### **A Brief Biography of Booker Taliaferro Washington**

Booker Taliaferro Washington (April 5, 1856 – November 14, 1915) was an American educator, author, orator, and advisor to presidents of the U.S. Between 1890 and 1915, Washington was the dominant leader in the African-American community. Washington was from the last generation of black American leaders born into slavery and became the leading voice of the former slaves and their descendants.

Washington's long-term adviser, Timothy Thomas Fortune (1856-1928), was a respected African-American economist and editor of *The New York Age*, the most widely read newspaper in the black community within the U.S. He was the ghost-writer and editor of Washington's 1<sup>st</sup> autobiography, “*The Story of My Life and Work*”. Washington published 5 books during his lifetime with the aid of ghost-writers Timothy Fortune, Max Bennett Thrasher and Robert E. Park.

#### **“Up from Slavery” (1901)**

“*Up from Slavery*” is the autobiography of Booker T. Washington sharing his personal experience of having to work to rise up from the position of a slave child during the Civil War, to the difficulties and obstacles he overcame to get an education at the new Hampton Institute, to his work establishing vocational schools - most notably the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama - to help black people and other disadvantaged minorities learn useful, marketable skills and work to pull themselves, as a race, up by the bootstraps. He reflects on the generosity of both teachers and philanthropists who helped in educating blacks and Native Americans. He describes his efforts to instill manners, breeding, health and a feeling of dignity to students. His educational philosophy stresses combining academic subjects with learning a trade. Washington explained that the integration of practical subjects is partly designed to reassure the white community as to the usefulness of educating black people. Washington was quite controversial figure in his own lifetime, but in 1998, the Modern Library listed “*Up from Slavery*” at No.3 on its list of the 100 best nonfiction books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1999 it was also listed by the conservative *Intercollegiate Review* as one of the “50 Best Books of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the origin of name “Booker”?

2. What was the role of Tuskegee Institute in the life of Booker T. Washington?
3. Why did “*Up from Slavery*” become bestseller? What was the effect of the autobiography on the African-American community?

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4. Smock, R *Booker T. Washington: Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow*. Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 2009.

### **10.5. Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960). “*Their Eyes Were Watching God*”**

**Primary Works:** “*Drenched in Light*”, a story (1924), “*Mules and Men*”, a study of folkways (1935), “*Their Eyes Were Watching God*”, a novel (1937), “*Tell My Horse*” (1938), “*Moses, Man of the Mountain*” (1939), “*Dust Tracks on a Road*”, an autobiography (1942), “*Seraph on the Suwanee*”, a novel (1948).

#### **A Brief Biography of Zora Neale Hurston**

Zora Neale Hurston (January 7, 1891, Notasulga, Alabama, U.S. – January 28, 1960, Fort Pierce, Florida) American folklorist and writer associated with the Harlem Renaissance who celebrated the African American culture of the rural South.

In 1901 she moved to Eatonville, Florida, where she attended school. After the death of her mother in 1904, Hurston’s home life became increasingly difficult, and at 16 she joined a traveling theatrical company, ending up in New York City during the Harlem Renaissance, the Roaring Twenties and the Jazz Age.

She attended successfully Howard University, Barnard College and Columbia University. She also conducted field studies in folklore among African Americans in the South. In 1924 she published a story, “*Drenched in Light*” in the literary journal *Opportunity*. The artists and intellectuals, both black and white, who created and supported the Harlem Renaissance welcomed the audacious Zora Hurston into their community. She became friends with such luminaries as poets Langston Hughes and Countée Cullen, author Carl Van Vechten, and novelist Fannie Hurst, for whom she served as chauffeur for a time.

In 1930 Hurston collaborated with Hughes on a play titled “*Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life in Three Acts*” (1991). In 1934 she published her 1<sup>st</sup> novel, “*Jonah’s Gourd Vine*”, which was well received by critics for its portrayal of African American life uncluttered by stock figures or sentimentality. “*Mules and Men*”, a study of folkways among the African American population of Florida, followed in 1935. “*Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (1937), a novel, “*Tell My Horse*” (1938), a blend of

travel writing and anthropology based on her investigations of voodoo in Haiti, and *“Moses, Man of the Mountain”* (1939), a novel, firmly established her as a major author. For a number of years Hurston was on the faculty of North Carolina College for Negroes and on the staff of the Library of Congress. *“Dust Tracks on a Road”* (1942), an autobiography, is highly regarded. Her last novel was *«Seraph on the Suwanee”* (1948).

Despite her early promise, by the time of her death Hurston was little remembered by the general reading public, but there was a resurgence of interest in her work in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to *“Mule Bone”*, several other collections were also published posthumously; these include *“Spunk: The Selected Stories”* (1985), *“The Complete Stories”* (1995), and *“Every Tongue Got to Confess”* (2001), a collection of folktales from the South. In 1995 the Library of America published a 2-volume set of her work in its series.

### ***“Their Eyes Were Watching God” (1937)***

*“Their Eyes Were Watching God”*, novel by Zora Neale Hurston, is considered her finest book.

In lyrical prose influenced by folk tales that the author heard while assembling her Anthology of African American folklore *“Mules and Men”* (1935), Janie Crawford tells of her 3 marriages, her growing self-reliance, and her identity as a black woman. Much of the dialogue conveys psychological insight through plain speech written in dialect, which bring an added layer of realism to the novel. In particular, her use of dialect makes the dialogue more natural, better evoking the time and place she's writing about. Whereas Janie's 1<sup>st</sup> two husbands are domineering, her 3<sup>rd</sup> husband, Tea Cake, is easygoing and reluctantly willing to accept Janie as an equal. Hurston manages to characterize these 3 very different men without resorting to caricature in the 1<sup>st</sup> two instances or idealization in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Janie is one of few fictional heroines of the period who is not punished for her sensual nature.

Although Hurston's novel received some harsh criticism for being quaint and romantic and was out of print for years, it is now considered an important work for its understanding of the African American folkloric tradition, for its language, and for its female hero, a woman who struggles and successfully finds her own identity.

Themes: 1) The novel is at heart a story about one woman's search for true love. Janie's romantic ideas about love leave her unhappy with Logan and Joe. She eventually finds love in Tea Cake, only to lose him when he contracts rabies. 2) The novel can also be read as a coming of age story. The narrative traces Janie's development from a naive, romantic teenager to a strong black woman who knows what she wants out of life. 3) Hurston explores the themes of religion and race in tandem. Janie's experiences of racism don't test her faith in God, but force her to look at religion in a different light. In the end, the novel emphasizes that all eyes are watching god, regardless of race.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What was a specific feature of all Hurston's literary works?
2. What was contribution of Hurston to the *Harlem Renaissance*?

**“Their Eyes Were Watching God”:**

1. According to the book, what has the woman come back from doing?
2. Why did all the people see her come?
3. What do they remember about the woman?
4. What do the men notice about Janie as she walks down the street, and what do the women notice about her?
5. What does Pheoby bring for Janie?
6. According to Sam Watson, why do the residents of Eatonville want to rise on Judgment Day?
7. What does Janie mean when she says “unless you see de fur, a mink skin ain't no different from a coon hide?”

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**10.6. Richard Wright (1908-1960). “Native Son”. “Black Boy”**

**Primary Works:** “*Uncle Tom's Children: Four Novellas*” (1938), “*Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States*” (1941), “*Native Son*” (1940), “*Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth*” (1945), “*The Outsider*” (1953), “*Savage Holiday*” (1954), “*The Long Dream*” (1958), “*Eight Men*” (1961), “*Lawd Today*” (1963), “*White Man, Listen!*” (1957), “*American Hunger*” (1977), “*Rite of Passage*” (1994), “*A Father's Law*” (2008).

**A Brief Biography of Richard Wright**

*The day “Native Son” appeared, American culture was changed forever. No matter how much qualifying the book might later need, it made impossible a repetition of old lies.*

- Irving Howe

Richard Wright (September 4, 1908, near Natchez, Miss., U.S. – November 28, 1960, Paris, France) representative of American Modernism, novelist and short-story writer, who was among the 1<sup>st</sup> black American writers to protest white treatment of blacks, notably in his novel “*Native Son*” (1940) and his autobiography, “*Black Boy*” (1945). He inaugurated the tradition of protest explored by other black writers after



World War II. His prose captures the lyrical black dialect and paints unforgettable pictures of the deep South and of Chicago of the 1930s.

Wright's grandparents had been slaves. His father left home when he was 5, and growing up in poverty, Wright was often shifted from one relative to another. He worked at a number of jobs before joining the northward migration, to Memphis, and then to Chicago. There, after working in unskilled jobs, he got an opportunity to write through the Federal Writers' Project. Wright wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> story at the age of 15 named "The Voodoo of Hell's Half-Acre" which was published in a local black newspaper. He 1<sup>st</sup> came to the general public's attention with a volume of novellas, "*Uncle Tom's Children*" (1938), based on the question: How may a black man live in a country that denies his humanity? In each story but one the hero's quest ends in death.

His fictional scene shifted to Chicago in "*Native Son*". Its protagonist, a poor black youth named Bigger Thomas, accidentally kills a white girl, and in the course of his ensuing flight his hitherto meaningless awareness of antagonism from a white world becomes intelligible. The book was a best-seller and was staged successfully many times.

Wright's "*Black Boy*" is a moving account of his childhood and young manhood in the South. The book chronicles the extreme poverty of his childhood, his experience of white prejudice and violence against blacks, and his growing awareness of his interest in literature. It also portrayed author's life starting from Mississippi experiences to his social isolation and racial discrimination in New York. It became an instant best seller.

After World War II, Wright settled in Paris as a permanent expatriate. "*The Outsider*" (1953), acclaimed as the 1<sup>st</sup> American existential novel, warned that the black man had awakened in a disintegrating society not ready to include him. 3 later novels were not well-received. In 1947 he got the French Citizenship after which he spent a lot of time in traveling through Europe, Africa and Asia. His experiences were read in his later books. Some of his writings consist of "*White Man, Listen!*" (1957) - polemical writing, "*The Long Dream*" (1958) and a collection of short stories "*Eight Men*" (1961). The topics of books revolved around hunger, poverty, race and various protest movements.

The autobiographical "*American Hunger*" (1977) narrates Wright's experiences after moving to the North. A novella, "*Rite of Passage*" (1994), and an crime novel, "*A Father's Law*" (2008), completed by his daughter, were also published posthumously.

### **"Native Son" (1940)**

"*Native Son*" was an instant success, even as it met with some controversy. Wright had written an insanely difficult novel - one about a black man justly accused of murder whose actions were nevertheless shaped by cultural, social, and economic forces that he couldn't control. This novel is about a murderer. And not only that, but it's a novel that makes you feel both sympathy and empathy for the murderer. The novel addresses the issue of white American society's responsibility for the repression of blacks. The plot charts the decline of Bigger Thomas, a young African American imprisoned for two murders - the accidental smothering of his white employer's daughter and the

deliberate killing of his girlfriend to silence her. In his cell Thomas confronts his growing sense of injustice and concludes that violence is the only alternative to submission to white society.

### **“Black Boy” (1945)**

The autobiography “*Black Boy*”, by Richard Wright, is a tale of hope and determination. It catalogues Wright’s life growing up as an African-American in Jim Crow South, depicting the economic and social struggles that were stereotypical for African-Americans at the time. It follows him through his youth, examining the hardships and obstacles faced by both Wright and his family. It is a story about the hardships and obstacles faced by a poverty-stricken family, and one boy’s determination to escape the prison created by these circumstances. Beyond this, “*Black Boy*” is a story about a life-long struggle with hunger. Wright suffers from hunger his entire life, not only for food but also for acceptance, love, and an understanding of the world around him; but most importantly, Wright possesses an insatiable hunger for knowledge. In short, Wright’s hunger can never be satisfied. The more he feeds his hungers with knowledge, the more ravenous those hungers grow. Each morsel of knowledge enlightens him to a world he has no experience with, which serves to create further questions about the world in which he is entrenched. His acquired knowledge about the many possibilities that life could possibly have held for him expands the hunger for a world that he can understand and could therefore accept him. Although it is true that his intense appetite for knowledge often alienates him from others, it is still his greatest asset, acting as both the motivation and the key to his life’s success.

Racism is not as much a theme in this novel as it is an environmental condition - an integral part of the setting. The novel tries to expose the ethical effect which the Jim Crow system had on its subjects, both black and white. “*Black Boy*” is a novel about individual positions within a racist mind-set. That is, the world in which Richard must live is racist, and within that world prejudice against blacks is all-pervasive. However, Richard occasionally meets with tolerant persons. Furthermore, Richard himself must be tolerant with those around him who do not have the intellect to see the world like he does. He must also endure the Jim Crow system until he has enough money to escape or else he will be killed. Richard, having realized that his options are either to play along by being dumb or to be tolerant and escape, chooses the route of escape.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. Although Wright's work appeared later than the poets of the *Harlem Renaissance*, he reflects some of their concerns. Trace the themes of Wright’s works.
2. Compare and contrast Richard Wright's story with Zora Neale Hurston's prose. Are these writers exploring race or gender, or both?

#### **“Native Son”:**

1. Do you think social conditions and cultural climates are more important factors in determining our lives than the choices we make?
2. What roles do culture, society, and race play in the choices Bigger makes?

3. Think about the prejudice against black people in this story.

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### **10.7. James Baldwin (1924-1987). "Go Tell It on the Mountain"**

**Primary Works:** "Go Tell It on the Mountain" (1953), "Notes of a Native Son" (1955), "Giovanni's Room" (1956), "Nobody Knows My Name" (1961), "Another Country" (1962), "The Fire Next Time" (1963), "Blues for Mister Charlie", play (1964), "Going to Meet the Man" (1965), "Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone" (1968), "If Beale Street Could Talk" (1974), "Just Above My Head" (1979), "The Price of the Ticket" (1985).

#### **A Brief Biography of James Baldwin**

James Arthur Baldwin, (born August 2, 1924, New York, New York-died December 1, 1987, Saint-Paul, France), American essayist, novelist, and playwright whose eloquence and passion on the subject of race in America made him an important voice, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, in the U.S. and, later, through much of western Europe.

The eldest of 9 children, he grew up in poverty in the black ghetto of Harlem in New York City. After graduation from high school, he began a restless period of ill-paid jobs, self-study, and literary apprenticeship in Greenwich Village, the bohemian quarter of New York City. He left in 1948 for Paris, where he lived for the next 8 years and wrote semiautobiographical 1<sup>st</sup> and finest novel, "Go Tell It on the Mountain" (1953). His 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, "Giovanni's Room" (1956), deals with the white world and concerns an American in Paris. Between the 2 novels came a collection of essays, "Notes of a Native Son" (1955).

In 1957 he returned to the U.S. and became an active participant in the civil rights struggle that swept the nation. The New Yorker magazine gave over almost all of its November 17, 1962, issue to a long article by Baldwin on the Black Muslim separatist movement and other aspects of the civil rights struggle. The article became a best seller

in book form as “The Fire Next Time” (1963). His book of essays, “*Nobody Knows My Name*” (1961), explores black-white relations in the U.S. This theme also was central to his novel “*Another Country*” (1962), which examines gender and racial issues. His bitter play about racist oppression, “*Blues for Mister Charlie*” (“Mister Charlie” being a black term for a white man), played on Broadway to mixed reviews in 1964. In later years, from 1969, Baldwin became a self-styled “transatlantic commuter”, living alternatively in the south of France and in New York and New England.

Baldwin's novels and plays fictionalize fundamental personal questions and dilemmas amid complex social and psychological pressures thwarting the equitable integration of blacks, while depicting some internalized obstacles to such individuals' quests for acceptance.

Though Baldwin continued to write until his death, publishing works including “*Going to Meet the Man*” (1965), a collection of short stories; the novels “*Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone*” (1968), “*If Beale Street Could Talk*” (1974), and “*Just Above My Head*” (1979); and “*The Price of the Ticket*” (1985), a collection of autobiographical writings, none of his later works achieved the popular and critical success of his early work.

### **“Go Tell It on the Mountain” (1953)**

“*Go Tell It on the Mountain*” is a semiautobiographical novel by J. Baldwin. It was his 1<sup>st</sup> novel and is considered his finest. Based on the author’s experiences as a teenaged preacher in a small revivalist church, the novel describes 2 days and a long night in the life of the Grimes family, particularly 14-year-old John and his stepfather, Gabriel. It is a classic of contemporary African American literature.

Baldwin’s description of John’s descent into the depths of his young soul was hailed as brilliant, as was his exploration of Gabriel’s complex sorrows. The novel teems with biblical references. Though the novel is in part about the position of blacks in American society, some critics felt that Baldwin did not adequately address racial issues; the novelist, however, said he made a deliberate attempt to break out of the “cage” of black writing.

#### **Study Questions:**

##### **“Go Tell It on the Mountain”:**

1. Why is the book in 3 parts? What do their titles (and the chapter titles) have to do with the content?
2. What is the importance of music in the novel?
3. Which character do you identify with the most? Why?
4. The novel stretches back to the emancipation of the slaves in the south, through Florence's memories of her mother's stories. How does that link back in time connect to the novel's present?
5. How does Harlem contrast with the rest of New York in the novel?

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### **10.8. Ralph Waldo Ellison (1914-1994). “Invisible Man”**

**Primary Works:** “*Invisible Man*” (1952), “*Shadow and Act*” (1964), “*Going to the Territory*” (1986), “*Juneteenth*” (1999).

#### **A Brief Biography of Ralph Waldo Ellison**

Ralph Waldo Ellison was born on March 1, 1914 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Ellison’s child was not stifled with racism. Oklahoma was not affected as much by the racial tension that appeared so much in the south. As he grew older Ellison wanted to become a “*Renaissance man*”. He wanted to have knowledge in all areas; to be a whole man by knowing a lot about everything. As a result, he became a recognized writer and he was often asked to lecture and teach at colleges and universities around the country; among them: Yale, Columbia, Rutgers, and Bard. He was not only an accomplished writer and a professor but a man who was proficient as a jazz trumpeter. He was also a freelance photographer and a furniture maker. Ellison was also an expert at electronic equipment. Ellison attended Tuskegee Institution in Alabama for the years (1933-1936). He then headed north to New York to study sculpture. In New York he met the writer Richard Wright. Wright encouraged Ellison to write book reviews. He soon started writing essays and short stories. Ellison became the editor of the *Negro Quarterly*. When serving in the Merchant Marines during World War II he 1<sup>st</sup> began thinking about writing a novel. Ellison started his novel “*Invisible Man*” in 1945 and it was published in 1952. The novel was Ellison’s greatest work.

Ellison's writings could be called autobiographical; they are about his life experiences. His 1<sup>st</sup> novel “*Invisible Man*” was thought to be about him because there were many similarities between the main character and himself.

Besides “*Invisible Man*” he collected 2 dozen of his essays and put them in a book called “*Shadow and Act*” which was published in 1964. He also published another book of essays and short stories in 1986 called “*Going to the Territory*”. A few of his most anthologized stories are “*Flying Home*”, “*King of the Bingo Game*” and “*A Coupla Scalped*”. Ellison started a 4<sup>th</sup> book but never finished it. “*The Juneteenth*” was going to be a trilogy. It was later published.

#### **“Invisible Man” (1952)**

“*Invisible Man*” is a novel which addresses many of the social and intellectual issues facing African-Americans early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including black nationalism, the relationship between black identity and general laws of society, and the reformist racial policies of Booker T. Washington, as well as issues of individuality and personal identity.

“*Invisible Man*” won the U.S. National Book Award for Fiction in 1953. In 1998, the Modern Library ranked *Invisible Man* 19<sup>th</sup> on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Time magazine included the novel in its Time 100 Best English-language Novels from 1923 to 2005.

The major theme of “*Invisible Man*” is the necessity to construct a personal identity in a divided society. Ellison builds this theme on the assumption that in a racist country, blacks are granted no true identity; instead, they are merely the receptors of the projections of the white man’s fantasies and fears. The novel demonstrates the process by which the narrator came to the realization that he and other blacks are invisible and as such cannot ever succeed by playing according to white rules. The task of the narrator upon realizing he is invisible is to figure out how to proceed from that realization responsibly. He does not want to withdraw altogether from the world. He also does not want to engage with it on the false basis that he has in the past, when he was blind to his invisibility.

The mood of the novel is surreal-dream-like and sometimes nightmarish. In fact, the dream serves as a motif that is echoed over and over in the novel.

"Who the hell am I"? This question puzzled the invisible man, the unidentified, anonymous narrator of Ralph Ellison’s acclaimed novel, “*Invisible Man*”. Throughout the story, the narrator embarks on a mental and physical journey to seek what the narrator believes is "true identity", a belief quite mistaken, for he, although unaware of it, had already been inhabited by true identities all along. Ellison, in “*Invisible Man*”, uses the main character’s invisibility and conflict with the outside world to illustrate the confusion of identity that many people experience.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the most popular theme in Ellison’s works?
2. Can we state that “finding true identity” is one of the motifs in Ellison’s writings?

#### **“*Invisible Man*”:**

1. What's the effect of having 2 epigraphs? Are both necessary?
2. What parts of the book are universal and can be accessed by everyone, what parts are grounded in the black experience, and/or what parts are particular only to the narrator?
3. “*Invisible Man*” pushes for the eradication of ideology and for a political philosophy that embraces interpersonal relations. Why was this necessarily asserted in novel form? Did presenting these opinions in novel form render them more effective?
4. What is "the principle"? How does the narrator's understanding of his grandfather's words change over time?
5. Are all black people in the novel invisible?
6. Is the ending optimistic or pessimistic?

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## CHAPTER XI. AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS

### Plan:

- 11.1. Emily Dickinson. **10 of the Most Famous Poems**
- 11.2. Margaret Fuller. **“Woman in Nineteenth Century”**
- 11.3. Toni Morrison - New Generation Women Writer. **“Beloved”**. **“The Bluest Eye”**
- 11.4. Maya Angelou. **“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”**
- 11.5. Eudora Welty. **“The Optimist’s Daughter”**
- 11.6. Joyce Carol Oates. **“Them”**
- 11.7. Alice Walker. **“The Color Purple”**
- 11.8. Rita Frances Dove. **“Thomas and Beulah”**
- 11.9. Jamaica Kincaid. **“Lucy”**
- 11.10. Toni Cade Bambara. **“Blues Ain't No Mocking Bird”**
- 11.11. Pearl Sydenstricker Buck. **“The Good Earth”**
- 11.12. Flannery O’Connor. **“A Good Man Is Hard to Find”**
- 11.13. Margaret Mitchell. **“Gone with the Wind”**
- 11.14. Sylvia Plath. **“The Bell of Jar”**
- 11.15. Willa Cather. **“O Pioneers!”** and **“One of Ours”**

### 11.1. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). 10 of the Most Famous Poems

**Primary Works:** *nearly 1800 poems.*

#### A Brief Biography of Emily Dickinson

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson, (December 10, 1830, Amherst, Massachusetts, U.S. – May 15, 1886, Amherst), American lyric poet who lived in seclusion and commanded a singular brilliance of style and integrity of vision. With Walt Whitman, Dickinson is widely considered to be 1 of the 2 leading 19<sup>th</sup>-century American poets. Her family was very religious. In her teens she started writing poems. She wrote about hope, flowers, birds, people’s life and death. She went to school at Amherst Academy and to Amherst College. She never married. At age 40 she barely left the house. She had accomplished by writing over 1700 poems. She chose topics in her poems were based on her social life. People thought that her poems reflected how she felt, and till this day she is still remembered as America’s poet. On May 15, 1886 she died.

**Her Poetry.** Emily Dickinson had no abstract theory of poetry. It is not certain if she was familiar with the poetic theories of Edgar Allan Poe, Coleridge, Emerson, Whitman and Matthew Arnold. When editor Thomas Higginson asked her to define poetry, she gave a subjective, emotional response: "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?"

Whatever her own views of poetry, critics have associated her work with other traditions in literature: **1. The 17<sup>th</sup> Century Metaphysical Tradition:** She read a



great deal and enjoyed the writings of 17<sup>th</sup> century authors. **2. The Emersonian Tradition:** She frequently voices ideas of independence and individualism, of reaction against conformity and obeisance to tradition, providing us a poetic variation upon the theme of self-reliance. There is also the romantic notion of the relationship between beauty and truth. As John Keats states: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty". **3. The New England Tradition:** It has been characteristic of New England people to be shy, withdrawn, to say little, but to convey much. Emily never writes a long poem, but tends toward epigrammatic, the concentrated, carefully wrought, gemlike lyric, whose mastery of ambiguity, of allusion, of compressed syntax, of the lyric outburst, is a central concern. **4. The Nature Poetry Tradition:** Possible influence of William Cullen Bryant and Henry Thoreau.

**The Character of Her Verse:** 1. Highly compressed, compact, shy of being exposed. 2. Her style is elliptical - she will say no more than she must - suggesting either a quality of uncertainty or one of finality. 3. Her lyrics are her highly subjective. 1/5 of them begin with "I" - she knows no other consciousness. 4. Ambiguity of meaning and syntax. "She almost always grasped whatever she sought, but with some fracture of grammar and dictionary on the way". 5. Concreteness - it is nearly a theorem of lyric poetry that it is as good as it is concrete. Even when she is talking of the most abstract of subjects, Emily specifies it by elaborating it in the concreteness of simile or metaphor. 6. Use of poetic forms such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance; also onomatopoeic effects. 7. Obscurity. "... she was obscure, and sometimes inscrutable; and though obscurity is sometimes... a compliment to the reader, yet it is never safe to press this compliment too hard."

**Themes in Emily Dickinson's Poetry.** A few themes occupied the poet: love, nature, doubt and faith, suffering, death, immortality - these John Donne has called the great granite obsessions of humankind.

**Love:** Though she was lonely and isolated, Emily appears to have loved deeply, perhaps only those who have "loved and lost" can love, with an intensity and desire which can never be fulfilled in the reality of the lovers' touch.

**Nature:** A fascination with nature consumed Emily. She summed all her lyrics as "the simple news that nature told", she loved "nature's creatures" no matter how insignificant - the robin, the hummingbird, the bee, the butterfly, the rat. Only the serpent gave her a chill.

**Faith and Doubt:** Emily's theological orientation was Puritan. But there was another force alive in her time that competed for her interests: that was the force of literary transcendentalism. This explains a kind of paradoxical or ambivalent attitude to different matters.

**Pain, Suffering and Death:** Emily displays an obsession with pain and suffering; there is an eagerness in her to examine pain, to measure it, to calculate it, to intellectualize it as fully as possible. Her last stanzas become a catalog of grief and its causes: death, want, cold, despair, exile. Many readers have been intrigued by Dickinson's ability to probe the fact of human death. She can look straight at approaching death.

### 10 of the Most Famous Poems by E. Dickinson

Emily Dickinson is considered among the greatest poets in English literature. She is known for her unusual use of form and syntax; and for being “The poet of paradox”. Dickinson was a prolific writer and created nearly 1800 poems but only a handful of them were published during her lifetime. Here are **10 of the most famous poems** by America’s leading female poet.

**10. “Faith” is a fine invention**. Number: 185

An often quoted poem, “Faith” is a fine invention” gives insight on Dickinson’s views on religion and science. While calling faith an invention and putting it in quotation marks suggests that the poem is pro science yet the ability for only some to ‘see’, or possess a kind a divine power, contradicts that. No wonder Dickinson is famous as the “The poet of paradox”. She goes on to add that it is wiser to use ‘microscopes’, or science, in an emergency.

Poem:

*“Faith” is a fine invention  
For Gentlemen who see!  
But Microscopes are prudent  
In an Emergency!*

**9. “Much Madness is divinest Sense**”. Number: 435

“Much Madness” begins with a paradoxical line which equates madness to divine sense. Dickinson talks about the insane society which treats individuality as madness. If you agree with the majority you are sane but if you raise objections, you are considered dangerous and need to be controlled. The madness versus sanity theme of the poem can also be interpreted in various other ways adding to the popularity of the poem.

Poem:

*Much Madness is divinest Sense -  
To a discerning Eye -  
Much Sense - the starkest Madness -  
'Tis the Majority  
In this, as all, prevail -  
Assent - and you are sane -  
Demur - you're straightway dangerous -  
And handled with a Chain -*

**8. “Tell all the truth but tell it slant**”. Number: 1129

In this poem Dickinson presents truth as a powerful entity whose dazzling brilliance can bring this world to an end. Hence she suggests that it would be wise to tell the truth but ‘tell it slant’ and to gradually ease it into the world.

Poem:

*Tell all the truth but tell it slant -  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind*

*The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind -*

**7. “Success is counted sweetest”.** Number: 67

In this poem Dickinson uses the image of a victorious army and of a defeated soldier who is dying. Through this image she conveys that success can be understood best by those who have suffered defeat. The popularity of the poem lies in the fact that unlike some of her other poems which talk about losing in romance, “*Success Is Counted Sweetest*” can be applied to any situation where there are winners and losers.”

Poem:

*Success is counted sweetest  
By those who ne’er succeed.  
To comprehend a nectar  
Requires sorest need.  
Not one of all the purple Host  
Who took the Flag today  
Can tell the definition  
So clear of victory  
As he defeated - dying -  
On whose forbidden ear  
The distant strains of triumph  
Burst agonized and clear!*

**6. “Wild nights - Wild nights!”** Number: 249

“*Wild nights - Wild nights!*” is widely discussed for its implications. It doesn’t tell a story but is an expression of wish or desire. Dickinson uses the sea as an image for passion. It remains one of the most popular romantic poems written by an American.

Poem:

*Wild nights - Wild nights!  
Were I with thee  
Wild nights should be  
Our luxury!  
Futile - the winds -  
To a Heart in port -  
Done with the Compass -  
Done with the Chart!  
Rowing in Eden -  
Ah - the Sea!  
Might I but moor - tonight -  
In thee!*

**5. “If I can stop one Heart from breaking”.** Number: 919

This simple and often quoted poem by Dickinson talks about the deeds one can do which will insure that one’s life was not is vain.

Poem:

*If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain ;  
If I can ease one life the aching,*

*Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.*

**4. “I heard a Fly buzz - when I died”.** Number: 465

In “I heard a Fly buzz” the narrator is on his or her deathbed in a still room surrounded by loved ones. Everyone is awaiting the arrival of the ‘King’. The figure of death appears as a tiny, often disregarded, fly with a ‘stumbling Buzz’. It comes between the narrator and light and then the narrator ‘could not see to see’ or is dead. The poem remains one of Dickinson’s most discussed and famous works.

Poem:

*I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -  
The Stillness in the Room  
Was like the Stillness in the Air -  
Between the Heaves of Storm -  
The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -  
And Breaths were gathering firm  
For that last Onset - when the King  
Be witnessed - in the Room -  
I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away  
What portion of me be  
Assignable - and then it was  
There interposed a Fly -  
With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -  
Between the light - and me -  
And then the Windows failed - and then  
I could not see to see -*

**3. “I’m nobody! Who are you?”** Number: 288

In this poem the narrator considers that being nobody is a luxury and it is depressingly repetitive to be somebody, who like a frog has a compulsion to croak all the time. The most talked about detail of Dickinson’s life is perhaps that only 10 of her nearly 1800 works were published during her lifetime and she lived her life in anonymity. This and the fact that the poem is about the popular subject of “us against them” makes it one of the most famous poems written by Dickinson.

Poem:

*I’m Nobody! Who are you?  
Are you - Nobody - Too?  
Then there’s a pair of us!  
Don’t tell! They’d banish us - you know!  
How dreary - to be - Somebody!  
How public - like a Frog -  
To tell one’s name - the livelong June -  
To an admiring Bog!*

**2. “Because I could not stop for Death”.** Number: 712

Many of Dickinson's poems deal with the themes of death and immortality; and this is the most famous of them all. In it Emily personifies death as a gentle guide who takes a leisurely carriage ride with the poet to her grave. According to prominent American poet Allen Tate, "If the word great means anything in poetry, this poem is 1 of the greatest in the English language; it is flawless to the last detail".

Poem:

*Because I could not stop for Death -  
He kindly stopped for me -  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves -  
And Immortality.  
We slowly drove - He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For His Civility -  
We passed the School, where Children strove  
At Recess - in the Ring -  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain -  
We passed the Setting Sun -  
Or rather - He passed Us -  
The Dews drew quivering and Chill -  
For only Gossamer, my Gown -  
My Tippet - only Tulle -  
We paused before a House that seemed  
A Swelling of the Ground -  
The Roof was scarcely visible -  
The Cornice - in the Ground -  
Since then - 'tis Centuries - and yet  
Feels shorter than the Day  
I first surmised the Horses' Heads  
Were toward Eternity -*

**1. "Hope is the thing with feathers".** Number: 254

The most famous poem by Dickinson, "Hope is the thing with feathers" is ranked among the greatest poems in the English language. It metaphorically describes hope as a bird that rests in the soul, sings continuously and never demands anything even in the direst circumstances.

Poem:

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -  
And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -  
I've heard it in the chillest land -*

*And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.*

### Study Questions:

1. Study a group of poems with related themes. Then write an interpretation of one of the poems that includes your expanded understanding of the way Dickinson uses the theme in other poems in the group. Choose from among the following (the poem numbers are from the Johnson edition):

- (a) poems of loss and defeat: 49, 67, 305.
- (b) poems about ecstasy or vision: 185, 214, 249, 322, 465, 501, 632.
- (c) poems about solitude: 280, 303, 441, 664.
- (d) poems about death: 49, 67, 88, 98, 153, 182, 241, 258, 280, 301, 341, 360, 369, 389, 411, 449, 510, 529, 547, 712, 784, 856, 976, 1078, 1100, 1624, 1716, 1732.
- (e) poems about madness and suffering: 315, 348, 435, 536.
- (f) poems about entrapment: 187, 528, 754, 1099.
- (g) poems about craft: 441, 448, 505, 1129.
- (h) poems about images of birds: 130, 328, 348, 824.
- (i) poems about a bee or bees: 130, 214, 216, 348, 1405.
- (j) poems about a fly or flies: 187 and 465.
- (k) poems about butterflies: 214, 341, 1099.
- (l) poems about church imagery or biblical references: 130, 216, 258, 322, 1545.
- (m) poems about love: 47, 293, 299, 303, 453, 463, 478, 494, 511, 549, 568, 640, 664, 907.
- (n) poems about nature: 12, 130, 140, 214, 285, 318, 321, 322, 328, 33, 441, 526, 630, 783, 861, 986, 1084, 1356, 1463, 1575.
- (o) poems about doubt and faith: 49, 59, 61, 185, 217, 254, 324, 338, 357, 376, 437, 564, 1052, 1207, 1545.
- (p) poems about pain and anguish: 165, 193, 241, 252, 258, 280, 305, 315, 341, 348, 365, 410, 510, 512, 536, 650, 675, 772, 1005.
- (q) poems about after death or afterlife: 301, 401, 409, 413, 615, 712, 829, 964.

2. Many Dickinson poems illustrate change in the consciousness of the poet or speaker. Choose a poem in which this happens and trace the process by which the poem reflects and creates the change.

3. Closely analyze the central image in one of the following poems: 754 ("*My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun*"), 1099 ("*My Cocoon tightens - Colors teaze*"), or 1575 ("*The Bat is dun, with wrinkled Wings*").

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### **11.2. Margaret Fuller (1810-1850). "Woman in Nineteenth Century"**

**Primary Works:** *"Summer on the Lakes" (1844)*, *"Woman in the Nineteenth Century" (1845)*, *"Papers on Literature and Art" (1846)*, *"At Home and Abroad" (1856)*, *"Life Without and Life Within" (1858)*.

#### **A Brief Biography of Margaret Fuller**

Sarah Margaret Fuller, married name Marchesa Ossoli, (born May 23, 1810, Cambridgeport, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.-died July 19, 1850, at sea off Fire Island, N.Y.), an American writer, a women's rights activist, associated with the Transcendentalist movement, critic, teacher, and woman of letters whose efforts to civilize the taste and enrich the lives of her contemporaries make her significant in the history of American culture. She is particularly remembered for her landmark book *"Woman in the Nineteenth Century" (1845)*, which examined the place of women within society.

Fuller was an extremely precocious child. Under the severe tutelage of her father she more than compensated for the inaccessibility of formal education to females of the time; but, while she acquired wide learning at a very early age, the strain permanently impaired her health.

In 1839 she published a translation of Eckermann's *"Conversations with Goethe"*; her most cherished project, never completed, was a biography of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Fuller formed many important friendships during this period, including those with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Elizabeth Peabody, William Ellery Channing, and Orestes Brownson. From 1840 to 1842 she was editor of *The Dial*, a magazine launched by the Transcendentalists. She wrote poetry, reviews, and critiques for the quarterly. Although she was sympathetic to the movement, she had some reservations about the label 'Transcendentalist' being applied to her. However, she frequently visited leading Transcendentalists, and wrote about her experiences in her book called *"Summer on the Lakes" (1844)*

In Boston, for 5 winters (1839-1844), she conducted classes of "conversations" for women on literature, education, mythology, and philosophy, in which venture she was reputed to be a dazzling leader of discussion. Her professed purpose was "to

systematize thought”; more generally, she attempted to enrich the lives of women and to dignify their place in society. The same purpose guided her in writing “*Woman in the Nineteenth Century*”, a tract on feminism that was both a demand for political equality and an ardent plea for the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual fulfillment of women.

In 1844 Fuller became literary critic on the *New York Tribune*. She encouraged American writers, crusaded for social reforms, and made her greatest contribution as an interpreter of modern European literature.

Fuller was interested in a range of social topics. She believed in social reform from women’s rights to the prison system. In particular, she believed women had a right to a full education. She felt a complete education would enable women to be more independent and enable a wider horizon of possibilities than the social conventions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century allowed. She also abhorred slavery and felt the Native Americans had been unfairly treated. She wrote extensively on a range of social issues from homelessness to women’s equality and played a role in promoting progressive ideas, which were later taken up by women rights activists and social campaigners.

Before she sailed for Europe in 1846, some of her essays appeared as “*Papers on Literature and Art*”, which assured the cordial welcome she received in English and French circles. America’s 1<sup>st</sup> woman foreign correspondent, she reported on her travels for the *Tribune*; the “letters” were later published in “*At Home and Abroad*” (1856).

In 1850, Fuller and her husband took a boat back to America. But, on July 19, 1850, the returning ship hit a sandbank. The ship was abandoned amidst crashing waves and Fuller was never seen again. She had previously written of feeling bad omens about her fate. Her last manuscript on the Roman republic was lost. After her death, a short biography was published, which proved popular.

### **“*Woman in Nineteenth Century*” (1845)**

In “*Woman in the Nineteenth Century*”, Fuller urges young women to seek greater independence from the home and family and to obtain such independence through education. She disdains the notion that women should be satisfied with domesticity, suggesting instead that women should be allowed to fulfill their personal potential by doing whatever work appeals to them: “Let them be sea-captains, if they will.

“*Woman in the Nineteenth Century*” further advocated the reform of property laws that were unfair to women - a controversial and unpopular idea in many quarters. The book’s unprecedented and frank discussions of marriage and relations between men and women also scandalized many. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the book sold out in a week and sparked a heated debate, bringing issues of women’s rights to the nation’s attention.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. Specify the role of Margaret Fuller as a) a women’s rights activist; b) a representative of Transcendentalist movement; c) a critic; d) a teacher.



2. Comment “*Woman in the Nineteenth Century*” from the perspective of fiction. Reveal its literary value, thematic directiveness, idea etc.

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### **11.3. Toni Morrison (1931-2019) - New Generation Women Writer. “Beloved”. “The Bluest Eye”**

**Primary Works:** “*The Bluest Eye*” (1970), “*Sula*” (1973). “*Song of Solomon*” (1977), “*Tar Baby*” (1981), “*Beloved*” (1987), “*Jazz*” (1992), “*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*” (1992), “*Paradise*” (1998), “*Love*” (2003), “*A Mercy*” (2008), “*Home*” (2012), “*God Help the Child*” (2015).

### **A Brief Biography of Toni Morrison**

Toni Morrison, original name Chloe Ardelia Anthony Wofford, (born February 18, 1931, Lorain, Ohio, U.S. - died August 5, 2019), American writer noted for her examination of black experience (particularly black female experience) within the black community. She received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993.

Morrison grew up in the American Midwest in a family that possessed an intense love of and appreciation for black culture. Storytelling, songs, and folktales were a deeply formative part of her childhood. She attended Howard University (B.A., 1953) and Cornell University (M.A., 1955). After teaching at Texas Southern University for 2 years, she taught at Howard from 1957 to 1964. In 1965 she became a fiction editor. From 1984 she taught writing at the State University of New York at Albany, leaving in 1989 to join the faculty of Princeton University.

Morrison’s 1<sup>st</sup> book, “*The Bluest Eye*” (1970), is a novel of initiation concerning a victimized adolescent black girl who is obsessed by white standards of beauty and longs to have blue eyes.

In 1973 a 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, “*Sula*”, was published; it examines (among other issues) the dynamics of friendship and the expectations for conformity within the community. The novel explores good and evil through the friendship of two women who grew up together. The work was nominated for the American Book Award.

“*Song of Solomon*” (1977) is told by a male narrator in search of his identity; its publication brought Morrison to national attention.

“*Tar Baby*” (1981), set on a Caribbean island, explores conflicts of race, class, and gender.

The critically acclaimed *“Beloved”* (1987), which won a Pulitzer Prize for fiction, is based on the true story of a runaway slave who, at the point of recapture, kills her infant daughter in order to spare her a life of slavery.

*“Jazz”* (1992) is a story of violence and passion set in New York City’s Harlem during the 1920s. Subsequent novels are *“Paradise”* (1998), a richly detailed portrait of a black utopian community in Oklahoma, and *“Love”* (2003), an intricate family story that reveals the myriad facets of love and its ostensible opposite. *“Love”* divides its narrative between the past and present. Bill Cosey, a wealthy entrepreneur and owner of the Cosey Hotel and Resort, is the center figure in the work. The flashbacks explore his life, while his death casts a long shadow on the present part of the story. A critic for *Publisher's Weekly* praised the work, stating that "Morrison has crafted a gorgeous, stately novel whose mysteries are gradually unearthed".

*“A Mercy”* (2008) deals with slavery in 17<sup>th</sup>-century America.

In the redemptive *“Home”* (2012), a traumatized Korean War veteran encounters racism after returning home and later overcomes apathy to rescue his sister. Morrison once again explores a period of American history - this time the post-Korean War era. In choosing this setting, "I was trying to take the scab off the '50s, the general idea of it as very comfortable, happy, nostalgic. *Mad Men*. Oh, please. There was a horrible war you didn't call a war, where 58,000 people died. Novel’s main character, Frank, is a veteran who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. While writing the novel, Morrison experienced a great personal loss. Her son Slade, an artist, died in December 2010. The pair had collaborated together on a number of children's books, including *“Big Box”* (1999) and *“Little Cloud and Lady Wind”* (2010).

*“God Help the Child”* (2015) chronicles the ramifications of child abuse and neglect through the tale of Bride, a black girl with dark skin who is born to light-skinned parents.

Her novels are known for their epic themes, vivid dialogue and richly detailed black characters. The central theme of Morrison’s novels is the black American experience; in an unjust society her characters struggle to find themselves and their cultural identity. Her use of fantasy, her sinuous poetic style, and her rich interweaving of the mythic gave her stories great strength and texture. In 2010 Morrison was made an officer of the *French Legion of Honor*. 2 years later she was awarded the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Toni Morrison died at Montefiore Medical Center in The Bronx, New York City, on August 5, 2019, from complications of pneumonia.

### ***“Beloved”* (1987)**

*“Beloved”*, novel by T. Morrison, winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, examines the destructive legacy of slavery as it chronicles the life of a black woman named Sethe, following her from her pre-Civil War life as a slave in Kentucky to her life in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1873. Although she lives there as a free woman, she is held prisoner by memories of the trauma of her life as a slave.

Major themes of the novel: mother-daughter relationships and psychological impact of slavery.

The novel is based on the true story of a black slave woman, Margaret Garner, who in 1856 escaped from a Kentucky plantation with her husband Robert and sought refuge in Ohio. Slave catchers soon caught up with the family, and before their recapture Margaret killed her young daughter to prevent her return to slavery. In the novel, Sethe is also a passionately devoted mother, and in an act of supreme love and sacrifice she too tries to kill her children to keep them from slavery. She succeeds only in killing her two-year-old daughter, and since she has not the energy to “pay” for 2 words on her child’s tombstone (each word costs her ten minutes of intimate moments with the engraver) not “*Dearly Beloved*” but only “*Beloved*” was ultimately carved on the stone. From their bodies to their labour, all aspects of slaves were considered merchandise.

Sethe now lives in Ohio with her teenage daughter Denver, where their house is haunted by the ghost of the child Sethe killed. The hauntings are only alleviated by the occasional appearance of Paul D, a man so ravaged by his slave past that he keeps his feelings in the “tin tobacco box” of his heart. One day a teenage girl turns up. Is she Beloved incarnate? She knows the song that only Sethe and Denver share. Sethe is obsessed with assuaging her guilt and the opportunity to love Beloved.

This intensely shocking and moving narrative is written in a variety of voices and lengthy, fragmentary monologues, which, like the character of Beloved herself, are sometimes ambiguous. Morrison’s beautiful language and intense imagery, however, have been rightly celebrated in this classic work.

### **“*The Bluest Eye*” (1970)**

“*The Bluest Eye*”, 1<sup>st</sup> novel by Toni Morrison. This tragic study of a black adolescent girl’s struggle to achieve white ideals of beauty and her consequent descent into madness was acclaimed as an eloquent indictment of some of the subtler forms of racism in American society. Pecola Breedlove longs to have “the bluest eye” and thus to be acceptable to her family, schoolmates, and neighbors, all of whom have convinced her that she is ugly.

The novel suggests that the categories of gender, race, and economics are enmeshed in determining the fate of the 11-year-old tragic heroine. Pecola’s obsessive desire to have the bluest eyes is a symptom of the way that the black female body has become dominated by white masculine culture. Morrison offers a typically powerful critique of the way that black subjectivity continues to be repressed in a commodity culture. The complex temporal structure of the novel and the restless changes in point of view are in part an attempt to imagine a fluid model of subjectivity that can offer some kind of resistance to a dominant white culture. The adolescent black sisters who relate the narrative, Claudia and Freda MacTeer, offer a contrast to the oppressed Breedlove family in that here they exercise both agency and authority.

In this early novel, Morrison’s writing not only captures the hidden cadences of speech; she writes with a keen sensitivity to the protean quality of words. She offers a poetry infused with the promise of alternative modes of being in the world.

### **Study Questions:**

### **“Beloved”:**

1. Was Sethe justified in killing Beloved? Why or why not?
2. Is Beloved a ghost? Is she a dead person come back to life? Or is she a random girl who's been possessed by the spirit of Beloved?
3. Why is the book separated into 3 parts?
4. If you were to pick one narrative perspective for the book (instead of the several that make up the book), whose perspective would you pick? Why?
5. The end of the book makes it so that we're not entirely sure what happened to Beloved. Do you think Beloved is gone by the end of the book, or do you think she's still around?
6. How does this novel compare to other novels about slavery and its effects?

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3. Fowler, D. *Drawing the Line: The Father Reimagined in Faulkner, Wright, O'Connor, and Morrison*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2013.
4. Hall, A. *Disability and Modern Fiction: Faulkner, Morrison, Coetzee and the Nobel Prize for Literature*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
5. Luszczynska, A.M. *The Ethics of Community: Nancy, Derrida, Morrison, and Menendez*. NY: Continuum, 2012.

#### **11.4. Maya Angelou (1928-2014). “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”**

**Primary Works: Autobiographies:** “*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*” (1969), “*Gather Together in My Name*” (1974), “*Singin’ and Swingin’ and Gettin’ Merry Like Christmas*” (1976), “*The Heart of a Woman*” (1981), “*All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*” (1986), “*A Song Flung Up to Heaven*” (2002), “*Mom & Me & Mom*” (2013). **Drama:** “*Georgia, Georgia*” (1972). **Poetry collections:** “*Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ’fore I Diiie*” (1971), “*And Still I Rise*” (1978), “*Now Sheba Sings the Song*” (1987), “*I Shall Not Be Moved*” (1990). **Children’s books:** “*My Painted House*”, “*My Friendly Chicken and Me*” (1994), “*Life Doesn’t Frighten Me*” (1998), “*The Maya’s World*” series. **Poems:** “*A Brave and Startling Truth*” (1995), “*His Day Is Done*” (2013).

#### **A Brief Biography of Maya Angelou**

Maya Angelou, original name Marguerite Annie Johnson, (born April 4, 1928, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.-died May 28, 2014, Winston-Salem, North Carolina), American poet, memoirist, and actress whose several volumes of autobiography explore the themes of economic, racial, and gender oppression.

Although born in St. Louis, Angelou spent much of her childhood in the care of her paternal grandmother in rural Stamps, Arkansas. Her extremely difficult early life, full of tragedies and shocks, is the focus of her 1<sup>st</sup> autobiographical work, *“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”* (1969), which gained critical acclaim and a National Book Award nomination. Subsequent volumes of autobiography include *“Gather Together in My Name”* (1974), *“Singin’ and Swingin’ and Gettin’ Merry Like Christmas”* (1976), *“The Heart of a Woman”* (1981), *“All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes”* (1986), *“A Song Flung Up to Heaven”* (2002), and *“Mom & Me & Mom”* (2013).

Angelou was also a dancer, an actress and a singer. In 1966 and wrote *“Black, Blues, Black”* (aired 1968), a 10-part television series about the role of African culture in American life. As the writer of the movie drama *“Georgia, Georgia”* (1972), she became one of the 1<sup>st</sup> African American women to have a screenplay produced as a feature film.

Angelou’s poetry, collected in such volumes as *“Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ’fore I Diiie”* (1971), *“And Still I Rise”* (1978), *“Now Sheba Sings the Song”* (1987), and *“I Shall Not Be Moved”* (1990), drew heavily on her personal history but employed the points of view of various personae. She also wrote a book of meditations, *“Wouldn’t Take Nothing for My Journey Now”* (1993), and children’s books that include *“My Painted House”*, *“My Friendly Chicken and Me”* (1994), *“Life Doesn’t Frighten Me”* (1998), and *“The Maya’s World”* series, which was published in 2004-2005 and featured stories of children from various parts of the world. Angelou dispensed anecdote-laden advice to women in *“Letter to My Daughter”* (2008).

She celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UNO in the poem *“A Brave and Startling Truth”* (1995) and eulogized Nelson Mandela in the poem *“His Day Is Done”* (2013), which was commissioned by the U.S. State Department and released in the wake of the South African leader’s death. In 2011 Angelou was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The freedom with which Angelou wrote owes a lot to her legacy. She was considered influential for freely writing about her personal experiences - her seven autobiographies openly documented her life. Before her works, black women were often marginalized and unable to properly showcase their lives. Angelou’s story of succeeding from poverty and struggle has left her revered both in her field and in society as a whole.

### ***“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” (1969)***

*“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”* is an autobiography about the early years of Maya Angelou. The 1<sup>st</sup> in a 7-volume series, it is a coming-of-age story that illustrates how strength of character and a love of literature can help overcome racism and trauma. The book begins when 3-year-old Maya and her older brother are sent to Stamps, Arkansas, to live with their grandmother and ends when Maya becomes a mother at the age of 16. In the course of *“Caged Bird”*, Maya transforms from a victim of racism with an inferiority complex into a self-possessed, dignified young woman capable of responding to prejudice.

When Angelou wrote "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" at the end of the 1960s, one of the necessary and accepted features of literature, according to critic Pierre A. Walker, was thematic unity. One of Angelou's goals was to create a book that satisfied this criterion, in order to achieve her political purposes, which were to demonstrate how to resist racism in America. The structure of the text, which resembles a series of short stories, is not chronological but rather thematic.

### Study Questions:

#### **"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings":**

1. What's up with the end of the novel? Do you think it's kind of sudden? What were you expecting?
2. Could Maya's story still happen today? What would be the same? What would be different?
3. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is an autobiography, but it also has its fair share of fiction. How important are the facts when it comes to telling the truth?
4. The novel is pretty funny; don't you think? Why do you think Angelou wrote it this way when it treats such sensitive and serious subjects?
5. What's up with the prologue? Why is it separate from the rest of the novel, and what is its significance?
6. Do you think readers today interpret this book differently than readers did in 1969? How so?

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4. O'Neal, L. "Maya Angelou's new stamp uses a quote that may not be entirely hers" // The Washington Post, No.8, 2015.

### **11.5. Eudora Welty (1909-2001). "The Optimist's Daughter"**

**Primary works: Stories:** "Death of a Traveling Salesman" (1936), "A Worn Path" (1940), "Why I Live at the P.O." (1941), "A Curtain of Green", story collection (1941), "The Wide Net" (1943), "Music from Spain" (1948), "The Golden Apples" (1949), "The Bride of the Innisfallen" (1955), "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" (1963), "Moon Lake" (1980). **Novels:** "Delta Wedding" (1946), "The Ponder Heart" (1954), "Losing Battles" (1970), "The Optimist's Daughter" (1972). "The Robber Bridegroom", novella (1942), "The Shoe Bird", juvenile (1964).

### **A Brief Biography of Eudora Welty**

Eudora Alice Welty (April 13, 1909 - July 23, 2001) was an American short story writer and novelist who wrote about the American South.

Welty's 1<sup>st</sup> short story, "*Death of a Traveling Salesman*" (1936), attracted the attention of Katherine Anne Porter, who became a mentor to Welty and wrote the foreword to Welty's 1<sup>st</sup> short story collection, "*A Curtain of Green*" (1941). The book established Welty as 1 of American literature's leading lights. She eventually published over 40 short stories, 5 novels, 3 works of nonfiction, and 1 children's book.

The winner of the prestigious O. Henry Awards for the year 1941 was a short story written by a relative newcomer to the world of American fiction, a woman straight out of William Faulkner's backyard. That woman was Eudora Welty and her story was "*A Worn Path*" (1940).

The short story "*Why I Live at the P.O.*" (1941) was published by *The Atlantic Monthly*. The story is about Sister, and how she becomes estranged from her family and ends up living at the post office where she works. Seen by critics as quality Southern literature, the story comically captures family relationships. Like most of her short stories, Welty masterfully captures Southern idiom and places importance on location and customs.

Welty's debut novel, "*The Robber Bridegroom*" (1942), deviated from her previous psychologically-inclined works, presenting static, fairy-tale characters. Some critics suggest that she worried about "encroaching on the turf of the male literary giant to the north of her in Oxford, Mississippi-William Faulkner", and therefore wrote in a fairy-tale style instead of a historical one. Most critics and readers saw it as a modern Southern fairy-tale and noted that it employs themes and characters reminiscent of the Grimm Brothers' works.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, "*The Optimist's Daughter*" (1972) is believed by some to be Welty's best novel. It was written at a much later date than the bulk of her work. As poet Howard Moss wrote in *The New York Times*, the book is "a miracle of compression, the kind of book, small in scope but profound in its implications, that rewards a lifetime of work". The plot focuses on family struggles when the daughter and the 2<sup>nd</sup> wife of a judge confront each other in the limited confines of a hospital room while the judge undergoes eye surgery.

Welty gave a series of addresses at Harvard University, revised and published as "*One Writer's Beginnings*" (1983). It was the 1<sup>st</sup> book published by Harvard University Press to be a New York Times Best Seller (at least 32 weeks on the list), and runner up for the 1984 National Book Award for Nonfiction.

In 1992, she was awarded the Rea Award for the Short Story for her lifetime contributions to the American short story. Welty was a charter member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers. She also taught creative writing at colleges and in workshops. Welty was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, among numerous awards including the Order of the South. She was the 1<sup>st</sup> living author to have her works published by the Library of America.

### ***"The Optimist's Daughter" (1972)***

*“The Optimist’s Daughter”* is a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction winning 1972 short novel by Eudora Welty. It concerns a woman named Laurel, who travels to New Orleans to take care of her father, Judge McKelva, after he has surgery for a detached retina. He fails to recover from the surgery, though, surrenders to his age, and dies slowly as Laurel reads to him from Dickens. Her father’s 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Fay, who is younger than Laurel, is a shrewish outsider from Texas. Her shrill response to the Judge’s illness appears to accelerate his demise. Laurel and Fay are thrown together when they return the Judge to his home town of Mount Salus, Mississippi, where he will be buried. There, Laurel is immersed in the enveloping good neighborliness of the friends and family she knew before marrying and moving away to Chicago. Fay, though, has always been unwelcome and takes off for a long weekend, leaving Laurel in the big house full of memories. Laurel encounters her mother’s memory, her father’s life after he lost his 1<sup>st</sup> wife, and the complex emotions surrounding her loss and the wave of memories in which she swims. She comes to a place of understanding that Fay can never share, and leaves small town Mississippi with the memories she can carry with her.

The book begins with the main character Laurel Hand who travels to New Orleans from her home in Chicago to assist her aging father as a family friend and doctor operates on his eye. Laurel’s father remains in the hospital for recovery for several months. During this time, Laurel begins to get to know her outsider stepmother better, as she rarely visited her father since the 2 were married. Fay begins to show her true colors as the Judge’s condition worsens. To the distress of all who knew him, the Judge dies after his wife throws a violently emotional fit in the hospital and confesses to cheating and interest in his money.

The 2 women travel back to the Judge’s home in Mount Salus, Mississippi for the funeral and are received by close friends of the family. Here, Laurel finds love and friendship in a community which she left after childhood. Ironically, the warmth of the town clashes with Fay’s dissenting and antagonistic personality. The woman from Texas, who claimed to have no family other than the Judge, is soon confronted by her past as her mother, siblings, and other members of her family show up to her house to attend the funeral. Though Laurel confronts Fay as to the reason why she lied, she cannot help but feel anything except pity for the lonely, sullen woman. Directly after her husband’s funeral, Fay leaves to go back home to Madrid, Texas with her family.

After her distraught and immature stepmother leaves, Laurel finally has time to herself in the house she grew up in with the friends and neighbors she knew since childhood. During the few days she remains, Laurel digs through the past as she goes through her house remembering her deceased parents and the life she had before she left Mount Salus. She rediscovers the life of friendship and love that she left behind so many years ago, along with heartache.

Her visit to her hometown and the memories of her parents open up a new insight on life for Laurel. She leaves Mount Salus with a new understanding of life and the factors which influence it the most - friends and family. But most of all, she gains a new understanding and respect for herself.

### **Study Questions:**



1. What can we consider more successful - stories, novels or nonfiction - in E. Welty's artistic activity?
2. Comment the main idea of the short story "*The Optimist's Daughter*". Generate minor themes in the novel.

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Earle, C. "*Rural Life in the South*" // Encyclopedia of American Social History. Charles Scribner's Sons, 2013.
2. Moss, H. "*Eudora Welty's New Novel about Death and Class*". Review of "*The Optimist's Daughter*" // Newsweek, May 22, 2012.
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4. Vande Kieft, R.M. "*Eudora Welty*" // Concise Dictionary of American Literary Biography: The New Consciousness, 1941-1968. Gale Research, 2017.
5. Weeks, E. Review of "*The Optimist's Daughter*" // Atlantic Monthly, June 2012.

### **11.6. Joyce Carol Oates (1938-). "Them"**

**Primary Works: Novels:** *The Wonderland Quartet: "A Garden of Earthly Delights" (1967), "Expensive People" (1968), "Them" (1969), "Wonderland" (1971). The Gothic Saga: "Bellefleur" (1980), "A Bloodsmoor Romance" (1982), "Mysteries of Winterthurn" (1984), "My Heart Laid Bare" (1998), "The Accursed" (2013). Other novels: "With Shuddering Fall" (1964), "Do with Me What You Will" (1973), "Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang" (1993), "Zombie" (1995), "We Were the Mulvaney" (1996), "Broke Heart Blues" (1999), "The Falls" (2004), "My Sister, My Love" (2008), "Mudwoman" (2012). Novellas: "Black Water" (1992); "Daddy Love" (2013), "Carthage" (2014), "Jack of Spades" (2015), "The Man Without a Shadow" (2016). "Upon the Sweeping Flood and Other Stories", short story collection (1966). **Short stories:** "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" (1963), "Stalking" (1972), "The Temple" (1996).*

### **A Brief Biography of Joyce Carol Oates**

Joyce Carol Oates, pseudonyms Rosamond Smith and Lauren Kelly (born June 16, 1938, Lockport, New York, U.S.), American novelist, short-story writer, and essayist noted for her vast literary output in a variety of styles and genres. Particularly effective are her depictions of violence and evil in modern society.

Oates was born in New York state, studied English at Syracuse University (B.A., 1960) and the University of Wisconsin (M.A., 1961). She taught English at the University of Detroit (1961-1967) and at the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada (1967-1978). From 1978 she taught at Princeton University.

Early in her career Oates contributed short stories to a number of magazines and reviews, including the *Prairie Schooner*, *Literary Review*, *Southwest Review*, and *Epoch*, and in 1963 she published her 1<sup>st</sup> collection of short stories, "*By the North Gate*". Her 1<sup>st</sup> novel, "*With Shuddering Fall*" (1964) was followed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> short-story

collection, *Upon the Sweeping Flood* (1965). She wrote prolifically thereafter, averaging about 2 books per year.

Her notable fiction works include *A Garden of Earthly Delights* (1967), *them* (1969; winner of a National Book Award), *Black Water* (1992), *The Falls* (2004), *Mudwoman* (2012), *Carthage* (2014) and *The Man Without a Shadow* (2016). Her forays into young adult fiction included *Big Mouth & Ugly Girl* (2002) and *Two or Three Things I Forgot to Tell You* (2012).

She published the short-story collection *Faithless: Tales of Transgression*, (2001) "richly various" tales of sin. An extensive and mainly retrospective volume of her stories, *High Lonesome: New & Selected Stories, 1966-2006*, was published in 2006. *Wild Nights!: Stories About the Last Days of Poe, Dickinson, Twain, James, and Hemingway* (2008) featured fictionalized accounts of the final days of various iconic American writers. The stories in *Black Dahlia and White Rose* (2012) were threaded with menace and violence; the title piece fictionalized the sensational 1947 Black Dahlia murder in Los Angeles. *Evil Eye: Four Novellas of Love Gone Wrong* (2014) is a collection of tales that explore the sinister possibilities of romantic entanglement.

Oates also wrote mysteries (under the pseudonyms Rosamond Smith and Lauren Kelly), plays, essays, poetry, and literary criticism. Essays, reviews, and other prose pieces are included in *Where I've Been, and Where I'm Going* (1999) and *In Rough Country* (2010). She published the memoir *A Widow's Story*, (2011) in which she mourned her husband's death. *The Lost Landscape: A Writer's Coming of Age* (2015) is a memoir elliptically documenting her childhood.

Oates's novels encompass a variety of historical settings and literary genres. She typically portrays American individuals whose intensely experienced and obsessive lives end in bloodshed and self-destruction owing to larger forces beyond their control. Her books blend a realistic treatment of everyday life with horrific and even sensational depictions of violence.

### ***"Them"* (1969)**

*"Them"*, novel by J. C. Oates, granted a National Book Award in 1970. Violent and explosive in both incident and tone, the work is set in urban Detroit from 1937 to 1967 and chronicles the efforts of the Wendell family to break away from their destructive, crime-ridden background. Critics praised the novel for its detailed social observation and its bitter indictment of American society.

*"Them"* is clearly a naturalistic novel. It resembles T. Dreiser's *"Sister Carrie"* (1900) in its employment of a female protagonist, emphasis on power, focus on the ordinary person, attraction of its characters to the glittering symbols of wealth, and careful research into the socio-economic background of the period. The fundamental difference is that while Dreiser's Carrie suffers for trying to improve her condition, Oates's characters suffer tragically merely by attempting to maintain their current status, to hold on to some affection, stability, and economic security. Oates surpasses Dreiser in her portraits of familial relationships and sense of dramatic timing, but she

sometimes shares Dreiser's penchant for the clumsy, overblown style, and the repetitious insistence on the misery of the novel's characters.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Identify the Gothic elements in the fiction of Joyce Carol Oates.
2. Oates has been accused of excessive violence in her novels and stories. What purpose does it serve in her fiction?
3. How does point of view operate in an Oates novel or short story? Is it consistent? Does it shift among different characters?
4. What does Oates say about contemporary American society? What are its preoccupations, its limitations?
5. How does the American family thrive in Oates? What are its strengths, and what are its problems?
6. Do Oates's protagonists come to some understanding of their identity by the end of the work?

### **"Them":**

1. "*Them*" chronicles the lives of 3 members of the Wendall family: Loretta, Maureen, and Jules. What stages of development do each of these characters go through? Have they changed or remained static? Are they survivors only or have they found valuable responses to the lives they find themselves in? To what extent are they responsible for their own fates?
2. How does each character pursue the American dream? What is his or her American dream? Is it yours?
3. Do you find Nadine to be an affirmative voice in the novel? Why does she keep washing her hair?
4. Is the relationship between Jules and Nadine based on love? What kind of love? Romantic? Obsessive? Controlling?
5. How well does Oates capture the atmosphere of Detroit? What is her attitude towards it? How does this city represent America?

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2. Creighton, J.V. *Joyce Carol Oates: Novels of the Middle Years*. NY: Twayne, 2012.
3. Daly, B. *Lavish Self-Divisions: The Novels of Joyce Carol Oates*. Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 2016.

## **11.7. Alice Walker (1944-). "The Color Purple"**

**Primary Works:** "Once", poem (1968). **Novels:** "The Third Life of Grange Copeland" (1970), *Meridian* (1976), "The Color Purple" (1982), "The Temple of My Familiar" (1989), "By the Light of My Father's Smile" (1998). **Poem collections:** "Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems" (1973), *Absolute Trust in the Goodness of*

*the Earth*” (2003), “*A Poem Traveled Down My Arm*” (2003), “*Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poems*” (1991). **Collections of short stories:** “*In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Woman*” (1973), “*The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart*” (2000). **Essays:** “*In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens*” (1983), “*Sent by Earth*” (2001), “*We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*” (2006), “*The Cushion in the Road*” (2013).

### **A Brief Biography of Alice Walker**

Alice Malsenior Walker (born February 9, 1944, Eatonton, Georgia, U.S.), American writer whose novels, short stories, and poems are noted for their insightful treatment of African American culture. Her novels, most notably “*The Color Purple*” (1982), focus particularly on women.

Walker was the 8<sup>th</sup> child of African American sharecroppers. While growing up she was accidentally blinded in one eye, and her mother gave her a typewriter, allowing her to write instead of doing chores. After graduating college in 1965, Walker moved to Mississippi and became involved in the civil rights movement. She also began teaching and publishing short stories and essays. She married in 1967, but the couple divorced in 1976.

Walker’s 1<sup>st</sup> book of poetry, “*Once*”, appeared in 1968, and her 1<sup>st</sup> novel, “*The Third Life of Grange Copeland*” (1970), a narrative that spans 60 years and 3 generations, followed 2 years later. A 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of poetry, “*Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems*”, and her 1<sup>st</sup> collection of short stories, “*In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Woman*”, both appeared in 1973. The latter bears witness to violence and abuse in the African American community. After moving to New York, Walker completed “*Meridian*” (1976), a novel describing the coming of age of several civil rights workers in the 1960s.

Walker later moved to California, where she wrote her most popular novel, “*The Color Purple*” (1982). An epistolary novel, it depicts the growing up and self-realization of an African American woman between 1909 and 1947 in a town in Georgia. The book won a Pulitzer Prize and was adapted into a film by Steven Spielberg in 1985.

Walker’s later fiction includes “*The Temple of My Familiar*” (1989), an ambitious examination of racial and gender tensions; “*By the Light of My Father’s Smile*” (1998), the story of a family of anthropologists posing as missionaries in order to gain access to a Mexican tribe; and “*Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart*” (2005), about an older woman’s quest for identity. Reviewers complained that these novels employed New Age abstractions and poorly conceived characters, though Walker continued to draw praise for championing racial and gender equality in her work. She also released the volume of short stories “*The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart*” (2000) and several other volumes of poetry.

Her essays were compiled in “*In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose*” (1983), “*Sent by Earth: A Message from the Grandmother Spirit After the Bombing of the World Trade Center and Pentagon*” (2001), “*We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For*” (2006), and “*The Cushion in the Road: Meditation and Wandering as the Whole World Awakens to Being in Harm’s Way*” (2013). Walker

also wrote juvenile fiction and critical essays on such female writers as Flannery O'Connor and Zora Neale Hurston.

### **“The Color Purple” (1982)**

“*The Color Purple*” chronicles the struggle of several black women in rural Georgia in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983. A feminist novel about an abused and uneducated black woman’s struggle for empowerment, the novel was praised for the depth of its female characters and for its eloquent use of black English vernacular. Walker won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award. In 1985, a Steven Spielberg film based on the novel was released to wide audiences and significant acclaim.

“*The Color Purple*” documents the traumas and gradual triumph of Celie, a young African-American woman raised in rural isolation in Georgia, as she comes to resist the paralyzing self-concept forced on her by those who have power over her.

“*The Color Purple*” is not written in the style of most novels. The author does not tell us everything about the characters, the setting, and why the characters behave the way they do. The novel is written in a series of letters to God, not dated. There are large gaps between some letters, but this is not revealed by the author; we have to figure it out ourselves. The letters are written in what Walker calls black folk language, which also reduces the easiness of the reading.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. Analyze in what way Alice Walker resembles other writers describing hard lives of black communities, especially - women? In what way she is different from others?
2. Why was “*The Color Purple*” hardly accepted by literary critics? Did they think the problems of the novel were not urgent and topical at that period of time?

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1. Bloom, H. *Alice Walker*. NY: Chelsea House, 2017.
2. Dieke, I. *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*. Greenwood P: Westport, Connecticut, 2017.
3. Light, A. “*Fear of the Happy Ending: The Color Purple, Reading and Racism.*” In *English and Cultural Studies*, ed. M. Green. London: Chelsea House, 2017.

### **11.8. Rita Frances Dove (1952-). “Thomas and Beulah”**

**Primary Works: Poetry collections:** “10 Poems” (1977), “*The Yellow House on the Corner*” (1980), “*Museum*” (1983), “*Thomas and Beulah: Poems*” (1986); “*Grace Notes*” (1989), “*Selected Poems*” (1993); “*Sonata Mulattica*” (2009); “*American Smooth*” (2004); “*On the Bus with Rosa Parks*” (1999); “*Mother Love*” (1995); **Essay collections:** “*The Poet's World*” (1995). **Drama:** “*The Darker Face of the Earth*”, a

verse play in 14 scenes (1994). **Novels:** “*Through the Ivory Gate*” (1992). **Short story collections:** “*Fifth Sunday*” (1985).

### **A Brief Biography of Rita Frances Dove**

Rita Frances Dove (born August 28, 1952) is an American poet and essayist, born in Akron, Ohio, educated at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, the University of Tübingen in Germany, and the University of Iowa where she studied at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. From 1993 to 1995, she served as Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. She is the 1<sup>st</sup> African-American to have been appointed since the position was created by an act of Congress in 1986 from the previous "consultant in poetry" position (1937-86). Dove also received an appointment as "special consultant in poetry" for the Library of Congress's bicentennial year from 1999 to 2000. She served as the Poet Laureate of Virginia from 2004 to 2006.

A professor of English at Arizona State University, Rita Dove won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1987 for her volume “*Thomas and Beulah: Poems*” (1986), an extended sequence of poems describing the lives of her grandparents. At 34 she was one of the youngest ever recipients of the prize and only the 2<sup>nd</sup> African-American writer to receive it. Her verse is characterized by both its lyric and narrative qualities, the latter being particularly evident in “*Thomas and Beulah*” which recounts the story of a black couple's life in the industrial Midwest in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the volume addresses 1 of Dove's persistent themes, that of displacement, or what Dove herself refers to as the sense of living in ‘2 different worlds, seeing things with double vision’. Her single most well-known poem, arguably, is “Parsley” which is based on a massacre perpetrated by Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1957. Her other volumes of verse include “*Ten Poems*” (1977), “*The Yellow House on the Corner*” (1980), “*Museum*” (1983), “*Grace Notes*” (1991), and “*Selected Poems*” (1993). “*Fifth Sunday: Stories*” appeared in 1985 and was reprinted in 1990, while “*Through the Ivory Gate*” (1992) is a novel and “*The Darker Face of the Earth*” (1994) a play in verse. Rita Dove was named U.S. poet laureate for the year 1993-1994. 2 valuable interviews with Dove in which she discusses her work are to be found in “*Black American Literature Forum*” (Fall 1986) and “*Gargoyle*” (1985).

### **“*Thomas and Beulah*” (1986)**

Rita Dove won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1986 for her collection of poems *Thomas and Beulah*. The collection, which is dedicated to the poet's mother, contains poems that are meant to tell two sides of the same story and are meant to be read sequentially. In the back of the collection, a chronology of events in the lives of Thomas and Beulah aids in understanding the events dramatized in the poems.

The collection consists of 44 poems arranged in 2 parts, some of which had been published in various places before 1986. The collection is divided into 2 parts: Part 1, entitled “*Mandolin*”, presents 23 poems; part 2, entitled “*Canary in Bloom*”, consists of the volume's remaining 21 poems. The volume has 80 pages including the chronology.

“*Thomas and Beulah*” is a tour de force, a virtuoso performance by a major poet operating at the height of her powers. “*Thomas and Beulah*” takes the form of a 2-part book of narrative poems that collectively tell the stories of Thomas (in “*Mandolin*” the book’s 1<sup>st</sup> part) and his wife, Beulah (in “*Canary in Bloom*” the 2<sup>nd</sup> part). The parts are meant to be read sequentially and offer the male and female perspectives on some 70 years of private history. The 2 parts are followed by a “*Chronology*” that provides an imagined framework of the critical years in the married life of Thomas, a mandolin player and talented tenor, and Beulah, his proud and sometimes unforgiving spouse. The poems are a mixture of lush imagery involving food, musical instruments, cars, and weather, as well as quotations from songs and specimens of actual “Negro” speech. Although the poems form interlocking units, many of them (such as “*The Zeppelin Factory*” and “*Pomade*”) are self-sufficient and freestanding works of art that could be read individually, without reference to the book as a whole.

### Study Questions:

1. How does Rita Dove represent the lives of African American women?
2. What defines motherhood for Dove?
3. The role of the artist is a frequent theme in Dove’s work. What does she find this role to be? What different kinds of art appear in her works?
4. How does Dove use form in her poetry? What does she do with sonnet form that is original and unusual?
5. How does Dove use myth in her work?

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2. Ingersoll, E. *Conversations with Rita Dove*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2013.
3. Lofgren, L. “Partial Horror: Fragmentation and Healing in Rita Dove’s *Mother Love*” // *Callaloo*, No.19, no. 1. 2016.
4. Pereira, M. *Rita Dove’s Cosmopolitanism*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2013.
5. Righelato, P. “Geometry and Music: Rita Dove’s “*Fifth Sunday*” // *Yearbook of English Studies*, No.31. 2011.
6. Bellafante, G. “Poetry in Motion” // *Time*, May 31, 2013.

### 11.9. Jamaica Kincaid (1949). “*Lucy*”

**Primary Works: Novels:** “*Annie John*” (1985), “*Lucy*” (1990), “*The Autobiography of My Mother*” (1996), “*Mr. Potter*” (2002), “*See Now Then*” (2013). **Uncollected fiction:** “*Ovando*” (1989), “*The Finishing Line*” (1990), “*Biography of a Dress*” (1992), “*Song of Roland*” (1993), “*Xuela*” (1994). **Short story collections:** “*At the Bottom of the River*” (1983).

### A Brief Biography of Jamaica Kincaid

Jamaica Kincaid, original name Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardson, (born May 25, 1949, St. John's, Antigua), Caribbean American writer whose essays, stories, and novels are evocative portrayals of family relationships and her native Antigua.

Kincaid settled in New York City when she left Antigua at age 16. She 1<sup>st</sup> worked as an au pair in Manhattan. She later won a photography scholarship in New Hampshire but returned to New York within 2 years. In 1973 she took the name Jamaica Kincaid (partly because she wished the anonymity for her writing), and the following year she began regularly submitting articles to *The New Yorker* magazine, where she became a staff writer in 1976. Kincaid's writings for the magazine often chronicled Caribbean culture. Her essays and stories were subsequently published in other magazines as well.

In 1983 Kincaid's 1<sup>st</sup> book, "*At the Bottom of the River*", a collection of short stories and reflections, was published. Setting a pattern for her later work, it mixed lyricism and anger. "*Annie John*" (1984) and "*Lucy*" (1990) were novels but were autobiographical in nature, as were most of Kincaid's subsequent works, with an emphasis on mother-daughter relationships. "*A Small Place*" (1988), a 3-part essay, continued her depiction of Antigua and her rage at its despoliation. Kincaid's treatment of the themes of family relationships, personhood, and the taint of colonialism reached a fierce pitch in "*The Autobiography of My Mother*" (1996) and "*My Brother*" (1997), an account of the death from AIDS of Kincaid's younger brother.

Her writing has been criticized. As works such as "*At the Bottom of the River*" and "*The Autobiography of My Mother*" use Antiguan cultural practices, some critics say these works employ "magical realism". "The author claims, however, that [her work] is 'magic' and 'real,' but not necessarily [works] of 'magical realism.'" Other critics claim that her style is "modernist" because much of her fiction is "culturally specific and experimental". It has also been praised for its keen observation of character, curtness, wit, and lyrical quality.

Her *Talk of the Town* columns for *The New Yorker* were collected in "*Talk Stories*" (2001), and in 2005 she published "*Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*", an account of a plant-collecting trip she took in the foothills of the Himalayas. The novel "*See Now Then*" (2013) chronicles the late-life dissolution of a marriage by way of the jilted wife's acerbic ruminations.

Her writing explores such themes as colonialism and colonial legacy, postcolonialism and neo-colonialism, gender, renaming, mother-daughter relationships, British and American imperialism, colonial education, writing, racism, class, power, and adolescence. In her most recent novel, "*See Now Then*", Kincaid also 1<sup>st</sup> explores the theme of time.

Her novels are loosely autobiographical, though Kincaid has warned against interpreting their autobiographical elements too literally: "Everything I say is true, and everything I say is not true. You couldn't admit any of it to a court of law. It would not be good evidence". Her work often prioritizes "impressions and feelings over plot development" and features conflict with both a strong maternal figure and colonial and neocolonial influences.



## **“Lucy” (1990)**

“Lucy” (1990) is a short novel or novella by J. Kincaid. The story begins as: the eponymous Lucy has come from the West Indies to the U.S. to be an au pair for a wealthy white family. The plot of the novel closely mirrors Kincaid's own experiences.

“Lucy” retains some critical tone, but simplifies the style of Kincaid’s earlier works by using less repetition and surrealism. The 1<sup>st</sup> of her books set completely outside the Caribbean, “Lucy”, like most of Kincaid’s writing, has a strong autobiographical basis. The novel’s protagonist, Lucy Josephine Potter, shares one of Kincaid’s given names and her birthday. Like Kincaid, Lucy leaves the Caribbean to become an au pair in a large American city. At 19, Lucy is older than previous Kincaid protagonists, which lends the book a more mature and cynical perspective than in her previous fiction. Still, Lucy has pangs of homesickness and unresolved feelings about her mother, and she has never lived on her own or seen much of the world. With plenty of room for growth and Lucy becoming a photographer, the story takes the form of a *künstlerroman*, a novel in which an artist matures.

“Lucy” also joins the tradition of American immigration literature, tales that recount a newcomer’s experience in the U.S., such as those seen in Anzia Yezierska’s “*Bread Givers*”, Willa Cather’s “*My Antonia*”, and Julia Alvarez’s “*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*”. Along with exploring immigration, “Lucy”, as does much of Kincaid’s work, grapples with tensions between mother and daughter. Colonial themes of identity confusion and the connection between maternal and imperial rule stand out less clearly in “Lucy” than in Kincaid’s earlier books but have an underlying presence in Lucy’s relationship with her white, affluent employers, her homeland, and her new surroundings.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the association and symbolism of yellow in the novel “Lucy” by J. Kincaid?
2. How do themes involving parents and children appear in “Annie John”, “Lucy”, and “The Autobiography of My Mother”?
3. What justification can you see for J. Kincaid calling “The Autobiography of My Mother” an “autobiography” when the subject is someone whom the narrator never knew?
4. What use does Kincaid make of clothing in her fiction? How is it related to themes of power?
5. What relationship does Kincaid see between power and colonial rule?
6. How does power function as a theme in Kincaid’s novels? Can children have power over parents? How can they exert that power?
7. What evidence of Kincaid’s interest in botany do you find in her fiction?

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### 11.10. Toni Cade Bambara (1939-1995). "Blues Ain't No Mocking Bird"

**Primary Works: Short-story collections:** "Gorilla, My Love" (1972), "The Sea Birds Are Still Alive" (1977). **Novels:** "The Salt Eaters" (1980), "If Blessing Comes" (1987). **Anthologies:** "The Black Woman" (1970), "Tales and Stories for Black Folks" (1971). **Short stories:** "Sweet Town" (1959), "The Lesson" (1972).

#### A Brief Biography of Toni Cade Bambara

Toni Cade Bambara, original name Toni Cade, (born March 25, 1939, New York, N.Y., U.S.-died Dec. 9, 1995, Philadelphia, Pa.), American writer, civil-rights activist, and teacher who wrote about the concerns of the African-American community.

Reared by her mother in Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Queens, N.Y., Bambara (a surname she adopted in 1970) was educated at Queens College (B.A., 1959). In 1961 she went to Europe, studying acting and mime in Italy and in France. She received an M.A. in 1964 from City College of the City University of New York. She was a frequent lecturer and teacher at universities and a political activist who worked to raise black American consciousness and pride. In the 1970s she was active in both the black liberation and the women's movements.

Bambara's fiction, which is set in the rural South as well as the urban North, is written in black street dialect and presents sharply drawn characters whom she portrayed with affection. She published the short-story collections "Gorilla, My Love" (1972) and "The Sea Birds Are Still Alive" (1977), as well as the novels "The Salt Eaters" (1980) and "If Blessing Comes" (1987). She edited and contributed to "The Black Woman: An Anthology" (1970) and to "Tales and Stories for Black Folks" (1971). She also collaborated on several television documentaries.

"Gorilla, My Love" included 15 stories, mostly written between 1959 and 1970. This was the best known and most widely acclaimed book that Bambara ever published. Her writings in "Gorilla, My Love" was praised for capturing the essence of real events and real people. The stories "are among the best portraits of black life to have appeared in some time. Written in a breezy, engaging style that owes a good deal to street dialect".

Bambara's published her 1<sup>st</sup> novel called "The Salt Eaters", in 1980; it was a well-received work. John Leonard describes the book as "extraordinary", and "[it] is almost

an incantation, poem-drunk, myth-happy, mud-caked, jazz-ridden, prodigal in meanings a kite and a mask". *"The Salt Eaters"* won the American Book Award and the Langston Hughes Society Award in 1981.

Toni Cade Bambara died December 9, 1995 of colon cancer. Some of her last works which were yet to be published were gathered by her daughter, Karma and her lifelong friend and editor Toni Morrison, in the collection *"Deep Sightings and Rescue Missions"*.

### ***"Blues Ain't No Mocking Bird" (1971)***

*"Blues Ain't No Mocking Bird"* is a short story. It is told through the point of view of a young black girl in northern America. *"Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird"* is about a family whose privacy is invaded by 2 white cameramen who are making a film for the county's food stamp program. In this story, the little girl is playing with her neighbors, Tyrone and Terry and cousin, Cathy at her grandmother's house. Her grandmother is on the back porch spreading rum on the cakes she has made. 2 white filmmakers, shooting a film "about food stamps" for the county, tree near their yard. The little girl's grandmother asks them to leave but not listening to her request, they simply move farther away. When Granddaddy Cain returns from hunting a chicken hawk, he takes the camera from the men and smashes it. The white men swear and go away. Cathy, the distant cousin of the little girl, displays a precocious ability to interpret other people's actions and words as well as an interest in storytelling and writing. Granny shares a story with the children and Cathy which relates to her feeling about people filming without permission. To her, life is not to be publicized to everyone because they are not as "good" or wealthy as others.

The reader may notice the improper spelling such as 'mockin' instead of 'mocking' or 'nuthin' instead of 'nothing'. This is because the story is written in dialect, to give an element of truth to the story.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. How does the African American tradition of oral storytelling feature in Toni Cade Bambara's works?
2. Through what specific actions do young girls in Bambara's stories demonstrate their resistance to social norms?
3. Explore how truth telling is an important aspect of Bambara's work.
4. Who are the social activists in Bambara's fiction and what problems are they trying to remedy?

#### ***"Blues Ain't No Mockingbird":***

1. What do the two men think of Granny Cain in *"Blues Ain't No Mockingbird"*?
2. What happens to the two hawks in Toni Cade Bambara's short story *"Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird"*? Why?
3. In *"Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird"*, what is author Toni Cade Bambara's tone?
4. What is the conflict in Toni Cade Bambara's *"Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird"*?

5. What are the idioms in Toni Cade Bambara's short story "*Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird*"?
6. How do the men react to Granny's asking them to stop filming in "*Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird*"?
7. What is the dialect in Toni Cade Bambara's "*Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird*"?

### **Selected Sources:**

1. "*Toni Cade Bambara*" // *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, V.38. Detroit: The Gale Research Company, 2015.

### **11.11. Pearl Sydenstricker Buck (1892-1973). "*The Good Earth*"**

**Primary Works: Novels:** "*East Wind, West Wind*" (1930), "*The House of Earth*", a trilogy (1935): "*The Good Earth*" (1931) - "*Sons*" (1932) - "*A House Divided*" (1935), "*Fighting Angel*" (1936), "*The Exile*" (1936), "*The Chinese Novel*" (1939), "*Dragon Seed*" (1942), "*Imperial Woman*" (1956), "*The Townsman*" (1945), "*The Eternal Wonder*" (2012). **Short stories:** "*The First Wife and Other Stories*" (1933), "*Far and Near*" (1947), "*The Good Deed*" (1969). **Nonfictional work:** "*The Child Who Never Grew*" (1950). **Autobiography:** "*My Several Worlds*" (1954).

### **A Brief Biography of Pearl Sydenstricker Buck**

Pearl S. Buck, née Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker, pseudonym John Sedges, (born June 26, 1892, Hillsboro, West Virginia, U.S.-died March 6, 1973, Danby, Vermont), American author noted for her novels of life in China. She received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938.

Pearl Sydenstricker was raised in Zhenjiang in eastern China by her missionary parents. Initially educated by her mother and a Chinese tutor, she was sent at 15 to a boarding school in Shanghai. 2 years later she entered Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia; she graduated in 1914 and remained for a semester as an instructor in psychology.

In May 1917 she married missionary John L. Buck; although later divorced and remarried, she retained the name Buck professionally. She returned to China and taught English literature in Chinese universities in 1925-30. During that time, she briefly resumed studying in the U.S. at Cornell University, where she took an M.A. in 1926. She began contributing articles on Chinese life to American magazines in 1922. Her 1<sup>st</sup> published novel, "*East Wind, West Wind*" (1930), was written aboard a ship headed for America.

"*The Good Earth*" (1931), a poignant tale of a Chinese peasant and his slave-wife and their struggle upward, was a best seller. The book, which won a Pulitzer Prize (1932), established Buck as an interpreter of the East to the West and was adapted for stage and screen. "*The Good Earth*", widely translated, was followed by "*Sons*" (1932) and "*A House Divided*" (1935); the trilogy was published as "*The House of Earth*" (1935). Buck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938.

From 1935 Buck lived in the U.S. She and her 2<sup>nd</sup> husband, Richard Walsh, adopted 6 children through the years. Indeed, adoption became a personal crusade for Buck. In 1949, in a move to aid the mixed-race children fathered in Asia by U.S. servicemen, she and others established an adoption agency, Welcome House. She also founded another child-sponsorship agency, the Pearl S. Buck Foundation (1964; later renamed Opportunity House), to which in 1967 she turned over most of her earnings - more than \$7 million. Welcome House and Opportunity House merged in 1991 to form Pearl S. Buck International, headquartered on Buck's estate, Green Hills Farm in Pennsylvania, which is a national historic landmark.

After Buck's return to the U.S., she turned to biography, writing lives of her father, Absalom Sydenstricker (*Fighting Angel*, 1936), and her mother, Caroline (*The Exile*, 1936). Later novels include *Dragon Seed* (1942) and *Imperial Woman* (1956). She also published short stories, such as "The First Wife and Other Stories" (1933), "Far and Near" (1947), and "The Good Deed" (1969); a nonfictional work, "The Child Who Never Grew" (1950), about her mentally disabled daughter, Carol (1920-92); an autobiography, "My Several Worlds" (1954); and a number of children's books. Under the name John Sedges, she published 5 novels unlike her others, including a best seller, "The Townsman" (1945). In December 2012 an unpublished manuscript completed just prior to Buck's death was discovered in a storage locker in Texas, and it was published the next year. The novel, titled "The Eternal Wonder", chronicles the peregrinations of a young genius.

### ***"The Good Earth" (1931)***

*"The Good Earth"* is a novel about peasant life in China in the 1920s, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1932.

Pearl S. Buck was truly a pioneer in appreciating the People's Republic of China and its emergence as a world power. Through her writings and humanitarian activities, she often made attempts to reduce the cultures of China and the U.S. to their lowest common denominator in order to bridge the two worlds in which she lived.

*"The Good Earth"* follows the life of Wang Lung from his beginnings as an impoverished peasant to his eventual position as a prosperous landowner. He is aided immeasurably by his equally humble wife, O-Lan, with whom he shares a devotion to the land, to duty, and to survival. Buck combines descriptions of marriage, parenthood, and complex human emotions with depictions of Chinese reverence for the land and for a specific way of life.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Pearl Buck won the 1938 Nobel Prize for Literature for what the Nobel Prize Committee called "rich and genuine epic portrayals of Chinese peasant life, and for masterpieces of biography." How is her talent for writing biography reflected in her portrayal of Wang Lung and his family?

2. Discuss the roles of "chance" and "change" in the life of the Chinese peasant (especially note Chapters 18, 19, and 20), as opposed to a cause-and-effect relationship, illustrated in the belief by Wang Lung that hard work will have benefits.
3. Discuss the relationship between the House of Hwang and the family Wang, especially the rise of the Wangs while the House of Hwang is disintegrating. Consider, too, the similarity shown in the last half of the novel between the two houses.
4. A basic tenet of the novel seems to be that virtue and hard work are rewarded. Yet, the riches that are brought back from the South (truly a turning point of the novel) are acquired through "chance" and trickery. And, at the end of the novel, the roots established by Wang Lung will obviously be pulled up as the land is sold and divided by the sons. Is this consistent?
5. In *"The Chinese Novel"* (1939), Pearl Buck writes, "the novel in China was the peculiar product of the common people. And it was solely their property... dealing with all which interested the people, with legend and with myth, with lore and intrigue, with brigands and wars, with everything, indeed, which went to make up the life of the people, high and low." In what ways do the story and style of *"The Good Earth"*, in their simplicity, offer something for all readers?
6. The success of *"The Good Earth"* prompted Pearl Buck to write 2 sequels, which were finally released with *"The Good Earth"* in a trilogy entitled *"House of Earth"*. How does *"The Good Earth"* lend itself to sequels? In what way is the end of *"The Good Earth"* a beginning? In the end, how does the family Wang compare to the House of Hwang at the beginning of the novel?

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4. Melvin, Sh. *The Resurrection of Pearl Buck* // Wilson Quarterly Archives, No.10, 2016.

### **11.12. Flannery O'Connor (1892-1973). "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"**

**Primary Works: Novels:** *"Wise Blood"* (1952) *"The Violent Bear It Away"* (1960). **Short stories:** *"A Good Man Is Hard to Find, and Other Stories"* (1955), *"Everything That Rises Must Converge"* (1965), *"Mystery and Manners"* (1969), *"The Complete Stories"* (1971). **Non-Fiction:** *"The Habit of Being"* (1979), *"The Presence of Grace, and Other Book Reviews"* (1983), *"A Prayer Journal"* (2013).

### **A Brief Biography of Flannery O'Connor**

Flannery O'Connor, in full Mary Flannery O'Connor, (born March 25, 1925, Savannah, Georgia, U.S.-died August 3, 1964, Milledgeville, Georgia), American novelist and short-story writer whose works, usually set in the rural American South

and often treating of alienation, concern the relationship between the individual and God.

O'Connor grew up in a prominent Roman Catholic family in her native Georgia. She lived in Savannah until her adolescence, but the worsening of her father's lupus erythematosus forced the family to relocate in 1938 to the home in rural Milledgeville where her mother had been raised. After graduating from Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia College & State University) in 1945, she studied creative writing at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Her 1<sup>st</sup> published work, a short story, appeared in the magazine *Accent* in 1946. Her 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *Wise Blood* (1952; film 1979), explores, in O'Connor's own words, the "religious consciousness without a religion." *Wise Blood* consists of a series of near-independent chapters-many of which originated in previously published short stories-that tell the tale of Hazel Motes, a preacher's grandson who returns from military service to his hometown after losing his faith and then relocates to another town, this one populated by a grotesque cast of itinerant loners, false prophets, and displaced persons on the make. *Wise Blood* combines the keen ear for common speech, the caustic religious imagination, and the flair for the absurd that were to characterize O'Connor's subsequent work. With the publication of further short stories, 1<sup>st</sup> collected in *A Good Man Is Hard to Find, and Other Stories* (1955), she came to be regarded as a master of the form. The collection's eponymous story became possibly her best-known work. In it O'Connor created an unexpected agent of salvation in the character of an escaped convict called The Misfit, who kills a quarreling family on vacation in the Deep South.

Her other works of fiction are a novel, *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), and the short-story collection *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965). A collection of occasional prose pieces, *Mystery and Manners*, appeared in 1969. *The Complete Stories*, published posthumously in 1971, contains several stories that had not previously appeared in book form; it won a National Book Award in 1972.

Disabled for more than a decade by the lupus erythematosus she inherited from her father, which eventually proved fatal, O'Connor lived modestly, writing and raising peafowl on her mother's farm at Milledgeville. The posthumous publication of *The Habit of Being* (1979), a book of her letters; *The Presence of Grace, and Other Book Reviews* (1983), a collection of her book reviews and correspondence with local diocesan newspapers; and *A Prayer Journal* (2013), a book of private religious missives, provided valuable insight into the life and mind of a writer whose works defy conventional categorization. O'Connor's darkly comic works commonly feature startling acts of violence and unsympathetic, often depraved, characters. She explained the prevalence of brutality in her stories by noting that violence "is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moment of grace." It is this divine stripping of human comforts and hubris, along with the attendant degradation of the corporeal, that stands as the most salient feature of O'Connor's work.

### ***"A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1955)***

“*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*”, volume of short stories. Like much of the author’s work, the collection presents vivid, hidebound characters seemingly hounded by a redemption that they often successfully elude. Several of the stories are generally considered masterpieces of the form. These include “*The Artificial Nigger*,” in which the strange sight of a black lawn statue causes a bigoted grandfather to realize a truth about injustice; “*Good Country People*,” in which a young woman’s sense of moral superiority proves her downfall; and the title story, whose demonic character the Misfit becomes an instrument of revelation for his most formidable victim. The other stories in the volume are “*The River*,” “*A Circle in the Fire*,” “*The Displaced Person*,” “*A Stroke of Good Fortune*,” “*A Late Encounter with the Enemy*,” “*The Life You Save May Be Your Own*,” and “*A Temple of the Holy Ghost*.”

### Study Questions:

1. Choose one story by Flannery O’Connor in which a mother is present. How is her importance demonstrated?
2. Racism is an important theme in many of the stories. Choose one story in which it is relevant and explain how it affects the characters' lives.
3. Choose one story and explain how weather is used as an indicator of the characters' moods and intentions.
4. Choose an example of a character whose glorification of a past time is a major identifying factor. Explain how this preoccupation affects the action of the story.
5. Many characters in O’Connor’s stories demonstrate a disgust with the state of the world. Elaborate on this tool of characterization as it applies to three characters.
6. Many of Flannery O’Connor’s protagonists are deformed or suffer from disabilities. Choose one of the characters and describe how he or she becomes defined by the deformity or disability.
7. In “*The Displaced Person*,” how is violent imagery associated with language used to enforce the characters' racism?
8. Grace is one of the most important themes in O’Connor’s stories. Choose a story in which Grace plays an important role and describe how it is symbolized.

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3. Cash J.W. *Flannery O’Connor: A Life*. U of Tennessee P, 2004.

## 11.13. Margaret Mitchell (1900-1949). “*Gone with the Wind*”

**Primary Works: Novels:** “*Gone with the Wind*” (1936).

### A Brief Biography of Margaret Mitchell



Margaret Mitchell, in full Margaret Munnerlyn Mitchell Marsh, (born November 8, 1900, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.-died August 16, 1949, Atlanta), American author of the enormously popular novel *"Gone with the Wind"* (1936). The novel earned Mitchell a National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize, and it was the source of the classic film of the same name released in 1939.

Mitchell grew up in a family of storytellers who regaled her with firsthand accounts of their experiences during the American Civil War, which had ended just 35 years before her birth. An active tomboy, she played in the earthen fortifications that still surrounded her hometown of Atlanta and often went horseback riding with Confederate veterans. She also was a voracious reader and wrote numerous stories and plays throughout her youth.

Mitchell graduated from Atlanta's Washington Seminary in 1918 and enrolled at Smith College in Massachusetts. When her mother died the following year, Mitchell returned to Atlanta to keep house for her father and brother. Bored with her domestic duties and the Atlanta social scene, she characterized herself as a "dynamo going to waste." In 1921 she caused a scandal by performing a risqué dance at a local debutante ball.

In 1922 Mitchell wed Berrien Upshaw, but the marriage quickly soured amid allegations of his alcoholism and physical abusiveness. They separated, and with the assistance of John Marsh, who had been best man at her wedding, Mitchell accepted a position as a reporter for the Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine. In the summer of 1925, Mitchell and Marsh married.

In the spring of 1926, an ankle injury, aggravated by arthritis, led her to resign from the newspaper. She turned her attention to writing a novel about the Civil War and Reconstruction from a Southern point of view. She set the story in her native Georgia because she knew so much of its history from the family tales she had heard growing up; she also felt that Virginia had received too much attention in previous Civil War narratives. As originally drafted, the novel featured Pansy O'Hara, a spoiled and strong-willed coquette who comes of age just as her family's life on a cotton plantation is ravaged by war. Over a period of nine years, Mitchell worked at her novel sporadically, composing episodes out of sequence and often drafting multiple versions of single scenes. The manuscript came to the attention of the Macmillan publishing company through the recommendation of its associate editor Lois Dwight Cole, a close friend of Mitchell's. Cole had not yet read the unnamed and unfinished novel but had confidence in Mitchell's storytelling ability and convinced Harold Latham, Macmillan's editor in chief, that it was sure to be worth reading. On a visit to Atlanta in the spring of 1935, Latham persuaded Mitchell to submit her work in progress for consideration. Although Mitchell's submission consisted of a disorganized collection of draft chapters, the Macmillan company saw potential in her writing and, that summer, offered her a publishing contract. Underestimating the work that would be required to complete the novel, Mitchell agreed to have it ready for publication the following spring. She spent the next seven months in a frantic state as she endeavored to complete the narrative, fact-check each of the historical details referenced in the novel, and decide on a title. Macmillan liked *"Tomorrow Is Another Day"*, while Mitchell preferred *"Gone with the Wind"*, based on a line in Ernest Dowson's poem *"Cynara"* (formally, *"Non Sum Qualis*

*Eram Bonae sub Regno Cynarae,*” published in 1891). She also was eager to find a better name for Pansy and proposed Scarlett as a replacement. Cole initially rejected the suggestion, but she eventually agreed to let it stand. Mitchell’s novel was published as *“Gone with the Wind”* on June 30, 1936. Scarlett’s story of survival amid the brutalities of war and its aftermath struck a chord with readers around the world. 50000 copies were sold in 1 day; within 6 months, one million copies had been printed. The book went on to sell more copies than any other novel in U.S. publishing history. By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more than 30 million copies had been sold worldwide in more than 40 languages.

Within a month of the novel’s release, Mitchell sold the motion-picture rights to producer David O. Selznick for \$50,000, the highest amount ever paid to a debut novelist at the time. The film, starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable, premiered in Atlanta on December 15, 1939, after an unprecedented period of advance promotion, including the highly publicized search for an actress to play Scarlett. The movie was an immediate box-office smash and, at the 1940 Academy Awards ceremony, won 8 of the 13 Oscars for which it was nominated and 2 special awards.

After the book’s initial launch, Mitchell declined to make any promotional appearances and, beginning in 1937, to sign any more copies of the book (subject to occasional exceptions for foreign editions). As a result, she developed a reputation for being a recluse overwhelmed by her celebrity status. In reality, Mitchell simply disliked the spotlight and felt her time was better spent responding to the thousands of fan letters she received and managing what quickly became an international publishing empire. She spent a substantial portion of her time pursuing legal actions against foreign publishers who produced unauthorized or substandard editions of the novel. Her efforts to protect her literary rights overseas called attention to the inadequacy of copyright protections for American authors and inspired Congress to enact legislative improvements.

For many years after the novel’s release, Mitchell insisted that, because of the disruption the book caused in her life, she had no intention of ever writing again. By the late 1940s, though, much of the excitement had waned, and she was considering ideas for a new novel. On August 11, 1949, Mitchell was crossing the street on her way to a movie theatre when she was struck by a speeding car. She suffered extensive internal injuries, including a skull fracture, and died five days later. Her death was lamented in newspapers around the world; U.S. Pres. Harry S. Truman lauded Mitchell as “an artist who gave the world an eternal book.”

Decades after Mitchell’s death, her estate authorized novelist Alexandra Ripley to write *“Scarlett: The Sequel to Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind”* (1991), which was an international best seller but panned by critics. In 2001 Mitchell’s estate, claiming copyright infringement, sued to block the publication of Alice Randall’s *“The Wind Done Gone”* (2001), a parodic sequel to *“Gone with the Wind”* told from a former slave’s perspective. The case was settled out of court. Mitchell’s estate later authorized 2 additional derivative novels: *“Rhett Butler’s People”* (2007) and *“Ruth’s Journey”* (2014), both of which were written by historical novelist Donald McCaig.

### ***“Gone with the Wind” (1936)***

“*Gone with the Wind*” won a Pulitzer Prize in 1937. The novel is a sweeping romantic story about the American Civil War from the point of view of the Confederacy. In particular, it is the story of Scarlett O’Hara, a headstrong Southern belle who survives the hardships of the war and afterward manages to establish a successful business by capitalizing on the struggle to rebuild the South. Throughout the book she is motivated by her unfulfilled love for Ashley Wilkes, an honorable man who is happily married. After a series of marriages and failed relationships with other men, notably the dashing Rhett Butler, she has a change of heart and determines to win Rhett back.

### Study Questions:

#### “*Gone with the Wind*”:

1. What does the novel say the fundamental requirements of becoming a successful leader?
2. How can the ending of the novel be described as ironic?

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1. Pyron, D.A. *Southern Daughter: the life of Margaret Mitchell*. NY: Oxford UP, 2011.
2. Felder, D.G. *A Bookshelf of Our Own: Works That Changed Women's Lives*. NY: Citadel P, 2006.

### 11.14. Sylvia Plath (1932-1963). “*The Bell Jar*”

**Primary Works: Poems:** “Daddy” (1965), “Lady Lazarus” (1965), “Crossing the Water” (1971), “Winter Trees” (1971). **Collection of Poems:** “The Colossus” (1960), “Ariel” (1965), “The Collected Poems” (1981). **Radio play:** “Three Women” (1962). **Novel:** “The Bell Jar” (1963). **Book of short stories:** “Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams” (1977). **Book for children:** “The It-Doesn’t-Matter Suit” (1996). **Autobiographical:** “The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath” (2000).

### A Brief Biography of Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath, pseudonym Victoria Lucas, (born October 27, 1932, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.-died February 11, 1963, London, England), American poet whose best-known works, such as the poems “*Daddy*” and “*Lady Lazarus*” and the novel “*The Bell Jar*”, starkly express a sense of alienation and self-destruction closely tied to her personal experiences and, by extension, the situation of women in mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century U.S.

Plath published her 1<sup>st</sup> poem at 8. She entered and won many literary contests, and, while still in high school, she sold her 1<sup>st</sup> poem to *The Christian Science Monitor* and her 1<sup>st</sup> short story to *Seventeen* magazine. She entered Smith College on a scholarship in 1951 and was a co-winner of the *Mademoiselle* magazine fiction contest in 1952. At Smith Plath achieved considerable artistic, academic, and social success,

but she also suffered from severe depression, attempted suicide, and underwent a period of psychiatric hospitalization. She graduated from Smith with highest honors in 1955 and went on to Newnham College in Cambridge, England, on a Fulbright fellowship. In 1956 she married the English poet Ted Hughes; they had 2 children. The couple separated in 1962, after Hughes's affair with another woman.

During 1957-1958 Plath was an instructor in English at Smith College. In 1960, shortly after she returned to England with Hughes, her 1<sup>st</sup> collection of poems appeared as *"The Colossus"*, which received good reviews. Her novel, *"The Bell Jar"*, was published in London in 1963 under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas. Strongly autobiographical, the book describes the mental breakdown and eventual recovery of a young college girl and parallels Plath's own breakdown and hospitalization in 1953.

During her last 3 years Plath abandoned the restraints and conventions that had bound much of her early work. She wrote with great speed, producing poems of stark self-revelation and confession. The anxiety, confusion, and doubt that haunted her were transmuted into verses of great power and pathos borne on flashes of incisive wit. Her poem *"Daddy"* and several others explore her conflicted relationship with her father, Otto Plath, who died when she was 8. In 1963, after this burst of productivity, she took her own life.

*"Ariel"* (1965) - a collection of Plath's later poems that included *"Daddy"* and another of her well-known poems, *"Lady Lazarus"* - sparked the growth of a much broader following of devoted and enthusiastic readers than she had during her lifetime. *"Ariel"* received a review in *The New York Times* that praised its "relentless honesty," "sophistication of the use of rhyme," and "bitter force," and *Poetry* magazine noted "a pervasive impatience, a positive urgency to the poems." Plath quickly became one of the most popular U.S. poets. The appearance of small collections of previously unpublished poems, including *"Crossing the Water"* (1971) and *"Winter Trees"* (1971), was welcomed by critics and the public alike. *"The Bell Jar"* was reissued in Great Britain under her own name in 1966, and it was published in the U.S. for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in 1971. *"Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams"*, a book of short stories and prose, was published in 1977.

*"The Collected Poems"*, which includes many previously unpublished poems, appeared in 1981 and received the 1982 Pulitzer Prize for poetry, making Plath the 1<sup>st</sup> to receive the honor posthumously. A book for children that she had written in 1959, *"The It-Doesn't-Matter Suit"*, was published in 1996. Plath had kept a journal for much of her life, and in 2000 *"The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath"*, covering the years from 1950 to 1962, was published. A biographical film of Plath starring Gwyneth Paltrow (Sylvia) appeared in 2003. In 2009 Plath's radio play *"Three Women"* (1962) was staged professionally for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. A volume of Plath's letters, written in 1940-56, was published in 2017. A 2<sup>nd</sup> collection - which contained her later letters, including a number of candid notes to her psychiatrist - appeared the following year.

Many of Plath's posthumous publications were compiled by Hughes, who became the executor of her estate. However, controversy surrounded both the estate's management of her work's copyright and his editing practices, especially when he revealed that he had destroyed the last journals written prior to her suicide.

## **“The Bell Jar” (1963)**

“*The Bell Jar*” is a novel by Sylvia Plath, 1<sup>st</sup> published in January 1963 under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas and later released posthumously under her real name. The work, a thinly veiled autobiography, chronicles a young woman’s mental breakdown and eventual recovery, while also exploring societal expectations of women in the 1950s. Plath committed suicide one month after the publication of “*The Bell Jar*”, her only novel.

**Summary.** “*The Bell Jar*” details the life of Esther Greenwood, a college student who dreams of becoming a poet. She is selected for a month-long summer internship as a guest editor of *Ladies’ Day* magazine, but her time in New York City is unfulfilling as she struggles with issues of identity and societal norms. She meets two other interns who manifest contrasting views of femininity as well as Esther’s own internal conflicts: the rebellious and sexual Doreen and the wholesome and virginal Betsy. During this time, Esther thinks about her boyfriend, Buddy Willard, and her anger when he admitted that he was not a virgin, claiming to have been seduced. She believes he is a hypocrite, having acted as if she was more sexually experienced. After being rejected for a writing class, Esther must spend the rest of her summer at home with her mother; Esther’s father died when she was young. She struggles to write a novel and becomes increasingly despondent, making several half-hearted suicide attempts. She ultimately overdoses on sleeping pills but survives. Esther is admitted to a mental institute, where she is treated by a progressive psychiatrist. In addition, Esther undergoes electric-shock treatment, which makes her feel as if she has been freed from a bell jar. While on a night pass, Esther loses her virginity, which she sees as a millstone. When she begins hemorrhaging, she seeks the help of another patient, Joan, who goes with her to the emergency room. Shortly thereafter Joan commits suicide, and her death seems to quell Esther’s own suicidal thoughts. The novel ends with a seemingly reborn Esther about to face the examination board, which will decide if she can go home.

**Assessment.** Initially celebrated for its dry self-deprecation and ruthless honesty, “*The Bell Jar*” is now read as a damning critique of 1950s social politics. Plath made clear connections between Esther’s dawning awareness of the limited female roles available to her and her increasing sense of isolation and paranoia. The contradictory expectations imposed upon women in relation to motherhood and intellectual achievement are linked to Esther’s sense of herself as fragmented. Her eventual recovery relies on her ability to dismiss the dominant versions of femininity that populate the novel.

Although concerned with the stifling atmosphere of 1950s America, “*The Bell Jar*” is not limited to examination of gender. The novel opens with the sentence “It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs,” which refers to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were convicted of spying for Russia. This allusion to the Cold War and McCarthyism makes implicit connections between Esther’s experiences and the other paranoias and betrayals that characterized the decade.

The novel was inspired by events that occurred when Plath was in her early 20s. Although the work ends on a hopeful note, Plath took her own life in 1963.

## Study Questions:

1. How does Plath view nature in "Edge" and "Sheep in Fog"?
2. Should Sylvia Plath be considered a confessional poet, or does her work challenge that designation?
3. In what way are Plath's poems elegies?
4. Explain Plath's debt to Anne Sexton. How does an understanding of this relationship help to understand her work?
5. How does the concept of purity manifest in Plath's poetry?
6. What are the major elements/images/styles of Plath's middle and late stages?
7. How does Plath use the setting of a hospital in her poetry?
8. When compared to earlier poems, how do "Contusion" and "Edge" reveal a shift in Plath's attitude toward life and death?
9. What do "Metaphors" and "Child" suggest about Plath's view on pregnancy and motherhood?
10. How does Plath approach the subject of her father in "Full Fathom Five," "Daddy," and "The Colossus"?

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### 11.15. Willa Cather (1873-1947). "O Pioneers!" and "One of Ours"

**Primary Works: Book of verses:** "April Twilights" (1903), "Song of the Lark" (1915), "Song of the Lark" (1915). **Collection of short stories:** "The Troll Garden" (1905). **Novels:** "Alexander's Bridge" (1912), "O Pioneers!" (1913), "My Ántonia" (1918), "One of Ours" (1922), "A Lost Lady" (1923), "The Professor's House" (1925), "Death Comes for the Archbishop" (1927), "Shadows on the Rock" (1931), "Obscure Destinies" (1932), "Sapphira and the Slave Girl" (1940). **Essay:** "Not Under Forty" (1936). **Collection of tales:** "Youth and the Bright Medusa" (1920), "Paul's Case, and Lucy Gayheart" (1935). **Collection of letters:** "The Selected Letters of Willa Cather" (2013).

### A Brief Biography of Willa Cather

Willa Cather, in full Wilella Sibert Cather, (born December 7, 1873, near Winchester, Virginia, U.S.-died April 24, 1947, New York City, New York), American novelist noted for her portrayals of the settlers and frontier life on the American plains.

At age 9 Cather moved with her family from Virginia to frontier Nebraska, where from age 10 she lived in the village of Red Cloud. There she grew up among the immigrants from Europe - Swedes, Bohemians, Russians, and Germans - who were breaking the land on the Great Plains.

At the University of Nebraska, she showed a marked talent for journalism and story writing, and on graduating in 1895 she obtained a position in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on a family magazine. Later she worked as copy editor and music and drama editor of the Pittsburgh Leader. She turned to teaching in 1901 and in 1903 published her 1<sup>st</sup> book of verses, *“April Twilights”*. In 1905, after the publication of her 1<sup>st</sup> collection of short stories, *“The Troll Garden”*, she was appointed managing editor of McClure’s, the New York muckraking monthly. After building up its declining circulation, she left in 1912 to devote herself wholly to writing novels.

Cather’s 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *“Alexander’s Bridge”* (1912), was a factitious story of cosmopolitan life. Under the influence of Sarah Orne Jewett’s regionalism, however, she turned to her familiar Nebraska material. With *“O Pioneers!”* (1913) and *“My Ántonia”* (1918), which has frequently been adjudged her finest achievement, she found her characteristic themes - the spirit and courage of the frontier she had known in her youth. *“One of Ours”* (1922), which won the Pulitzer Prize, and *“A Lost Lady”* (1923) mourned the passing of the pioneer spirit.

In her earlier *“Song of the Lark”* (1915), as well as in the tales assembled in *“Youth and the Bright Medusa”* (1920), including the much-anthologized *“Paul’s Case, and Lucy Gayheart”* (1935), Cather reflected the other side of her experience - the struggle of a talent to emerge from the constricting life of the prairies and the stifling effects of small-town life.

A mature statement of both themes can be found in *“Obscure Destinies”* (1932). With success and middle age, however, Cather experienced a strong disillusionment, which was reflected in *“The Professor’s House”* (1925) and her essays *“Not Under Forty”* (1936).

Her solution was to write of the pioneer spirit of another age, that of the French Catholic missionaries in the Southwest in *“Death Comes for the Archbishop”* (1927) and of the French Canadians at Quebec in *“Shadows on the Rock”* (1931). For the setting of her last novel, *“Sapphira and the Slave Girl”* (1940), she used the Virginia of her ancestors and her childhood.

Cather’s will have erected strong protections around her intellectual property, preventing adaptations of her fiction and forbidding publication of her correspondence. However, upon the 2011 death of a nephew who had served as her last designated executor, copyright of her work passed to the Willa Cather Trust. The trust - a partnership of the Willa Cather Foundation, Cather’s remaining family, and the University of Nebraska Foundation - lifted the prohibitions on publishing her letters. Though Cather had destroyed much of her own epistolary record, nearly 3,000 missives were tracked down by scholars, and 566 were collected in *“The Selected Letters of Willa Cather”* (2013).

### **“O Pioneers!” (1913)**

“*O Pioneers!*”, regional novel, is known for its vivid re-creation of the hardships of prairie life and of the struggle of immigrant pioneer women. The novel was partially based on Cather’s Nebraska childhood, and it reflected the author’s belief in the primacy of spiritual and moral values over the purely material. Its heroine, Alexandra Bergson, exemplified the courage and purpose Cather felt were necessary to subdue the wild land. The title is taken from Walt Whitman’s poem “*Pioneers! O Pioneers!*” which, like the novel, celebrated frontier virtues of strength and inner spirit.

### “**My Antonia**” (1918)

“*My Antonia*” is arguably the most famous work of American novelist Willa Cather. The novel takes the form of a fictional memoir written by Jim Burden about an immigrant girl named Antonia with whom he grew up in the American West. Cather, like her character Jim, moved to Nebraska when she was ten years old, and she bases many of the events, characters, and settings of the novel on her own childhood experiences. The novel forms a sort of “trilogy” with two other prairie novels by Cather, “*O Pioneers!*” (1913) and “*The Song of the Lark*” (1915).

For its time and context, “*My Antonia*” pushed the boundaries of traditional literature. 1<sup>st</sup>, its narrative structure is mainly built from episodes and anecdotes rather than a continuous storyline - Cather thinks nothing of jumping 20 years ahead in between chapters. For this reason, the novel is sometimes considered a modernist work.

“*My Antonia*” also blurs gender barriers. To begin, the novel is written by a woman but told through the eyes of a male narrator. Additionally, the characters in the story break from stereotypical gender roles - the women are strong, athletic, and active, while the men are generally passive and weak. Interestingly, while studying at the University of Nebraska, Cather herself used to wear men's clothing and go by the name “William.”

Cather was also nontraditional in her choice of subject matter. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Cather chose to write about everyday people in the American West. “*My Antonia*” focuses on the lives and concerns of average Nebraskans, including European immigrants - the kind of people that Cather grew up around. As a result, the novel provides modern readers a glimpse into the lives of the early white settlers of the American West.

### “**One of Ours**” (1923)

“*One of Ours*” won the 1923 Pulitzer Prize for the Novel. It tells the story of the life of Claude Wheeler, a Nebraska native around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The son of a successful farmer and an intensely pious mother, he is guaranteed a comfortable livelihood. Nevertheless, Wheeler views himself as a victim of his father's success and his own inexplicable malaise.

The novel is built upon a large scale, and if there is any room for slight fault finding, it is, perhaps, a little too long. It does not drag, but is sometimes slightly overelaborated. Yet one would regret the omission of any of its incident, as it is all so



good in quality even where the particular incident may be redundant. She is never prosy, but she sometimes does hold on to one note a bit longer than necessary.

The story is very definitely that of one young man. Claude Wheeler is more than a leading figure; he is overshadowing the whole story, all the other characters being entirely subsidiary, of little importance except as they touch upon him and affect him.

We are looking at life, almost all the time, through his eyes; he is done from the inside while the others are more externalized, as we see them, for the most part, also through his vision of them. It is a method that has marked advantages, especially in that it keeps the novel a unit.

Critics panned its idealized view of World War I. Acid-penned literary legend H.L. Mencken, for example, wrote that her depiction of war “drops precipitately to the level of a serial in *The Lady’s Home Journal* ... fought out not in France, but on a Hollywood movie-lot.” Other critics and fellow authors, including Ernest Hemingway, who had actually seen military duty, agreed. They found her view of war as a salvation of Claude’s otherwise meaningless life to be grossly sentimentalized. “*One of Ours*” was published the same year as “*Three Soldiers*” by John Dos Passos, to which it was often compared unfavorably. *Three Soldiers*, also a novel, offered an anti-war perspective.

Still, with “*One of Ours*”, Willa Cather gained a greater readership, and some critics thought it was a fine piece of writing. Evidently the Pulitzer committee did as well.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Provide similarities or differences between “*My Antonia*” by Willa Cather, and “*The Sound and the Fury*” by William Faulkner.
2. How is irony used by Cather in “*My Antonia*” to present and undermine myths in this story? What are ways she challenges or perpetuates the act of myth-making?

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## CHAPTER XII. AMERICAN LITERATURE AFTER WORLD WAR II. POSTMODERNISM

### Plan:

- 12.1. Robert Penn Warren. *“All the King's Men”*
- 12.2. Norman Mailer. *“The Armies of the Night”*. New Journalism
- 12.3. Kurt Vonnegut. *“Slaughterhouse-Five”*. Postmodernism
- 12.4. Joseph Heller. *“Catch-22”*. Postmodernism
- 12.5. Katherine Anne Porter. *“Ship of Fools”*
- 12.6. Jerome David Salinger. *“The Catcher in the Rye”*
- 12.7. Irwin Shaw. *“The Young Lions”*. *“Rich Man, Poor Man”*
- 12.8. James Jones. *“From Here to Eternity”*
- 12.9. Truman Capote. *“Breakfast at Tiffany's”*. *“In Cold Blood”*

### 12.1. Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989). *“All the King's Men”*

**Primary Works: Textbooks:** *“Understanding Poetry”* (1938), *“Understanding Fiction”* (1943), *“Fundamentals of Good Writing: A Handbook of Modern Rhetoric”* (1950). **Novels:** *“Night Rider”* (1939), *“All the King's Men”* (1946), *“At Heaven's Gate”* (1943), *“World Enough and Time”* (1950), *“Band of Angels”* (1956), *“The Cave”* (1959). **Poetry volumes:** *“Promises: Poems, 1954-1956”* (1957), *“You, Emperors, and Others”* (1960), *“Audubon: A Vision”* (1969), *“Rumor Verified”* (1981), *“Chief Joseph”* (1983), *“New and Selected Poems, 1923-1985”* (1985). **Short-stories collection:** *“The Circus in the Attic”* (1948). **Critical writings:** *“Selected Essays”* (1958). **Others:** *“World Enough and Time”*, a romantic novel (1950), *“Wilderness”*, a tale of the Civil War (1961), *“Flood”*, a romance (1964), *“Who Speaks for the Negro?”* (1965), *“Meet Me in the Green Glen”* (1971).

### A Brief Biography of Robert Penn Warren

Robert Penn Warren, (born April 24, 1905, Guthrie, Ky., U.S.-died Sept. 15, 1989, Stratton, Vt.), American novelist, poet, critic, and teacher, best-known for his treatment of moral dilemmas in a South beset by the erosion of its traditional, rural values. He became the 1<sup>st</sup> poet laureate of the U.S. in 1986.

Warren studied and worked at such universities as Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn. (where he joined a group of poets who called themselves *the Fugitives*), the University of California, Berkeley (M.A., 1927), Yale University (as a teacher, 1951-1973), the University of Oxford (as a Rhodes scholar). With Cleanth Brooks and Charles W. Pipkin, he founded and edited *The Southern Review* (1935-1942), possibly the most influential American literary magazine of the time. His *“Understanding Poetry”* (1938) and *“Understanding Fiction”* (1943), both written with Cleanth Brooks, were enormously influential in spreading the doctrines of the *New Criticism*. Another his textbook, *“Fundamentals of Good Writing: A Handbook of Modern Rhetoric”* (1950), can be called a New Critical perspective.

Warren's 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *"Night Rider"* (1939), is based on the tobacco war (1905-08) between the independent growers in Kentucky and the large tobacco companies. It anticipates much of his later fiction in the way it treats a historical event with tragic irony, emphasizes violence, and portrays individuals caught in moral quandaries.

His best-known novel, *"All the King's Men"* (1946), is based on the career of the Louisiana demagogue Huey Long and tells the story of an idealistic politician whose lust for power corrupts him and those around him. Main character Willie Stark resembles Huey Pierce Long (1893-1935), the radical populist governor of Louisiana whom Warren was able to observe closely while teaching at Louisiana State University. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947 and made into a film, won the Academy Award for best motion picture of 1949.

Warren's other novels include *"At Heaven's Gate"* (1943); *"World Enough and Time"* (1950), which centers on a controversial murder trial in Kentucky in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; *"Band of Angels"* (1956); and *"The Cave"* (1959).

His long narrative poem, *"Brother to Dragons"* (1953), dealing with the brutal murder of a slave by 2 nephews of Thomas Jefferson, is essentially a versified novel, and his poetry generally exhibits many of the concerns of his fiction. His other volumes of poetry include *"Promises: Poems, 1954-1956"* (1957); *"You, Emperors, and Others"* (1960); *"Audubon: A Vision"* (1969); *"Rumor Verified"* (1981); *"Chief Joseph"* (1983); and *"New and Selected Poems, 1923-1985"* (1985).

*"The Circus in the Attic"* (1948), which included *"Blackberry Winter"*, considered by some critics to be one of Warren's supreme achievements, is a volume of short stories, and *"Selected Essays"* (1958) is a collection of some of his critical writings.

Besides receiving the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, Warren twice won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry (1958, 1979) and, at the time of his selection as poet laureate in 1986, was the only person ever to win the prize in both categories. In his later years he tended to concentrate on his poetry.

### **"All the King's Men" (1946)**

*"All the King's Men"* is a novel by R.P. Warren. The story concerns the rise and fall of Willie Stark, a character modeled on Huey Long, the governor of Louisiana during the time frame of the novel (late 1920s to early '30s). The book won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947. It is rated the 36<sup>th</sup> greatest novel of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Modern Library, and it was chosen as one of TIME magazine's 100 best novels since 1923.

Stark comes from a poor background, becomes a lawyer, and is elected governor. A self-styled man of the people, he soon learns to use such tactics as bribery and intimidation to ensure passage of his populist programs such as the building of new rural roads and hospitals. These methods account for his power but at the same time are responsible for his downfall.

The novel evolved from a verse play that Warren began writing in 1936 entitled *"Proud Flesh"*. One of the characters in *"Proud Flesh"* was named Willie Talos, in reference to the brutal character Talus in Edmund Spenser's late 16<sup>th</sup> century work *"The Faerie Queene"*.

Warren claimed that "*All the King's Men*" was "never intended to be a book about politics". One central motif of the novel is that all actions have consequences, and that it is impossible for an individual to stand aloof and be a mere observer of life, as Jack tries to do (1<sup>st</sup> - as a graduate student doing historical research and 2<sup>nd</sup> - as a wisecracking newspaperman). Time is another of the novel's thematic fascinations. The idea that every moment in the past contains the seeds of the future is constantly explored through the novel's non-chronological narrative, which reveals character continuities and thematic connections across different time periods.

### **Study Question:**

1. Who were *the Fugitives*, and what was Warren's contribution to their activities?
2. What generalizations can be made about the relationships of fathers and sons in Warren's fiction?
3. What is *New Criticism*? What roles did Warren play in this critical movement?

#### **"All the King's Men":**

1. Do you think Jack is a reliable or unreliable narrator? Do you think he has an accurate memory of childhood events? Why or why not?
2. How would the stories of Jack and Willie look if they were told by Sadie, Lucy, or Anne? Do you think Jack gives us an accurate look at these women? Support your answer.
3. Does the story of Cass Mastern "fit" into the larger story of the novel? How, if at all, does it comment on the other stories? Would "*All the King's Men*" have been a better or worse book without Cass's story?
4. Do you think this book should be taught in schools? If so, why, and at what levels. If not, why shouldn't it be taught. If you were teaching it, how would you go about it? What would you most want your students to walk away with?
5. How does Jack's racist speech make you feel about him? Is he racist? If he's not, why might he use racial slurs?
6. There are lots of scenes of Jack in cars. What does this tell us, if anything, about his character?

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## 12.2. Norman Mailer (1923-2007). “*The Armies of the Night*”. **New Journalism**

**Primary Works: Novels:** “*The Naked and the Dead* (1948), “*Barbary Shore*” (1951), “*The Deer Park*” (1955), “*The White Negro*” (1957), “*An American Dream*” (1964), “*Why Are We in Vietnam?*” (1967), “*The Armies of the Night*” (1968), “*Miami and the Siege of Chicago*” (1968), “*Of a Fire on the Moon*” (1970), “*The Executioner’s Song*” (1979), “*Ancient Evenings*” (1983), “*Tough Guys Don’t Dance*” (1984), “*Harlot’s Ghost*” (1991), “*The Gospel According to the Son*” (1997), “*The Castle in the Forest*” (2007).  
**Others:** “*Advertisements for Myself*”, a collection of unfinished stories, parts of novels, essays, reviews, notebook entries, or ideas for fiction (1959), “*The Presidential Papers*”, essay collection (1963), “*Oswald’s Tale*”, nonfictional portrayal of John F. Kennedy’s assassin (1995).

### A Brief Biography of Norman Mailer

Norman Kingsley Mailer, (born Jan. 31, 1923, Long Branch, N.J., U.S.-died Nov. 10, 2007, New York, N.Y.), American novelist and journalist, best known for using a form of journalism, called *New Journalism*, that combines the imaginative subjectivity of literature with the more objective qualities of journalism. Both Mailer’s fiction and his nonfiction made a radical critique of the totalitarianism he believed inherent in the centralized power structure of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century America.

Mailer grew up in Brooklyn and graduated from Harvard University in 1943 with a degree in aeronautical engineering. Drafted into the army in 1944, he served in the Pacific until 1946. While he was enrolled at the Sorbonne, in Paris, he wrote “*The Naked and the Dead*” (1948), hailed immediately as one of the finest American novels to come out of World War II.

Mailer’s success at age 25 aroused the expectation that he would develop from a war novelist into the leading literary figure of the postwar generation. But Mailer’s search for themes and forms to give meaningful expression to what he saw as the problems of his time committed him to exploratory works that had little general appeal. His 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, “*Barbary Shore*” (1951), and “*The Deer Park*” (1955) were greeted with critical hostility and mixed reviews, respectively. His next important work was a long essay, “*The White Negro*” (1957), a sympathetic study of a marginal social type - the “hipster.”

In 1959, when Mailer was generally dismissed as a one-book author, he made a bid for attention with the book “*Advertisements for Myself*”, a collection of unfinished stories, parts of novels, essays, reviews, notebook entries, or ideas for fiction. The miscellany’s naked self-revelation won the admiration of a younger generation seeking alternative styles of life and art. Mailer’s subsequent novels, though not critical successes, were widely read as guides to life. “*An American Dream*” (1965) is about a man who murders his wife, and “*Why Are We in Vietnam?*” (1967) is about a young man on an Alaskan hunting trip.

A controversial figure whose egotism and belligerence often antagonized both critics and readers, Mailer did not command the same respect for his fiction that he

received for his journalism, which conveyed actual events with the subjective richness and imaginative complexity of a novel. *“The Armies of the Night”* (1968), for example, was based on the Washington peace demonstrations of October 1967, during which Mailer was jailed and fined for an act of civil disobedience; it won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. A similar treatment was given the Republican and Democratic presidential conventions in *“Miami and the Siege of Chicago”* (1968) and the Moon exploration in *“Of a Fire on the Moon”* (1970).

In 1969 Mailer ran unsuccessfully for mayor of New York City. Among his other works are his essay collection *“The Presidential Papers”* (1963); *“The Executioner’s Song”* (1979), a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel based on the life of convicted murderer Gary Gilmore; *“Ancient Evenings”* (1983), a novel set in ancient Egypt, the 1<sup>st</sup> volume of an uncompleted trilogy; *“Tough Guys Don’t Dance”* (1984), a contemporary mystery thriller; and the enormous *“Harlot’s Ghost”* (1991), a novel focusing on the Central Intelligence Agency. In 1995 Mailer published *“Oswald’s Tale”*, an exhaustive nonfictional portrayal of John F. Kennedy’s assassin. Mailer’s final 2 novels intertwined religion and historical figures: *“The Gospel According to the Son”* (1997) is a 1<sup>st</sup>-person “memoir” purportedly written by Jesus Christ, and *“The Castle in the Forest”* (2007), narrated by a devil, tells the story of Adolf Hitler’s boyhood.

Norman Mailer, one of the most famous writers in the history of American literature, died of renal failure on November 10<sup>th</sup>, aged 84.

### ***“The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History”* (1968)**

*“The Armies of the Night”* is a nonfiction novel written by N. Mailer. It won the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-fiction and the National Book Award in category Arts and Letters. Mailer essentially created his own genre; as the subtitle suggests, the narrative is split into historicized and novelized accounts of the October 1967 March on the Pentagon. Mailer’s unique rendition of the non-fiction novel was one of only a few at the time, and received the most critical attention.

2 years before *“The Armies of the Night”* was published, *“In Cold Blood”* was written by Truman Capote, who had just been called by George Plimpton - the “inventor” of the nonfiction novel, claimed that the genre should exclude any mention of its subjectivity and refrain from the 1<sup>st</sup> person. While to some extent satirizing Capote’s model, Mailer’s role in center stage is quite objective, no matter how much personal experience of the author was used while creating so-called “nonfiction historical narratives”. With *“The Armies of the Night”*, Mailer received the best reviews since the publication of *“The Naked and the Dead”*. Reviewers found his 3<sup>rd</sup>-person treatment of himself as a character utterly convincing. Mailer’s narration seemed so credible because he dealt with all the important aspects of his character in conjunction with the complexity of events surrounding the march on the Pentagon.

*“The Armies of the Night”* is not only a brilliant product of the countercultural ferment of the late 1960’s, but also an enduring attempt to challenge the categorical limits of nonfiction, which it shares with contemporary works by Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Hunter Thompson, and others.

## Study Questions:

1. Do you find Mailer's use of himself as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person participant effective or confusing?
2. "*The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History*" has often been cited as an example of the "new journalism". But a similar point of view was used by Henry Adams in "*The Education of Henry Adams*" (1907), and the concept of a "nonfiction novel" dates back at least as far as Ernest Hemingway's "*Green Hills of Africa*" (1935). Does this relatively unusual form attract or repel you?

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2. Hughes, E. *Literary Brooklyn: The Writers of Brooklyn and the Story of American City Life*. NY: Holt, 2011.
3. Lennon, J.M. *Norman Mailer: A Double Life*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 2013.

### 12.3. Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007). "*Slaughterhouse-Five*". Postmodernism

**Primary Works: Novels:** "*Player Piano*" (1952), *The Sirens of Titan*" (1959), "*Mother Night*" (1961), "*Cat's Cradle*" (1963), "*God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*" (1965), "*Slaughterhouse-Five; or, The Children's Crusade*" (1969), "*Breakfast of Champions; or, Goodbye Blue Monday!*" (1973), "*Slapstick; or, Lonesome No More!*" (1976; film 1982), "*Jailbird*" (1979), "*Deadeye Dick*" (1982), "*Galápagos*" (1985), "*Bluebeard*" (1987), "*Hocus Pocus*" (1990), "*Timequake*" (1997). **Plays:** "*Happy Birthday, Wanda June*" (1970), "*We Are What We Pretend to Be*", novella (2012). **Nonfiction:** "*Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon*" (1974), "*Armageddon in Retrospect*" (2008), "*Letters*" (2012). **Collections of short stories:** "*Welcome to the Monkey House*" (1968), "*Look at the Birdie*" (2009), "*While Mortals Sleep*" (2011). **Collection of essays and speeches:** "*A Man Without a Country: A Memoir of Life in George W. Bush's America*" (2005).

### A Brief Biography of Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., (born November 11, 1922, Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.-died April 11, 2007, New York, New York), American writer noted for his wryly satirical novels who frequently used postmodern techniques as well as elements of fantasy and science fiction to highlight the horrors and ironies of 20<sup>th</sup>-century civilization. Much of Vonnegut's work is marked by an essentially fatalistic worldview that nonetheless embraces modern humanist beliefs.

Vonnegut grew up in a well-to-do family. As a teenager, Vonnegut wrote for his high school newspaper, and he continued the activity at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, where he majored in biochemistry before leaving in 1943 to enlist in the U.S.

Air Force. Captured by the Germans during World War II, he was one of the survivors of the firebombing of Dresden, Germany, in February 1945. After the war Vonnegut took graduate courses in anthropology at the University of Chicago while working as a reporter. He was later employed as a public relations writer in upstate New York, but his reservations about what he considered the deceitfulness of the profession led him to pursue fiction writing full-time.

In the early 1950s Vonnegut began publishing short stories. Many of them were concerned with technology and the future, which led some critics to classify Vonnegut as a science fiction writer, though he resisted the label. His 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *“Player Piano”* (1952), elaborates on those themes, visualizing a completely mechanized and automated society whose dehumanizing effects are unsuccessfully resisted by the scientists and workers in a New York factory town. For his 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, *“The Sirens of Titan”* (1959), Vonnegut imagined a scenario in which the entire history of the human race is considered an accident attendant on an alien planet’s search for a spare part for a spaceship.

Vonnegut abandoned science fiction tropes altogether in *“Mother Night”* (1961; film 1996), a novel about an American playwright who serves as a spy in Nazi Germany. In *“Cat’s Cradle”* (1963) some Caribbean islanders, who practice a religion consisting of harmless trivialities, come into contact with a substance discovered by an atomic scientist that eventually destroys all life on Earth. The novel was particularly significant in its development of a slyly irreverent voice that constantly called attention to its own artifice; a similar “metafictional” style would characterize much of Vonnegut’s subsequent work.

*“God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater”* (1965) centers on the title character, an eccentric philanthropist, but also introduces the writer Kilgore Trout, a fictional alter ego of Vonnegut who appears throughout his oeuvre.

Although Vonnegut’s work had already gained a popular audience by the late 1960s, the publication of *“Slaughterhouse-Five; or, The Children’s Crusade”* (1969; film 1972) cemented his reputation. Explicitly drawing on his Dresden experience, Vonnegut crafted an absurdist nonlinear narrative in which the bombing raid serves as a symbol of the cruelty and destructiveness of war through the centuries. Critics lauded *“Slaughterhouse-Five”* as a modern-day classic.

*“Breakfast of Champions; or, Goodbye Blue Monday!”* (1973; film 1999) is about a Midwestern businessman who becomes obsessed with Trout’s books. It is a commentary on writing, fame, and American social values, interspersed with drawings by Vonnegut. Though reviews were mixed, it quickly became a best seller.

Vonnegut’s next 2 novels were less successful. *“Slapstick; or, Lonesome No More!”* (1976; film 1982) focuses on a pair of grotesque siblings who devise a program to end loneliness, and *“Jailbird”* (1979) is a postmodern pastiche rooted in 20<sup>th</sup>-century American social history.

While Vonnegut remained prolific throughout the 1980s, he struggled with depression and in 1984 attempted suicide. His later novels include *“Deadeye Dick”* (1982), which revisits characters and settings from *“Breakfast of Champions”*; *“Galápagos”* (1985), a fantasy of human evolution told from a detached future perspective, a brilliant look at Vonnegut’s concerns that the “oversized human brain”



was ironically leading mankind to possible extinction; *“Bluebeard”* (1987), the fictional autobiography of an aging painter; *“Hocus Pocus”* (1990), about a college professor turned prison warden; and *“Timequake”* (1997), a loosely structured meditation on free will. In his last novel, *“Timequake”*, Vonnegut powerfully expressed his sense that corporate greed, overpopulation and war would win out in the end over simple humanity. As he ruefully apologized to those who would come after him, “We could have saved the world, but we were just too damned lazy”.

Vonnegut also wrote several plays, including *“Happy Birthday, Wanda June”* (1970; film 1971); several works of nonfiction, such as the collection *“Wampeters, Foma & Granfaloon”* (1974); and several collections of short stories, chief among which was *“Welcome to the Monkey House”* (1968). In 2005 he published *“A Man Without a Country: A Memoir of Life in George W. Bush’s America”*, a collection of essays and speeches inspired in part by contemporary politics. Vonnegut’s posthumously published works include *“Armageddon in Retrospect”* (2008), a collection of fiction and nonfiction that focuses on war and peace, and a number of previously unpublished short stories, assembled in *“Look at the Birdie”* (2009) and *“While Mortals Sleep”* (2011). *“We Are What We Pretend to Be”* (2012) comprised an early unpublished novella and a fragment of a novel unfinished at his death. A selection of his correspondence was published as *“Letters”* (2012).

Kurt Vonnegut died on April 11, 2007, after a fall on the steps of his New York brownstone. He was mourned the world over as one of the great American writers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***“Slaughterhouse-Five” (1969)***

*“Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children’s Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death”* (1969) is deeply satirical novel, which blends science fiction with historical facts of World War II, notably Vonnegut’s own experience as a prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany, during the Allied firebombing of that city in early 1945. It is generally recognized as Vonnegut’s most influential and popular work.

The story is told in a nonlinear order and events become clear through flashbacks (or time travel experiences) from the unreliable narrator named Billy Pilgrim. While serving in the American army during World War II, Billy Pilgrim is captured and transported as slave labor to Dresden, where he and others are kept in a slaughterhouse, the most overt of Vonnegut’s symbols of the destruction of war. Pilgrim becomes “unstuck in time” and then never knows which part of his life he is going to experience next. He is even kidnapped by aliens, the Tralfamadorians, and exhibited in a zoo on their planet. During his stay on their planet, he learns that they have a completely different concept of time: for them, every moment, whether in the past, present or future, has always existed, always will, and will occur over and over again. They are able to revisit any part of their lives at will, and so to them an individual’s death does not matter as they are still alive in the past.

On Earth Billy preaches the fatalistic philosophy of the Tralfamadorians, who because they know the future also know about the inevitable demise of the universe. They are resigned to fate, unfailingly responding to events with their catchphrase “So

it goes". They realize both the necessity of changing what is possible to change and the need to be wise enough to know the unchangeable. Pilgrim adopts this fatalism, eventually spreading it to millions of followers.

One of the most important events in Pilgrim's life was witnessing the Allied carpet- and fire-bombing of Dresden during World War II (which leveled the city and killed some 25,000 civilians, though some inflated figures over the years have put the number at more than 100,000), and the descriptions of that horror bring home in gripping fashion Vonnegut's eloquent antiwar message.

But despite its bleak message, "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" is also funny, filled with black humor, and it is often cited as Vonnegut's best. The author's simple, direct, and minimalist style of prose greatly facilitates understanding of the story's nonlinear order and widespread settings, jumping from Pilgrim's dull postwar life as an optometrist in the fictional town of Ilium to war-torn Dresden and the alien world of Tralfamadore.

### Study Questions:

1. What is the relationship between the structure and the content of "*Slaughterhouse-Five*"?
2. Briefly discuss some of the consequences of a Tralfamadorian view of the universe for a human.
3. How does Vonnegut's technique of time-shifting affect our understanding of the novel? Is there an advantage to structuring "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" in the "telegraphic schizophrenic manner"? If not, is it too random to allow a cohesive, linear story to emerge?
4. Many Vonnegut novels deal with traffickers of "useful lies". Can the lessons of Tralfamadore be considered as useful lies? Why or why not?
5. Discuss the use of irony or black humor in "*Slaughterhouse-Five*".
6. What does Vonnegut achieve by placing himself as a character in the story?

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## 12.4. Joseph Heller (1923-1999). "*Catch-22*". Postmodernism

**Primary Works: Novels:** "*Catch-22*" (1961), "*Something Happened*" (1974), "*Good as Gold*" (1979), "*God knows*" (1984), "*Closing time*" (1994), "*Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man*" (2000). **Autobiography:** "*Now and then: from Coney Island to here*" (1998). **Play:** "*We Bombed in New Haven*" (1968).

### A Brief Biography of Joseph Heller

Joseph Heller, (born May 1, 1923, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.-died December 12, 1999, East Hampton, New York), American writer whose novel *“Catch-22”* (1961) was one of the most significant works of protest literature to appear after World War II. The satirical novel was a popular success, and a film version appeared in 1970.

During World War II, Heller flew 60 combat missions as a bombardier with the U.S. Air Force in Europe. After receiving an M.A. at Columbia University in 1949, he studied at the University of Oxford as a Fulbright scholar, taught English at Pennsylvania State University, worked as an advertising copywriter for the magazines *Time* and *Look*, and as promotion manager for *McCall’s*, meanwhile writing *“Catch-22”* in his spare time. Released to mixed reviews, *“Catch-22”* developed a cult following with its dark surrealism. Centering on the antihero Captain John Yossarian, stationed at an airstrip on a Mediterranean island during World War II, the novel portrays the airman’s desperate attempts to stay alive. The “catch” in *“Catch-22”* involves a mysterious Air Force regulation that asserts that a man is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous combat missions but, if he makes the necessary formal request to be relieved of such missions, the very act of making the request proves that he is sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved. The term “catch-22” thereafter entered the English language as a reference to a proviso that trips one up no matter which way one turns.

Heller’s later novels, including *“Something Happened”* (1974), an unrelievedly pessimistic novel, *“Good as Gold”* (1979), a satire on life in Washington, D.C., and *“God Knows”* (1984), a wry, contemporary-vernacular monologue in the voice of the biblical King David, were less successful. *“Closing Time”*, a sequel to *“Catch-22”*, appeared in 1994. His final novel, *“Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man”* (2000), was published posthumously. Heller also wrote an autobiography, *“Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here”* (1998), and his dramatic work includes the play *“We Bombed in New Haven”* (1968).

While Heller’s place in 20<sup>th</sup>-century letters is assured with *“Catch-22”*, he is also highly regarded for his other works, which present a comic vision of modern society with serious moral implications. Heller’s tragicomic vision of modern life, found in all of his novels, focuses on the erosion of humanistic values and highlights the ways in which language obscures and confuses reality. A major theme throughout his writing is the conflict that occurs when individuals interact with such powerful institutions as corporations, the military, and the federal government. Heller’s novels have displayed increasing pessimism over the inability of individuals to reverse society’s slide toward corruption and degeneration. He renders the chaos and absurdity of contemporary existence through disjointed chronology, anachronistic and oxymoronic language, and repetition of events. In all his work, Heller emphasizes that it is necessary to identify and take responsibility for our social and personal evils and to make beneficial changes in our behavior.

### ***“Catch-22”* (1961)**

“*Catch-22*” is a satirical novel by the American author Joseph Heller. He began writing it in 1953; the novel was 1<sup>st</sup> published in 1961. It is frequently cited as one of the greatest literary works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It uses a distinctive non-chronological 3<sup>rd</sup>-person omniscient narration, describing events from the points of view of different characters. The separate storylines are out of sequence so that the timeline develops along with the plot.

The novel is set during World War II, from 1942 to 1944. It mainly follows the life of Captain John Yossarian, a U.S. Army Air Forces B-25 bombardier. Most of the events in the book occur while the fictional 256<sup>th</sup> Squadron is based on the island of Pianosa, in the Mediterranean Sea, west of Italy. The novel looks into the experiences of Yossarian and the other airmen in the camp, who attempt to maintain their sanity while fulfilling their service requirements so that they may return home.

The novel's title refers to a plot device that is repeatedly invoked in the story. “*Catch-22*” starts as a set of paradoxical requirements whereby airmen mentally unfit to fly did not have to do so, but could not actually be excused. By the end of the novel it is invoked as the explanation for many unreasonable restrictions. The phrase “*Catch-22*” has since entered the English language, referring to a type of unsolvable logic puzzle sometimes called a double bind. According to the novel, people who were crazy were not obliged to fly missions; but anyone who applied to stop flying was showing a rational concern for his safety and, therefore, was sane.

The development of the novel can be split into segments. The 1<sup>st</sup> (chapters 1-11) broadly follows the story fragmented between characters, but in a single chronological time in 1943. The 2<sup>nd</sup> (chapters 12-20) flashes back to focus primarily on the “Great Big Siege of Bologna” before once again jumping to the chronological “present” of 1943 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> part (chapters 21-25). The 4<sup>th</sup> (chapters 26-28) flashes back to the origins and growth of Milo's syndicate, with the 5<sup>th</sup> part (chapters 28-32) returning again to the narrative “present” but keeping to the same tone of the previous four. In the 6<sup>th</sup> and final part (chapters 32 on) remains in the “present” time but takes a much darker turn and spends the remaining chapters focusing on the serious and brutal nature of war and life in general.

Previously the reader had been cushioned from experiencing the full horror of events, but in the final section the events are laid bare. The horror begins with the attack on the undefended Italian mountain village, with the following chapters involving despair (Doc Daneeka and the Chaplain), disappearance in combat (Orr and Clevinger), disappearance caused by the army (Dunbar) or death of most of Yossarian's friends (Nately, McWatt, Mudd, Kid Sampson, Dobbs, Chief White Halfoat and Hungry Joe), culminating in the unspeakable horrors of Chapter 39, in particular the murder of Michaela, who represents pure innocence. In Chapter 41, the full details of the gruesome death of Snowden are finally revealed.

Despite this, the novel ends on an upbeat note with Yossarian learning of Orr's miraculous escape to Sweden and Yossarian's pledge to follow him there.

“*Catch-22*” is most often interpreted as an antiwar protest novel that foreshadowed the widespread resistance to the Vietnam War that erupted in the late 1960s. While Heller's later novels have received mixed reviews, “*Catch-22*” continues to be highly regarded as a trenchant satire of the big business of modern warfare.

### Study Questions:

1. Define specific features of Heller's satire. Is it direct or indirect? What devices the writer uses to express satire in his works?
2. What was the influence of personal experience on the author's novels?

#### **"Catch-22":**

1. One of the most challenging aspects of "Catch-22" is piecing together the order in which events occur. How does Heller manipulate time, fragment the action, and confuse cause and effect? More important, how does this confusing form fit the function? In other words, how does the way in which this story is told fit with what is actually happening in the story?
2. How is insanity defined in "Catch-22"? What characteristics do "crazy" characters have? Is madness the norm or an exception during wartime?
3. Are there any purely "good" characters in the book? If so, who are they and how is their goodness expressed? On the other hand, how do the more flawed characters demonstrate their cynicism, deceit, blindness, or lust for power?
4. Few of the characters ever form lasting friendships with fellow soldiers. How is the individual kept isolated from his peers? In what ways do characters cope with their loneliness?
5. Why is Yossarian so obsessed with death? Is he correct in assuming everyone is out to kill him? How do the deaths of Nately and Snowden change him?
6. How does Yossarian maintain his personal integrity amidst all the corruption and apathy in Pianosa? What particular characteristics does he value? And what moral lines does he refuse to cross?
7. Do you consider the ending of "Catch-22" a happy or sad one? How might it be construed as a triumph for Yossarian? A defeat? Is it the only way out of the mad system of "Catch-22"?

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2. Heller, E. *Yossarian Slept Here: When Joseph Heller Was Dad, the Apthorp Was Home, and Life Was a Catch-22*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 2011.

### 12.5. Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980). "Ship of Fools"

**Primary Works: Story collections:** "Flowering Judas" (1930), "The Leaning Tower" (1944), "Collected Short Stories" (1965). **Stories:** "Maria Concepcion" (1922), "Holiday" (1944). **Novels:** "Pale Horse, Pale Rider", a trilogy (1939): 3 novels: "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," "Noon Wine," and "Old Mortality", "Ship of Fools" (1962). **Essays, articles and book reviews:** "The Days Before" (1952), "The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of KAP" (1970); "The Never Ending Wrong", memoir of the trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti (1977).

## A Brief Biography of Katherine Anne Porter

*"I shall try to tell the truth, but the result will be fiction."*

K.A. Porter

Katherine Anne Porter, (born May 15, 1890, Indian Creek, Texas, U.S.-died Sept. 18, 1980, Silver Spring, Md.), American novelist and short-story writer, a master stylist whose long short stories have a richness of texture and complexity of character delineation usually achieved only in the novel.

Porter was educated at private and convent schools in the South. She worked as a newspaperwoman in Chicago and in Denver, Colorado, before leaving in 1920 for Mexico, the scene of several of her stories. "*Maria Concepcion*" (1922), her 1<sup>st</sup> published story, was included in her 1<sup>st</sup> book of stories, "*Flowering Judas*" (1930), which was enlarged in 1935 with other stories.

In 1918 Katherine almost died in Denver during the 1918 flu pandemic. When she was discharged from the hospital months later, she was frail and completely bald. When her hair finally grew back, it was white and remained that color for the rest of her life. Her experience was reflected in her trilogy of short novels, "*Pale Horse, Pale Rider*" (1939), a poignant tale of youthful romance brutally thwarted by the young man's death in the influenza epidemic. In it and the 2 other stories of the volume, "*Noon Wine*" and "*Old Mortality*", appears for the 1<sup>st</sup> time her semiautobiographical heroine, Miranda, a spirited and independent woman.

During the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, Porter enjoyed a prominent reputation as one of America's most distinguished writers, but her limited output and equally-limited sales had her living on grants and advances for most of the era. She published "*The Leaning Tower*" (1944), a collection of stories, and won an O. Henry Award for her 1962 story, "*Holiday*". The literary world awaited with great anticipation the appearance of Porter's only full-length novel, on which she had been working since 1941.

With the publication of "*Ship of Fools*" (1962) Porter won a large readership for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. A best-seller that became a major film in 1965, it tells of the ocean voyage of a group of Germans back to their homeland from Mexico in 1931, on the eve of Hitler's ascendancy. Porter's carefully crafted, ironic style is perfectly suited to the allegorical exploration of the collusion of good and evil that is her theme, and the penetrating psychological insight that had always marked her work is evident in the book.

Known as a writer of great clarity, Porter achieved a style of objectivity without sacrificing sensitivity. Her stories are self-motivated, without the author's omnipresence. She has been called "a maker of darkish parables" for her treatment of individuals who are impoverished by the modern environment and also for her use of the themes of guilt, isolation, and spiritual denial. Many of her stories use the geographic locales of the South, the Southwest, and Mexico.

Porter's "*Collected Short Stories*" (1965) won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Her essays, articles, and book reviews were collected in "*The Days Before*" (1952; augmented 1970).

In 1977, Porter published her last work - "*The Never-Ending Wrong*", an account of the notorious trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, which she had protested 50 years earlier.

Porter died in Silver Spring, Maryland, on September 18, 1980, at the age of 90, and her ashes were buried next to her mother at Indian Creek Cemetery in Texas.

### **"A Ship of Fools" (1962)**

"*A Ship of Fools*" is a novel by K.A. Porter. Porter used as a framework "*Das Narrenschiff*" (1494; "*The Ship of Fools*"), by Sebastian Brant, a satire in which the world is likened to a ship whose passengers, fools and deranged people all, are sailing toward eternity.

Porter's novel is set in 1931 aboard a German passenger ship returning to Bremerhaven, Germany, from Veracruz, Mexico. The ship carries a microcosm of peoples whose behaviors are driven by jealousy, cruelty, and duplicity. It is an allegory that traces the rise of Nazism and looks metaphorically at the progress of the world on its "voyage to eternity".

The theme of the novel is the passengers' unavailing withdrawal from a life of disappointment, seeking a kind of utopia, and, "without knowing what to do next", setting out for a long voyage to pre-World-War-II Europe, a world of prejudice, racism and evil. Mrs. Treadwell, a nostalgic American divorcee, hopes to find happiness in Paris, where she once spent her youth. Elsa Lutz, the plain daughter of a Swiss hotelkeeper, thinks heaven might be in the Isle of Wight. Jenny, an artist, says the most dangerous and happiest moment in her life was when she was swimming alone in the Gulf of Mexico, confronted with a school of dolphins.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. Comment on the theme of betrayal in the story "*Flowering Judas*". Who or what is betrayed? By whom? Does Laura betray? Does she betray herself?
2. Analyze how Porter uses time to dramatize the evolution of her characters.
3. What typically southern values predominate in K.A. Porter's short stories?
4. What "old order" do the stories of "*The Old Order*" reflect?
5. Discuss the tension between the demands of civil law and individual conscience in "*Noon Wine*".

#### **"Ship of Fools":**

1. Is Porter's "*Ship of Fools*" in effect a "moral allegory" similar to that of Sebastian Brant?
2. By what techniques does Porter seek to unify the novel "*Ship of Fools*" with its many diverse minor characters? Is she successful in the attempt?

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## 12.6. Jerome David Salinger (1919-2010). “*The Catcher in the Rye*”

**Primary Works:** “*The Catcher in the Rye*”, the only novel (1951), “Hapworth 16, 1924”, novella (1965). **Stories:** “*This Sandwich Has No Mayonnaise*” (1945), “*I’m Crazy*” (1946), “*A Perfect Day for Bananafish*” (1948), “*For Esmé - with Love and Squalor*” (1950), “*Teddy*” (1953), “*Franny and Zooey*” (1961), “*Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*” (1963). **Short story collections:** “*Nine Stories*” (1953).

### A Brief Biography of Jerome David Salinger

Jerome David Salinger, (born January 1, 1919, New York, New York, U.S.-died January 27, 2010, Cornish, New Hampshire), American writer whose novel “*The Catcher in the Rye*” (1951) won critical acclaim and devoted admirers, especially among the post-World War II generation of college students. His corpus of published works also consists of short stories that were printed in magazines, including *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Esquire*, and *The New Yorker*.

Salinger grew up in New York City, attending public schools and a military academy. After brief periods at New York and Columbia universities, he devoted himself entirely to writing, and his stories began to appear in periodicals in 1940. After Salinger’s return from service in the U.S. Army (1942-1946), his name and writing style became increasingly associated with *The New Yorker* magazine, which published almost all of his later stories. Some of the best of these made use of his wartime experiences: “*For Esmé - with Love and Squalor*” (1950) describes a U.S. soldier’s poignant encounter with two British children; “*A Perfect Day for Bananafish*” (1948) concerns the suicide of the sensitive, despairing veteran Seymour Glass.

Major critical and popular recognition came with the publication of “*The Catcher in the Rye*”, whose central character, a sensitive, rebellious adolescent, relates in authentic teenage idiom his flight from the “phony” adult world, his search for innocence and truth, and his final collapse on a psychiatrist’s couch. The humor and colorful language of “*The Catcher in the Rye*” place it in the tradition of Mark Twain’s “*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” and the stories of Ring Lardner, but its hero, like most of Salinger’s child characters, views his life with an added dimension of precocious self-consciousness.

“*Nine Stories*” (1953), a selection of Salinger’s short stories, added to his reputation. Several of his published pieces feature the siblings of the fictional Glass



family, beginning with Seymour's appearance in "*A Perfect Day for Bananafish*". In works such as "*Franny and Zooey*" (1961) and "*Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*" (1963), the introspective Glass children, influenced by their eldest brother and his death, navigate questions about spirituality and enlightenment.

The reclusive habits of Salinger in his later years made his personal life a matter of speculation among devotees, and his small literary output was a subject of controversy among critics. The last work Salinger published during his lifetime was a novella titled "*Hapworth 16, 1924*", which appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1965. In 1974 "*The Complete Uncollected Short Stories of J.D. Salinger*", an unauthorized 2-volume work of his early pieces, was briefly released to the public, but sales were halted when Salinger filed a lawsuit for copyright infringement.

J.D. Salinger passed away on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

### ***"The Catcher in the Rye" (1951)***

"*The Catcher in the Rye*", the influential and widely acclaimed story, details 2 days in the life of the narrator and protagonist Holden Caulfield, an unstable 16-year-old boy who has just been expelled from prep school and sets off to explore New York before returning home. Confused and disillusioned, he searches for truth and rails against the "phoniness" of the adult world. He ends up exhausted and emotionally ill, in a psychiatrist's office. The events are related after his recovery.

Contemporaneously set, Holden tells his own tale through a stream-of-consciousness to his doctor. He is always isolated; he has moved from school to school. The book depicts his relationships with a large number of characters: school friends, teachers, girlfriends, his siblings, and parents.

The mood of the novel is dark, bleak, gloomy, and depressing. Holden is a troubled, searching, frustrated, and alienated youth; since he is the narrator of the story, his personal mood colors everything in the novel. There is even a sense of impending danger, doom, and death throughout the plot since everything around him seems to confirm Holden's troubled state of mind.

The recurrent themes are: 1) Alienation Within a Society. 2) Corruption of Society. 3) The Difficulty of Growing Up. 4) "Phoniness" in Life.

Holden speaks with his younger dead brother Allie - who died of leukemia 3 years before the story begins - and he is best understood by his 10-year-old sister, Phoebe, whom he adores and who exhibits more maturity than her older brother. His most positive fantasy is as a hero who saves children playing in a field of rye (portrayed as the ideal childhood) by preventing them from falling off a cliff, thereby losing their innocence and descending into the degenerate world of adults - a world of not growth but loss, shallowness, disappointment, and hypocrisy. This book exposes the universal fear of growing up, and it is a powerful, though at times unsettling, read.

Outside the Salinger canon, Holden Caulfield can be compared with the protagonist of Mark Twain's "*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*". Like Huck Finn, Holden is also seeking, though metaphorically, a home, a place where he can be accepted and truly belong. There is also a parallel between "*The Catcher in the Rye*"

and William Saroyan's *"The Human Comedy"*. There is an orthographic as well as metrical similarity between the names of the 2 protagonists, Holden Caulfield and Homer Macanlay. They also have similar ages, for Holden is 16, and Homer passes as 16. Both works also have an objectionable character called Ackley. Both boys have trouble finding a place in which to fit. Holden Caulfield, however, is much more well-known than Homer Macanlay and becomes a symbol of sensitivity for the hippie cult movement in the 60's.

The novel was published to much critical and popular acclaim, although its content did invoke criticism, while some also deemed it boring and monotonous.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What, in J.D. Salinger's life, most influenced his short stories? Are there any parallels between the themes of his stories and his personal life experience?
2. What are basic themes of Salinger's short stories?

#### ***"The Catcher in the Rye":***

1. Holden narrates the story of *"The Catcher in the Rye"* while he is recovering from his breakdown. Do you think the promise of recovery that Holden experiences as he watches the carousel at the end of the novel has been fulfilled?
2. What is the significance of the carousel in Chapter 25?
3. Though Holden never describes his psychological breakdown directly, it becomes clear as the novel progresses that he is growing increasingly unstable. How does Salinger indicate this instability to the reader while protecting his narrator's reticence?
4. Analyze Holden's vision of the nature of childhood and adulthood.
5. The novel is structured around Holden's encounters and interactions with other people. Does any pattern seem to emerge, or does anything change in his interactions as the novel progresses? How do Holden's encounters with adults, children, women, and his peers evolve as the novel progresses?
6. Create a 5-song playlist that would represent the themes from *"The Catcher in the Rye"*.

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### **12.7. Irwin Shaw (1913-1984). *"The Young Lions"*. *"Rich Man, Poor Man"***

**Primary Works:** *“Bury the Dead”*, play (1935), *“The Big Game”*, screenplay (1936).  
**Novels:** *“The Young Lions”* (1948), *“Two Weeks in Another Town”* (1960), *“Rich Man, Poor Man”* (1970), *“Evening in Byzantium”* (1973), *“Beggarmen, Thief”* (1977).

### **A Brief Biography of Irwin Shaw**

Irwin Shaw, original name Irwin Gilbert Shamforoff (born Feb. 27, 1913, New York, N.Y., U.S.-died May 16, 1984, Davos, Switz.), prolific American playwright, screenwriter, and author of critically acclaimed short stories and best-selling novels.

Shaw studied at Brooklyn College (B.A., 1934) and at age 21 began writing the scripts of the popular *Andy Gump* and *Dick Tracy* radio shows. He wrote his pacifist one-act play *“Bury the Dead”* for a 1935 contest; though it lost, the play appeared on Broadway the next year, the 1<sup>st</sup> of his 12 plays. He wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> of his many screenplays, *“The Big Game”*, in 1936. Popular magazines such as *The New Yorker* and *Esquire* published his short stories; they were praised for their plotting, their naturalness of narration, and especially their characterization.

Shaw’s experiences in the U.S. Army in Europe during World War II led to his writing *“The Young Lions”* (1948; filmed 1958), a novel about 3 young soldiers - 1 German and 2 Americans - in wartime; it became a best-seller, and thereafter Shaw devoted most of the rest of his career to writing novels. Among the best known 12 novels are *“Two Weeks in Another Town”* (1960), *“Evening in Byzantium”* (1973), and *“Beggarmen, Thief”* (1977). Probably his most popular novel, though it was derided by critics, was *“Rich Man, Poor Man”* (1970), which was the source of the 1<sup>st</sup> TV miniseries. Shaw’s novels and stories were the basis of several movies, including *“Take One False Step”* (1949), *“Tip on a Dead Jockey”* (1958), and *“Three”* (1969).

### **“The Young Lions” (1948)**

700-pages’ novel recounts the progress of its 3 protagonists. Their lives are presented chronologically, kept parallel in time as the narrative focuses 1<sup>st</sup> on one protagonist, then on another. Paying little attention to the broad sweep of the war, the novel concentrates on the personal dramas and the small combats that determine each man’s fate. Christian, Michael, and Noah live out destinies shaped by their conscious decisions as well as by unconscious impulses and by the accidents or coincidences of environment. Though the particulars of their experiences differ, these 3 soldiers learn the common, bitter truth of combat: “You can’t let them send you any place where you don’t have friends to protect you”.

Christian Diestl is at 1<sup>st</sup> a sympathetic Austrian drawn to Nazism by despair for his future but willing to sacrifice Jews if necessary; Noah Ackerman is an American Jew facing discrimination of the American kind; and Michael Whitacre is an American WASP who struggles with his lack of meaning arising from his lack of struggles.

The 3 have very different wars: Diestl becomes less sympathetic as he willingly sacrifices more and more merely to survive; Ackerman finally overcomes the discrimination of his fellows in the army only to be nearly undone by the horror of the camps; Whitacre, still without meaning in his life, survives them both.

In a 1953 interview, Shaw commented, "what I was trying to do in *"The Young Lions"* was to show the world at a certain point in its history, its good and evil, and as many people as I could crowd into the book struggling through that world, trying to find some reason for trying to stay alive in it".

Shaw said that, in addition to the 3 central figures of the novel, he had originally intended to include a 4<sup>th</sup>, non-human character - a bullet which would act as a link between the other 3 characters. The novel would follow its origin from when the lead is mined from the ground, through to its manufacture and its journey to ending up in Whitacre's cartridge belt and finally used to kill Diestl in the novel's climax. But Shaw gave up the idea as "unnecessary and grandiose".

### ***"Rich Man, Poor Man" (1970)***

*"Rich Man, Poor Man"* is a novel by Irwin Shaw, written in 1969 and published in 1970.

The central theme of the novel is that those who want to achieve the American Dream must make many moral compromises. Success in America involves the individual in relational, economic, and social conflicts less violent but not less deadly than combat.

*"Rich Man, Poor Man"* is the epic tale of one family; a tale that takes place from the turmoil of World War II to the beginning of Vietnam. There are 3 children in the Jordache family: Gretchen, the oldest, Rudolph, the responsible one, and Thomas, the troublemaker. The novel follows the lives of each member of the family, through happiness and turmoil, separation and reunions, and takes the reader on an emotional roller coaster that they will not soon forget.

#### **Study Questions:**

1. Why did Shaw decide to write novels, not plays?
2. Find and read one of the short stories written by Irwin Shaw. Compare it with his plays and novels in theme, style, motif and characters.

#### ***"Rich Man, Poor Man"*:**

1. How does Shaw divide the legacy of Mary and Axel Jordache among 3 offspring? A story about a son and a daughter would seem to have an easy and natural structure. Why 3 protagonists?
2. Does Shaw present each protagonist with equal sympathy? What is admirable and unadmirable about each?
3. Clearly Tom's best moment occurs at the end of the novel when he rescues Jean. He has transformed from thug to hero. What is Gretchen's best moment? What is Rudolph's?

#### ***"The Young Lions"*:**

1. What is Irwin Shaw's *"The Young Lions"* about and who are his characters?
2. Analyze thematic variety of the novel. What is the major theme? What are the minor ones?

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### **12.8. James Jones. “From Here to Eternity”**

**Primary Works:** *From Here to Eternity Trilogy*: “*From Here to Eternity*” (1951) - “*The Thin Red Line*” (1962) - “*Whistle*” (1978). “*Some Came Running*” (1957), “*The Pistol*” (1959), “*Go to the Widow-Maker*” (1967), “*The Merry Month of May*” (1971), “*A Touch of Danger*” (1973).

#### **A Brief Biography of James Jones**

James Jones, (born Nov. 6, 1921, Robinson, Ill., U.S.-died May 9, 1977, Southampton, N.Y.), American novelist best known for his explorations of World War II and its aftermath. He is also known for “*From Here to Eternity*” (1951), a novel about the peacetime army in Hawaii just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The strongest influence on Jones’s literary career was his service in the U.S. Army from 1939 to 1945, during which he received the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart after actions in the South Pacific. He used his knowledge of day-to-day life in the military to advantage in his 1<sup>st</sup> novel, “*From Here to Eternity*”, which described the experiences of a charismatic serviceman who dies shortly after the outbreak of war in the Pacific.

Moving to Paris he wrote his 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, “*Some Came Running*” (1958), where Jones drew on his Midwestern life in Illinois after the war. His next 2 novels, however, returned to his wartime experiences: “*The Pistol*” (1959) and “*The Thin Red Line*” (1963). Jones remained an expatriate in Paris until 1975, when he returned to the U.S. He settled in Long Island, where he remained until his death in 1977. None of his later works attracted the public or critical attention that his 1<sup>st</sup> novel had.

#### **“From Here to Eternity” (1951)**

“*From Here to Eternity*” is the debut novel of James Jones. Set in 1941, the novel focuses on several members of a U.S. Army infantry company stationed in Hawaii in the months leading up to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It is loosely based on Jones’ experiences in the pre-World War II Hawaiian Division’s 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the unit in which he served, Company E (“*The Boxing Company*”). Fellow company member Hal Gould said that while the novel was based on the company, including some depictions of actual persons, the characters are fictional, and the harsh conditions and described events are inventions.

“*From Here to Eternity*” won the National Book Award and was named one of the 100 Best Novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Modern Library Board. The book was later made into an Academy Award-winning film, as well as 2 television adaptations and a stage musical.

“*From Here to Eternity*” offers an unflinching view of army life. Jones captures the spirit of the peacetime army with extraordinary accuracy and authenticity; he uses the vulgar, graphic language of the soldier not only for effect, but also for realism. Commonplace violence pervades every action in the novel. Jones spares no detail as Prewitt drinks, fights, gets hurt, kills, and finally is killed. In strongly gripping scenes, Jones describes the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of a drunken, violent night out on the town with the soldiers of G Company.

### Study Questions:

1. Characterize general theme of all writing of Jones. Are they in any way united by theme, style or idea?
2. In which novel Jones describes Midwestern life in Illinois after the war? Give details from the novel.

### “*From Here to Eternity*”:

1. Why is Prew sent to his new station? What does his history say about his character?
2. Why does Prew refuse to fight?
3. Describe Prew's friendship with Angelo.
4. Who does Prew meet in the city? What does this lead to?
5. Why is Karen fed up with her marriage?
6. How does Angelo die?
7. Why don't Warden and Karen stay together?
8. What crime does Prew commit? Why?
9. What does Warden's performance during the bombing say about his character?
10. Why does Prew return to the base, and what happens there?

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## 12.9. Truman Capote (1924-1984). “*Breakfast at Tiffany's*”. “*In Cold Blood*”

**Primary Works: Novels:** “*Other Voices, Other Rooms*” (1948), “*The Grass Harp*” (1951), “*Breakfast at Tiffany's*”, novella (1958), “*In Cold Blood*” (1965), “*Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel*” (1986). **Stories:** “*Miriam*” (1945), “*Shut a Final Door*” (1946), “*A Tree of Night*” (1949). **Collection of articles, essays:** “*The Muses Are Heard*” (1956), “*The Dogs Bark: Public People and Private Spaces*” (1973), “*Music for Chameleons: New Writing*” (1980).

## A Brief Biography of Truman Capote

Truman Capote, original name Truman Streckfus Persons, (born September 30, 1924, New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.-died August 25, 1984, Los Angeles, California), American novelist, short-story writer, and playwright whose early writing extended the Southern Gothic tradition, though he later developed a more journalistic approach in the novel *"In Cold Blood"* (1965; film 1967), which, together with *"Breakfast at Tiffany's"* (1958; film 1961), remains his best-known work. In addition to being known for his works of literature, Capote was also famous for his flamboyant public persona, extravagant and outrageous lifestyle.

His parents were divorced and he spent his childhood with various relatives in Louisiana, Alabama and Connecticut. He drew on his childhood experiences for many of his early works of fiction. He achieved early literary recognition in 1945 when his haunting short story *"Miriam"* was published; the following year it won the O. Henry Memorial Award, the 1<sup>st</sup> of 4 such awards Capote was to receive. The short story *"Shut a Final Door"* (O. Henry Award, 1946) and other tales of loveless and isolated individuals were collected in *"A Tree of Night, and Other Stories"* (1949).

His 1<sup>st</sup> published novel, *"Other Voices, Other Rooms"* (1948), was acclaimed as the work of a young writer of great promise. The book is a sensitive, partly autobiographical portrayal of a boy's search for his father and his own sexual identity through a nightmarishly decadent Southern world.

The quasi-autobiographical novel *"The Grass Harp"* (1951) is a story of nonconforming innocents who temporarily retire from life to a tree house, returning renewed to the real world. Capote's 1<sup>st</sup> non-fiction work, *"The Muses are Heard"* (1956) was a collection of articles which included travel essays from his trip to Europe as well as theatrical pieces.

One of Capote's most popular works, *"Breakfast at Tiffany's"*, is a novella about Holly Golightly, a young fey café society playgirl; it was 1<sup>st</sup> published in *Esquire* magazine in 1958 and then as a book, with several other stories.

Capote's increasing preoccupation with journalism was reflected in his nonfiction novel *"In Cold Blood"*, a chilling account of the murders of 4 members of the Clutter family, committed in Kansas in 1959. Capote began researching the murders soon after they happened, and he spent 6 years interviewing the 2 men who were eventually executed for the crime. *"In Cold Blood"* 1<sup>st</sup> appeared as a series of articles in 1965 in *The New Yorker*; the book version was published that same year. Its critical and popular success pushed Capote to the forefront of the emerging *New Journalism*, and it proved to be the high point of his dual careers as a writer and a celebrity socialite. Endowed with a quirky but attractive character, he entertained television audiences with outrageous tales recounted in his distinctively high-pitched lisping Southern drawl.

Capote's later writings never approached the success of his earlier ones.

In later years Capote's growing dependence on drugs and alcohol stifled his productivity. Moreover, selections from a projected work that he considered to be his masterpiece, a social satire entitled *"Answered Prayers"*, appeared in *Esquire* in 1975-

1976 and raised a storm among friends and foes who were harshly depicted in the work (under the thinnest of disguises). He was thereafter ostracized by his former celebrity friends. The book, which had not been completed at the time of his death, was published as *“Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel”* in 1986. *“Summer Crossing”*, a short novel that Capote wrote in the 1940s and that was believed lost, was published in 2006.

Leaving behind a wealth of literary works, Truman Capote passed away in Los Angeles on August 25, 1984. He suffered from liver cancer.

### ***“Breakfast at Tiffany's” (1958)***

*“Breakfast at Tiffany's”* is the story of a young woman in World War II-era New York who hobnobs with famous people, gets into a lot of trouble, and breaks many hearts along the way, all while struggling to find her place in the world. And it's one of Truman Capote's most famous works, due in large part to the film adaptation of it. The short novel created a lot of buzz among critics and in Capote's own social circle, so this makes the book a pretty interesting blend of literary achievement and pop culture text.

When it comes down to it, Holly Golightly is trying to find herself (we know this is a terrible cliché, but we think it's pretty true in this case). Holly is 19 and she's trying to figure out who she is, what she wants in her life, what her place in the world is, and what will make her happy.

### ***“In Cold Blood” (1965)***

*“In Cold Blood”*, novel by T. Capote, is a cold but impressive piece of documentary realism that contributed, along with the work of Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer, to the emergence of a "new journalism" that used many of the techniques of fiction.

Capote's most famous work is a pioneering example of both the "nonfiction novel" and the modern "true crime" story. It retells the story of the 1959 murders of the Clutter family in Kansas by a pair of drifting misfits, Dick Hickock and Perry Smith, and of the subsequent trial and execution of the killers. Capote also uses the polarities of this particular case as the starting point for a larger examination of the values of late 1950s and early 1960s America; the respectable Clutters are so wholesomely all-American that they could almost have been invented, while Smith and Hickock come over as brutal real life versions of the James Dean "rebel" culture. The world of the victims is painstakingly and sympathetically reconstructed, but Capote's real interest is in the emotional lives of Perry and Dick, and what might have led them into such murderous excess. Indeed, some argue that Capote was so fascinated by Perry Smith because he saw in him a possible alternative version of himself.

Given that Capote wrote about the crime throughout the trial, it has even been suggested that the final verdicts were conditioned by the way in which his journalism had portrayed the killers. In this light, *“In Cold Blood”* offers a larger, more disturbing insight. Like Mailer's *“The Executioner's Song”* (1979), it embodies a debate about fact, fiction, and the overlaps and differences between their ethical responsibilities.



### Study Questions:

1. Reveal the contribution of Capote to *New Journalism*.
  2. Why do you think Capote became a raving alcoholic after writing “*In Cold Blood*”?
- “*Breakfast at Tiffany*”:**
1. If you could write an alternate ending for the novel, what would it be and why?
  2. How might our perception of Holly be different if the novel was told from her point of view?
  3. Capote makes sure that we know that Holly is just 19 years old. Why might this detail be important?
  4. Why do you think the narrator remains unnamed?
  5. Capote breaks the novel up into short, quick chapters. How does that influence the way we read?
  6. Which secondary character do you think is most important to the story. Why?
- “*In Cold Blood*”:**
1. Does the fact that Capote likely altered some of the dialogue and characterization in the book affect its merit as an example of the nonfiction novel? Does it affect your enjoyment of the work?
  2. What's the effect on the reader of the author's technique of alternating between stories of the killers and the stories of the rest of the characters?
  3. What techniques does the author use to make this a nonfiction novel rather than just a history or work of journalism?
  4. What would this story have looked like if it had appeared as a journalistic article in the *New York Times* or your local newspaper?
  5. Would the story have been told differently if the author hadn't been an outsider to Kansas?

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## CHAPTER XIII. BEAT GENERATION

### Plan:

#### 13.1. Basic Traits of Beat Generation Writers

#### 13.2. Jack Kerouac. “*On the Road*”

#### 13.3. Allen Ginsberg. “*Howl*”

### 13.1. Basic Traits of Beat Generation Writers

**Writers of the Beat Generation:** Ginsberg, Allen (1926-1997), Kerouac, Jack (1922-1969), Burroughs, William S. (1914-1997), Corso, Gregory (1930-2001), Ferlinghetti, Lawrence (1919-), Cassady, Neal (1926-1968), Solomon, Carl (1928-1993), Holmes, John Clellon (1926-1988), Johnson, Joyce (1935-), Kesey, Ken (1935-2001), Brautigan, Richard (1935-1984), Snyder, Gary (1930-).

Beat movement, also called **Beat Generation**, is American social and literary movement originating in the 1950s and centered in the bohemian artist communities of San Francisco’s North Beach, Los Angeles’ Venice West, and New York City’s Greenwich Village. Its adherents, self-styled as “beat” (originally meaning “weary”, but later also connoting a musical sense, a “beatific” spirituality, and other meanings) and derisively called “**beatniks**”, expressed their alienation from conventional, or “square”, society by adopting an almost uniform style of seedy dress, manners, and “hip” vocabulary borrowed from jazz musicians. Generally apolitical and indifferent to social problems, they advocated personal release, purification, and illumination through the heightened sensory awareness that might be induced by drugs, jazz, or the disciplines of Zen Buddhism.

The “founders” of the *Beat Generation* met at Columbia University in the early 1940s. Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg formed the core of this initial group, and they would remain bulwarks of the Beat sensibility for years to come. Lucien Carr, John Clellon Holmes, and Neal Cassidy were also original members of this coterie, though their clout was somewhat less than the others. Gregory Corso was the 1<sup>st</sup> wave Beat poet who Ginsberg met at a bar.

For the *Beat Generation*, the shadowy underside of society could harbor every bit as much creative genius as the gilded halls of the academy. Despite their anti-establishment and anti-academy pretensions, the *Beats* were all well-educated and generally from middle class backgrounds.

It was Kerouac who coined the term “*Beat Generation*”, and the name stuck. William S. Burroughs was another original Beat writer, though slightly older and more experienced than his contemporaries. Burroughs was found unfit to serve in the Army during World War II, and had spent several years wandering and doing odd jobs. It was pure serendipity that he and Kerouac and Ginsberg would enter each other’s orbit, for their creative interchanges marked the true beginning of Beat literature.

The *Beat Generation* pulled from a variety of source materials to construct their particular vision of literature and culture. Several of the originators claim Romantic poets as major influences on their work. Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Blake are

often cited as especially influential on the development of the Beat aesthetic. Interspersed with their Romantic influences were surrealist and absurdist tendencies. At the same time, the American Transcendental Movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a powerful inspiration for the confrontational politics of the *Beats*. Henry David Thoreau was particularly revered as a symbol of protest. It was the Beats, in fact, who played a large role in rehabilitating Thoreau's reputation and elevating "*Walden*" to the status that it holds today. Conversely, the artistic production of the American Modernists was in many ways reviled by the Beats. The neo-classical formalism of T. S. Eliot was rejected as too much removed from real life and experience. Eliot embraced his status as an academic, while to the *Beat Generation* he was simply 1 more elitist with pretensions of grandeur.

The elder statesman of the *Beat Generation* was the poet **Lawrence Ferlinghetti**. A son of immigrants, Ferlinghetti was a Navy veteran who worked with resistance movements during World War II. He settled in San Francisco after the war, where he opened the City Lights Bookstore. City Lights quickly become a hub of *Beat Generation*. Around the same time, Ferlinghetti also entered the publishing industry, bringing both lesser-known and established poets to the mainstream. In his own poetry, Ferlinghetti displayed a jazz-inspired rhythm and improvisational spirit. Much like the work of E. E. Cummings, his lines seemed almost thrown on the page, though underneath the seeming disorganization was careful planning and a deliberate effect. Ferlinghetti was known for his combination of humor and darkness, a perfect reflection of the state of America and the world at mid-century. He saw the decadence and prudery of American culture, and the destructive potential of capitalism gone awry, but his 1<sup>st</sup> response was to laugh at the absurdity of it all. Ferlinghetti's poetry, therefore, is less firmly rooted in the Beat aesthetic from which it sprang. His humor and humanity make his art more timeless, not as weighed down by the historical moment.

The publication of **Allen Ginsberg's** "*Howl*" in 1956 marks a turning point in the history of Beat literature, not to mention American literature in general. The long-form poem is intended to be read aloud, almost chanted, a sort of return to an oral tradition that had been neglected in literature for a long time. With "*Howl*", Ginsberg takes the reader/listener on a tour of the underside of America. There are drug-addicts, drifters, lost women, and swindlers. There is a visceral rage against the system that requires conformity and selling-out. Foul language and slang are common throughout the work, as well as drug use and criminality. All of these things were shocking to the 1950s establishment. But for Ginsberg, he was simply following the path of his inspiration. He cited Walt Whitman as 1 of his greatest influences, and one can certainly hear echoes of Whitman's primitivism throughout Ginsberg's corpus of work.

No *Beat Generation* novelist garnered more attention and adulation than **Jack Kerouac**, and none of their personal lives were more filled with conflict, confusion and crippling depression. Eventually dying from his alcoholism, Kerouac was never happy with the position that he attained as the de facto spokesperson for his generation. He was reportedly quite shy, and had a difficult time with the rejection that he faced early in his career. His single greatest success was "*On the Road*", a philosophical travel narrative which blends *stream of consciousness*, drug visions, and profound observations into a generational statement that resonates to this day. The

book made him immediately famous. Even his *Beat Generation* cohorts were rather taken aback with the creativity and passion which emanated from the quiet Kerouac. In addition to novels and philosophy, he wrote a great deal about the craft of fiction, or at least his version of that craft. Kerouac's half-brilliant, half-incomprehensible meditations on the work of making literature are windows into the Beat consciousness. Inside, one finds great potential often hampered by disarray, and an unquenchable idealism which crashes hard against the bitter reality of American consumer culture. In a sense, Jack Kerouac was the most fragile of all the *Beat Generation* writers. He succumbed to the pressure of fame and attention. While Ginsberg deflected the weight of expectation, Kerouac carried it on his shoulders, and it eventually crushed him.

If **William S. Burroughs** had produced nothing else of note besides "*Naked Lunch*", he would still be considered one of the preeminent Beat writers. Perhaps more than his contemporaries, Burroughs embodied the spirit of reckless abandon for which the *Beat Generation* was known. In Mexico City, on a drunken spree, Burroughs accidentally shot his 1<sup>st</sup> wife Jane Vollmer in the head. The only reason he was in Mexico was to avoid possible imprisonment in the U.S. The near savagery of his life would naturally carry over into his artistic efforts. His greatest contribution to literary technique was what he called the "**cut-up**", a form which borrowed more from collage and cubism than traditional linear narrative. The blatant disregard for narrative effectively mirrored Burroughs' mental state, as he forever struggled with alcohol and drug addictions. "*Naked Lunch*" is a difficult and sometimes terrifying novel to engage with, though readers continue to be drawn to in for its style, use of language, and innovation.

Criticism of the *Beat Generation's* aesthetics and behavior came from many corners of society. The academic community derided the Beats as anti-intellectual and unrefined. Mainstream America was horrified by their supposed deviancy and illicit drug use. Established poets and novelists looked down upon the freewheeling abandon of Beat literature. Politicians identified elements of Beat ideology as a threat to the nation's security. The *Beat Generation* effectively absorbed all of these barbs without disintegrating. However, their relatively short time in the spotlight of literature and culture could be attributed to the amount of scorn heaped upon them. The original coinage of "Beat" was meant to imply a people beaten down and walked over, and in the early 1950s that interpretation was very apt.

With Ginsberg's "*Howl*", the notion of what was acceptable literature was broadened immensely. Censorship as a force for modulating public discourse, in the realm of literature at least, came to an end. Perhaps more importantly, the Beats propelled discussions of ecology and environmentalism into the mainstream. Before the 1950s, environmentalism as it is understood today did not really exist. The *Beat Generation's* infatuation with Native American and

To summarize, *beat poets* sought to liberate poetry from academic preciousness and bring it "back to the streets". The *Beat Generation* faded from view as quickly as it appeared.

### Study Questions:

1. What did the Beat generation writers, write about?
2. What were big influences on the *Beat generation* writers?
3. What did they write about?
4. What were some trends in writings in the *Beat generation*?
5. Who cemented the notion “Beat generation”?

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### **13.2. Jack Kerouac (1922-1969). “On the Road”**

**Primary Works: Novels:** “*The Town and the City*” (1950), “*On the Road*” (1957), “*The Dharma Bums*” (1958), “*The Subterraneans*” (1958), “*Maggie Cassidy: A Love Story*” (1959), “*Dr Sax*” (1959), “*Tristessa*” (1960), “*Lonesome Traveller*” (1960), “*Big Sur*” (1962), “*Visions of Gerard*” (1963), “*Desolation Angels*” (1965), “*Satori in Paris*” (1966), “*The Vanity of Duluo*z” (1968), “*Pic*” (1971), “*Visions of Cody*” (1972). **Others:** “*Mexico City Blues*”, poetry, 242 choruses (1959), “*Book of Dreams*”, dream transcripts (1961), “*Scattered Poems*” (1971), “*Book of Blues*” (1995).

### **A Brief Biography of Jack Kerouac**

Jack Kerouac (born Jean-Louis Lebris de K  rouac; March 12, 1922-October 21, 1969) was an American novelist and poet. He is considered a literary iconoclast and, alongside William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, a pioneer of the *Beat Generation*.

Kerouac is recognized for his method of spontaneous prose. Thematically, his work covers topics such as spirituality, jazz, promiscuity, Buddhism, drugs, poverty, and travel. He became an underground celebrity and, with other beats, a progenitor of the hippie movement, although he remained antagonistic toward some of its politically radical elements.

The son of an impoverished French-Canadian family, Jack Kerouac also questioned the values of middle-class life. He met members of the "Beat" literary underground as an undergraduate at Columbia University in New York City. His fiction

was much influenced by the loosely autobiographical work of southern novelist Tom Wolfe.

Kerouac's best-known novel, *"On the Road"* (1957), describes "beatniks" wandering through America seeking an idealistic dream of communal life and beauty through jazz and drug-induced visions. The book epitomizes the generation that Kerouac himself named as "beat". It is the tale of his adventures with Neal Cassady (the character Dean Moriarty), before he dropped out of the 'Beat' scene and withdrew into alcoholism.

*"The Dharma Bums"* (1958) also focuses on peripatetic counterculture intellectuals and their infatuation with Zen Buddhism. Kerouac also penned a book of poetry, *"Mexico City Blues"* (1959), and volumes about his life with such beatniks as experimental novelist William Burroughs and poet Allen Ginsberg.

Kerouac's books, which are in print today, include *"The Town and the City"*, *"Doctor Sax"*, *"The Subterraneans"*, *"Desolation Angels"*, *"Visions of Cody"*, *"The Sea Is My Brother"*, *"Big Sur"* and others.

In 1969, aged 47, Kerouac died from internal bleeding due to long-term alcohol abuse. Since his death, Kerouac's literary prestige has grown, and several previously unseen works have been published.

### ***"On the Road" (1957)***

*"On the Road"*, novel by Jack Kerouac, written over the course of 3 weeks in 1951 and published in 1957.

The free-form book describes a series of frenetic trips across the U.S. by a number of penniless young people who are in love with life, beauty, jazz, entertainment, drugs, speed, and mysticism and who have absolute contempt for alarm clocks, timetables, road maps, mortgages, pensions, and all traditional American rewards for industry.

Basic themes of the novel are: 1. Sadness. 2. Dissatisfaction. 3. Madness. 4. Admiration. 5. Drugs and Alcohol. 6. Time. 7. Friendship. 8. Art and Culture. 9. Visions of America. 10. Wisdom and Knowledge.

Jack Kerouac's *"On the Road"* has become a classic text in American literary counterculture. Set in the aftermath of the World War II, Sal Paradise's account of his travels across America has become emblematic of the struggle to retain the freedom of the American dream in a soberer historical moment. Paradise's journey with the free and reckless Dean Moriarty (based on fellow Beat adventurer Neal Cassady) from the East to the West Coast of America is a celebration of the abundance, vitality, and spirit of American youth. The pair's rejection of domestic and economic conformity in favor of a search for free and inclusive communities and for heightened individual experiences were key constituents of the emerging Beat culture, of which Kerouac - along with literary figures such as Ginsberg and Burroughs - was soon to become a charismatic representative.

The book was one of the 1<sup>st</sup> novels associated with the *Beat movement* of the 1950s.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is Kerouac's role in the formation of *Beat literature*?
2. Some writers had influence on Kerouac's vision. Name these authors and reveal how exactly did they influence Kerouac's literary outlook.

**“On the Road”:**

1. Is Dean a hero, a failure, or both?
2. What is Sal's attitude toward America?
3. What is Sal's idea of the West compared to his idea of the East? Does this change during the course of the novel?
4. How is “*On the Road*” written? Is it different from earlier, more traditional novels? What kind of effect does this have on traditional plot? Does the form help to express the themes of the novel?
5. Discuss the theme of race in the novel. Is Sal prejudiced?
6. Is Sal an honest narrator? Are there any inconsistencies in his narration? If so, what effect do they have on the story?
7. Discuss the theme of jazz music in “*On the Road*”. How does jazz music relate to the novel thematically? Formally?

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**13.3. Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997). “Howl”**

**Primary Works:** “*Howl and Other Poems*” (1956), “*Kaddish and Other Poems 1958-60*” (1961), “*Empty Mirror*” (1961), “*Reality Sandwiches: 1953-1960*” (1963), “*Wichita Verses Sutra*” (1967), “*Planet News*” (1968), “*Iron Horse*” (1972), “*The Fall of America: Poems of These States, 1965-1971*” (1973), “*Mind Breaths: Poems 1972-1977*” (1978), “*Collected Poems 1947-1980*” (1984), “*White Shroud, Poems 1980-1985*” (1986), “*Cosmopolitan Greetings: Poems 1986-1992*” (1995), “*Collected Poems, 1947-1997*” (2006), “*Wait Till I’m Dead: Uncollected Poems*” (2016).

**A Brief Biography of Allen Ginsberg**

Allen Ginsberg, (born June 3, 1926, Newark, New Jersey, U.S.-died April 5, 1997, New York, New York), American poet whose epic poem “*Howl*” (1956) is considered to be one of the most significant products of the *Beat movement*.

Ginsberg grew up in Paterson, New Jersey, where his father, Louis Ginsberg, himself a poet, taught English. Allen Ginsberg’s mother, whom he mourned in his long poem “*Kaddish*” (1961), was confined for years in a mental hospital. Ginsberg was influenced in his work by the poet William Carlos Williams, particularly toward the use of natural speech rhythms and direct observations of unadorned actuality. While at Columbia University, where his anarchical proclivities pained the authorities, Ginsberg became close friends with Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs, who were later to be numbered among *the Beats*. After leaving Columbia in 1948, he traveled widely and worked at a number of jobs from cafeteria floor mopper to market researcher.

“*Howl*”, Ginsberg’s 1<sup>st</sup> published book, laments what he believed to have been the destruction by insanity of the “best minds of [his] generation”. Dithyrambic and prophetic, owing something to the romantic bohemianism of Walt Whitman, it also dwells on drug addiction, Buddhism, and Ginsberg’s revulsion from what he saw as the materialism and insensitivity of post-World War II America.

“*Empty Mirror*”, a collection of earlier poems, appeared along with “*Kaddish and Other Poems*” in 1961, followed by “*Reality Sandwiches*” in 1963. “*Kaddish*”, one of Ginsberg’s most important works, is a long confessional poem in which the poet laments his mother’s insanity and tries to come to terms with both his relationship to her and with her death.

In the early 1960s Ginsberg began a life of ceaseless travel, reading his poetry at campuses and coffee bars, traveling abroad. He became an influential guru of the American youth counterculture in the late 1960s. He acquired a deeper knowledge of Buddhism, and increasingly a religious element of love for all sentient beings entered his work.

His later volumes of poetry included “*The Fall of America: Poems of These States, 1965-1971*” (1972), which won the National Book Award; “*Mind Breaths: Poems 1972-1977*” (1978); “*White Shroud: Poems 1980-1985*” (1986); “*Collected Poems 1947-1980*” (1984). His “*Collected Poems, 1947-1997*” (2006) is the 1<sup>st</sup> comprehensive 1-volume collection of Ginsberg’s published poetry. “*The Letters of Allen Ginsberg*” was published in 2008, and a collection edited by Bill Morgan and David Stanford that focuses on Ginsberg’s correspondence with Kerouac was published as “*Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg: The Letters*” in 2010. “*Wait Till I’m Dead: Uncollected Poems*” (2016) compiled verse that Ginsberg had submitted to various publications and selected from his correspondence.

### **“*Howl*” (1956)**

“*Howl*” is a poem written by Allen Ginsberg in 1955, published as part of his 1956 collection of poetry titled “*Howl and Other Poems*”, and dedicated to Carl Solomon. The poem consists of 3 parts, with an additional footnote. A denunciation of the weaknesses and failings of American society, “*Howl*” is a combination lamentation, jeremiad, and vision. The poem opens with a description of the despair and frustration



of American youths: ...*I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix...*

The poem was praised for its incantatory rhythms and raw emotion; critics noted the influences of Ginsberg's mentor William Carlos Williams (who wrote an introduction to the 1959 edition), Walt Whitman, and William S. Burroughs.

In terms of subject matter, "*Howl*" is exactly what the title suggests. It's a raw, aggressive, painful, sad shout directed at the culture that Ginsberg believed had destroyed many of his best friends. Chances are you have never read anything like it. The poem was never meant to be the kind of work that would be picked apart by scholars in universities. It was meant to be a shot of adrenaline straight into the listener's bloodstream. Many of the cultural issues it discusses remain controversial even today.

"*Howl*" is considered to be one of the great works of American literature. It came to be associated with the group of writers known as the Beat Generation.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Allen Ginsberg's use of long lines was a deliberate experiment for him, the "long clunky statement" that permits "not the way you would say it, a thought, but the way you would think it, we think rapidly in visual images as well as words, and if each successive thought were transcribed in its confusion... you get a slightly different prosody than if you were talking slowly". Read "*Howl*" and pay particular attention to Ginsberg's use of the long line.

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## CHAPTER XIV. AMERICAN DRAMA

### Plan:

#### 14.1. Basic Traits of American Drama

14.2. Eugene O'Neill. "*Long Day's Journey into Night*"

14.3. Edward Albee. "*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*"

14.4. Lillian Hellman. "*The Little Foxes*"

14.5. Arthur Miller. "*Death of a Salesman*"

14.6. Sam Shepard. "*Buried Child*"

14.7. Tennessee Williams. "*A Streetcar Named Desire*"

### 14.1. Basic Traits of American Drama

American Drama is a literature intended for performance, written by Americans in the English language. American drama begins in the American colonies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and continues to the present. Clive Bloom states that American Drama is the most neglected part of the study of American literature.

Most American plays of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries strongly reflected British influence. In fact, no New York City theater season presented more American plays than British plays until 1910. The reasons behind this phenomenon are complex, but a common language and the ready availability of British plays and British actors offer the most obvious explanation.

Although the British repertory dominated the American stage for so long, American drama had begun to diverge from British drama by the time of Andrew Jackson's presidency, from 1828 to 1836. British plays, which typically reflected the attitudes and manners of the upper classes, were by then in conflict with more egalitarian American values. Despite this growing divergence, British actors, theater managers, and plays continued to cross the Atlantic Ocean with regularity, and most American plays copied British models until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For this reason, some critics claim that American drama was not born until the end of World War I (1914-1918).

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American drama was moving steadily toward realism, illuminating the rough or seamy side of life and creating more believable characters. Realism remained the dominant trend of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in both comedies and tragedies. American drama achieved international recognition with the psychological realism of plays by Eugene O'Neill and their searing investigation of characters' inner lives. As the century advanced, the number of topics considered suitable for drama broadened to encompass race and gender, life and death.

### An Outline History of American Drama

#### Colonial Drama:

1. The 1<sup>st</sup> American Play in English, possibly "*The Lost Lady*" (1641) by Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia.
2. 1<sup>st</sup> Play printed in America: "*Androborus*" (1714) by Robert Hunter.

3. 1<sup>st</sup> Play written by an American and performed in America by Professional Actors, “*The Prince of Parthia*” (1759) by Thomas Godfrey.

4. College Drama in the Colonies.

5. 1<sup>st</sup> Play to treat a native subject, “*Ponteach or The Savages of America*” (1766) by Robert Rogers.

### **Drama During the Revolution and the Post-Revolutionary Period to 1800:**

1. Plays Reflecting Patriot Views during the Revolution.

2. Plays Reflecting Loyalist Views during the Revolution.

3. Nonpartisan Drama.

4. The Beginnings of American Comedy: Royall Tyler's “*The Contrast*” (1787) as the 1<sup>st</sup> comedy.

5. The Father of American Drama: William Dunlap (actually - melodrama).

### **Drama of a New Nation, 1800-1865:**

1. Plays from the Town Crier: Nationalism on Stage.

2. Poetic Drama: The Serious Dramatist at Work.

3. Native American Character Types: Jonathan, Sambo, and Metamora.

4. A Mirror of the Times.

5. Yankee Originality: American's Contribution to World Theater.

### **American Drama from the Civil War to World War I:**

1. The Rise of Realism in American Drama.

2. The Beginnings of Social Drama: Comment, Comedy, and Melodrama. Rachel Crothers.

3. The Age of Melodrama.

4. The Popular Farce.

5. Poetic Drama.

6. A New Seriousness.

7. Beginnings in Dramatic Criticism.

### **From World War I to World War II, 1914-1939:**

1. Realism continued to be a primary form of dramatic expression in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2. Experimentation in both the content and the production of plays became increasingly important.

3. American expressionism was distinguished from its German forebears by a searching focus on the inner life of the central character, whose detailed depiction is in stark contrast to all other characters.

4. Eugene O'Neill. In 1936 O'Neill became the 1<sup>st</sup> American playwright to win a Nobel Prize for literature.

5. The plays of Lillian Hellman also displayed a social conscience.

6. The global scale of fears in the 1930s was reflected in the plays of Robert Sherwood, whose satirical attack on weapons manufacturers predicted the impending world cataclysm of World War II.

### **Postwar Drama: 1945-1960:**

1. Arthur Miller. Miller combined realistic characters and a social agenda while also writing modern tragedy.

2. Tennessee Williams. One of America's most lyrical dramatists, contributed many plays about social misfits and outsiders.

3. The 1940s launched lighthearted musicals.
4. Realism continued strongly in the 1950s with character studies of society's forgotten people.
5. In the late 1950s African American playwriting received a tremendous boost.

**The Mainstream Redefined: The 1960-1999:**

1. The civil rights movement and antiwar protests of the mid-1960s exploded in drama as regional and experimental theaters.
2. Small-scale musicals, antiwar rock musical.
3. Sam Shepard and David Mamet.
4. By the 1980s many American playwrights found themselves tied to topics of current interest: AIDS crisis, suicide, Western civilization.
5. The 1990s also saw the return of exciting domestic drama by playwrights assumed by many to have finished their careers: Arthur Miller and Edward Albee.

**Recent Trends:**

1. Economic woes of regional and experimental theaters resulted in a multitude of plays with a single setting and no more than two or three characters.
2. Many playwrights appeared to write with a film or television adaptation in mind.
3. American theater had become too conservative in its mainstream and too specialized in its smaller venues.

**Study Questions:**

1. Generally, into what 2 periods the history of the development of American drama can be divided? Why?
2. What was more popular among dramatists before World War I - comedies or tragedies? Or both? Support your answer with historical details.
3. Characterize the development of American drama from 1914 to 1999.
4. What are recent trends in the development of American Drama?

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**14.2. Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953). "Long Day's Journey into Night"**

**Primary Works:** (Year Written/Year Produced or Published): "A Wife for a Life" (1913/1958), "The Web" (1913/1914), "Bound East for Cardiff" (1914/1916), "Fog" (1914/1917), "The Sniper" (1915/1917), "In the Zone" (1916/1917), "The Long Voyage Home" (1916/1917), "The Moon for the Caribbees" (1916/1918), "Beyond the Horizon" (1918/1920), "Anna Christie" (1920/1921), "The Hairy Ape" (1921/1922), "Desire Under the Elms" (1923/1924), "Lazarus Laughed" (1926/1928), "Strange Interlude" (1927/1928), "Dynamo" (1928/1929), "Ah! Wilderness" (1932/1933), "Days Without

*End*” (1933/1934), “*The Iceman Cometh*” (1939/1946), “*Long Day’s Journey into Night*” (1941/1956),

### A Brief Biography of Eugene O’Neill

*“I was born in a hotel and, damn it, I’ll die in a hotel.”*

- E. O’Neill

Eugene Gladstone O’Neill, (born Oct. 16, 1888, New York, N.Y., U.S.-died Nov. 27, 1953, Boston, Mass.), foremost American dramatist and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936. His masterpiece, “*Long Day’s Journey into Night*” (produced posthumously 1956), is at the apex of a long string of great plays, including “*Beyond the Horizon*” (1920), “*Anna Christie*” (1921), “*Strange Interlude*” (1928), “*Ah! Wilderness*” (1933), and “*The Iceman Cometh*” (1946).

Eugene O’Neill was the son of the Irish-American actor James O’Neill. As the son of a travelling actor, O’Neill never knew a stable “home”. He accompanied his father on theatrical tours during his youth, and at the age of 7 was sent to school. He did not spend much time with his parents. He would be affected later in life by the loneliness he experienced while away from his family. He went to Princeton University in 1906, where he stayed only 1 year. He was suspended for 4 weeks for throwing a rock at a window while drunk, and never bothered to return to take his final exams.

Later O’Neill explored the cosmopolitan world of New York. Then he sailed to Honduras to escape of past troubles. This 3-year trip broadened his horizons. He arrived in New York and worked in the theater. He briefly served as assistant manager of a theatrical troupe organized by his father, but in 1910 he “ran away” again, this time to Buenos Aires. While in Buenos Aires, O’Neill worked a number of odd jobs, but most of his time was spent drinking with friends on the waterfront. He returned to New York in 1911.

After contracting a mild case of tuberculosis in 1912, O’Neill went to a sanitarium, where he wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> plays. It was here that O’Neill decided that he wanted to be a playwright. After leaving the sanitarium, O’Neill studied the techniques of playwriting at Harvard University from 1914 to 1915 under the famous theater scholar George Pierce Baker.

During most of the next 10 years O’Neill lived in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and in New York City, where he served as both a dramatist and a manager for the Provincetown Players. This experimental theatrical group staged a number of his 1-act plays, beginning with “*Bound East for Cardiff*” (1916), and several long plays, including “*The Hairy Ape*” (1922). “*Beyond the Horizon*” (1920), a domestic tragedy in 3 acts, was produced successfully on the Broadway stage, as was “*The Emperor Jones*” (1920), a study of the disintegration of the mind of a black dictator under the influence of fear. In the 9-act play “*Strange Interlude*” (1928), O’Neill sought to portray the way in which hidden psychological processes affect outward actions.

His most ambitious work, the trilogy “*Mourning Becomes Electra*” (1931), was an attempt to re-create the power and profundity of the ancient Greek tragedies by setting the themes and plot of the “*Oresteia*” by Aeschylus in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New England. “*Ah,*

*Wilderness*" (1933), written in a relatively light vein, was another of his most successful plays.

O'Neill's other dramas include "*Moon of the Caribbees*" (1918), "*Anna Christie*" (1921), "*All God's Chillun Got Wings*" (1924), "*Desire Under the Elms*" (1924), "*The Great God Brown*" (1926), "*Lazarus Laughed*" (1928), "*Marco Millions*" (1928), "*Dynamo*" (1929), and "*Days Without End*" (1934).

From 1934 until his death, O'Neill suffered from a crippling nervous disorder similar to Parkinson's disease. During this entire period, he worked intermittently on a long cycle of plays concerning the history of an American family, but he completed only "*A Touch of the Poet*" in 1942 and "*More Stately Mansions*" in 1953. After 1939 he wrote 3 other plays unrelated to the cycle: "*The Iceman Cometh*" (1946), which portrays a group of social misfits unable to live without illusions, and 2 tragedies dealing with his family, "*Long Day's Journey into Night*" and "*A Moon for the Misbegotten*". O'Neill was awarded the 1936 Nobel Prize for literature.

2 weeks after O'Neill's death, *New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson mourned: "A giant writer has dropped off the earth; a great spirit and our greatest dramatists have left us, and our theatre world is now a smaller, more ordinary place".

### ***"Long Day's Journey into Night" (1956)***

"*Long Day's Journey into Night*" is a drama in 4 acts written by E. O'Neill in 1941-1942 but 1<sup>st</sup> published in 1956. The play is widely considered to be his masterwork and magnum opus. The play premiered in Sweden and then opened on Broadway, winning the Tony Award for Best Play.

O'Neill posthumously received the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for the work. "*Long Day's Journey into Night*" is often regarded to be 1 of the finest American plays of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The play concerns the Tyrone family - including parents James and Mary and their sons Edmund and Jamie. Mary is addicted to drugs and Edmund is ill with tuberculosis. The play refers to the setting of the play, which takes place during 1 day. The action covers a single day from around 8:30 a.m. to midnight, in August 1912 at the seaside Connecticut home of the Tyrones: the semi-autobiographical representations of O'Neill himself, his older brother, and their parents at their home, Monte Cristo Cottage. 1 part of the play concerns addiction and the resulting dysfunction of the family. In the play the characters conceal, blame, resent, regret, accuse, and deny in an escalating cycle of conflict with occasional desperate and sincere attempts at affection, encouragement, and consolation.

### **Study Questions:**

1. O'Neill explained "*The Hairy Ape*" by saying that "it was a symbol of man, who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way. Thus, not being able to find it on earth nor in heaven, he's in the middle, trying to make peace". Comment.
2. "Tragedy, I think, has the meaning the Greeks gave it. To them it brought exaltation, an urge toward life and ever more life. It roused them to deeper spiritual

understandings and released them from the petty greed of everyday existence. When they saw tragedy on the stage they felt their own hopeless hopes ennobled in art". Comment these words of E. O'Neill. Can this claim be substantiated by O'Neill's work?

3. "The essence of O'Neill's dramatic output is the grim futility of human existence, cursed by alienation from self, society, and the source-of-all-life, and made bearable only by illusion". Do you agree with these words of William R. Thurman? Discuss with reference to E. O'Neill's plays.

4. "O'Neill not only lived intensely but attempted with perilous honesty to contemplate, absorb and digest the meaning of his life and ours", said Harold Curlman. Through a discussion of E. O'Neill's plays, explain writer's understanding of the meaning of life.

5. Sometimes O'Neill's major works involve what appears to be a criticism of society. Sometimes they make use of a Freudian pattern. But at their most successful, they are tragic, rather than either sociological or psychological. Discuss with specific references to the plays.

6. Discuss what O'Neill's character Edmund calls "faithful realism" in "*Long Day's Journey into Night*". Is this play a work of realism in the Howellsian or Jamesian sense? In what way does it extend the concerns of the earlier realists to include 20<sup>th</sup>-century concerns?

7. Study early-19<sup>th</sup>-century American literature and locate "*Long Day's Journey into Night*" as the culmination of themes and concerns that have set a direction in American fiction from "*Rip Van Winkle*" on. What does the play have to say about versions of the American dream, about individual identity, about self-reliance, about social exclusion, and about the development of consciousness?

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### **14.3. Edward Albee (1928-2016). "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"**

**Primary Works:** "*The Zoo Story*" (1959) - later expanded to "*Peter and Jerry*" (2004) - later expanded to "*At Home at the Zoo*" (2009), "*The Sandbox*" (1959), "*The American Dream*" (1961), "*Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?*" (1962), "*A Delicate Balance*" (1966), "*Tiny Alice*" (1965), "*All Over*" (1971), "*Seascape*" (1975), "*The Lady from Dubuque*" (1980), "*Three Tall Women*" (1994), "*The Play About the Baby*" (1998), "*The Goat; or, Who Is Sylvia?*" (2002), "*Occupant*" (2001), "*Me, Myself, & I*" (2007), "*Stretching My Mind*", essays (2005).

### **A Brief Biography of Edward Albee**

Edward Franklin Albee (born March 12, 1928, Washington, D.C., U.S.-died September 16, 2016, Montauk, New York), American dramatist and theatrical producer best known for his play *“Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”* (1962), which displays slashing insight and witty dialogue in its gruesome portrayal of married life.

Albee was the adopted child. He had a difficult relationship with his parents. Albee grew up in New York City and nearby Westchester county. He was educated at Choate School and at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. He wrote poetry and an unpublished novel but turned to plays in the late 1950s.

Among Albee’s early 1-act plays, *“The Zoo Story”* (1959), *“The Sandbox”* (1959), and *“The American Dream”* (1961) were the most successful and established him as an astute critic of American values. But it is his 1<sup>st</sup> full-length play, *“Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”* (1962, film - 1966), that remains his most important work. In this play a middle-aged professor, his wife, and a younger couple engage 1 night in an unrestrained drinking bout that is filled with malicious games, insults, humiliations, betrayals, savage witticisms, and painful, self-revealing confrontations. The play won immediate acclaim and established Albee as a major American playwright.

It was followed by a number of full-length works, including *“A Delicate Balance”* (1966; Pulitzer Prize), which was based in part on his mother’s witty alcoholic sister, and *“Three Tall Women”* (1994; Pulitzer Prize). The latter play deals with Albee’s perceptions and feelings about his mother and is a remarkable portrait achieved by presenting the interaction of 3 women, who resemble each other, at different stages of life. Among his other plays are *“Tiny Alice”* (1965), which begins as a philosophical discussion between a lawyer and a cardinal; *“Seascape”* (1975; Pulitzer Prize), a poetic exploration of evolution; and *“The Play About the Baby”* (1998), on the mysteries of birth and parenthood.

Albee continued to dissect American morality in plays such as *“The Goat; or, Who Is Sylvia?”* (2002), which depicts the disintegration of a marriage in the wake of the revelation that the husband has engaged in bestiality. In *“Occupant”* (2001), Albee imagines the sculptor Louise Nevelson being interviewed after her death. Albee also expanded *“The Zoo Story”* into a 2-act play, called *“Peter and Jerry”* (2004). (The play was retitled *“At Home at the Zoo”* in 2009.) The absurdist *“Me, Myself, & I”* (2007) trenchantly analyzes the relationship between a mother and her twin sons.

In addition to writing, Albee produced a number of plays and lectured at schools throughout the country. He was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 1996. A compilation of his essays and personal anecdotes, *“Stretching My Mind”*, was published in 2005. That year Albee also received a Tony Award for lifetime achievement.

### ***“Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”* (1962)**

*“Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”* is a play by E. Albee. It examines the breakdown of the marriage of a middle-aged couple, Martha and George. Late one evening, after a university faculty party, they receive an unwitting younger couple, Nick and Honey, as guests, and draw them into their bitter and frustrated relationship. The



play is in 3 acts, normally taking a little less than 3 hours to perform, with 2 10-minute intermissions. The title is a pun on the song "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" from Walt Disney's "Three Little Pigs" (1933), substituting the name of the celebrated English author Virginia Woolf. Martha and George repeatedly sing this version of the song throughout the play.

Themes of the play are: 1) Reality and illusion; 2) Critique of the societal expectations.

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" won both the 1963 Tony Award for Best Play and the 1962-1963 New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play. It is frequently revived on the modern stage. The dialogue in the 1<sup>st</sup> act of the play has been hailed by some critics as some of the greatest in all of the American theatre.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Do research and divide all Albee's plays into some groups according to themes revealed and ideas shared.

#### **"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?":**

1. Explain the significance of the title, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"
2. Why do you think George tells the story about his childhood friend who accidentally killed both of his parents? What implications could it have thematically?
3. What is the significance of everyone drinking so much?
4. Why is it important that George is a history professor, whereas Nick is a biologist?
5. How do these 2 disciplines relate to their characters?
6. Why would E. Albee set this play at a cocktail party (rather than at a family dinner or on a vacation or at an amusement park, etc.)?
7. What significance does Honey's weakness and vomiting have? Why would Albee create her to be so often sick?

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### **14.4. Lillian Hellman (1905-1984). "The Little Foxes"**

**Primary Works: Plays:** *"The Children's Hour"* (1934), *"Days to Come"* (1936), *"The Little Foxes"* (1939), *"Another Part of the Forest"* (1946), *"Watch on the Rhine"* (1941), *"The Searching Wind"* (1944), *"Toys in the Attic"* (1960). **Autobiographical works:** *"An Unfinished Woman"*, a memoir (1969), *"Pentimento"* (1973), *"Scoundrel Time"* (1976), *"Maybe"* (1980).

### A Brief Biography of Lillian Hellman

Lillian Hellman, (born June 20, 1905, New Orleans, La., U.S.-died June 30, 1984, Vineyard Haven, Martha's Vineyard, Mass.), American playwright and motion-picture screenwriter whose dramas forcefully attacked injustice, exploitation, and selfishness.

Hellman attended New York public schools and New York University and Columbia University. Her marriage (1925-1932) to the playwright Arthur Kober ended in divorce. She had already begun an intimate friendship with the novelist Dashiell Hammett that would continue until his death in 1961. In the 1930s, after working as book reviewer, press agent, play reader, and Hollywood scenarist, she began writing plays.

Her dramas exposed some of the various forms in which evil appears - a malicious child's lies about 2 schoolteachers (*"The Children's Hour"*, 1934); a ruthless family's exploitation of fellow townspeople and of one another (*"The Little Foxes"*, 1939, and *"Another Part of the Forest"*, 1946); and the irresponsible selfishness of the Versailles-treaty generation (*"Watch on the Rhine"*, 1941, and *"The Searching Wind"*, 1944).

Criticized at times for her doctrinaire views and characters, she nevertheless kept her characters from becoming merely social points of view by writing credible dialogue and creating a realistic intensity matched by few of her playwrighting contemporaries. These plays exhibit the tight structure and occasional over-contrivance of what is known as the well-made play. In the 1950s she showed her skill in handling the subtler structure of Chekhovian drama (*"The Autumn Garden"*, 1951) and in translating and adapting (Jean Anouilh's *"The Lark"*, 1955, and Voltaire's *"Candide"*, 1957, in a musical version). She returned to the well-made play with *"Toys in the Attic"* (1960), which was followed by another adaptation, *"My Mother, My Father, and Me"* (1963; from Burt Blechman's novel *"How Much?"*). She also edited Anton Chekhov's *"Selected Letters"* (1955) and a collection of stories and short novels, *"The Big Knockover"* (1966), by Hammett.

Her plays are commonly described with labels such as "well-made play," "melodrama," "social protest." But her real achievement is an ironic look at life, at times funny, at times pathetic, and always incorporating a moral vision.

Hellman, a longtime supporter of leftist causes, detailed in *"Scoundrel Time"* (1976) her troubles and those of her friends during the 1950s. Hellman refused to give the committee the names of people who had associations with leftists; she was subsequently blacklisted though not held in contempt of Congress.

Her reminiscences, begun in *"An Unfinished Woman"* (1969), were continued in *"Pentimento"* (1973) and *"Maybe"* (1980). After their publication, certain fabrications were brought to light, notably her reporting in *"Pentimento"* of a personal relationship

with a courageous woman she called Julia. The woman on whose actions Hellman's story was based denied acquaintance with the author.

### ***"The Little Foxes" (1939)***

*"The Little Foxes"* is a play by L. Hellman, considered a classic of 20<sup>th</sup> century drama. Its title comes from Chapter 2, Verse 15 of the *"Song of Solomon"* in the King James version of the Bible, which reads, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes". Set in a small town in Alabama in 1900, it focuses on the struggle for control of a family business.

*"The Little Foxes"* is a 3-act play with only 10 characters, 7 of whom are related by blood or marriage. L. Hellman made no secret of the fact that *"The Little Foxes"* was inspired by her mother's family, the Marxes. Regina Hubbard Giddens is said to resemble Lillian's own grandmother, Sophie Marx Newhouse; Ben Hubbard, her uncle Jacob Marx, who was a successful banker; and Birdie, Lillian's gentle, unworldly mother, Julia Newhouse Hellman. In her memoir *"Pentimento"* (1973), Hellman writes that Alexandra is the girl she imagined herself to have been at her age.

The characters in *"The Little Foxes"* can be placed in 2 categories: those who have ruthlessly seized control over their community, for the purpose of self-aggrandizement; and those who, though governed by principle, are relatively powerless. The 1<sup>st</sup> group consists of Regina, Ben, Oscar, and Leo and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Horace, Birdie, the 2 black servants Addie and Cal, and the only good Hubbard, Alexandra. The action of the play involves not 1 but 2 conflicts. The 4 rapacious Hubbards, led by Regina and Ben, are all seeking in one way or another to neutralize those who oppose them; meanwhile, they are also involved in a struggle among themselves for power and for property.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is Hellman's idea of history? Who makes history and how are events in history related? Why does she connect the events of the McCarthy Era to the Vietnam War?
2. What kind of credibility does an autobiographical memoir have as compared to a history or a political science book? Why does Hellman use the word scoundrel and what does she mean by it?

### ***"The Little Foxes":***

1. What inspired Lillian Hellman to write the play *"The Little Foxes"*?
2. What is the exact quote about "...words left unsaid or deeds left undone" from the *"The Little Foxes"*?

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#### 14.5. Arthur Miller (1915-2005). "Death of a Salesman"

**Primary Works: Novels:** *Focus* (1945). **Plays:** "The Man Who Had All the Luck" (1944), "All My Sons" (1947), "Death of a Salesman" (1949), "The Crucible" (1953), "A Memory of Two Mondays" (1955), "A View from the Bridge" (1955); "After the Fall" (1964), "Incident at Vichy" (1964), "The Price" (1968), "The Creation of the World and Other Business" (1972), "The Archbishop's Ceiling" (1977), "Playing for Time" (1980), "The American Clock" (1980), "The Ride Down Mount Morgan" (1991), "The Last Yankee" (1993), "Broken Glass" (1994), "Mr. Peters' Connections" (1998), "Resurrection Blues" (2002), "Finishing the Picture" (2004). **Short stories:** "I Don't Need You Any More" (1967). **Autobiography:** "Timebends" (1987). **Screenplays:** "The Misfits" (1961), "Everybody Wins" (1990).

#### A Brief Biography of Arthur Miller

". . . the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing - his sense of personal dignity".

A. Miller. "Tragedy and the Common Man" (1949)

Arthur Asher Miller (born October 17, 1915, New York, New York, U.S.-died February 10, 2005, Roxbury, Connecticut), American playwright, who combined social awareness with a searching concern for his characters' inner lives. He is best known for "Death of a Salesman" (1949).

Miller was shaped by the *Great Depression*, which brought financial ruin onto his father, a small manufacturer, and demonstrated to the young Miller the insecurity of modern existence. After graduation from high school he worked in a warehouse. With the money he earned he attended the University of Michigan (B.A., 1938), where he began to write plays. His 1<sup>st</sup> public success was with "Focus" (1945; filmed 1962), a novel about anti-Semitism. "All My Sons" (1947; filmed 1948), a drama about a manufacturer of faulty war materials that strongly reflects the influence of Henrik Ibsen, was his 1<sup>st</sup> important play. It won Miller a Tony Award, and it was his 1<sup>st</sup> major collaboration with the director Elia Kazan, who also won a Tony Award.

Miller's next play, "Death of a Salesman", became one of the most famous American plays of its period. It is the tragedy of Willy Loman, a man destroyed by false values that are in large part the values of his society.

Miller based "The Crucible" (1953) on the witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692-1693, a series of persecutions that he considered an echo of the McCarthyism of his day, when investigations of alleged subversive activities were widespread. Though not as popular as "Death of a Salesman", it won a Tony for best play.

“*A Memory of Two Mondays*” and another short play, “*A View from the Bridge*”, about an Italian-American longshoreman whose passion for his niece destroys him, were staged on the same bill in 1955. “*After the Fall*” is concerned with failure in human relationships and its consequences, large and small, by way of McCarthyism and the Holocaust; it opened in January 1964, and it was understood as largely autobiographical, despite Miller’s denials. “*Incident at Vichy*”, which began a brief run at the end of 1964, is set in Vichy France and examines Jewish identity. “*The Price*” (1968) continued Miller’s exploration of the theme of guilt and responsibility to oneself and to others by examining the strained relationship between 2 brothers.

“*The Archbishop’s Ceiling*”, produced in 1977, dealt with the Russian treatment of dissident writers. “*The American Clock*”, a series of dramatic vignettes based on Studs Terkel’s “*Hard Times*” (about the *Great Depression*), was produced in 1980. Miller’s later plays included “*The Ride Down Mount Morgan*” (1991), “*Mr. Peters’ Connections*” (1998) and “*Resurrection Blues*” (2002).

Miller also wrote a screenplay, “*The Misfits*”, for his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife, the actress Marilyn Monroe; they were married from 1956 to 1961. “*The Misfits*”, released in 1961, its filming served as the basis for Miller’s final play, “*Finishing the Picture*” (2004). “*I Don’t Need You Any More*”, a collection of his short stories, appeared in 1967 and a collection of theatre essays in 1977. His autobiography, “*Timebends*”, was published in 1987.

Winner of many literary and dramatic award, Miller is an important force in American drama. His major characters are ordinary and suffering individuals seemingly trapped by naturalistic circumstances. And yet, Miller points out, they have dignity if not human greatness. Critical debate centers on the use or misuse of applying the norms of Aristotelian tragedy to a twentieth century democratic society. Miller has argued forcefully that a “*lowman*” is capable of a heroic status.

### **“*Death of a Salesman*” (1949)**

“*Death of a Salesman*” is a play by A. Miller. It was the recipient of the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play. The play premiered on Broadway in February 1949, running for 742 performances, and has been revived on Broadway 4 times, winning 3 Tony Awards for Best Revival. It is widely considered to be one of the greatest plays of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Themes of the play are: 1) reality and illusion; 2) the American Dream.

Miller had been exploring the ideas underlying “*Death of a Salesman*” since he was a teenager, when he wrote a story about a Jewish salesman; he also drew on memories of an uncle.

“*Death of a Salesman*” is a tragedy about the differences between the Loman family’s dreams and the reality of their lives. The play is a scathing critique of the American Dream and of the competitive, materialistic American society of the late 1940s. The storyline features Willy Loman, an average guy who attempts to hide his averageness and failures behind increasingly delusional hallucinations as he strives to be a “success.” Thus, the play addresses loss of identity and a man’s inability to accept change within himself and society. The play is a montage of memories, dreams,

confrontations, and arguments, all of which make up the last 24 hours of Willy Loman's life. The play concludes with Willy's suicide and subsequent funeral.

For Miller, it was important to place “the common man” at the center of a tragedy. As he wrote in 1949: “The quality in such plays that does shake us... derives from the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world. Among us today this fear is as strong, and perhaps stronger, than it ever was. In fact, it is the common man who knows this fear best”.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Critics have disagreed as to whether “*Death of a Salesman*” can be called a tragedy. Most of the debate centers on whether or not Willy Loman has the stature of a tragic hero. What admirable characteristics does Willy have? Could any of his desires or motivations be called noble? Consider particularly Willy's motivations in committing suicide. Can they be proved? In what respect are they mistaken? Does Willy make any “discovery” before his death? If so, does it involve an increase in his self-knowledge?
2. Critics generally agree that the theme of “*The Crucible*” emerges from the drama implicit in the play. What, in your view, is the theme of the play? The contemporary appeal of the play can hardly be attributed to the Salem witch-hunt and of the 1950s. Why then has “*The Crucible*” held up so well? What makes it still worth reading and performing?

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### **14.6. Sam Shepard (1943-2017). “Buried Child”**

**Primary Works:** “*Chicago*” (1967), “*Icarus's Mother*” (1967), “*Red Cross*” (1967), “*Fourteen Hundred Thousand*” (1967), “*Melodrama*” (1967), “*La Turista*” (1967), “*The Unseen Hand*” (1969), “*Operation Sidewinder*” (1970), “*The Tooth of Crime*” (1972), “*Geography of a Horse Dreamer*” (1974), “*Killer's Head*” (1975), “*Angel City*” (1976), “*Suicide in B-flat*” (1976), “*Seduced*” (1978), “*Curse of the Starving Class*” (1977), “*Buried Child*” (1978), “*True West*” (1980), “*Fool for Love*” (1983), “*A Lie of the Mind*”

(1985), *“Simpatico”* (1994), *“The God of Hell”* (2004), *“Ages of the Moon”* (2009), *“Heartless”* (2012), and *“A Particle of Dread”* (2014).

### **A Brief Biography of Sam Shepard**

Samuel Shepard Rogers III (born November 5, 1943, Fort Sheridan, near Highland Park, Illinois, U.S.-died July 27, 2017, Midway, Kentucky), American playwright and actor whose plays adroitly blend images of the American West, Pop motifs, science fiction, and other elements of popular and youth culture.

As the son of a career army father, Shepard spent his childhood on military bases across the U.S. and in Guam before his family settled on a farm in Duarte, California. After a year of agricultural studies in college, he joined a touring company of actors and, in 1963, moved to New York City to pursue his theatrical interests. His earliest attempts at playwriting, a rapid succession of 1-act plays, found a receptive audience in Off-Off-Broadway productions. In the 1965-1966 season Shepard won Obie Awards (presented by the *Village Voice* newspaper) for his plays *“Chicago”*, *“Icarus’s Mother”*, and *“Red Cross”*.

Shepard lived in England from 1971 to 1974, and several plays of this period, notably *“The Tooth of Crime”* (1972) and *“Geography of a Horse Dreamer”* (1974), premiered in London. In late 1974 he became playwright-in-residence at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco, where most of his plays over the next decade were 1<sup>st</sup> produced.

Shepard’s works of the mid-1970s showed a heightening of earlier techniques and themes. In *“Killer’s Head”* (1975), for example, the rambling monologue, a Shepard stock-in-trade, blends horror and banality in a murderer’s last thoughts before electrocution; *“Angel City”* (1976) depicts the destructive machinery of the Hollywood entertainment industry; and *“Suicide in B-flat”* (1976) exploits the potentials of music as an expression of character.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Shepard applied his unconventional dramatic vision to a more conventional dramatic form, the family tragedy. *“Curse of the Starving Class”* (1977; film 1994), the Pulitzer Prize-winning *“Buried Child”* (1978), and *“True West”* (1980) are linked thematically in their examination of troubled and tempestuous blood relationships in a fragmented society.

Shepard returned to acting in the late 1970s, winning critical accolades for his performances in such films as *“Days of Heaven”* (1978); *“Resurrection”* (1980); *“The Right Stuff”* (1983), for which he received an Academy Award nomination; and *“Fool for Love”* (1985), which was written by Shepard and based on his 1983 play of the same name. In 1982 he was cast in *“Frances”*, and during the filming he began a relationship with Jessica Lange that continued until 2009. He also appeared in screen adaptations of other writers’ novels, including *“The Pelican Brief”* (1993), *“Snow Falling on Cedars”* (1999), *“All the Pretty Horses”* (2000), and *“The Notebook”* (2004).

Among Shepard’s later films are *“The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford”* (2007) and *“Blackthorn”* (2011), in which he portrayed the American outlaws Frank James and Butch Cassidy, respectively. He portrayed the hard-bitten uncle of a pair of down-and-out brothers in the violent small-town drama

“*Out of the Furnace*” (2013) and a father whose suicide precipitates a family crisis in “*August: Osage County*” (2013), an adaptation of the play by Tracy Letts. Shepard was lauded for his grim turn as a man whose son is killed during a burglary in the darkly comic thriller “*Cold in July*” (2014). In 2016 he appeared in the drama “*In Dubious Battle*” which was based on a John Steinbeck novel about striking farmworkers.

Shepard’s other plays include “*La Turista*” (1967), “*The Unseen Hand*” (1969), “*Operation Sidewinder*” (1970), “*Seduced*” (1978), “*A Lie of the Mind*” (1985), “*Simpatico*” (1994; film 1999), “*The God of Hell*” (2004), “*Ages of the Moon*” (2009), “*Heartless*” (2012), and “*A Particle of Dread*” (2014). In addition, he published several collections of short stories, such as “*Days out of Days*” (2010). In 1986 Shepard was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

### **“*Buried Child*” (1978)**

“*Buried Child*” is a play by Sam Shepard 1<sup>st</sup> presented in 1978. It is a piece of theater which depicts the fragmentation of the American nuclear family in a context of disappointment and disillusionment with American mythology and the American Dream, the 1970s rural economic slowdown, and the breakdown of traditional family structures and values.

The play is set on a farm in Illinois, and centers around Halie and Dodge, a middle-class agricultural couple enduring poverty along with their 2 children, Tilden and Bradley (an amputee). It practically rains through the entire play, which is symbolic of how helpless Americans felt during this murky time in American history. Likewise, as the familiar adage states, “when it rains, it pours”, suggesting problems compounded by more problems. In this sense, the rain is also symbolic of the family’s deeper issues that are soon to come to the surface of the narrative.

The play won the 1979 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and launched Shepard to national fame as a playwright. In 1979, Shepard also won the Obie Award for Playwriting. The Broadway production in 1996 was nominated for 5 Tony Awards, including Best Play.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Do research and suggest one play written by Sam Shepard, which is worth to become a winner of Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Support your choice.
2. Watch any film where Sam Shepard appeared. Share your opinion about playwright’s acting skills.

#### **“*Buried Child*”:**

1. What is the backdrop for this play?
2. Reveal all themes touched in the play.
3. Who is Ansel?
4. What does Tilden continue to bring in from the backyard?

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#### 14.7. Tennessee Williams (1911-1983). "A Streetcar Named Desire"

**Primary Works: Plays:** "American Blues" (1939), "The Glass Menagerie" (1944), "Battle of Angels" (1945), "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1947), "Summer and Smoke" (1948), "The Rose Tattoo" (1951), "Camino Real" (1953), "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1955), "Baby Doll" (1956), "Orpheus Descending" (1958), "The Fugitive Kind" (1958), "Suddenly Last Summer" (1958), "Sweet Bird of Youth" (1959), "Period of Adjustment" (1960), "The Night of the Iguana" (1961), "Kingdom of Earth" (1967), "Dragon Country" (1970), "Out Cry" (1973), "Vieux Carré" (1977), "A Lovely Sunday for Crève Coeur" (1978-79), "Clothes for a Summer Hotel" (1980), "Something Cloudy, Something Clear" (1981). **Novels:** "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone" (1950), "Moise and The World of Reason" (1975). **Poems:** "In the Winter of Cities" (1956). **Autobiography:** "Memoirs" (1975).

#### A Brief Biography of Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams, original name Thomas Lanier Williams (born March 26, 1911, Columbus, Miss., U.S.-died Feb. 25, 1983, New York City), American dramatist whose plays reveal a world of human frustration in which passion and violence underlie an atmosphere of romantic gentility.

Williams became interested in playwriting while at the University of Missouri (Columbia) and Washington University (St. Louis) and worked at it even during the *Great Depression* while employed in a St. Louis shoe factory. Little theatre groups produced some of his work, encouraging him to study dramatic writing at the University of Iowa, where he earned a B.A. in 1938.

His 1<sup>st</sup> recognition came when "American Blues" (1939), a group of 1-act plays, won a Group Theatre award. Williams, however, continued to work at jobs ranging from theatre usher to Hollywood scriptwriter until success came with "The Glass Menagerie" (1944). In it, Williams portrayed a declassed Southern family living in a tenement. The play is about the failure of a domineering mother, Amanda, living upon her delusions of a romantic past, and her cynical son, Tom, to secure a suitor for Tom's crippled and painfully shy sister, Laura, who lives in a fantasy world with a collection of glass animals.

Williams' next major play, "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1947), won a Pulitzer Prize. It is a study of the mental and moral ruin of Blanche Du Bois, another former

Southern belle, whose genteel pretensions are no match for the harsh realities symbolized by her brutish brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski.

In 1953, *“Camino Real”*, a complex work set in a mythical, microcosmic town whose inhabitants include Lord Byron and Don Quixote, was a commercial failure, but his *“Cat on a Hot Tin Roof”* (1955), which exposes the emotional lies governing relationships in the family of a wealthy Southern planter, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize and was successfully filmed, as was *“The Night of the Iguana”* (1961), the story of a defrocked minister turned sleazy tour guide, who finds God in a cheap Mexican hotel. *“Suddenly Last Summer”* (1958) deals with lobotomy and cannibalism, and in *“Sweet Bird of Youth”* (1959), the gigolo hero is castrated for having infected a Southern politician’s daughter with venereal disease.

Williams was in ill health frequently during the 1960s, compounded by years of addiction to sleeping pills and liquor, problems that he struggled to overcome after a severe mental and physical breakdown in 1969. His later plays were unsuccessful, closing soon to poor reviews. They include *“Vieux Carré”* (1977), about down-and-outs in New Orleans; *“A Lovely Sunday for Crève Coeur”* (1978-79), about a fading belle in St. Louis during the *Great Depression*; and *“Clothes for a Summer Hotel”* (1980), centering on Zelda Fitzgerald, wife of novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, and on the people they knew.

Williams also wrote 2 novels, *“The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone”* (1950) and *“Moise and the World of Reason”* (1975), essays, poetry, film scripts, short stories, and an autobiography, *“Memoirs”* (1975). His works won 4 Drama Critics’ awards and were widely translated and performed around the world.

A gifted writer and recipient of many literary awards, T. Williams is now recognized as an innovator of the new American drama after the end of World War II. Many of his plays have shocked audiences; they display violence, alcoholism and fetishism in terms that were never before seen on the American stage. His pervasive theme is the inescapable loneliness of human condition. His characters are faded men and women, consumed by time and decay; many (like Amanda, Laura, and Tom Wingfield, Jim O’Connor, Big Daddy, Big Mama, Brick and Maggie), have become memorable.

### ***“A Streetcar Named Desire” (1947)***

*“A Streetcar Named Desire”* ensured that T. Williams’ name would never leave the ranks of the playwright elite even decades after his death. The play, which tells the story of an aging Southern belle’s difficult relationship with her aggressive brother-in-law, was successful both commercially and critically. It opened in December of 1947 on Broadway and ran for over 2 full years, earning 2 Tony awards for the stage production and the 1948 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

The structure of this play is best seen through a series of confrontations between Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski. In the 1<sup>st</sup> scene the confrontation is not so severe, but it increases in severity until 1 of the 2 must be destroyed. To understand fully the scenes of confrontations, readers should have a good understanding of what is at stake in each encounter. That is, they should understand some of the differences

between the DuBois world and the Kowalski world. Thus the play is structured on the principle of presenting the 2 worlds, establishing what each world believes in, and then placing these worlds in a series of direct confrontations until 1 is destroyed.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Williams is really a moral symbolist who projects the tradition of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Faulkner into the present. More than any of these writers, however, he has made the mystery of his central metaphor. Explain.
2. Williams instinctively understands the loneliness of a human being - his or her constant and desperate attempt to escape the reality that is their loneliness - and their subsequent failure to do so. Find the prove in his plays.
3. In what way does Williams make the audience consider some of his plays "tragic"?  
**"A Streetcar Named Desire":**
  1. "A Streetcar Named Desire" is divided into 11 scenes rather than the traditional act and scene divisions. What is the effect of this structure?
  2. How does Williams tend to end scenes? On a consistently dramatic note? A tragic one? With suspense?
  3. Are there any moral or ethical lessons to be found in "A Streetcar Named Desire"?
  4. Contrast Blanche and Stanley as opposite characters and symbols of conflicting ideals.

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## CHAPTER XV. AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION, APOCALYPTIC FICTION, BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND DETECTIVE STORIES

### Plan:

**15.1. Basic Traits of American Science Fiction**

**15.2. Ray Bradbury. “Fahrenheit 451”**

**15.3. Isaac Asimov. “I, Robot”. “Foundation”**

**15.4. Stephen King. “The Green Mile”**

**15.5. Samuel Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961). “The Maltese Falcon”**

**15.6. John Grisham (1955-). “The Firm”**

**15.7. E.B. White. “Charlotte’s Web”**

**15.8. Lyman Frank Baum (1856-1919). “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz”**

### 15.1. Basic Traits of American Science Fiction

Science fiction (SF), a literary genre in which a background of science or pseudoscience is an integral part of the story. Although SF is a form of fantastic literature, many of the events recounted are within the realm of future possibility, e.g., robots, space travel, interplanetary war, invasions from outer space.

SF is generally considered to have had its beginnings in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the romances of Jules Verne and the novels of H.G. Wells.

In the U.S., SF developed in the 1920’s along the lines of scientific and technical predictions (H. Gernsback) and space adventures (E. Smith, E. Hamilton, and E. Burroughs). The best works of American postwar SF, foreshadowed in the 1930’s by the works of J. Campbell, rose to the level of serious social criticism and philosophical generalization (for example, the works of R. Bradbury, W. Tenn, F. Pohl, C. Kornbluth, R. Heinlein, R. Sheckley, and K. Vonnegut), paralleling, as it were, the literature of critical realism and the political-warning novel. However, in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, this trend was replaced by a “new wave” of sci-fi writers (S. Delany, R. Zelazny) who reflected the modernist concern with innovative forms. The works of these writers have fantastic descriptions of the “inner space” of the human mind.

In 1926, Hugo Gernsback founded the pulp magazine *Amazing Stories*, devoted exclusively to SF, particularly to serious explorations into the future. Good writing in the field was further encouraged when John W. Campbell, Jr., founded *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1937. In that magazine much attention was paid to literary and dramatic qualities, theme, and characterization; Campbell “discovered” and popularized many important sci-fi writers, including Isaac Asimov, Frederic Brown, A. E. van Vogt, Lewis Padgett, Eric Frank Russell, Clifford Simak, Theodore Sturgeon, Fritz Leiber, Murray Leinster, Robert Heinlein, Raymond F. Jones, and Robert Sheckley.

SF has established itself as a legitimate branch of literature. C.S. Lewis's “*Out of the Silent Planet*” (1938) used SF as a vehicle for theological speculation, and works such as Aldous Huxley's “*Brave New World*” (1932), George Orwell's “*Nineteen Eighty-four*” (1949), Ray Bradbury's “*Fahrenheit 451*” (1953), and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s “*Cat's Cradle*” (1963) demonstrate the particular effectiveness of the genre as an

instrument of social criticism. Sci-fi literature anticipates and comments on political and social concerns, and a variety of SF subgenres have emerged: feminist SF; disaster novels and novels treating the world emerging from a disaster's wake; stories postulating alternative worlds; fantastic voyages to "inner space"; and "cyberpunk" novels set in "cyberspace," a realm where computerized information possesses three dimensions in a "virtual reality".

The rich variety of notable sci-fi writing to emerge since the "classic" work of Asimov, Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, and Ray Bradbury includes Frank Herbert's "*Dune*" (1965) and its sequels, which conjured up a desert world where issues of ecology, ethics, and human destiny and evolution were played out; Philip K. Dick's satirical and philosophical vision of post-nuclear war southern California in novels such as "*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*" (1968) and "*Valis*" (1981); the apocalyptic disaster fiction of J. G. Ballard, including "*The Crystal World*" (1966) and "*Vermilion Sands*" (1971); the rigorously science-based works of Poul Anderson, such as "*Tau Zero*" (1970) and "*The Boat of a Million Years*" (1989); Michael Crichton's best-selling sci-fi suspense novels, particularly "*The Andromeda Strain*" (1969) and "*Jurassic Park*" (1990); William Gibson's evocations of urban "cyberpunk" desolation in novels such as "*Count Zero*" (1986) and "*Mona Lisa Overdrive*" (1988); Doris Lessing's "*Canopus in Argos: Archives*", a series of 4 novels (1979-1983) that explores the possibilities of a feminist utopia; and the writing of Ursula Le Guin, who has imagined ecological utopias in works such as "*Always Coming Home*" (1985) and "*The Word for World is Forest*" (1986).

Over recent decades, SF has become popular in the nonliterary media, including film, television, and electronic games. "*Star Wars*" (1977) and its sequels and prequel, "*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*" (1977), and "*E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*" (1982) were among the most financially successful motion pictures ever produced.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What's the line that distinguishes the SF genre from other genres such as speculative fiction or fantasy? What elements does SF have in common with these other genres? And how does it differ from them?
2. Is SF "serious" literature? Can we include the best SF works along with other canonical literary works, like those by writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Jane Austen and William Faulkner? Or is SF necessarily an "inferior" genre?
3. SF is closely associated with the novel and the short story form, given that the most famous works of SF have been written in these forms. That said, do you think that we can have a science fiction poem?
4. Why is SF so obsessed with time, and specifically the future? How does Sci-Fi's treatment of time challenge some of the conventional ideas we have about time? How does SF's depiction of non-human or semi-human characters challenge or redefine what we mean by the "human"?
5. How do authors use the conventions of the sci-fi genre to say something about our own time and place? Why do you think SF lends itself to being used in this allegorical way?

6. Why do you think male writers are overrepresented in the sci-fi genre? Why don't we have more women writing science fiction?
7. Is SF "entertainment" or is it "literature"? How does "entertainment" overlap with "literature" and how does it diverge from it?
8. Why is the idea of the journey or the voyage so central to SF?
9. What's up with Sci-Fi's obsession with outer space? Why is it that sci-fi writers find this realm so fascinating, and why do they like writing about it so much?

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### **15.2. Ray Bradbury (1920-2012). "Fahrenheit 451"**

**Primary Works: Short stories:** "Hollerbochen's Dilemma" (1938), "Pendulum" (1941), "The Veldt" (1951), "The Golden Apples of the Sun" (1953), "The Fog Horn" (1953), "A Sound of Thunder" (1953), "All Summer in a Day" (1959), "Death Is a Lonely Business" (1985), "A Graveyard for Lunatics" (1990), "Let's All Kill Constance" (2002). **Short story collections:** "Dark Carnival" (1947), "The Illustrated Man" (1951), "A Medicine for Melancholy" (1959), "The Machineries of Joy" (1964), "I Sing the Body Electric!" (1969), "The October Country" (1970). **Novels:** "Fahrenheit 451" (1953), "Dandelion Wine" (1957), "Something Wicked This Way Comes" (1962), "Green Shadows, White Whale" (1992), "Farewell Summer" (2006). **Series of short stories:** "The Martian Chronicles" (1950). **Collection of short plays:** "The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics" (1963).

### **A Brief Biography of Ray Bradbury**

Ray Douglas Bradbury, (born August 22, 1920, Waukegan, Illinois, U.S.-died June 5, 2012, Los Angeles, California), American author best known for his highly imaginative short stories and novels that blend a poetic style, nostalgia for childhood, social criticism, and an awareness of the hazards of runaway technology.

As a child, Bradbury loved horror films such as "The Phantom of the Opera" (1925); the books of L. Frank Baum and Edgar Rice Burroughs, and the 1<sup>st</sup> sci-fi magazine, *Amazing Stories*. Bradbury's family moved to Los Angeles in 1934. In 1937 Bradbury joined the Los Angeles Science Fiction League, where he received encouragement from young writers such as Henry Kuttner, Edmond Hamilton, Robert

Heinlein, and Leigh Brackett, who met weekly with him. Bradbury published his 1<sup>st</sup> short story, “*Hollerbochen’s Dilemma*” (1938), in the league’s “fanzine” *Imagination!* In 1939 Bradbury traveled to the 1<sup>st</sup> World Science Fiction convention, in New York City, where he met many of the genre’s editors. He made his 1<sup>st</sup> sale to a professional SF magazine in 1941, when his short story “*Pendulum*” (written with Henry Hasse) was published in *Super Science Stories*. Many of Bradbury’s earliest stories, with their elements of fantasy and horror, were published in *Weird Tales*. Most of these stories were collected in his 1<sup>st</sup> book of short stories, “*Dark Carnival*” (1947). Bradbury’s style, with its rich use of metaphors and similes, stood out from the more utilitarian work that dominated pulp magazine writing.

In the mid-1940s Bradbury’s stories started to appear in major magazines. “*The Martian Chronicles*” (1950), a series of short stories, depicts Earth’s colonization of Mars, which leads to the extinction of an idyllic Martian civilization. However, in the face of an oncoming nuclear war, many of the settlers return to Earth, and after Earth’s destruction, a few surviving humans return to Mars to become the new Martians. The short-story collection “*The Illustrated Man*” (1951) included one of his most famous stories, “*The Veldt*”, in which a mother and father are concerned about the effect their house’s simulation of lions on the African veldt is having on their children.

Bradbury’s next novel, “*Fahrenheit 451*” (1953), is regarded as his greatest work. In a future society where books are forbidden, Guy Montag, a “fireman” whose job is the burning of books, takes a book and is seduced by reading. “*Fahrenheit 451*” has been acclaimed for its anti-censorship themes and its defense of literature against the encroachment of electronic media.

The collection “*The Golden Apples of the Sun*” (1953) contained “*The Fog Horn*”, about 2 lighthouse keepers’ terrifying encounter with a sea monster; the title story, about a rocket’s dangerous journey to scoop up a piece of the Sun; and “*A Sound of Thunder*”, about a safari back to the Mesozoic to hunt a Tyrannosaurus. In 1954 Bradbury spent 6 months in Ireland with director John Huston working on the screenplay for the film “*Moby Dick*” (1956), an experience Bradbury later fictionalized in his novel “*Green Shadows, White Whale*” (1992). After the release of *Moby Dick*, Bradbury was in demand as a screenwriter in Hollywood and wrote scripts for Playhouse 90, Alfred Hitchcock Presents, and *The Twilight Zone*.

One of Bradbury’s most personal works, “*Dandelion Wine*” (1957), is an autobiographical novel about a magical but too brief summer of a 12-year-old boy in Green Town, Illinois (a fictionalized version of his childhood home of Waukegan). His next collection, “*A Medicine for Melancholy*” (1959), contained “*All Summer in a Day*”, a poignant story of childhood cruelty on Venus, where the Sun comes out only every 7 years. The Midwest of his childhood was once again the setting of “*Something Wicked This Way Comes*” (1962), in which a carnival comes to town run by the mysterious and evil Mr. Dark. The next year, he published his 1<sup>st</sup> collection of short plays, “*The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics*”.

In the 1970s Bradbury no longer wrote short fiction at his previous pace, turning his energy to poetry and drama. Earlier in his career he had sold several mystery short stories, and he returned to the genre with “*Death Is a Lonely Business*” (1985), an homage to the detective stories of writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell

Hammett mixed with an autobiographical setting of 1949 Venice, California, where Bradbury lived at the time. 2 sequels, *“A Graveyard for Lunatics”* (1990) and *“Let’s All Kill Constance”* (2002), mined his experiences in 1950s and ’60s Hollywood. His final novel, *“Farewell Summer”* (2006), was a sequel to *“Dandelion Wine”*.

Bradbury was often considered a sci-fi author, but he said that his only SF book was *“Fahrenheit 451”*. Strictly speaking, much of his work was fantasy, horror, or mysteries. He said, “I use a scientific idea as a platform to leap into the air and never come back”. He received many honors for his work including an Emmy for his animated adaptation of *“The Halloween Tree”* (1994) and the National Medal of Arts (2004). In 2007 the Pulitzer Prize Board awarded Bradbury a Special Citation for his distinguished career. In all, Bradbury has published more than thirty books, close to 600 short stories, and numerous poems, essays, and plays. His short stories have appeared in more than 1,000 school curriculum "recommended reading" anthologies.

### ***“Fahrenheit 451” (1953)***

*“Fahrenheit 451”* is a dystopian novel. It is regarded as one of his best works. The novel presents a future American society where books are outlawed and "firemen" burn any that are found.

The story of fireman Guy Montag 1<sup>st</sup> appeared in *“The Fireman”*, a short story by Ray Bradbury published in *Galaxy Science Fiction* in 1951. Montag's story was expanded 2 years later, in 1953, and was published as *“Fahrenheit 451”*. The novel is divided into 3 parts: *“The Hearth and the Salamander”*, *“The Sieve and the Sand”*, and *“Burning Bright”*.

*“Fahrenheit 451”*, which takes its title from the temperature at which paper burns, takes place in a sterile, futuristic society in which firemen burn books because the state has decided that books make people unhappy. Suspected readers are arrested. Instead of reading, people listen to “seashells”, tiny radios that fit in the ear, and watch insipid television shows projected on wall-to-wall screens. In school, students play sports and learn nothing. Fast driving is encouraged, and pedestrians are arrested. Indiscriminate drug use, suicide, overpopulation, and war are rampant. In this world lives Guy Montag, the main character, who smilingly and unquestioningly accepts his job as a fireman. Guy’s wife, Mildred, watches endless hours of television and overdoses on narcotics. Early in the novel, a young neighbor, Clarisse, shocks Guy by asking whether he ever reads the books he burns and whether he is happy.

The novel has been the subject of interpretations focusing on the historical role of book burning in suppressing dissenting ideas. In a 1956 radio interview, Bradbury stated that he wrote *Fahrenheit 451* because of his concerns at the time (during the McCarthy era) about the threat of book burning in the U.S. In later years, he stated his motivation for writing the book in more general terms.

In 1954, *“Fahrenheit 451”* won the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature and the Commonwealth Club of California Gold Medal. It has since won the Prometheus "Hall of Fame" Award in 1984 and a 1954 "Retro" Hugo Award, 1 of only 4 Best Novel Retro Hugos ever given, in 2004. Bradbury was honored with a Spoken Word Grammy nomination for his 1976 audiobook version.



## Study Questions:

1. What literary genres are favorite for Bradbury? Give examples.
2. What was the role of scientific idea in Bradbury's works?

### **"Fahrenheit 451":**

1. How plausible is the future envisioned in this novel? Specifically, do you think the author provides a convincing account of how censorship became so rampant in this society?
2. Why do you think Beatty hates books?
3. Read the poem "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold. In what ways is it significant that Montag reads this particular poem to Mildred and her friends?
4. How does Faber define the value of books? Does his definition of "quality" apply to media other than printed books? Do you think his definitions are accurate or not? Explain.
5. Discuss Montag's relationship with Mildred. Is this a typical marital relationship in their culture? Discuss the role of family in the characters' lives, particularly in relation to the TV parlor "families" and their nature and function.
6. Describe Clarisse's effect on Montag and her function in the novel. How and why does she change him? Why does she vanish from the novel?
7. Discuss the use of quotations from literature in "Fahrenheit 451". Which works are quoted and to what effect? Pay specific attention to "Dover Beach" and quotes from William Shakespeare.

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### **15.3. Isaac Asimov (1920-1992). "I, Robot"**

**Primary Works: *The Robot Series:*** "The Caves of Steel" (1954), "The Naked Sun" (1957), "The Robots of Down" (1983), "Robots and Empire" (1985). ***Galactic Empire Novels:*** "The Currents of Space" (1952), "The Stars, Like Dust" (1951), "Pebble in the Sky" (1950). ***Foundation Trilogy:*** Prequels: "Prelude to Foundation" (1988), "Forward the Foundation" (1993), Original Trilogy: "Foundation" (1951), "Foundation and Empire" (1952), "Second Foundation" (1953), Sequels: "Foundation's Edge" (1982), "Foundation and Earth" (1986). "*Lucky Starr*" Series (1952-1958), "Norby" Chronicles (1983-1991), "The End of Eternity" (1955), "Fantastic Voyage" (1966), "The Gods Themselves" (1972), "Fantastic Voyage II: Destination Brain" (1987), "Nemesis" (1989), "Nightfall" (1989), "The Bicentennial Man" (1976). ***Short Story Collections:*** "I, Robot" (1950), "Asimov's Mysteries" (1968), "The

*Complete Robot*” (1982), *“Robot Dreams”* (1986). *“Black Widowers” Series* (1974-2003).

### **A Brief Biography of Isaac Asimov**

Isaac Asimov, (born January 2, 1920, Petrovichi, Russia-died April 6, 1992, New York, New York, U.S.), American author and biochemist, a highly successful and prolific writer of SF and of science books for the layperson. He published about 500 volumes.

Asimov was brought to the U.S. at age 3. He grew up in Brooklyn, New York, graduating from Columbia University in 1939 and taking a Ph.D. there in 1948. He then joined the faculty of Boston University, with which he remained associated thereafter.

Asimov began contributing stories to sci-fi magazines in 1939 and in 1950 published his 1<sup>st</sup> book, *“Pebble in the Sky”*. His trilogy of novels, *“Foundation”*, *“Foundation and Empire”*, and *“Second Foundation”* (1951-53), which recounts the collapse and rebirth of a vast interstellar empire in the universe of the future, is his most famous work of SF. In the short-story collection *“I, Robot”* (1950; filmed 2004), he developed a set of ethics for robots and intelligent machines (his “Three Laws of Robotics”) that greatly influenced other writers’ treatment of the subject.

His other novels and collections of stories included *“The Stars, like Dust”* (1951), *“The Currents of Space”* (1952), *“The Caves of Steel”* (1954), *“The Naked Sun”* (1957), *“Earth Is Room Enough”* (1957), *“Foundation’s Edge”* (1982), and *“The Robots of Dawn”* (1983). His *“Nightfall”* (1941) is thought by many to be the finest SF short story ever written.

Among Asimov’s books on various topics in science, written with lucidity and humor, are *“The Chemicals of Life”* (1954), *“Inside the Atom”* (1956), *“The World of Nitrogen”* (1958), *“Life and Energy”* (1962), *“The Human Brain”* (1964), *“The Neutrino”* (1966), *“Science, Numbers, and I”* (1968), *“Our World in Space”* (1974), and *“Views of the Universe”* (1981). He also published 2 volumes of autobiography.

### ***“I, Robot”* (1950)**

*“I, Robot”* is a collection of 9 short stories by sci-fi writer Isaac Asimov. The stories 1<sup>st</sup> appeared in sci-fi magazines between 1940 and 1950, the year they 1<sup>st</sup> appeared together in book form.

The stories are linked by a framing narrative involving an interview between a reporter and retired robopsychologist Susan Calvin, who relates her work with dysfunctional robots and the problems inherent in human-robot interactions. The 9 stories include: *“Robbie”* (1940, 1950), *“Runaround”* (1942), *“Reason”* (1941), *“Catch That Rabbit”* (1944), *“Liar!”* (1941), *“Little Lost Robot”* (1947), *“Escape!”* (1945), *“Evidence”* (1946), *“The Evitable Conflict”* (1950).

Although the stories can be read separately, they share a theme of the interaction of humans, robots, and morality, and when combined they tell a larger story of Asimov’s fictional history of robotics.

It is in these stories that Asimov took the fundamental step of treating robots not like Frankenstein's monster, something created by mad scientists that eventually threatens its creator (what Asimov termed the "Frankenstein complex"), but as aware entities with their own set of programmed ethics. In the story "*Runaround*," Asimov sets forth his famed *Three Laws of Robotics*:

1) A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

2) A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the 1<sup>st</sup> Law.

3) A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Law.

Asimov deliberately left loopholes in these injunctions, and each of the tales is a detective story of sorts in which Calvin or her colleagues at the U.S. Robotics and Mechanical Men Inc. - Donovan and Powell - discover which ambiguity or conflict between the laws is causing the robot to behave in an unexpected way.

The stories are arranged chronologically with the development of "positronic robots" (Asimov's term for increasingly human-like creations). The 1<sup>st</sup> robot to appear is Robbie, the perfect playmate for a young girl, who because of him becomes isolated from other children. Other robots include Nestor-10, whose programming conflict can only be solved by adjusting the 1<sup>st</sup> Law so he can allow his employers to put themselves at risk in order to do their work.

Asimov's *Three Laws* have spread throughout SF, and almost every robot in books or film is now created with these governing laws in mind.

### ***"Foundation" (1942-1953)***

Isaac Asimov's *The Foundation Trilogy* is a work designed on an astonishing scale. The actions it describes cover more than four centuries and many solar systems. This, however, is only a fraction of the much larger perspective behind the story, for the sequence opens with a view of a Galactic Empire including more than twenty-five million inhabited planets; that Empire is furthermore the result of an expansion into space so long-drawn-out that even the memory of Earth itself has vanished. All one can say is that the Foundation era begins more than twelve thousand years in the future, at a time when Sol III is known only as one of the possible worlds of human origin, and when all the knowledge and history of human beings to date have dwindled to a few scraps of legend.

Yet the story that *Foundation* and its successors seek to tell is that of the decline and fall of the Galactic Empire, together with its replacement by something yet greater, not only in scale but also in achievement. To add a final implausibility to this ambitious project, the three novels do not even appear to have been conceived as a whole, but instead first came out as a string of seven short stories and one three-part serial in the pages of *Astounding Science Fiction* between 1942 and 1950, all of these being then collected (with one additional story to round them out) in the three volumes making up *The Foundation Trilogy*. Asimov, in other words, did not know how his story would finish when he started. Yet the enormous scale of what he was doing was evident from

the beginning. One cannot avoid the question of how he hoped to hold his story or stories together.

The unifying factor of the sequence is, however, perfectly clear, and provides an especially good example of the theory that science fiction is above all “idea centered.” The main idea of all the Foundation stories is psychohistory, or Seldon’s Plan. In essence, Asimov suggests that all of history, and all of politics, are controlled by forces as intrinsically open to classification as those of physics. These forces normally evade classification, first because human beings are themselves involved in them, and therefore cannot treat them dispassionately, and second because they are overwhelmingly statistical, working only—both these points are repeatedly stressed—on large bodies of people, and on people with no true understanding of what is happening to them. At the very start of Foundation, though, one man has arisen who has refined millennia of intuition into the exact science of psychohistory, and has seen from his studies that the Galactic Empire, then at its height of power, must inevitably fall into a new Dark Age.

This man is Hari Seldon, and the plan he has developed is aimed, not at thwarting the Dark Age’s coming—for this is now inevitable—but at mitigating its effects, shortening it indeed from thirty millennia to one. This will be achieved, he suggests, by setting up a scientific “Foundation” at the far end of the Galaxy, on the world of Terminus, so that knowledge will never completely be lost. All three volumes of the trilogy are then set within the first four centuries or so from the establishment of Seldon’s Foundation. They cover the beginning of the new Dark Age, the slow expansion of the Foundation into the ruins of Empire, and the search for the rumored Second Foundation whose duty it is to complement the material skills of the First Foundation with psychic and psychohistorical skills.

### **Themes.**

#### **- Psychohistory and Prediction**

A central theme of the trilogy is the role of psychohistory, which allows individuals to predict the future with precision. Hari Seldon, the creator of this concept, foresees the collapse of the Galactic Empire and therefore establishes the Foundations, which serve as the foundation for the narrative. Seldon's exceptional mathematical abilities make psychohistory a precise science, transforming large-scale predictions from intuition into calculation. This predictive capability is crucial to the Foundation's triumph over its barbaric neighbors. However, this skill is often found in pragmatic thinkers like traders and politicians rather than scientific specialists. Psychohistory forecasts the behavior of large groups and deals in probabilities, meaning individual choices are not predetermined, leaving room for personal initiative within the framework of the Seldon Plan. Furthermore, psychohistory cannot foresee the emergence of the Mule, a mutant with significant mental abilities.

#### **- Scientific Advancement and Open Inquiry**

Asimov champions the importance of scientific advancement through open inquiry, emphasizing that no scientific discovery, regardless of its utility, is the ultimate solution. The Foundation consistently faces new challenges, and often, the resolution to a previous issue becomes a hindrance in tackling the current one.

#### **- Psychohistory and Human Politics**

As has been said already, the central idea of the Foundation series is that of psychohistory, and its associated implications about human character and human politics. Two structural devices, however, are of particular importance in making this idea attractive and plausible. One, which has become a standby for science-fiction writers ever since, is the habit of preceding sections or chapters with quotations from an imaginary Encyclopedia Galactica, the project set up by Seldon to conceal his real intentions, but now feigned to have been completed and to have reached its one hundred sixteenth edition some six centuries after the last events of Second Foundation. These short “excerpts” give the reader vital condensed information. These excerpts also put the events narrated into an austere and impersonal perspective. A whole religion, based on worship of the Galactic Spirit, becomes a temporary expedient; desperate ventures pale into footnotes; the footnotes themselves (for all the authority of the Encyclopedia) are sometimes suggested to be unreliable, the product of deceit or wish fulfillment. There is a continual contrast between the events narrated and how they are remembered, sometimes working against the Encyclopedia, but more often pointing to the limited vision of the characters directly involved.

- Cultural Relativism and Historical Perspective

A similar effect is reached by the very gaps between the nine separate sections of the trilogy. Salvor Hardin is a young firebrand in one, urging action on the sluggish Pirenne. In the next he has become old and sagacious, sticking to an apparent “do nothing” policy against the protests of his juniors. The only conclusion seems to be that no general policy is ever right; the wise man reacts differently to different circumstances. Later, Lathan Devers is left at the end of Part I of Foundation and Empire urging greater democracy on his superiors; a few pages later, in Part II, the reader learns that he died in the slave mines “eighty years ago” for continuing his defiance. The effect is not only to generate a sense of the scale and sweep of history, important though that is, but also to develop a strong sense of cultural relativism, perhaps especially for American readers. It is, for example, very easy for Americans to identify with the Independent Worlds of Foundation and Empire, and to see their relations with Terminus in terms of the War of Independence of 1776, as indeed, at an earlier stage, it is easy to see Salvor Hardin as a type of George Washington

**Critical Context.** Probably this political subtlety was at the heart of the enormous appeal of the series when it first appeared. There was something particularly daring about such suggestions in the late 1940’s, just after a great war had been fought for democracy (though with many unanticipated side effects). Asimov also clearly exploited the strong 1940’s interest in atomic power and its meaning for the future of humanity. In his story, the Foundation gains its power originally because it holds on to the knowledge of atomics while all the surrounding kingdoms are back to oil and coal. He never quite succeeds, however, in explaining how interstellar flight remains possible after knowledge of nuclear power has been lost; many of the minor technological items in the series also now seem dated, not because they are too grandiose but because they are too trivial. Who would ever need an “atom flash” for tipping ashtrays into? Calling a light bulb an “Atomo” bulb really tells the reader very little about it. Nevertheless, it could be said that at the heart of the sequence there lies, connected, a strong belief in unlimited technological progress, an equally strong

awareness that this has no connection with political stability or maturity, and a wish for the cataclysms of war and history to be made sensible and predictable, instead of merely chaotic. The Foundation series can, it is true, be faulted on several grounds, such as failure of cultural imagination or overcomplexity of plot. Still, Asimov deserves great credit for having resisted, in his time, strong pressures toward ideological conformity. He rejected the temptation to tell a story where all issues were settled by battleships and blasters; he insisted on reversing ordinary notions of weakness and strength.

One puzzle which has since stimulated scholars is the origin of Asimov's historical ideas. His notions of determinism and necessity have reminded some of Karl Marx, though this is a theory which Asimov himself definitely rejects. There are hints also of Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (twelve volumes, 1934-1961), while Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788) is implicit in the trilogy's entire structure. It seems likely, though, that Asimov encountered both authors only by hearsay or in paraphrase, very probably passed on by John W. Campbell, Jr., the enormously influential editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, whose interest in "future histories" was picked up in similar style by such authors as Robert A. Heinlein, writing at the same time as Asimov, or Poul Anderson, writing a little later. *Foundation and Empire* also shows some signs, especially in *Bel Riose*, of the influence of Robert Graves's novel *Count Belisarius* (1938), which was especially popular during World War II. On the whole, though, it is clear that Asimov's basic ideas and attitudes are surprisingly original, while his work (literally speaking, for Asimov has several degrees in chemistry) shows many of the strengths and weaknesses of an autodidactic author.

Since their publication, the Foundation books have become probably the best-known science-fiction novels ever, receiving in 1966 the unique honor of a Hugo award for the best science-fiction series of all time. Some critics suggest that they form a watershed in the whole history of science fiction. Before them, authors could treat scientific futures from a viewpoint of complete historical or political naivete; after them, that option was forever closed, and science fiction moved into its "modern" phase. This claim may not prove entirely true, for some naive ideas will always find a publisher. Just the same, the influence of the Foundation books cannot be overestimated, for their ironic tone, their successfully "antiheroic" heroes, and their promotion of the idea of psychohistory. It remains to be said that Asimov has produced a further work in the sequence, the long novel *Foundation's Edge* (1982). Its interests, though, have moved away from the forty-year-old original impulse, in the direction of technology and ecology rather than history or politics.

**Critical Evaluation.** The Foundation trilogy has become one of the texts on which the science-fiction future history subgenre is based, and its popularity validates its canonical status. The trilogy has sold millions of copies in many languages and has never been out of print. Its vision of a human galactic empire encompassing 25 million stars provided a broad canvas on which to paint human progress or downfall. It begins—like Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788), on which the trilogy was modeled—with the impending dissolution of civilization and efforts to avert an ensuing dark age.

Donald Wollheim was a fellow member with Isaac Asimov of the Futurians (a seminal Brooklyn fan organization of the late 1930's and early 1940's), the editor of Ace Books, and then editor and publisher of DAW Books. In *The Universe Makers* (1971), Wollheim called the Foundation trilogy "the point of departure for the full cosmogony of science-fiction future history." The 1966 World Science Fiction Convention voted the trilogy "the greatest all-time science fiction series." Numerous scientists have attributed their interest in science to their early reading of the trilogy. These include theoretical physicist Michio Kaku and Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, who has said that he went into economics because it was the closest thing he could find to psychohistory.

A number of misconceptions arise from calling the work a "trilogy." It is a sequence of three books with a coherent topic: the fall of the Galactic Empire and efforts by Hari Seldon and his successors to shorten the period of barbarism that would follow from thirty thousand years to only one thousand years. However, none of the three books was originally conceived as a single novel. The first book, *Foundation*, is made up of five novelettes, four of them written and published in *Astounding Science Fiction* over a period of three years. The first section of the book was written specifically for the publication of the book in 1951. The second book, *Foundation and Empire*, is composed of two novellas, written in 1944 and 1945 and published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1945. The third book, *Second Foundation*, consists of two more novellas, written in 1947 and 1949 and published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1948 and 1949.

Before and during World War II, almost no science fiction was published in book form, and Asimov had no idea that he was writing anything but magazine fiction that would die with the issue of the magazine in which it was published. He was astonished after the war to find editors interested in reprinting his magazine stories in anthologies and a few publishers interested in publishing complete Asimov books. One of the publishers was Doubleday, whose editor, Lawrence Ashmead, asked Asimov for an original novel, rather than reprinted material. Asimov wrote *Pebble in the Sky* (1950), in which he imagined Earth's radioactivity increasing, shortening human lifespans and forcing humanity to seek a refuge among the stars that would ultimately lead to the Galactic Empire. Only a fan publisher, Gnome Press, was interested in *Foundation*, and Asimov published it there in 1951, followed by *Foundation and Empire* in 1952, and *Second Foundation* in 1953. Later, the books would be acquired and reprinted by Doubleday.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Do research on Asimov's 1<sup>st</sup> novels. What themes and ideas are discussed in these novels? Are there any similar characters?
2. What are specific features of Asimov's trilogy "*Foundation*"?

#### **"I, Robot":**

1. Do these *Three Laws* really make robots safer for people? Asimov goes through a few problems with these laws in his stories, but are there any other problems that you think he leaves out? And why does he wait until the 2<sup>nd</sup> story to spell out the *Three Laws*?

2. Asimov says he wrote these stories in order to get away from the Frankenstein Complex, the worry that our technology (especially robots) would destroy us. But do you think that these stories are ultimately a defense of robots? Or do they show us how robots could still destroy us, even with their *Three Laws*?
3. Several characters respond to robots differently, for instance, Gloria loves Robbie, Gloria's mom, not so much; in "*The Evitable Conflict*", Byerley doesn't seem to trust the Machines, but Calvin does. How do you react to the robots in these stories? Do you sympathize more with Gloria or with her mom in "*Robbie*"? What about the last story? Who do you think is right, Calvin or Byerley? Does it affect your reading to have these different characters respond differently to the robots? Does it make it seem like all of our possible reactions are in the stories?
4. How do the robots in Asimov's stories differ from the robots (or droids or what-have-you) in other writers' stories?
5. When Asimov collected these stories into one book, he added the frame of Susan Calvin telling her stories before her retirement. Why does Calvin get to be the frame narrator? Are there any stories where her narration just doesn't make much sense? Why do you think the interviewer tells us that she has passed away at the end? Does that affect how you think about this book?
6. Why do you think Asimov chose these stories and chose to put them in this order? For instance, "*Runaround*" was from 1942 and "*Reason*" was from 1941, but that's the order that he places them in.
7. Does the Frankenstein Complex still exist - are people still afraid about technology and what it might lead to? Are people still afraid of robots today? If Asimov were alive today, what technology do you think he would want to write about to show us that we shouldn't be afraid?

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### **15.4. Stephen King (1947-). "The Green Mile"**

**Primary Works: Novels:** "*Salem's Lot*" (1975), "*Rage*" (1977), "*The Shining*" (1977), "*The Stand*" (1978), "*The Dead Zone*" (1979), "*The Long Walk*" (1979), "*Firestarter*" (1980), "*The Way Station*" (1980), "*Cujo*" (1981), "*Roadwork*" (1981), "*The Running Man*" (1982), "*Christine*" (1983), "*Thinner*" (1984), "*It*" (1986), "*Misery*" (1987), "*The*



*Tommyknockers* (1987), *The Dark Half* (1989), *Needful Things* (1991), *Dolores Claiborne* (1993), *Insomnia* (1994), *The Green Mile* (1996), *Bag of Bones* (1998), *Dreamcatcher* (2001), *Cell* (2006), *Lisey's Story* (2006), *The Mist* (2007), *Duma Key* (2008), *Under the Dome* (2009), *11/22/63* (2011), *Joyland* (2013), *Doctor Sleep* (2013), *The Dark Man* (2013), *Revival* (2014), trilogy about Bill Hodges: *Mr. Mercedes* (2014) - *Finders Keepers* (2015) - *End of Watch* (2016). **Short fiction:** *Night Shift* (1978), *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* (1993), *The Man in the Black Suit* (1994), *Hearts in Atlantis* (1999), *Just After Sunset* (2008), *The Bazaar of Bad Dreams* (2015).

### A Brief Biography of Stephen King

Stephen Edwin King, (born September 21, 1947, Portland, Maine, U.S.), American novelist and short-story writer whose books were credited with reviving the genre of horror fiction in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

King graduated from the University of Maine in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in English. While writing short stories he supported himself by teaching and working as a janitor, among other jobs. His 1<sup>st</sup> published novel, *Carrie*, about a tormented teenage girl gifted with telekinetic powers, appeared in 1974 and was an immediate popular success.

*Carrie* was the 1<sup>st</sup> of many novels in which King blended horror, the macabre, fantasy, and SF. Among such works were *Salem's Lot* (1975); *The Shining* (1977); *The Stand* (1978); *The Dead Zone* (1979); *Firestarter* (1980); *Cujo* (1981); *The Running Man* (1982); *Christine* (1983); *Thinner* (1984); *It* (1986); *Misery* (1987); *The Tommyknockers* (1987); *The Dark Half* (1989); *Needful Things* (1991); *Dolores Claiborne* (1993); *Dreamcatcher* (2001); *Cell* (2006); *Lisey's Story* (2006); *Duma Key* (2008); *Under the Dome* (2009); *11/22/63* (2011); *Joyland* (2013); *Doctor Sleep* (2013), a sequel to *The Shining*; and *Revival* (2014). Most of these novels were filmed.

King published several of those works, including *The Dead Zone* and *The Running Man*, under the pseudonym Richard Bachman. A collection of the 1<sup>st</sup> 4 Bachman novels, *The Bachman Books* (1985), contains the essay *Why I Was Bachman*. *Mr. Mercedes* (2014), *Finders Keepers* (2015), and *End of Watch* (2016) formed a trilogy of hard-boiled crime novels centering on retired detective Bill Hodges.

King also wrote a serial novel, *The Dark Tower*, whose 1<sup>st</sup> installment, *The Gunslinger*, appeared in 1982; an 8<sup>th</sup> volume was published in 2012. A film adaptation of the series was released in 2017.

In his books King explored almost every terror-producing theme imaginable, from vampires, rabid dogs, deranged killers, and a pyromaniac to ghosts, extrasensory perception and telekinesis, biological warfare, and even a malevolent automobile.

In his later fiction, exemplified by *Dolores Claiborne*, King departed from the horror genre to provide sharply detailed psychological portraits of his protagonists, many of them women, who confront difficult and challenging circumstances. Though his work was sometimes disparaged as undisciplined and inelegant, King was a

talented storyteller whose books gained their effect from realistic detail, forceful plotting, and the author's undoubted ability to involve and scare the reader. His work consistently addressed such themes as the potential for politics and technology to disrupt or even destroy an individual human life. Obsession, the forms it can assume, and its power to wreck individuals, families, and whole communities was a recurring theme in King's fiction, driving the narratives of *Christine*, *Misery*, and *Needful Things*.

By the early 1990s King's books had sold more than 100 million copies worldwide, and his name had become synonymous with the genre of horror fiction. His short fiction was collected in such volumes as *Night Shift* (1978), *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* (1993), *Hearts in Atlantis* (1999), *Just After Sunset* (2008), and *The Bazaar of Bad Dreams* (2015). He wrote several motion-picture screenplays.

King explored both his own career and the craft of writing in *On Writing* (2000), a book he completed as he was recovering from severe injuries received after being struck by a car. King experimented with different forms of book distribution: *The Plant: Zenith Rising* was released in 2000 solely as an e-book, distributed via the Internet, with readers asked but not required to pay for it, and the novella *UR* was made available in 2009 only to users of the Kindle electronic reading device. The short story *Drunken Fireworks* was released in 2015 as an audiobook prior to its print publication.

King received a lot of awards. Moreover, his novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* was the basis for the movie *The Shawshank Redemption* which is widely regarded one of the greatest films of all time. His novella *The Way Station* (1980) was a Nebula Award novelette nominee. His short story *The Man in the Black Suit* (1994) received the O. Henry Award.

### ***“The Green Mile” (1996)***

“The Green Mile” is a novel by the American writer Stephen King, published in 1996. The protagonist Paul Edgecombe is a former jail keeper of the Cold Mountain Penitentiary. He worked at the Geen Mile block where criminals sentenced to death were kept. Each person in the block is unpredictable: maniacs, sadists, murderers are in wait of their dying hour. But there is also John Coffey among them, a giant possessing mystical abilities, and thanks to him Paul faces the impossible. The book is an example of magical realism.

#### **Study Question:**

1. Horror is often based on unintended consequences for well-intentioned people. How does this bear out in Stephen King's works?
2. Explore connections in the King “universe” and how it influences the reading of his novel.
3. Is there a discernible pattern to when King seeks justice in his fiction and to when he does not?

4. Explore King's use of pop culture in his writing. How he approaches it stylistically and the ways in which it enriches his work thematically.
5. In King's novels, human frailty often plays a role in the furtherance of evil. Find specific examples and trace their development in the course of his stories.
6. What do readers learn about the life of writers in King's work? How is creativity both a gift and a bane to King's characters?
7. Consider how horror unfolds in a specific King work. How does foreshadowing help lay the groundwork? What surprises occur suddenly? What twists upend expectations? In terms of technique, how successful is King when he tries to create fear?

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### **15.5. Samuel Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961). "The Maltese Falcon"**

**Primary Works: Novels:** "Red Harvest" (1929), "The Dain Curse" (1929), "The Maltese Falcon" (1930), "The Glass Key" (1931), "The Thin Man" (1934). **Short fiction:** "The Barber and his Wife" (1922); "The Great Lovers" (1922), "Holiday" (1923), "The Crusader" (1923), "The Green Elephant" (1923), "Itchy" (1924), "Ber-Bulu" (1925), "Nightmare Town" (1924), "The Girl with the Silver Eyes" (1924), "The Big Knockover" (1927), "Fly Paper" (1929), "The Farewell Murder" (1930), "A Man Called Spade" (1932), "Two Sharp Knives" (1934), "Night Shade" (1933), "A Man Called Thin" (1961).

### **A Brief Biography of Samuel Dashiell Hammett**

Samuel Dashiell Hammett, (born May 27, 1894, St. Mary's County, Md., U.S.-died Jan. 10, 1961, New York City), American writer who created the hard-boiled school of detective fiction.

Hammett left school at 13 and worked at a variety of low-paying jobs before working 8 years as a detective for the Pinkerton agency. He served in World War I, contracted tuberculosis, and spent the immediate postwar years in army hospitals. He began to publish short stories and novelettes in pulp magazines and in 1929 published 2 novels: "Red Harvest" and "The Dain Curse", before writing "The Maltese Falcon" (1930), generally considered his finest work. It introduced Sam Spade, Hammett's fictional detective creation, which became a classic of its genre.

From 1929 to 1930 Dashiell was romantically involved with Nell Martin, an author of short stories and several novels. He dedicated *“The Glass Key”* to her, and in turn, she dedicated her novel *“Lovers Should Marry”* to Hammett.

He also wrote *“The Glass Key”* (1931) and *“The Thin Man”* (1934), which initiated a motion picture and later a television series built around his detecting couple, Nick and Nora Charles. Nora was based on the playwright Lillian Hellman, with whom he formed a romantic alliance in 1930 that lasted until his death. Her *“Pentimento”* (1973) has an account of their life together.

After 1934 Hammett devoted his time to left-wing political activities and to the defense of civil liberties. He served in World War II as an enlisted man. In 1951 he went to jail for 6 months because he refused to reveal the names of the contributors to the bail bond fund of the Civil Rights Congress, of which he was a trustee.

On January 10, 1961, Hammett died in New York City's Lenox Hill Hospital, of lung cancer, diagnosed just two months before. As a veteran of two World Wars, he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

### ***“The Maltese Falcon” (1930)***

*“The Maltese Falcon”*, detective novel by D. Hammett. The story has been adapted several times for the cinema. The main character, Sam Spade, appears in this novel only and in 3 lesser known short stories, yet is widely cited as the crystallizing figure in the development of the hard-boiled private detective genre.

Raymond Chandler's character Philip Marlowe, for instance, was strongly influenced by Hammett's Spade. Spade was a departure from Hammett's nameless detective, The Continental Op. Sam Spade combined several features of previous detectives, most notably his cold detachment, keen eye for detail, and unflinching determination to achieve his own justice.

The novel's sustained tension is created by vivid scenes and by the pace and sparseness of the author's style. The other major attraction of the novel is its colorful cast of characters; they include the antiheroic detective Sam Spade; Brigid O'Shaughnessy, a deceptive beauty; Joel Cairo, an effeminate Levantine whose gun gives him courage; the very fat and jovial but sinister Casper Gutman; and Gutman's brigand, Wilmer, who is eager to be feared. All of them are looking for the Maltese falcon, a fabulously valuable 16<sup>th</sup>-century artifact.

The concluding chapter, in which Spade explains his uncorrupt, even if sometimes accommodating moral code, is among the most influential pieces of writing in American crime fiction, and antiheroes in the Spade mold came to dominate subsequent hard-boiled mysteries.

In 1998, the Modern Library ranked *“The Maltese Falcon”* 56<sup>th</sup> on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Study Question:**

1. Reveal the contribution of Hammett to the so-called “hard-boiled” literature.

2. What is typical in the novels by D. Hammett? Characters? Plot? Structure? Background? Prove your answer using examples taken from novels.

**“The Maltese Falcon”:**

1. Sam Spade's personal motivations are often difficult to decipher. Is Spade committed to his profession? Does he follow a moral code of conduct, or does he operate mostly on self-interest? Is he a hero or an antihero?
2. In what ways do money and greed motivate the characters in the novel? What might Hammett be saying about the relentless pursuit of wealth?
3. Lies and deceit abound in “*The Maltese Falcon*”. How does Spade figure out who he can trust if loyalties shift at the drop of a dime? Does Spade demonstrate loyalty to anyone? Is loyalty something that can be bought?
4. San Francisco in the 1930s as treacherous place run by ruthless tough guys. How does the setting contribute to the overall tone and atmosphere of the novel?

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**15.6. John Grisham (1955-). “The Firm”**

**Primary Works:** “*A Time to Kill*” (1989), “*The Firm*” (1991), “*The Pelican Brief*” (1992), “*The Client*” (1993), “*The Chamber*” (1994), “*The Rainmaker*” (1995), “*The Runaway Jury*” (1996), “*The Partner*” (1997), “*The Street Lawyer*” (1998), “*The Testament*” (1999), “*The Brethren*” (2000), “*A Painted House*” (2001), “*The Summons*” (2002), “*The King of Torts*” (2003), “*The Last Juror*” (2004), “*The Broker*” (2005), “*The Appeal*” (2008), “*The Associate*” (2009), “*The Confession*” (2010), “*The Litigators*” (2011), “*The Racketeer*” (2012), “*Sycamore Row*” (2013), “*Gray Mountain*” (2014), “*Rogue Lawyer*” (2015), “*Theodore Boone*” series (2010-2016), “*The Whistler*” (2016), “*The Rooster Bar*” (2017).

**A Short Biography of John Grisham**

John Grisham, (born February 8, 1955, Jonesboro, Arkansas, U.S.), American writer whose legal thrillers often topped best-seller lists and were adapted for film. Grisham became one of the fastest-selling writers of modern fiction. His books have been translated into 42 languages and published worldwide.

Grisham grew up in Southaven, Mississippi. After he was admitted to the Mississippi bar in 1981, he practiced law and served (1984-89) as a Democrat in the Mississippi state legislature. Then, inspired by a trial he observed in 1984, Grisham took 3 years to write his 1<sup>st</sup> novel, “*A Time to Kill*” (1989), which deals with the legal,

social, and moral repercussions when a Mississippi black man is tried for the murder of 2 white men who raped his 10-year-old daughter. Despite good reviews for its skillfully crafted dialogue and sense of place, the novel failed to sell.

Grisham vowed to “take a naked stab at commercial fiction” with his next novel, *“The Firm”* (1991), about a law school graduate who is seduced into joining a Memphis law firm that turns out to be a front for the Mafia. The selling of the film rights prompted a bidding war for publishing rights, and within weeks of the book’s release it appeared on The New York Times best-seller list, where it stayed for nearly a year, allowing Grisham to give up his law practice and move with his family to a farm in Oxford, Mississippi. In the meantime, *“A Time to Kill”*, reissued in paperback, sold more than 3 million copies.

Grisham wrote his 3<sup>rd</sup> novel - *“The Pelican Brief”* (1992), about a female law student investigating the assassinations of 2 Supreme Court justices - in only 3 months. 5.5 million copies of the book were printed. Film rights to the novel were sold for more than \$1 million. Another novel, *“The Client”* (1993), sacrificed roller-coaster suspense for humor and slapstick energy. Critics almost universally agreed that the plot, dealing with an 11-year-old boy who uncovers a mob-related murder plot, read as though it had been tailor-made for the screen. Indeed, the film rights to the novel sold for \$2.5 million, while the novel itself sold 2.6 million copies within 15 weeks. Grisham continued his success with such titles as *“The Chamber”* (1994), *“The Rainmaker”* (1995), *“The Runaway Jury”* (1996), and *“The Testament”* (1999).

In 2001 Grisham detoured from his formulaic legal thrillers with *“A Painted House”* (film 2003), the story of a farm boy from rural Arkansas who discovers a troubling secret in his small town. Other non-legal novels followed, including *“Skipping Christmas”* (2001; film 2004), *“Bleachers”* (2003), *“Playing for Pizza”* (2007), *“Calico Joe”* (2012), and *“Camino Island”* (2017).

However, Grisham also maintained his steady output of legal fiction, with *“The Summons”* (2002), *“The Last Juror”* (2004), *“The Appeal”* (2008), *“The Litigators”* (2011), *“The Racketeer”* (2012), and *“Gray Mountain”* (2014) among his later works in the genre. As of 2012, his books have sold over 275 million copies worldwide.

His 1<sup>st</sup> nonfiction book, *“The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town”* (2006), explores a 1982 murder case that resulted in 2 Oklahoma men being wrongfully sentenced to death row. In 2009 Grisham published the short-story collection *“Ford County”*.

2010 year saw *“Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer”*, the 1st installment in a series of legal thrillers for children aged 9 to 12 years. It features Theodore Boone, a 13-year-old who gives his classmates legal advice ranging from rescuing impounded dogs to helping their parents prevent their house from being repossessed. He said, "I'm hoping primarily to entertain and interest kids, but at the same time I'm quietly hoping that the books will inform them, in a subtle way, about law". Sequels included *“Theodore Boone: The Abduction”* (2011), *“Theodore Boone: The Accused”* (2012), *“Theodore Boone: The Activist”* (2013), *“Theodore Boone: The Fugitive”* (2015), and *“Theodore Boone: The Scandal”* (2016).

In *“Sycamore Row”* (2013) - a follow-up to *“A Time to Kill”* - Grisham returned to the racial politics that drove the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> novel, this time examining their

impact on a case involving a contested will. *“Rogue Lawyer”* (2015) chronicles the adventures of a criminal defense attorney who enjoys taking on seemingly hopeless cases, and *“The Whistler”* (2016) is about judicial misconduct. *“The Rooster Bar”* (2017) centers on 3 law students struggling with debt who discover that both their school and their student-loan bank are owned by a questionable Wall Street investor.

### ***“The Firm” (1991)***

Drawing upon his experiences as a native of the Deep South and as a lawyer, John Grisham created in *“The Firm”* a chase and suspense adventure involving the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Mafia, and a young attorney coming to terms with the reality of life in the world of big business and big money.

*“The Firm”* is divided into 41 short chapters. It is written from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person point of view, principally from the perspective of Mitchell McDeere; parts of the book are told from the viewpoints of other characters.

*“The Firm”* is the story of Mitch McDeere's employment with the Bendini, Lambert, and Locke law firm. Mitch is a young, ambitious man who recently graduated from Harvard law school. Having excelled in his law program and possessing a strong character, he is recruited by the exclusive firm. The firm promises him a lifestyle that he and his wife, Abby, had never dreamed was possible. The firm provides them with a BMW, low rate mortgage, sign-on bonus, a cash bonus for passing the bar exam, study aid for the bar exam and continuing education following it, the use of a corporate jet and international accommodations, and it repays all of Mitch's outstanding student loans. All of these "perks" are in addition to a great salary and guaranteed partnership in 10 to 15 years. Mitch and Abby are lured by the instant lifestyle upgrade. They are quickly disillusioned by what comes along with the benefits.

Employment with the firm is meant to be permanent, and some of the previous partners have died under mysterious circumstances. As the story unfolds, Mitch learns that he is being followed and all of his conversations are recorded. The surveillance extends beyond his office and into his car and home. Mitch is approached by an FBI agent, Wayne Tarrance, who would like Mitch to cooperate with FBI officials to infiltrate the Bendini law firm. He informs Mitch that the law firm has ties with the Moroltos, a mafia family known for its criminal activity. Mitch makes and supplies photocopies of secret documents to the FBI, risking his life to do so. Along the way he is aided by Abby as well as his other friends, Tammy and Barry. The law firm's head of security, DeVasher, has suspicions about Mitch's behavior. He makes plans to eliminate Mitch. Mitch escapes just in time and becomes the subject of an inter-state chase with both the FBI and private surveillance teams following him. Mitch and Abby do escape, along with Mitch's brother, Ray, and the FBI successfully prosecutes the Bendini employees.

*“The Firm”* is a typical suspense novel, ending in a hair-raising chase with the protagonist and his associates being pursued by 2 powerful and dangerous forces. As a typical example of this genre, *“The Firm”* is not overly burdened with theme or meaning, since its primary purpose is obviously to hold the attention of the reader. The novel is, in the popular parlance, a “page-turner”, and thus it is not necessary nor even

desirable for the author to burden the reader's mind with philosophical or moral considerations.

### Study Questions:

1. Reveal characteristic features of J. Grisham's novels.
2. What is the significance of "The Firm" novel's statement regarding the American Dream?

### Selected Sources:

1. Anderson, P. *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction*. NY: Random House, 2017.
2. Bearden, M. "John Grisham: In Six Years He's Gone from Rejection Slips to Mega-Sales" // *Publishers Weekly*, No.240. February, 2013.
3. Best, N. *Readings on John Grisham*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven P, 2013.
- Duffy, M. "Grisham's Law" // *Time*, 145, No.19. May 8, 2015.

### 15.7. E.B. White. "Charlotte's Web"

**Primary Works: Novels:** "The Orchard Keeper" (1965), "Outer Dark" (1968), "Child of Dark" (1974), "Suttree" (1979), "Blood Meridian" (1985), "The Border Trilogy": "All the Pretty Horses" (1992), "The Crossing" (1994), "Cities of the Plain" (1998), "No Country for Old Men" (2005; film 2007), "The Road" (2006; film 2009). **Plays:** "The Stonemason" (2001), "The Sunset Limited" (2006; television movie 2011). **Screenplay:** "The Counselor" (2013).

### A Brief Biography of E.B. White

E.B. White, in full Elwyn Brooks White, (born July 11, 1899, Mount Vernon, NY, U.S.-died October 1, 1985, North Brooklin, Maine), American essayist, author, and literary stylist, whose eloquent, unaffected prose appealed to readers of all ages.

A liberal free-thinker, White often wrote as an ironic onlooker, exploring the complexities of modern society, the unique character of urban and rural life, the often baleful influence of technology, and the emerging international system. White was skeptical about organized religion, but held a deep respect for nature and the uncluttered life.

E.B. White graduated from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in 1921 and worked as a reporter and freelance writer before joining *The New Yorker* magazine as a writer and contributing editor in 1927. Written in a personal, direct style that showcased an affable sense of humor, his witty pieces contained musings about city life, politics, and literature, among other subjects. White also wrote poems, cartoon captions, and brief sketches for the magazine, and his writings helped establish its intellectual and cosmopolitan tone.



His writing ranged from satire to textbooks and children's fiction. His writers' style guide, *"The Elements of Style"* (1959), remains a classic text on concise prose writing; his three children's books, *"Charlotte's Web"* (1952), *"Stuart Little"* (1945), and *"The Trumpet of the Swan"* (1970), are among the most widely read and influential children's literary works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *"Charlotte's Web"* is regarded as the best-selling children's book of all time. Its story of sacrificial love is one of the most heart-wrenching stories in children's literature.

### ***"Charlotte's Web"* (1952)**

*"Charlotte's Web"*, classic children's novel by E.B. White, published in 1952, with illustrations by Garth Williams. The widely read tale takes place on a farm and concerns a pig named Wilbur and his devoted friend Charlotte, the spider who manages to save his life by writing about him in her web.

**Summary.** Eight-year-old Fern Arable is devastated when she hears that her father is going to kill the runt of his pig's new litter. Persuading him that the piglet has a right to life and promising to look after it, she saves the animal and names him Wilbur. When Wilbur becomes too large, Fern is forced to sell him to her uncle, Homer Zuckerman, whose barn is filled with animals who shun the newcomer.

When Wilbur discovers that he will soon be slaughtered for Christmas dinner, he is horribly distraught. He sits in the corner of the barn crying, "I don't want to die." Charlotte-the hairy barn spider who lives in the rafters above his sty-decides to help him. With the assistance of a sneaky rat named Templeton and some of the other animals in the barn, she writes a message in her web: "Some Pig." More strange messages appear in the web, sparking people from miles around to visit these "divine" manifestations and the pig that inspired them. Charlotte accompanies Wilbur to the county fair, where she spins her last note: "Humble." Wilbur wins a special prize, and his survival is ensured.

It becomes apparent, however, that Charlotte is unwell. After laying hundreds of eggs, she is too weak to return to the Zuckerman's farm. A saddened Wilbur takes the egg sac, leaving the dying Charlotte behind. Once home, he keeps a watchful eye on the eggs. Although most leave after hatching, three stay behind in the barn, and they and subsequent generations of Charlotte's offspring comfort Wilbur for many years to come.

**Analysis.** *"Charlotte's Web"* earned critical acclaim upon its release - Eudora Welty notably called it "just about perfect" - and it quickly became a beloved children's classic. While humorous and charming, the novel also contains important lessons. For example, Fern's caring for Wilbur teaches her responsibility, and she realizes that if she stands up for what she believes in she can make a difference in the world. Charlotte and Wilbur's friendship, despite their differences in nature, teaches tolerance. As he grows up, like any child, Wilbur learns to cope with fear, loss, mortality, and loneliness. Although a story of life and death, it is also full of warmth, with silly characters such as the geese and the snobby sheep. In addition, *"Charlotte's Web"* contains a wealth of detail about spiders and other animals, which White drew from his own life on a farm. Wilbur was allegedly inspired by an ailing pig that White tried unsuccessfully to nurse

back to health. The incident served as the basis for the essay “*Death of a Pig*,” which was published in 1948, 4 years before the release of “*Charlotte’s Web*”.

### **Study Question:**

1. To what extent does E.B. White's nuclear family support and encourage him as a writer?
2. In view of White's checkered career in journalism, advertising and literature before coming to *The New Yorker*, what are some factors that account for his 56-year stint on the magazine's staff?
3. What explains for E.B. White's peculiar - almost bizarre - relationship to women, such as Alice Burchfield, throughout his youth and college days, before he meets Katherine?
4. How was E.B. White able to keep his position at *The New Yorker* despite his occasional unexplained absences and his period of separation?
5. Why did E.B. White say that he failed as a reporter? What personal traits - other than his obvious ability to write - caused him to feel that way?

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Lerer, S. *Children's Literature*. Chicago: U of Chicago P. 2008.
2. Nikolajeva, M. *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature*. Lanham: Scarecrow P, 2002.

### **15.8. Lyman Frank Baum (1856-1919). “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz”**

**Primary Works: *Fairy Tales*:** “*Father Goose*” (1899), “*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*” (1900).

#### **A Brief Biography of Lyman Frank Baum**

L. Frank Baum, in full Lyman Frank Baum, (born May 15, 1856, Chittenango, New York, U.S.-died May 6, 1919, Hollywood, California), American writer known for his series of books for children about the imaginary land of Oz.

Baum began his career as a journalist, initially in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and then in Chicago. His 1<sup>st</sup> book, “*Father Goose*” (1899), was a commercial success, and he followed it the next year with the even more popular “*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*”. A modern fairy tale, it tells the story of Dorothy, a Kansas farm girl who is blown by a cyclone to the land of Oz, where she is befriended by such memorable characters as the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion. A successful stage adaptation of the book opened in 1902 in Chicago. Its film version, in 1939, became a cinema classic and was made familiar to later generations of children through frequent showings on television.

Baum wrote 13 more Oz books, and the series was continued by another after his death. Using a variety of pseudonyms as well as his own name, Baum wrote some 60 books, the bulk of them juveniles that were popular in their day.

### ***“The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” (1900)***

*“The Wonderful Wizard of Oz”* is a modern fairy tale with a distinctly American setting, a delightfully levelheaded and assertive heroine, and engaging fantasy characters, the story was enormously popular and became a classic of children’s literature. However, by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the 1939 film *“The Wizard of Oz”* had become more familiar than the book on which it was based.

**Summary.** Dorothy is a young girl who lives in a one-room house in Kansas with the care-worn Uncle Henry and Aunt Em; the joy of her life is her dog, Toto. A sudden cyclone strikes, and, by the time Dorothy catches Toto, she is unable to reach the storm cellar. They are still in the house when the cyclone carries it away for a long journey. When at last the house lands, Dorothy finds that she is in a beautiful land inhabited by very short, strangely dressed people. The Witch of the North informs her that she is in the land of the Munchkins, who are grateful to her for having killed the Wicked Witch of the East (the house having landed on the witch), thus freeing them. The Witch of the North gives Dorothy the silver shoes of the dead witch and advises her to go to the City of Emeralds to see the Great Wizard Oz, who might help her return to Kansas. The witch sends Dorothy off along the yellow brick road with a magical kiss to protect her from harm.

On the long journey to the Emerald City, Dorothy and Toto are joined by the Scarecrow, who wishes he had brains; the Tin Woodman, who longs for a heart; and the Cowardly Lion, who seeks courage. They face many trials along their route, but they overcome them all, often because of the Scarecrow’s good sense, the Tin Woodman’s kindness, and the bravery of the Cowardly Lion. At last they reach the Emerald City, where the Guardian of the Gates outfits them with green-lensed glasses and leads them to the Palace of Oz. Oz tells them that no favors will be granted until the Wicked Witch of the West has been killed.

The companions head to the land of the Winkies, ruled by the Wicked Witch of the West. The witch sends wolves, crows, bees, and armed Winkies to stop them, all to no avail. So she uses her Golden Cap to summon the Winged Monkeys. The Winged Monkeys destroy the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman and cage the Cowardly Lion, but they bring Dorothy and Toto to the witch, who enslaves Dorothy. The witch wants Dorothy’s shoes, which she knows carry powerful magic. She contrives to make Dorothy trip and fall, so she can grab one of the shoes. An angered Dorothy throws a bucket of water at the witch, who then melts away to nothing. Dorothy frees the Cowardly Lion and engages the help of the now free Winkies in repairing and rebuilding the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow, and the friends return to Oz.

Oz does not summon them for several days, and, when he does admit them into his presence, he seems reluctant to grant their wishes. Toto knocks over a screen, revealing that Oz is only a common man. However, he fills the Scarecrow’s head with bran and pins and needles, saying that they are brains; he puts a silk-and-sawdust

heart into the Tin Woodman; and he gives the Cowardly Lion a drink that he says is courage. He and Dorothy make a balloon to carry them out of the Land of Oz, but the balloon flies away before Dorothy can board; Oz leaves the Scarecrow in charge of the Emerald City.

At the suggestion of a soldier, Dorothy and her friends go to seek the help of Glinda, the Witch of the South. They encounter several obstacles but at last reach Glinda's Castle. Glinda summons the Winged Monkeys so that they can take the Tin Woodman back to rule the Winkies, the Scarecrow back to Emerald City, and the Cowardly Lion to the forest to be king of the beasts. Then she tells Dorothy how to use the silver shoes to take her back to Kansas. Dorothy gathers up Toto, clicks her heels together three times, and says, "Take me home to Aunt Em!" She is transported back to the farm in Kansas.

**Analysis.** As well as being a wonderful and exciting adventure for children, the novel shows that each of the travelers already possessed what they had thought they lacked. Dorothy's pluck and the fully realized Land of Oz won over young readers, who were eager to see more adventures set in Oz. Baum wrote 13 more Oz books, and the series was continued by another writer after his death. A successful stage adaptation of the book opened in Chicago in 1902 and moved to Broadway the following year, and the 1939 musical film version starring Judy Garland became a cinema classic, made famous to later generations of children through frequent showings on television. "*The Wiz*" (1978), which starred Diana Ross as Dorothy and exchanged Kansas for New York City, was another notable adaptation.

### **Study Question:**

1. What was the 1<sup>st</sup> animal L.F. Baum wrote about in his books?
2. In your opinion, why "*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*" is considered the 1<sup>st</sup> true American fairytale?
3. L.F. Baum wrote under a variety of pseudonyms. What kind of pseudonym the writer used in a successful series of books called "*Aunt Jane's Nieces*"?

### **Selected Sources:**

1. Carpenter, A.S., Shirley J. L. *Frank Baum: Royal Historian of Oz*. Minneapolis: Lerner Pub Group, 1992.
2. DeBenedette, V. *15 Wonderful Things You Might Not Know About L. Frank Baum* // Mental Floss. May 15, 2018.

## CHAPTER XVI. MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE

### Plan:

- 16.1. John Gardner. *“Grendel”*
- 16.2. John Updike. Rabbit Series. *“Rabbit, Run”*
- 16.3. Saul Bellow. *“Dangling Man”*. *“Herzog”*
- 16.4. Harper Lee. *“To Kill a Mockingbird”*
- 16.5. Ken Kesey. *“One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”*
- 16.6. Suzanne Collins. *“Hunger Games”*
- 16.7. Bob Dylan. Lyrics and Songs
- 16.8. Louise Glück. *“The Wild Iris”*

### 16.1. John Gardner (1933-1982). *“Grendel”*

**Primary Works: Novels:** *“The Resurrection”* (1966), *“The Wreckage of Agathon”* (1970), *“Grendel”* (1971), *“The Sunlight Dialogues”* (1972), *“October Light”* (1976), *“Freddy’s Book”* (1980), *“Mickelsson’s Ghosts”* (1982). **Essay:** *“On Moral Fiction”* (1978). **Books on the raft of writing:** *“On Becoming a Novelist”* (1983), *“The Art of Fiction”* (1984). **Translation:** *“Gilgamesh: translated from the Sîn-leqi-unninn version”* (1984).

### A Brief Biography of John Gardner

John Champlin Gardner, Jr., (born July 21, 1933, Batavia, N.Y., U.S.-died Sept. 14, 1982, near Susquehanna, Pa.), American novelist and poet whose philosophical fiction reveals his characters’ inner conflicts.

Gardner attended Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri (A.B., 1955), and the University of Iowa (M.A., 1956; Ph.D., 1958) and then taught at various colleges and universities throughout the U.S., including Oberlin (Ohio) College, Bennington (Vermont) College, and the University of Rochester, New York.

Gardner published 2 novels, *“The Resurrection”* (1966) and *“The Wreckage of Agathon”* (1970), before his reputation was established with the appearance of *“Grendel”* (1971), a retelling of the Beowulf story from the point of view of the monster. His next novel, *“The Sunlight Dialogues”* (1972), is an ambitious epic with a large cast of characters and about a brooding, disenchanted policeman who is asked to engage a madman fluent in classical mythology. Later novels by Gardner include *“October Light”* (1976; National Book Critics Circle Award) - about an aging and embittered brother and sister living and feuding together in rural Vermont, *“Freddy’s Book”* (1980), and *“Mickelsson’s Ghosts”* (1982). He died in a motorcycle accident.

Gardner was also a gifted poet and a critic who published several books on Old and Middle English poetry. He expressed his views about writing in *“On Moral Fiction”* (1978), in which he deplored the tendency of many modern writers toward pessimism. His 2 books on the craft of writing fiction - *“On Becoming a Novelist”* (1983) and *“The Art of Fiction”* (1984) - are considered classics. Gardner was famously obsessive with his work, and acquired a reputation for advanced craft, smooth rhythms, and careful

attention to the continuity of the fictive dream. At one level or another, his books nearly always touched on the redemptive power of art.

### **“Grendel” (1971)**

“Grendel” is a novel by J. Gardner, retelling of part of the Old English poem “Beowulf” from the perspective of the antagonist, Grendel. Gardner's retelling presents the story from the existentialist view of Grendel, exploring the history of the characters before Beowulf arrives. Beowulf himself plays a relatively small role in the novel, but he is still the only human hero that can match and kill Grendel. The dragon plays a minor part as an omniscient and bored character, whose wisdom is limited to telling Grendel "to seek out gold and sit on it"; his one action in the novel is to endow Grendel with the magic ability to withstand attacks by sword (a quality Gardner found in the original).

Pulitzer Prize winning author Jane Smiley suggests that John Gardner uses Grendel as a metaphor for the necessity for a dark side to everything; where a hero is only as great as the villain he faces. Using Grendel’s perspective to tell at least part of the story of Beowulf in more contemporary language allows the story to be seen in a new light not only in terms of the point of view but also brings it into the modern era. Where Grendel is portrayed mainly as a physical creature in the original work, here a glimpse into his psyche is offered. Grendel lives in isolation and loneliness with his mother who in her old age is unable to provide any real companionship to her child. As the only being of his kind, he has no one to relate to and feels the need to be understood or have some connection. Grendel has a complex relationship with the humans who hate and fear him. He feels that he is somehow related to humanity and despite his desire to eat them, he can be moved by them and their works. His long life grants him the ability to act as a witness to how their lives transpire and their behavior and logic bewilders him. He is cursed to a life of solitude, also being portrayed as having eternal life, which furthers his plight and loneliness as he can only fall in battle and he is immune to all human weapons. He is only freed from his tormented life through his encounter with Beowulf.

Thus, Grendel is portrayed as an antihero. The novel deals with finding meaning in the world, the power of literature and myth, and the nature of good and evil.

In a 1973 interview, Gardner said: "In “Grendel” I wanted to go through the main ideas of Western Civilization - which seemed to me to be about... twelve? - and go through them in the voice of the monster, with the story already taken care of, with the various philosophical attitudes (though with Sartre in particular), and see what I could do, see if I could break out". On another occasion he noted that he "us[ed] Grendel to represent Sartre's philosophical position" and that "a lot of “Grendel” is borrowed from sections of Sartre's “Being and Nothingness”.

“Grendel” has become one of Gardner's best known and reviewed works.

### **Study Questions:**

1. How does Grendel narrating his own story influence how the audience might respond to it?
2. What is the role of humor in “Grendel”?

**Selected Sources:**

1. Nutter, R.G. *A Dream of Peace: Art and Death in the Fiction of John Gardner*. NY: Peter Lang. 2017.
2. Winther, P. *The Art of John Gardner: Instruction and Exploration*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2012.

## 16.2. John Updike (1932-2009). Rabbit Series

**Primary Works: Poetry collections:** “*The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures*” (1958), “*Endpoint, and Other Poems*” (2009), “*Selected Poems*” (2015). **Novels:** “*The Poorhouse Fair*” (1958), “*The Centaur*” (1963), “*Of the Farm*” (1965), “*The Angels*” (1968), “*Couples*” (1968), “*Picked-Up Pieces*” (1975), “*A Month Of Sundays*” (1975), “*Marry Me*” (1977), “*The Coup*” (1978), “*Beloved*” (1982), “*The Witches Of Eastwick*” (1984), “*Jester's Dozen*” (1984), “*The Witches of Eastwick*” (1984), “*Soft Spring Night In Shillington*” (1986), “*Roger's Version*” (1986), “*Out On The Marsh*” (1988), “*S*” (1988), “*Brazil*” (1994), “*In the Beauty of the Lilies*” (1996), “*Deadly Sins*” (1996), “*Toward The End Of Time*” (1997), “*Golf Dreams*” (1998), “*Gertrude and Claudius*” (2000), “*Seek My Face*” (2002), “*Terrorist*” (2006), “*The Widows of Eastwick*” (2008). **Rabbit series:** “*Rabbit, Run*” (1960) - “*Rabbit Redux*” (1971) - “*Rabbit Is Rich*” (1981) - “*Rabbit at Rest*” (1990) - “*Rabbit Remembered*” (2001). **Bech series:** “*Bech: A Book*” (1970) - “*Bech Is Back*” (1982) - “*Bech at Bay*”, a quasi-novel (1998). **Collections of short stories:** “*The Same Door*” (1959), “*Pigeon Feathers*” (1962), “*Museums and Women*” (1972), “*Problems*” (1979), “*To Far to Go*” (1979), “*Trust Me*” (1987), “*The Afterlife*” (1994), “*My Father's Tears, and Other Stories*” (2009). **Criticism:** “*Assorted Prose*” (1965), “*Picked-Up Pieces*” (1975), “*Hugging the Shore*” (1983), “*Odd Jobs*” (1991). **Essays:** “*Just Looking: Essays on Art*” (1989), “*Still Looking: Essays on American Art*” (2005), “*Always Looking: Essays on Art*” (2012). **Commentaries:** “*Due Considerations*” (2007) “*Higher Gossip*” (2011).

### A Brief Biography of John Updike

John Hoyer Updike (born March 18, 1932, Reading, Pennsylvania, U.S.-died January 27, 2009, Danvers, Massachusetts), American writer of novels, short stories, and poetry, known for his careful craftsmanship and realistic but subtle depiction of “American small-town middle-class” life.

Updike grew up in Shillington, Pennsylvania, and many of his early stories draw on his youthful experiences there. He graduated from Harvard University in 1954. In 1955 he began an association with *The New Yorker* magazine, to which he contributed editorials, poetry, stories, and criticism throughout his prolific career. His poetry - intellectual, witty pieces on the absurdities of modern life - was gathered in his 1<sup>st</sup> book,

*"The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures"* (1958), which was followed by his 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *"The Poorhouse Fair"* (1958).

About this time, Updike devoted himself to writing fiction full-time, and several works followed. *"Rabbit, Run"* (1960), which is considered to be one of his best novels, concerns a former star athlete who is unable to recapture success when bound by marriage and small-town life and flees responsibility. 3 subsequent novels, *"Rabbit Redux"* (1971), *"Rabbit Is Rich"* (1981), and *"Rabbit at Rest"* (1990) - the latter 2 winning Pulitzer Prizes - follow the same character during later periods of his life. *"Rabbit Remembered"* (2001) returns to characters from those books in the wake of Rabbit's death. *"The Centaur"* (1963) and *"Of the Farm"* (1965) are notable among Updike's novels set in Pennsylvania.

Updike continued to explore the issues that confront middle-class America, such as fidelity, religion, and responsibility. *"In the Beauty of the Lilies"* (1996) Updike draws parallels between religion and popular obsession with cinema, while *"Gertrude and Claudius"* (2000) offers conjectures on the early relationship between Hamlet's mother and her brother-in-law. In response to the cultural shifts that occurred in the U.S. after the September 11 attacks, Updike released *"Terrorist"* (2006).

Updike often expounded upon characters from earlier novels, eliding decades of their lives only to place them in the middle of new adventures. *"The Witches of Eastwick"* (1984; filmed 1987), about a coven of witches, was followed by *"The Widows of Eastwick"* (2008), which trails the women into old age. *"Bech: A Book"* (1970), *"Bech Is Back"* (1982), and *"Bech at Bay"* (1998) humorously trace the tribulations of a Jewish writer.

Updike's several collections of short stories include *"The Same Door"* (1959), *"Pigeon Feathers"* (1962), *"Museums and Women"* (1972), *"Problems"* (1979), *"Trust Me"* (1987), and *"My Father's Tears, and Other Stories"* (2009), which was published posthumously. A substantial portion of his short fiction oeuvre was published as the 2-volume *"John Updike: The Collected Stories"* (2013).

He also wrote nonfiction and criticism, much of it appearing in *The New Yorker*. It has been collected in *"Assorted Prose"* (1965), *"Picked-Up Pieces"* (1975), *"Hugging the Shore"* (1983), and *"Odd Jobs"* (1991). Essays examining art and its cultural presentation were featured in *"Just Looking: Essays on Art"* (1989), *"Still Looking: Essays on American Art"* (2005), and *"Always Looking: Essays on Art"* (2012). *"Due Considerations"* (2007) collects commentary spanning art and literature.

Updike also continued to write poetry, usually light verse. *"Endpoint, and Other Poems"*, published posthumously in 2009, collects poetry Updike had written between 2002 and a few weeks before he died; it takes his own death as its primary subject. *"Selected Poems"* (2015) broadly surveys his poetic career. *"Higher Gossip"*, a collection of commentaries, was released in 2011.

### **Rabbit Series. "Rabbit, Run" (1960)**

Updike's most famous work is his Rabbit series: the novels *"Rabbit, Run"*; *"Rabbit Redux"*; *"Rabbit Is Rich"*; *"Rabbit at Rest"*; and the novella *"Rabbit Remembered"*. The novels chronicle the life of the middle-class everyman Harry



"Rabbit" Angstrom over the course of several decades, from young adulthood to death. Both *"Rabbit Is Rich"* (1982) and *"Rabbit at Rest"* (1990) were recognized with the Pulitzer Prize.

*"Rabbit, Run"* is a 1960 novel by John Updike. The novel depicts three months in the life of a 26-year-old former high school basketball player named Harry 'Rabbit' Angstrom, and his attempts to escape the constraints of his life. It spawned several sequels.

Updike employs the present tense in his novel, a powerful literary technique which was somewhat unusual for the time. The sense is that readers are living Rabbit's life along with him, that no one knows when and where this running will lead. This technique establishes an immediacy that pulls the reader along, as in the opening: "Boys are playing basketball around a telephone pole with a backboard bolted to it. Legs, shouts". And of course, in the conclusion: "...he runs. Ah: runs. Runs". Movement is a central theme of the novel.

Another Updike technique, which echoes the chaos of Rabbit's life, is the use of a dense narrative, with few official interruptions of the action. Rabbit rarely pauses to think before he acts, so this format echoes the main character's sensibilities.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Characterize Updike's poetry. Compare it to some prolific pieces of American poetry.
2. Reveal specific features of Updike's short stories by analyzing one of them.

#### ***"Rabbit, Run":***

1. Is Rabbit an honest person? Can we think of any instances in the novel when he lies? If we can or can't, does that surprise us? Why or why not?
2. How does the novel's idea depend on Updike's picking a "rabbit" as an animal for Harry Angstrom? Does Harry's being a "rabbit" make him more or less sympathetic to the reader?
3. Why doesn't anyone talk about going to college in this book?
4. How do members of the society depicted in the novel treat each other?

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## **16.3. Saul Bellow (1915-2005). *"Dangling Man"*. *"Herzog"***

**Primary Works: Novels:** *"Dangling Man"* (1944), *"The Victim"* (1947), *"The Adventures of Augie March"* (1953), *"Henderson the Rain King"* (1959), *"Seize the Day"* (1956), *"Mosby's Memoirs"* (1968), *"To Jerusalem and Back"* (1976), *"Herzog"*

(1964), *“Mr. Sammler’s Planet”* (1970), *“Humboldt’s Gift”* (1975), *“The Dean’s December”* (1982), *“More Die of Heartbreak”* (1987), *“A Theft”* (1989), *“The Bellarosa Connection”* (1989), *“The Actual”* (1997), *“Ravelstein”* (2000).

### **A Brief Biography of Saul Bellow**

*“People don't realize how much they are in the grip of ideas.  
We live among ideas much more than we live in nature”.*

S. Bellow

Saul Bellow, (born June 10, 1915, Lachine, near Montreal, Quebec, Canada-died April 5, 2005, Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.), American novelist whose characterizations of modern urban man, disaffected by society but not destroyed in spirit, earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976. Brought up in a Jewish household and fluent in Yiddish (which influenced his energetic English style) he was representative of the Jewish American writers whose works became central to American literature after World War II. Bellow’s parents emigrated in 1913 from Russia to Montreal. When he was 9 they moved to Chicago. He attended the University of Chicago and Northwestern University (B.S., 1937) and afterward combined writing with a teaching career at various universities, including the University of Minnesota, Princeton University, New York University, Bard College, the University of Chicago, and Boston University.

Bellow won a reputation among a small group of readers with his 1<sup>st</sup> 2 novels, *“Dangling Man”* (1944), a story in diary form of a man waiting to be inducted into the army, and *“The Victim”* (1947), a subtle study of the relationship between a Jew and a Gentile, each of whom becomes the other’s victim. *“The Adventures of Augie March”* (1953) brought wider acclaim and won a National Book Award (1954). It is a picaresque story of a poor Jewish youth from Chicago, his progress - sometimes highly comic - through the world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his attempts to make sense of it. In this novel Bellow employed for the 1<sup>st</sup> time a loose, breezy style in conscious revolt against the preoccupation of writers of that time with perfection of form.

*“Henderson the Rain King”* (1959) continued the picaresque approach in its tale of an eccentric American millionaire on a quest in Africa. *“Seize the Day”* (1956), a novella, is a unique treatment of a failure in a society where the only success is success. He also wrote a volume of short stories, *“Mosby’s Memoirs”* (1968), and *“To Jerusalem and Back”* (1976) about a trip to Israel.

In his later novels and novellas - *“Herzog”* (1964; National Book Award, 1965), *“Mr. Sammler’s Planet”* (1970; National Book Award, 1971), *“Humboldt’s Gift”* (1975; Pulitzer Prize, 1976), *“The Dean’s December”* (1982), *“More Die of Heartbreak”* (1987), *“A Theft”* (1989), *“The Bellarosa Connection”* (1989), and *“The Actual”* (1997) - Bellow arrived at his most characteristic vein. The heroes of these works are often Jewish intellectuals whose interior monologues range from the sublime to the absurd. At the same time, their surrounding world, peopled by energetic and incorrigible realists, acts as a corrective to their intellectual speculations. It is this combination of cultural sophistication and the wisdom of the streets that constitutes Bellow’s greatest

originality. In *Ravelstein* (2000) he presented a fictional version of the life of teacher and philosopher Allan Bloom. 5 years after Bellow's death, more than 700 of his letters, edited by Benjamin Taylor, were published in *Saul Bellow: Letters* (2010).

### ***“Dangling Man” (1944)***

*“Dangling Man”* is a novel by S. Bellow. It is his 1<sup>st</sup> published work. Written in diary format, the story centers on the life of an unemployed young man named Joseph, his relationships with his wife and friends, and his frustrations with living in Chicago and waiting to be drafted. His diary serves as a philosophical confessional for his musings. It ends with his entrance into the army during World War II, and a hope that the regimentation of army life will relieve his suffering. Along with Bellow's 2<sup>nd</sup> novel *“The Victim”*, it is considered his "apprentice" work.

The central character, Joseph, is a "dangling man" because he has given up his job and is awaiting induction into the military. Perhaps he is dangling in another way: he has become too intellectually removed to connect emotionally with his wife Iva or his friends. His intellectual distance is applied to himself as well, and, despite all else, he does possess a certain lucidity. While he has now "outgrown" an earlier self, amazing that a reader at least could not help but like that earlier self more than the lucid but lost "dangling" man he has become.

Some critics, including Edmund Wilson and Kenneth Fearing, deplored the novel's lack of a definite plot, but praised Bellow's depiction of what they saw as the characteristic features of the generation of American intellectuals raised during the Great Depression. *“Dangling Man”* can be seen as a superfluous man narrative, raising interesting parallels with Turgenev's *“The Diary of a Superfluous Man”* and exploring the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian literary concept through a contemporary American experience.

The principal theme of *Dangling Man* involves the age-old search for values by which one can live in the world. For Joseph, this quest for ultimate meaning is necessarily preceded by self-knowledge: “But I must know what I myself am”.

### ***“Herzog” (1964)***

*“Herzog”* is a novel by S. Bellow, composed in large part of letters from the protagonist Moses E. Herzog. It won the U.S. National Book Award for Fiction and The Prix International. *TIME* magazine named it one of the 100 best novels in the English language since "the beginning of *TIME*" (1923 to 2005).

*“Herzog”* is set in 1964 in the U.S., and is about the midlife crisis of a Jewish man named Moses E. Herzog. At the age of 47, he is just emerging from his 2<sup>nd</sup> divorce, this one particularly acrimonious. He has 2 children, one by each wife, who are growing up without him. His career as a writer and an academic has floundered. He is in a relationship with a vibrant woman, Ramona, but finds himself running away from commitment.

Herzog spends much of his time mentally writing letters he never sends. These letters are aimed at friends, family members, and famous figures. The recipients may

be dead, and Herzog has often never met them. The one common thread is that Herzog is always expressing disappointment, either his own in the failings of others or their words, or apologizing for the way he has disappointed others. The character of Herzog in many ways echoes a fictionalized Saul Bellow. Both Herzog and Bellow grew up in Canada, the sons of bootleggers who had emigrated from Russia (St. Petersburg). Both are Jewish, lived in Chicago for significant periods of time, and were divorced twice (at the time of writing). Herzog is nearly the same age that Bellow was when he wrote the novel.

Moses Herzog, like many of Bellow's heroes, is a Jewish intellectual who confronts a world peopled by sanguine, incorrigible realists. Much of the action of the novel takes place within the hero's disturbed consciousness, including a series of flashbacks.

"*Herzog*" was praised for its combination of erudition and street smarts, for its lively Yiddish-influenced prose, and for its narrative drive.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the main theme of Bellow's novels? Is it connected to his personal experience? If yes - find biographical prove.
2. What are the most successful novels of S. Bellow? In your opinion, why exactly these novels were awarded?

#### **"Dangling Man":**

1. Define the phrase "dangling man" by relating to specific qualities of Moses Herzog's character.
2. Explain the thematic significance of the water and the fish motifs.
3. Evaluate the traits and attitudes of Sandor Himmelstein and Simkin as stereotypes.
4. Explain the thematic significance of the motion imagery in the novel. How does it reflect Herzog's internal condition?
5. Briefly categorize and evaluate the various life views considered and rejected by the protagonist.
6. Relate the mirror imagery to the theme of identity.
7. Explain the motives that drive Herzog to the brink of murder. Why doesn't he kill Gersbach?
8. Is the protagonist mad or sane? Defend your conclusion.
9. Discuss the comic irony of Herzog as an intellectual.
10. Examine carefully Herzog's train ride, his subway ride, and his drive through Chicago. At what level is his journey toward self-awareness at each stage?

#### **"Herzog":**

1. If you were Herzog's therapist, what advice would you give him? Why?
2. Do you think Herzog flaunts his education too much? Why or why not?
3. Why does Herzog write a bunch of letters that he has no intention of ever sending? What do we make of the fact that he writes fewer letters as the book goes on?
4. Why did Herzog buy a crummy old house in the Berkshires? What does this house come to symbolize for Herzog over time?
5. When does Herzog hit "rock bottom" in this book, or what is his lowest point?

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### **16.4. Harper Lee (1926-2016). “To Kill a Mockingbird”**

**Primary Works:** “Go Set a Watchman” (2015), “To Kill a Mockingbird” (1960).

#### **A Brief Biography of Harper Lee**

Harper Lee, in full Nelle Harper Lee, (born April 28, 1926, Monroeville, Alabama, U.S. - died February 19, 2016, Monroeville), American writer nationally acclaimed for her novel “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” (1960).

Harper Lee’s father was Amasa Coleman Lee, a lawyer who by all accounts resembled the hero of her novel in his sound citizenship and warmheartedness. The plot of “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” is based in part on his unsuccessful youthful defense of two African American men convicted of murder. Lee studied law at the University of Alabama (spending a summer as an exchange student at the University of Oxford), but she left for New York City without earning a degree. In New York she worked as an airline reservationist but soon received financial aid from friends that allowed her to write full-time. With the help of an editor, she transformed a series of short stories into “*To Kill a Mockingbird*”.

Stack of books, pile of books, literature, reading. Hompepage blog 2009, arts and entertainment, history and society.

The novel is told predominately from the perspective of a young girl, Jean Louise (“Scout”) Finch (who ages from six to nine years old during the course of the novel), the daughter of white lawyer Atticus Finch, and occasionally from the retrospective adult voice of Jean Louise. Scout and her brother, Jem, learn the principles of racial justice and open-mindedness from their father, whose just and compassionate acts include an unpopular defense of a Black man falsely accused of raping a white girl. They also develop the courage and the strength to follow their convictions in their acquaintance and eventual friendship with a recluse, “Boo” Radley, who has been demonized by the community. “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” received a Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and has sold more than 40 million copies worldwide. Criticism of its tendency to sermonize has been matched by praise of its insight and stylistic effectiveness. It became a memorable film in 1962. A Broadway play, adapted by Aaron Sorkin, appeared in 2018.

One character from the novel, Charles Baker (“Dill”) Harris, is based on Lee’s childhood friend and next door neighbour in Monroeville, Alabama, Truman Capote. When Capote traveled to Kansas in 1959 to cover the murders of the Clutter family for

The New Yorker, Lee accompanied him as what he called his “assistant researchist.” She spent months with Capote interviewing townspeople, writing voluminous notes, sharing impressions, and later returning to Kansas for the trial of the accused - contributions Capote would later use in the composition of *“In Cold Blood”*. After the phenomenal success that followed the publication of *“To Kill a Mockingbird”*, some suspected that Capote was the actual author of Lee’s work, a rumour that was proven wrong when in 2006 a 1959 letter from Capote to his aunt was found, stating that he had read and liked the draft of *“To Kill a Mockingbird”* that Lee had shown him but making no mention of any role in writing it.

After a few years in New York, Lee divided her time between that city and her hometown, eventually settling back in Monroeville, Alabama. She also wrote a few short essays, including *“Romance and High Adventure”* (1983), devoted to Alabama history. *“Go Set a Watchman”*, written before *“To Kill a Mockingbird”* (in 1950s) but essentially a sequel featuring Scout as a grown woman who returns to her childhood home in Alabama to visit her father, was released only in 2015.

Harper Lee was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2007.

### ***“To Kill a Mockingbird” (1960)***

This enormously popular novel was translated into some 40 languages, sold more than 40 million copies worldwide, and is one of the most-assigned novels in American schools. In 1961 it won a Pulitzer Prize. The novel was praised for its sensitive treatment of a child’s awakening to racism and prejudice in the American South.

*“To Kill a Mockingbird”* is both a young girl’s coming-of-age story and a darker drama about the roots and consequences of racism and prejudice, probing how good and evil can coexist within a single community or individual. Scout’s moral education is twofold: to resist abusing others with unfounded negativity but also to persevere when these values are inevitably, and sometimes violently, subverted. Criticism of the novel’s tendency to sermonize has been matched by praise of its insight and stylistic effectiveness.

The novel takes place in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the Great Depression. The protagonist is Jean Louise (“Scout”) Finch, an intelligent though unconventional girl who ages from six to nine years old during the course of the novel. She is raised with her brother, Jeremy Atticus (“Jem”), by their widowed father, Atticus Finch. He is a prominent lawyer who encourages his children to be empathetic and just. He notably tells them that it is “a sin to kill a mockingbird,” alluding to the fact that the birds are innocent and harmless.

When Tom Robinson, one of the town’s Black residents, is falsely accused of raping Mayella Ewell, a white woman, Atticus agrees to defend him despite threats from the community. At one point he faces a mob intent on lynching his client but refuses to abandon him. Scout unwittingly diffuses the situation. Although Atticus presents a defense that gives a more plausible interpretation of the evidence - that Mayella was attacked by her father, Bob Ewell - Tom is convicted, and he is later killed while trying to escape custody. A character compares his death to “the senseless slaughter of songbirds,” paralleling Atticus’s saying about the mockingbird.

The children, meanwhile, play out their own miniaturized drama of prejudice and superstition as they become interested in Arthur (“Boo”) Radley, a reclusive neighbour who is a local legend. They have their own ideas about him and cannot resist the allure of trespassing on the Radley property. Their speculations thrive on the dehumanization perpetuated by their elders. Atticus, however, reprimands them and tries to encourage a more sensitive attitude. Boo makes his presence felt indirectly through a series of benevolent acts, finally intervening when Bob Ewell attacks Jem and Scout. Boo kills Ewell, but Heck Tate, the sheriff, believes it is better to say that Ewell’s death occurred when he fell on his own knife, sparing the shy Boo from unwanted attention. Scout agrees, noting that to do otherwise would be “sort of like shootin’ a mockingbird”.

**Notes:** In 2015 Lee released a 2<sup>nd</sup> novel: “*Go Set a Watchman*”, written just before “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” but set 20 years later featuring Scout as a grown woman based in New York City who returns to her Alabama childhood home to visit her father. Although some claimed “*Go Set a Watchman*” is an earlier draft of “*To Kill a Mockingbird*”, it was actually Lee’s 1<sup>st</sup> novel, completed in 1957. Lee then began a 2<sup>nd</sup> novel incorporating short stories based on her childhood. Lee was encouraged by her agent Maurice Crain to finish the 2<sup>nd</sup> novel and not try to merge the two books. However, after the enormous success of “*To Kill a Mockingbird*”, Lee set “*Go Set a Watchman*” aside, and the completed manuscript of that novel languished in a safe-deposit box in Monroeville for decades. “*Go Set a Watchman*” excited controversy because it depicts Atticus as an ardent segregationist whose views horrify Scout, who has to reconcile Atticus’s racist attitudes with the kindly and loving father of her childhood memories.

### **Study Questions:**

#### **“*To Kill a Mockingbird*”:**

1. Analyze the relationship between Boo Radley and the children. How does this relationship change throughout the book? What are the causes of the developments in this relationship?
2. Discuss the concept of fear as presented in the novel. Compare the children's early fear of Boo Radley to their fear or lack thereof when Bob Ewell attacks them. Is Scout correct in stating that real fear can only be found in books?
3. Discuss the concept of family and Lee's presentation of the American family. What does it consist of?
4. Although criticized openly, Atticus is respected throughout the town of Maycomb. Why is this true?
5. Discuss the concept of education. Does Lee argue for a dominance of education in the home or institutionalized education? What evidence does she provide?
6. Trace the theme of the mockingbird throughout the novel and analyze what the bird symbolizes or represents.
7. Trace Boo Radley's development from monster to savior. How does Scout's understanding of Boo develop? What lessons does Boo teach Scout?
8. Discuss Atticus's approach to parenting. What is his relationship with his children? Can his parenting style be criticized? If so, how?

9. Scout and Jem mature considerably through the course of the novel. What developmental changes do they go through, and what causes these changes?
10. Discuss the town of Maycomb as you might discuss a main character in the book. What is the identity or "character" of the town, and how (if at all) does it change and grow over the years? How does its diversity give it a pluralistic character?
11. Discuss law as it is represented in *"To Kill A Mockingbird"*. What power and limitations exist within the legal system according to Atticus, Jem, and Scout?

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### **16.5. Ken Kesey (1935-2001). "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"**

**Primary Works: Novel:** *"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"* (1962; film, 1975), *"Sometimes a Great Notion"* (1964), *"Caverns"* (1990), *"Sailor Song"* (1992), *"Last Go Round"* (1994). **Nonfiction:** *"Garage Sale"* (1973), *"Demon Box"* (1986), *"The Further Inquiry"* (1990). **Book for Children:** *"Little Tricker the Squirrel Meets Big Double the Bear"* (1988).

#### **A Brief Biography of Ken Kesey**

Ken Kesey, in full Ken Elton Kesey, (born September 17, 1935, La Junta, Colorado, U.S.-died November 10, 2001, Eugene, Oregon), American writer who was a hero of the countercultural revolution and the hippie movement of the 1960s.

Kesey was educated at the University of Oregon and Stanford University. At a Veterans Administration hospital in Menlo Park, California, he was a paid volunteer experimental subject, taking mind-altering drugs and reporting on their effects. This experience and his work as an aide at the hospital served as background for his best-known novel, *"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"* (1962; film, 1975), which is set in a mental hospital. He further examined values in conflict in *"Sometimes a Great Notion"* (1964).

In the nonfiction Kesey's *"Garage Sale"* (1973), *"Demon Box"* (1986), and *"The Further Inquiry"* (1990), Kesey wrote of his travels and psychedelic experiences with the Merry Pranksters, a group that traveled together in a bus during the 1960s. Tom Wolfe recounted many of their adventures in *"The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test"* (1968). In 1967 Kesey fled to Mexico to avoid prosecution for possession of marijuana. He returned to California, served a brief sentence, and then moved to a farm near Eugene, Oregon.

In 1988 Kesey published a children's book, *"Little Tricker the Squirrel Meets Big Double the Bear"*. With 13 of his graduate students in creative writing at the University



of Oregon, he wrote a mystery novel, *"Caverns"* (1990), under the joint pseudonym of O.U. Levon, which read backward is "novel U.O. (University of Oregon)." In *"Sailor Song"* (1992), a comedy set in an Alaskan fishing village that becomes the backdrop for a Hollywood film, Kesey examined environmental crises and the end of the world. Subsequently, with the collaboration of Ken Babbs, he wrote a neo-western, *"Last Go Round"* (1994).

### ***"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"* (1962)**

*"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"*, novel by Ken Kesey, 1<sup>st</sup> published in 1962. At a Veterans Administration hospital in Menlo Park, California, Kesey had been a paid volunteer and experimental subject, taking mind-altering drugs and recording their effects, and this experience and his work as an aide at the hospital served as fodder for this novel, his best-known work, which is set in a mental hospital. The book's film adaptation (1975), starring Jack Nicholson as the main character, became the 1<sup>st</sup> movie since *"It Happened One Night"* (1934) to win all 5 major Academy Awards: best picture, best actor (Nicholson), best actress (Louise Fletcher), best director (Milos Forman), and best screenplay (Bo Goldman and Lawrence Hauben).

SUMMARY: Ken Kesey's novel depicts a mental asylum in which repeated attempts to diagnose the patients as insane are conceived as part of a larger scheme to produce pliant, docile subjects across the U.S. A key text for the antipsychiatry movement of the 1960s, it addresses the relationship between sanity and madness, conformity and rebellion. The novel remains finely balanced throughout. It is never clear, for example, whether the so-called "Combine" is, in actuality, a boundless authority designed to ensure social control across the whole population, or a projection of the narrator Chief Bromden's paranoid imagination. Also, the question of whether insanity, to quote R. D. Laing, "might very well be a state of health in a mad world," or at least an appropriate form of social rebellion, is raised but never quite answered.

Into the sterile, hermetically sealed world of the asylum wanders Randall P. McMurphy, a modern-day "cowboy" with a "sideshow swagger" who disrupts the ward's smooth running and challenges the near total authority of the steely Nurse Ratched. Insofar as McMurphy's acts of rebellion assume mostly self-interested forms, the novel's efforts at political mobilization fall short, and there remains something uneasy about its racial and gender politics. It takes the "cowboy" McMurphy to save the "Indian" Bromden and, in the era of civil rights and feminism, the white male patients are painted as "victims of a matriarchy," ably supported by a cabal of black orderlies.

In the end, Kesey's impressive attempts to come to grips with the amorphous nature of modern power—a power not necessarily tied to leaders or even institutions—make this a prescient, foreboding work. If McMurphy's fate is what awaits those who push too hard against the system, then Bromden's sanity depends on not turning a blind eye to injustice and exploitation.

### **Study Questions:**

### **“One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”:**

1. What do Nurse Ratched and McMurphy believe are the keys to defeating one another?
2. What is Nurse Ratched's primary technique of manipulation among the men of the ward?
3. What is the purpose of EST (Electroshock therapy) in the context of the patients' individual treatments?
4. Why is Chief Bromden the narrator instead of McMurphy?
5. Does McMurphy forget to leave on the night of his escape, or is it a purposeful self-sacrifice?
6. Is Nurse Ratched the true villain of the story?

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### **16.6. Suzanne Collins (1962-). “Hunger Games”**

**Primary Works: Children’s novels:** “*Gregor the Overlander*” (2003), “*Underland Chronicles*” (2004-2007), “*When Charlie McButton Lost Power*” (2005), “*Year of the Jungle: Memories from the Home Front*” (2013). **“Hunger Games” trilogy:** “*The Hunger Games*” (2008), “*Catching Fire*” (2009), “*Mockingjay*” (2010).

#### **A Brief Biography of Suzanne Collins**

Suzanne Collins, (born August 10, 1962, Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.), American author and screenwriter, best known for the immensely popular “*Hunger Games*” trilogy of young-adult novels (2008-2010).

Collins was the youngest of 4 children. Because her father was a career officer in the U.S. Air Force, the family moved frequently, and she spent time in Indiana and Belgium before graduating from high school in Birmingham, Alabama. After studying theatre and telecommunications at Indiana University (B.A., 1985), Collins received an M.F.A. in dramatic writing from New York University (1989). In the 1990s she wrote primarily for television, 1<sup>st</sup> for the short-lived sitcom *Hi Honey, I’m Home!* and then for several youth-oriented series (such as *Clarissa Explains It All*). She later served as head writer of the PBS animated children’s show *Clifford’s Puppy Days*.

While continuing to work in television, Collins conceived the children’s novel “*Gregor the Overlander*” (2003), about an 11-year-old boy in New York City drawn into

a fantastic subterranean world where humans coexist with giant anthropomorphic sewer dwellers such as rats and cockroaches. The book was commended for its vivid setting and sense of adventure, and 4 additional installments (2004-2007) in what became known as the “*Underland Chronicles*” soon followed. Despite the series’ intended audience, Collins - influenced by the lessons her father had taught her as a military historian and a Vietnam War veteran - straightforwardly introduced to its narrative such grim “adult” issues as genocide and biological warfare.

Brutal combat and its consequences were also central concerns of “*The Hunger Games*” (2008), a dystopian tale in which two dozen adolescents are compelled by a futuristic authoritarian state to fight to the death in a televised competition. Inspired equally by reality television and Classical mythology, the novel, aimed at teenage readers, attracted intense interest in the plight of its headstrong 16-year-old heroine, Katniss Everdeen. As Collins extended the narrative with “*Catching Fire*” (2009) and “*Mockingjay*” (2010), the series became a mainstay on best-seller lists, especially in the U.S., and also caught on with adults, a development that provoked comparisons to the broadly popular “*Harry Potter*” and “*Twilight*” novels. Critics as well as fans admired Collins’s ability to sustain a gripping plot, which was stimulated in part by an ongoing love triangle, while also engaging in a meaningful social critique of power and violence.

A film adaptation of “*The Hunger Games*”, for which Collins wrote much of the screenplay, enjoyed enormous commercial success upon its release in 2012. By that time more than 30 million copies of the trilogy were in print in the U.S. alone, and e-book sales were particularly robust. Adaptations of the remaining books appeared in 2013, 2014, and 2015; the 3<sup>rd</sup> book was released in 2 parts. In addition, Collins was the author of the children’s books “*When Charlie McButton Lost Power*” (2005) and “*Year of the Jungle: Memories from the Home Front*” (2013).

### **“*The Hunger Games*” (2008-2010)**

“*The Hunger Games*” is a trilogy of young adult dystopian novels. The series is set in specific universe, and follows young characters Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark. The novels in the trilogy are titled “*The Hunger Games*” (2008), “*Catching Fire*” (2009), and “*Mockingjay*” (2010). The novels have all been developed into films, with the film adaptation of “*Mockingjay*” split into 2 parts. The 1<sup>st</sup> two books in the series were both New York Times best sellers, and “*Mockingjay*” topped all U.S. bestseller lists upon its release. By the time the film adaptation of “*The Hunger Games*” was released in 2012, the publisher had reported over 26 million trilogy books in print, including movie tie-in books. “*The Hunger Games*” universe is a dystopia set in Panem, a country consisting of the wealthy Capitol and 12 districts in varying states of poverty. Every year, children from the districts are selected to participate in a compulsory televised battle royale death match called *The Hunger Games*. The novels were all well received. In August 2012, the series ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, exceeded only by the “*Harry Potter*” series in NPR’s poll of the top 100 teen novels, which asked voters to choose their favorite young adult books. On August 17, 2012, Amazon announced the trilogy as its top seller, surpassing the record previously held by the “*Harry Potter*” series. As of

2014, the trilogy has sold more than 65 million copies in the U.S. alone (more than 28 million copies of the 1<sup>st</sup> novel, more than 19 million copies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, and more than 18 million copies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> novel). The trilogy has been sold into 56 territories in 51 languages to date.

### Study Questions:

1. In what ways is all of Panem complicit in the horrors of “*The Hunger Games*”?
2. Discuss the ways in which Katniss's poverty has shaped her.
3. Contrast what Gale and Peeta signify for Katniss, and how each helps her succeed in the Games.
4. Trace Katniss's growth from determined stoic to a fuller human being, using examples to illustrate each phase of her character growth.
5. Discuss the influences of ancient civilizations on *The Hunger Games*.
6. Explain the various methods used by the Capitol to keep its population in line. How does the Capitol keep citizens from connecting with one another, and why are these strategies successful?
7. What do you think is the reasoning behind Haymitch's unified front strategy for Peeta and Katniss? What are the effects of the strategy, and why does it work?
8. How does the 1<sup>st</sup>-person narration help establish the themes of the novel?
9. Discuss the use of fire in the novel, and what it tells us about the protagonist.

### Selected Sources:

1. Carpenter, C. *Guide to “The Hunger Games”*. New Jersey: Plexus Publishing, 2012.
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3. Seife, E. *The Hunger Games Tribute Guide*. NY: Scholastic Press, 2012.
4. Gresh, L.H. *The Hunger Games Companion: The Unauthorized Guide to the Series*. NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2011.
5. Pollitt, K. *The Hunger Games’ Feral Feminism* // *The Nation*, April 3, 2012.
6. Dominus, S. *Suzanne Collins’s War Stories for Kids* // *The New York Times*, April 8, 2011.

## 16.7. Bob Dylan (1941-). Lyrics and Songs

**Primary Works:** *The Hunger Games*” (2008), “*Mockingjay*” (2010).

### A Brief Biography of Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan, original name Robert Allen Zimmerman, (born May 24, 1941, Duluth, Minnesota, U.S.), American folksinger who moved from folk to rock music in the 1960s, infusing the lyrics of rock and roll, theretofore concerned mostly with boy-girl romantic innuendo, with the intellectualism of classic literature and poetry. Hailed as the Shakespeare of his generation, Dylan sold tens of millions of albums, wrote more

than 500 songs recorded by more than 2,000 artists, performed all over the world, and set the standard for lyric writing. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016.

He grew up in the northeastern Minnesota mining town of Hibbing. Taken with the music of Hank Williams, Little Richard, Elvis Presley, and Johnny Ray, he acquired his 1<sup>st</sup> guitar in 1955 at age 14. Fascinated by *Beat poetry* and folksinger Woody Guthrie, he began performing folk music in coffeehouses, adopting the last name Dylan (after the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas).

Young ears everywhere quickly assimilated his quirky voice, which divided parents and children and established him as part of the burgeoning counterculture, “a rebel with a cause.” Moreover, his 1<sup>st</sup> major composition, “*Blowin’ in the Wind*,” served notice that this was no cookie-cutter recording artist.

Folk-rock singer-songwriter Bob Dylan signed his 1<sup>st</sup> recording contract in 1961, and he emerged as one of the most original and influential voices in American popular music. Dylan has continued to tour and release new studio albums, including “*Together Through Life*” (2009), “*Tempest*” (2012), “*Shadows in the Night*” (2015) and “*Fallen Angels*” (2016). The legendary singer-songwriter has received Grammy, Academy and Golden Globe awards, as well as the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Nobel Prize for Literature.

## Lyrics and Songs

Bob Dylan's songs are rooted in the rich tradition of American folk music and are influenced by the poets of modernism and the *beatnik* movement. Early on, Dylan's lyrics incorporated social struggles and political protest. Love and religion are other important themes in his songs. His writing is often characterized by refined rhymes and it paints surprising, sometimes surreal imagery. Since his debut in 1962, he has repeatedly reinvented his songs and music. He has also written prose, including his memoirs “*Chronicles: Volume One*” (2004) and poetry collection “*Tarantula*” (1971).

In his essay, Dylan writes about the impact that three important books made on him: Herman Melville's “*Moby-Dick*”, Erich Maria Remarque's “*All Quiet on the Western Front*” and Homer's “*Odyssey*”. He concludes: “Our songs are alive in the land of the living. But songs are unlike literature. They're meant to be sung, not read. The words in Shakespeare's plays were meant to be acted on the stage. Just as lyrics in songs are meant to be sung, not read on a page. And I hope some of you get the chance to listen to these lyrics the way they were intended to be heard: in concert or on record or however people are listening to songs these days. I return once again to Homer, who says, ‘Sing in me, oh Muse, and through me tell the story’”.

### Study Questions:

#### “*Blowin’ In The Wind*”:

1. How does the song criticize racism?
2. In what way does the song use symbolism to reveal a deeper meaning?
3. How can the line “blowin’ in the wind” be interpreted?

## Selected Sources:

1. Thomas R.F. Why Bob Dylan Matters. Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard UP, 2017.

### 16.8. Louise Glück (1943-). “*The Wild Iris*”

**Primary Works: Collections of Poetry:** “*Firstborn*” (1968), “*The House on Marshland*” (1975), “*Descending Figure*” (1980), “*The Triumph of Achilles*” (1985), “*Ararat*” (1990), “*The Wild Iris*” (1992), “*Meadowlands*” (1996), “*The First Five Books of Poems*” (1997), “*Vita Nova*” (1999), “*The Seven Ages*” (2001), “*Averno*” (2006), “*A Village Life*” (2009), “*Poems 1962-2012*” (2012), “*Faithful and Virtuous Night*” (2014), “*Winter Recipes from the Collective*” (2021). **Novella:** “*Marigold and Rose*” (2022), **Essay Collections:** “*Proofs and Theories*” (1994), “*American Originality*” (2017).

### A Brief Biography of Louise Glück

Louise Glück, in full Louise Elisabeth Glück, (born April 22, 1943, N.Y., NY, U.S.), American poet whose willingness to confront the horrible, the difficult, and the painful resulted in a body of work characterized by insight and a severe lyricism. In 2020 she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, cited “for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal.”

After attending Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, and Columbia University in New York City, Glück taught poetry at numerous colleges and universities, including Harvard and Yale. Her 1<sup>st</sup> collection of poetry, “*Firstborn*” (1968), used a variety of 1<sup>st</sup>-person personae, all disaffected or angry. The collection’s tone disturbed many critics, but Glück’s exquisitely controlled language and imaginative use of rhyme and metre delighted others. Although its outlook is equally grim, “*The House on Marshland*” (1975) shows a greater mastery of voice. There, as in her later volumes, Glück’s personae included historic and mythic figures such as Gretel and Joan of Arc. Her adoption of different perspectives became increasingly imaginative; for example, in “*The Sick Child*,” from the collection “*Descending Figure*” (1980), her voice is that of a mother in a museum painting looking out at the bright gallery. The poems in “*The Triumph of Achilles*” (1985), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award for poetry, address archetypal subjects of classic myth, fairy tales, and the Bible. These concerns are also evident in “*Ararat*” (1990), which has been acclaimed for searing honesty in its examination of the family and the self.

In 1993 Glück won a Pulitzer Prize for “*The Wild Iris*” (1992). Her later works included “*Meadowlands*” (1996), “*The First Five Books of Poems*” (1997), and “*The Seven Ages*” (2001). “*Averno*” (2006) was her well-received treatment of the Persephone myth. The poems collected in “*A Village Life*” (2009) - about existence in a small Mediterranean town - were written in a lavishly descriptive style that significantly departed from the parsimony that characterizes her earlier verse. “*Poems 1962-2012*” (2012) compiled all her published volumes of poetry. “*Faithful and Virtuous Night*” (2014) deals with mortality and nocturnal silence, sometimes from a

male perspective; it won the National Book Award. The poems in *“Winter Recipes from the Collective”* (2021) often read like fables or short stories. In 2022 Glück released her 1<sup>st</sup> work of fiction, *“Marigold and Rose”*. The novella centres on a pair of infant twins.

Glück was editor of *“The Best American Poetry 1993”* (1993). Her essay collections on poetry included *“Proofs and Theories”* (1994) and *“American Originality”* (2017). In 2001 she was awarded the Bollingen Prize for Poetry. Glück served as poet laureate consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress (2003-04). Her later honours included the Wallace Stevens Award (2008) and a National Humanities Medal (2015).

### ***“The Wild Iris” (1992)***

*“The Wild Iris”* by Louise Glück is told from the perspective of a flower. It comprehends death differently than humanity does and shares its understanding. The volume follows a specific sequence, poem to poem, describing the poet’s garden. In this piece, she delves into themes of the human soul, rebirth/immortality, and the commonalities between all life forms.

**Summary of *“The Wild Iris”*:** It is a complex and deeply metaphorical poem that describes death from the perspective of a flower. Throughout the short lines of *“The Wild Iris”*, the speaker describes what it means to live, die, and be reborn again. They’ve gone through the cycle an endless number of times as a flower. It is a struggle that has a door at the end, a light at the end of the tunnel. They are well-versed in what it is like to be buried alive and exist without a voice and then rediscover that voice as one bends the earth. While the speaker is talking about a flower, there are obvious implications for humanity, and the human soul. It is also possible to read this poem as a depiction of a mental or emotional rebirth rather than a physical one.

**Structure of *“The Wild Iris”*:** It is a twenty-three-line poem that is separated into uneven stanzas. These range in length from one line up to five. Glück did not choose to make use of a specific metrical pattern or rhyme scheme, a style of writing known as free verse. But, that doesn’t mean that the poem is totally devoid of rhyme, rhythm, and a variety of other literary devices.

**Literary Devices in *“The Wild Iris”*:** Glück makes use of several poetic techniques. These include but are not limited to metaphor, personification, and enjambment. The latter, enjambment, occurs when a line is cut off before its natural stopping point. Enjambment forces a reader down to the next line, and the next, quickly. One has to move forward in order to comfortably resolve a phrase or sentence. It can be seen throughout this poem, specifically in the transitions between lines one and two as well as eight, nine, and ten.

Personification occurs when a poet imbues a non-human creature or object with human characteristics. This is seen when the poet gives the speaker, a flower, human qualities. Such as the ability to recall events in the past and then convey those events to a reader.

A metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things that does not use “like” or “as” is also present in the text. When using this technique, a poet is saying that one thing is another thing, they aren’t just similar. There are several examples in *“The Wild*

*Iris*". For example, the image of the earth bending as the speaker reasserts themselves into the living world.

**Analysis of "The Wild Iris":**

Lines 1- 7

*At the end of my suffering  
there was a door.*

(...)

*Then nothing. The weak sun  
flickered over the dry surface*

In the 1<sup>st</sup> lines of "*The Wild Iris*", the speaker begins with a simple statement. It is spread over two lines, making use of a technique known as enjambment. The line alludes to both darkness and light. The speaker, who may or may not be a flower, suffered but at the end of it "there was a door". The door is a symbol of hope, happiness, and peace. The use of the word "door" confuses the speaker's identity further. It is unclear who she is and what she has experienced.

The speaker asks the reader to "Hear [her] out" in the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza. These words catch the reader's attention and make sure that the next lines are weighted with importance. They assert that they remember "death". But, that "death" is not their own perception of it. The memory is complicated by the speaker's perspective. It is "that which you call death" that they remember. There's something different about their perception than the reader's. This supports the possibility that the speaker is a flower.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza, the speaker takes the reader out of a metaphorical world and into a physical one, or at least that's how it seems. They describe the noises in a natural environment, a good example of auditory imagery, and the "weak sun". The wind is moving the branches and then all of a sudden there is "nothing". This could refer to the silence, to imminent death, or to a blank space in the speaker's mind.

Lines 8-15

*It is terrible to survive*

(...)

*to speak, ending abruptly, the stiff earth  
bending a little. And what I took to be  
birds darting in low shrubs.*

In the next stanza of "*The Wild Iris*", the speaker goes on to say that it is "terrible to survive / as consciousness" while buried in the earth. This is a dark and fearful image that brings up images of people being buried alive. The flower that may be at the centre of this poem would be buried in the dark earth in order to grow, something that is not fearful but life producing. It is interesting to consider why the speaker describes this process as "terrible". Either way, these lines are a good example of personification.

The distances of the speaker from the light of the world and life is still present in the eleventh and twelfth lines. They are present but unable to make themselves known. They have no voice, something that would be terrifying for any human being. There is a connection being developed here between the experience of the flower and what a human reader can understand.

Finally, the period of being unable to speak comes to its conclusion and the earth bends as the flower pushes its way through it. The speaker recalls how they thought the



sounds they previously heard above ground were mysterious now she knows it was the sound of birds. Imagery is used very skillfully here as a reader is asked to imagine the sound of birds flying as one might experience it underground. The image of the birds is an important one. In this case, it is likely symbolizing the human soul, freedom, and peace.

Lines 16-23

*You who do not remember  
passage from the other world  
(...)  
a great fountain, deep blue  
shadows on azure seawater.*

The 6<sup>th</sup> stanza picks up with the speaker reminding the reader that they have been telling a story of death. “You,” the reader won’t remember what it was like to move from one world to the next, from the darkness before life into the light. But, this speaker does. Like a flower, this speaker knows rebirth and life and death very well as they go through it every spring. The next lines emphasize this point. The “oblivion” that the speaker refers to is a temporary one.

In the final lines, the speaker expresses the heart of what it means to die and live again. This is done through the image of a “great fountain, deep blue”. This is the voice of the speaker telling the reader that this fountain of water comes from the “centre” of their life. While it is not entirely clear, these lines likely depict the moment that this flower/speaker regains life once more. An experience that all creatures have gone through but it is capable of remembering and relaying.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is the effect of alliteration, assonance and consonance in the poem "*Epithalamium*" by Louise Glück?
2. How does Louise Glück use imagery to shape meaning in the poem "*Study of My Sister*"?
3. What is the speaker talking about in "*Snowdrops*"?
4. How does Louise Glück in "*Study of My Sister*" use diction, syntax, and other literary devices to develop the theme and impact the reader??

### **Selected Sources:**

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3. Weeks, L. *Gluck to be Poet Laureate* // The Washington Post. August 29, 2003.
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## CHAPTER XVII. MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

### Plan:

#### 17.1. Overview of American Multicultural Literature

#### 17.2. Rudolfo Anaya. *“Bless Me, Ultima”*

#### 17.3. Edgar Laurence Doctorow. *“Ragtime”*

#### 17.4. N. Scott Momaday. *“House Made of Dawn”*

### 17.1. Overview of American Multicultural Literature

The dramatic loosening of immigration restrictions in the mid-1960s set the stage for the rich multicultural writing of the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New Jewish voices were heard in the fiction of E.L. Doctorow, noted for his mingling of the historical with the fictional in novels such as *“Ragtime”* (1975) and *“The Waterworks”* (1994) and in the work of Cynthia Ozick, whose best story, *“Envy; or, Yiddish in America”* (1969), has characters modeled on leading figures in Yiddish literature. Her story *“The Shawl”* (1980) concerns the murder of a baby in a Nazi concentration camp. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, younger Jewish writers from the former Soviet Union such as Gary Shteyngart and Lara Vapnyar dealt impressively with the experience of immigrants in the US.

Novels such as N. Scott Momaday’s *“House Made of Dawn”*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1969, James Welch’s *“Winter in the Blood”* (1974) and *“Fools Crow”* (1986), Leslie Marmon Silko’s *“Ceremony”* (1977), and Louise Erdrich’s *“Love Medicine”* (1984), *“The Beet Queen”* (1986), and *“The Antelope Wife”* (1998) were powerful and ambiguous explorations of Native American history and identity. Mexican Americans were represented by works such as Rudolfo A. Anaya’s *“Bless Me, Ultima”* (1972), Richard Rodriguez’s autobiographical *“Hunger for Memory”* (1981), and Sandra Cisneros’s *“The House on Mango Street”* (1983).

Some of the best immigrant writers, while thoroughly assimilated, nonetheless had a subtle understanding of both the old and the new culture. These included the Cuban American writers Oscar Hijuelos (*“The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love”*, 1989) and Cristina Garcia (*“Dreaming in Cuban”*, 1992 and *“The Agüero Sisters”*, 1997); the Antigua-born Jamaica Kincaid, author of *“Annie John”* (1984), *“Lucy”* (1990), the AIDS memoir *“My Brother”* (1997), and *“See Now Then”* (2013); the Dominican-born Junot Díaz, who won acclaim for *“Drown”* (1996), a collection of stories, and whose novel *“The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao”* (2007) won a Pulitzer Prize; and the Bosnian immigrant Aleksandar Hemon, who wrote *“The Question of Bruno”* (2000) and *“Nowhere Man”* (2002). Chinese Americans found an extraordinary voice in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *“The Woman Warrior”* (1976) and *“China Men”* (1980), which blended old Chinese lore with fascinating family history. Her 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *“Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book”* (1989), was set in the bohemian world of the San Francisco Bay area during the 1960s. Other important Asian American writers included Gish Jen, whose *“Typical American”* (1991) dealt with immigrant striving and frustration; the Korean American Chang-rae Lee, who focused on family life, political awakening, and generational differences in *“Native Speaker”* (1995) and

"*A Gesture Life*" (1999); and Ha Jin, whose "*Waiting*" (1999; National Book Award), set in rural China during and after the Cultural Revolution, was a powerful tale of timidity, repression, and botched love, contrasting the mores of the old China and the new. Bharati Mukherjee beautifully explored contrasting lives in India and North America in "*The Middleman and Other Stories*" (1988), "*Jasmine*" (1989), "*Desirable Daughters*" (2002), and "*The Tree Bride*" (2004). While many multicultural works were merely representative of their cultural milieu, books such as these made remarkable contributions to a changing American literature.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is Multiculturalism in American Literature? In regards to the themes, problems, ethnic groups of writers, etc.
2. How has multiculturalism affected American Literature since the Civil War?
3. Assess the purpose of multicultural literature.
4. In Maxine Hong Kingston's "*The Woman Warrior*" (1976) the narrator protests stereotypical and racist labels, "'chink' words and 'gook' words" because, as she says, "they do not fit my skin". Other ethnic American writers have sought to dismantle shallow stereotypes through their works by presenting complex characters in particular social and historical situations. Students interested in exploring how writers resist racist images might begin with an investigation of stereotypes about particular ethnic groups. Good starting points are offered in "*The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Multiethnic American Literature*" (2005) entries "*African American Stereotypes*", "*Arab American Stereotypes*", "*Chinese American Stereotypes*", "*Italian American Stereotypes*", "*Jewish American Stereotypes*", "*Mexican American Stereotypes*", and "*Native American Stereotypes*". Are these stereotypes reflected or addressed in literary works? Do writers challenge the stereotype? If so, in what ways? How do writers represent his/her cultural or ethnic identity?
5. Coming-of-age novels trace the development of the protagonist from childhood or adolescence into adulthood and usually involve disillusionment as he or she moves from innocence to experience, ignorance to knowledge, or idealism to realism. The identities of ethnic American adolescents are shaped by the culture(s) of their families as well as by dominant society. The volatility of adolescence combined with cultural negotiations that ethnic Americans undertake make the genre particularly powerful and appealing to American writers of diverse cultural backgrounds. Analyzing coming-of-age novels draws out the unique challenges that race and ethnicity impose on the development of nonwhite protagonists. What happens when characters realize that their skin color, religion, food, and habits are different from those of their friends? How does this awareness affect their sense of self and/or their attitudes toward their family members and root culture? How is the process of growing up complicated by the realization of "minority" status in a predominantly white society? Is the awareness of cultural difference empowering or disabling to the individual? Why or why not?
6. Compare a coming-of-age novel from the 1970s to one written more recently, paying close attention to attitudes about race and ethnicity. Do you see a change in attitude on the part of the protagonists? What social or historical reasons might there be for

differences/similarities? Another way to approach this topic is to consider the way ethnic American writers use the coming-of-age novel to counteract historical and social marginalization. In other words, how does the act of self-definition challenge those who would define them stereotypically? Some suggested works and comparisons: Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976) or Wong's *Homebase* (1979) with Chin's *Donald Duk* (1991) or Gish Jen's *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996); Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) with Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997); Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) with Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003); Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973) with Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002); Rivera's *...yno se lo trágo la tierra* (1971), Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), or Mohr's *Nilda* (1973) with Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), Helena María Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995), or Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007).

7. The British Indian writer Salman Rushdie has described magical realism as the "commingling of the improbable and the mundane". An important aspect in contemporary fiction, magical realism is a term applied to realistic narratives that include "magical" and supernatural happenings as accepted and integrated aspects of everyday life. In her introduction to *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (2004) Wendy Faris offers this definition: "Very briefly defined, magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them. Furthermore, that combination of realistic and fantastical narrative, together with the inclusion of different cultural traditions, means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much postcolonial society. Thus the mode is multicultural". Examine the elements of magical realism of a particular work. How do these elements challenge or revise Western European notions of reality? How do magical realist techniques help writers to bridge cultural differences and gaps? How do writers "integrate them into contemporary American culture in order to enrich or remedy it?" Works to consider include (but are not limited to) Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* (1995), Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* (1993), Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues* (1994), E.L. Doctorow's *Loon Lake* (1980), Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), Chitra Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices* (1997), Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977), Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988), and Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* (1990).

8. In his introduction to *MultiAmerica* (1996) Ishmael Reed challenges readers to imagine "a new, inclusive definition of the common [American] culture" that takes into consideration cultural, racial, and ethnic differences. He writes: "I think that a new definition of a common culture is possible, and that because of their multicultural status, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans with knowledge of their own ethnic histories and cultures as well as those of European cultures are able to contribute to the formation of a new, inclusive definition". Analyze the works by ethnic Americans. How does the particular work contribute to "a new, inclusive definition" of American literature? How does the work insist upon a broader definition of American identity that includes racial and ethnic difference? Another way to approach this topic

would be to focus on the forms and narrative techniques that ethnic American writers use. A common feature is the use of multiple forms and genres in a single work. As Maria Lauret notes in the introductory essay to “*Beginning Ethnic American Literature*” (2001), “frequently autobiography functions as theory, prose is shot through with poetry and song, narrative is also (counter-) historiography. Linguistic mixtures occur too, most obviously in the bilingual texts of Chicano/a writers, but also when African American writers make use of the black vernacular as a ‘native tongue,’ or when Asian Americans and Native Americans intersperse their English with words and phrases from their 1<sup>st</sup> language”. How do writers use these techniques and mixtures to challenge and revitalize monocultural definitions of American literature and identity? How does form express cultural hybridity? In analyzing a work, consider whether a writer is calling for the inclusion of ethnic American writers as part of mainstream America or is challenging the very definition of America.

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### 17.2. Rudolfo Anaya (1937-2020). “*Bless Me, Ultima*”

**Primary Works:** “*Bless Me, Ultima*” (1972), “*Heart of Aztlán*” (1976), “*Tortuga*” (1979), “*The Legend of La Llorona*” (1984), “*The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas*” (1985), “*Albuquerque*” (1992), “*Zia Summer*” (1995), “*Rio Grande Falls*” (1996), “*Shaman Winter*” (1999), “*Jemez Spring*” (2005), “*Randy Lopez Goes Home*” (2011), “*The Old Man’s Love Story*” (2013).

#### A Brief Biography of Rudolfo Anaya

Rudolfo Anaya, in full Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya, also called Rudolfo A. Anaya, (born October 30, 1937, Pastura, New Mexico, U.S.-died June 28, 2020, Albuquerque), American novelist and educator whose fiction expresses his Mexican American heritage, the tradition of folklore and oral storytelling in Spanish, and the Jungian mythic perspective. Anaya learned to speak English only when he started school. As a teen, he broke his back, and his recovery from that experience affected his worldview. He graduated from the University of New Mexico (B.A., 1963; M.A., 1968; M.A., 1972) and worked as a public school teacher in Albuquerque (1963-70) before becoming director of counseling at the University of Albuquerque. From 1974 to 1993 he taught at the University of New Mexico.

“*Bless Me, Ultima*” (1972; film 2013), Anaya’s acclaimed 1<sup>st</sup> novel, concerns a young boy growing up in New Mexico in the late 1940s and an elderly healer who changes his life. “*Heart of Aztlán*” (1976) follows a family’s move from rural to urban surroundings and confronts some of the problems of Chicano labourers. In “*Tortuga*” (1979) Anaya examines the emotions of a boy encased in a body cast at a hospital for paralyzed children (reflecting experiences that were Anaya’s as a child). These three novels make up a trilogy about Hispanic children in the US. The novel “*The Legend of La Llorona*” (1984) is about La Malinche, an enslaved Indian who became the mistress, guide, and interpreter of the conquistador Hernán Cortés. Anaya’s other fictional works included “*The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas*” (1985), “*Albuquerque*” (1992;

the title gives the original spelling of the city's name), *"Randy Lopez Goes Home"* (2011), and the novella *"The Old Man's Love Story"* (2013). His series of mystery novels featuring Chicano private investigator Sonny Baca included *"Zia Summer"* (1995), *"Rio Grande Fall"* (1996), *"Shaman Winter"* (1999), and *"Jemez Spring"* (2005).

In addition, Anaya wrote *"A Chicano in China"* (1986), a nonfiction account of his travels; short stories, such as those in *"Serafina's Stories"* (2004) and *"The Man Who Could Fly and Other Stories"* (2006); and a number of children's books, as well as plays and poems. An advocate of multiculturalism and bilingualism, he translated, edited, and contributed to numerous anthologies of Hispanic writing. In 2002 he was awarded a National Medal of Arts.

### ***"Bless Me, Ultima" (1972)***

*"Bless Me, Ultima"* is a semi-autobiographical novel based on the New Mexican community of Rudolfo Anaya's childhood. Anaya used his memory of his town, the Pecos River, Highway 66, the church, the school, and the surrounding villages and ranches as the inspiration for their depiction in his novel. Anaya also created clear similarities between the characters in the book and the characters in his childhood. Antonio's parents are based loosely on Anaya's parents: his father was a vaquero who was raised on the llano, and his mother grew up in a community of Catholic farmers. Anaya's brothers were fighting in World War II for most of his childhood in the same way that Antonio's three older brothers are fighting overseas in the novel. Moreover, similar to Antonio's family and their treatment of Ultima in the novel, Anaya's family was extremely respectful of the role played by the curandera in their community, reconciling the importance of folk medicine with their Catholic faith.

In addition to its ties to Anaya's personal experiences and background, *"Bless Me, Ultima"* also relates to the larger historical and cultural issues surrounding New Mexico. A Spanish colony beginning in 1695, New Mexico was initially colonized for the purpose of converting the native Pueblo Indians. The Spanish built permanent communities for the Indians along the Rio Grande and introduced domesticated animals to the area, all while striving for religious conversion of the native communities. The Spanish recruited the native people to build mission churches in each of the new villages, but the Pueblo Indians finally rebelled in 1680 and drove the Spanish out of their land.

In *"Bless Me, Ultima"*, this amalgamation of cultures is extremely apparent: the descendants of the Pueblo Indians still live according to a unique faith drawn from ancient native beliefs and Catholic doctrine and continue to farm the land as their livelihood. Moreover, Spanish remains the primary language, with Antonio only learning English after he begins to go to school.

During the 1960s and 1970s, at the time that Anaya began to write *"Bless Me, Ultima"*, the Mexican American population was finally beginning to flourish as an individual artistic community. In this period, known as the Chicano Movement, poetry, literature, music, and theater began to become integral parts of Mexican American culture, independent from the general culture of the United States. This movement was seen as a way to improve the economic and social lives of the Mexican American

community while simultaneously rooting it in its own history and creativity. Because Anaya was one of the 1<sup>st</sup> authors to promote this unique culture in his novels, he is recognized by many to be the “father” of Chicano literature.

### Study Questions:

#### “*Bless Me, Ultima*”:

1. What tensions are created for Antonio in his life because of his parents’ different backgrounds?
2. Is the novel a romance, a fantasy, or a realistic life story? Why?
3. What are the events in the book that change Antonio’s life the most? What are they and why are they so important?
4. What is the importance of dreams in the novel? Which dream is the most important to Antonio is his questions about life?
5. What will Antonio become when he grows up? A priest? A vaquero? Why or why not?
6. What is the significance of Antonio’s age in the novel? How would the novel be different if he were older?
7. What is the role of women in the novel? Is the strongest character male or female?
8. What scene in the novel forces the readers to question Ultima’s true nature? Why is this scene important?

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### 17.3. Edgar Laurence Doctorow (1931-2015). “*Ragtime*”

**Primary Works:** “*Welcome to Hard Times*” (1960; film 1967), “*Big as Life*” (1966), “*The Book of Daniel*” (1971; film 1983), “*Ragtime*” (1975; film 1981), “*Loon Lake*” (1980), “*World’s Fair*” (1985), “*Billy Bathgate*” (1989; film 1991), “*The Waterworks*” (1994), “*City of God*” (2000), “*The March*” (2005), “*Homer and Langley*” (2009), “*Andrew’s Brain*” (2014).

#### A Brief Biography of E.L. Doctorow

E.L. Doctorow, in full Edgar Lawrence Doctorow, (born January 6, 1931, Bronx, NY, U.S.-died July 21, 2015, N.Y., NY), American novelist known for his skillful manipulation of traditional genres.

Doctorow graduated from Kenyon College (B.A., 1952) and then studied drama and directing for a year at Columbia University. He worked for a time as a script reader for *Columbia Pictures* in New York City. In 1959 he joined the editorial staff of the *New American Library*, leaving that post five years later to become editor in chief at *Dial Press*. He subsequently taught at several colleges and universities, including Sarah



Lawrence College from 1971 to 1978. He was a visiting senior fellow at Princeton University in 1980-1981 and the following year became Glucksman Professor of English and American Letters at New York University.

Doctorow was noted for the facility with which he appropriated genre conceits to illuminate the historical periods in which he set his novels. His 1<sup>st</sup> novel, *“Welcome to Hard Times”* (1960; film 1967), is a philosophical turn on the western genre. In his next book, *“Big as Life”* (1966), he used science fiction to explore the human response to crisis. Doctorow’s proclivity for harvesting characters from history 1<sup>st</sup> became apparent in *“The Book of Daniel”* (1971; film 1983), a fictionalized treatment of the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for espionage in 1953. In *“Ragtime”* (1975; film 1981), historical figures share the spotlight with characters emblematic of the shifting social dynamics of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century America.

Doctorow then turned to the milieu of the Great Depression and its aftermath in the novels *“Loon Lake”* (1980), *“World’s Fair”* (1985), and *“Billy Bathgate”* (1989; film 1991). *“The Waterworks”* (1994) concerns life in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New York. *“City of God”* (2000), consisting of what are ostensibly the journal entries of a writer, splinters into several different narratives, including a detective story and a Holocaust narrative. *“The March”* (2005) follows a fictionalized version of the Union general William Tecumseh Sherman on his infamously destructive trek through Georgia, aimed at weakening the Confederate economy, during the American Civil War. Doctorow trained his sights on historical figures of less eminence in *“Homer and Langley”* (2009), a mythologization of the lives of the Collyer brothers, a pair of reclusive eccentrics whose death in 1947 revealed a nightmarish repository of curiosities and garbage in their Harlem, New York City, brownstone. In *“Andrew’s Brain”* (2014), a cognitive scientist discusses personal losses and the nature of consciousness with a psychiatrist.

Doctorow’s essays were collected in several volumes, including *“Reporting the Universe”* (2003) and *“Creationists: Selected Essays, 1993-2006”* (2006), which contrasts the creative process as it manifests in literature and in science. Additionally, Doctorow wrote the play *“Drinks Before Dinner”* (1<sup>st</sup> performed 1978) and published the short-story collections *“Lives of the Poets”* (1984), *“Sweet Land Stories”* (2004), and *“All the Time in the World”* (2011).

Doctorow was honoured with the National Humanities Medal (1998), the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction (2012), the Gold Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Book Foundation’s Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters (2013), and the U.S. Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction in 2014.

### ***“Ragtime”* (1975)**

*“Ragtime”* is a historical fiction novel that is set in New York City. Doctorow is a New York City native, and after going to school at Kenyon College and Columbia University, he spent a few years publishing books before writing his own and teaching about literature. Doctorow’s works are typically deep in philosophical ponderings and putting famous figures in unconventional situations to push the boundaries of historical fiction, making his writing both controversial and original. As a result,

Doctorow's unique writing style has brought him much positive attention, with *Ragtime* ranking in the top 100 books for the Modern Library and for TIME.

"*Ragtime*" is set in and around New York City, from the start of the century to before World War I. The work puts both fictional and historical figures together in important events and ideas during that pre-war period in American history. The novel's main characters are not named. They are members of a wealthy family in New Rochelle, New York, and they are referred to as Father, Mother, Mother's Younger Brother, Grandfather, and "the little boy." In addition, the narrator is never identified, whether in name or in relation to this family. This family is wealthy because they manufacture flags and fireworks, appealing to the nationalistic mentality of this time period. Their wealth obviously does not solve problems, as Father and Mother struggle with the division of independence and control after Father goes to the North Pole, and Mother's Younger Brother is a genius in their industry yet cannot satisfy his love life.

### Study Questions:

#### "*Ragtime*":

1. What is the significance of the author choosing to open *Ragtime* with its epigraph?
2. What is the event which radicalizes Coalhouse Walker to take actions some might describe as terrorism?
3. What specific element related to the subplot of Tateh speaks to the hypocrisy of certain anti-immigrant agendas?

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### 17.4. N. Scott Momaday (1934-). "*House Made of Dawn*"

**Primary Works:** "*House Made of Dawn*" (1968), "*The Way to Rainy Mountain*" (1969), "*The Names: A Memoir*" (1976), "*The Ancient Child*" (1989).

#### A Brief Biography of N. Scott Momaday

N. Scott Momaday, in full Navarre Scott Momaday, (born February 27, 1934, Lawton, Oklahoma, U.S.), Native American author of many works centred on his Kiowa heritage.

Momaday grew up on an Oklahoma farm and on Southwestern reservations where his parents were teachers. He attended the University of New Mexico (A.B., 1958) and Stanford University (M.A., 1960; Ph.D., 1963), where he was influenced by the poet and critic Yvor Winters. His 1<sup>st</sup> novel, "*House Made of Dawn*" (1968), is his

best-known work. It narrates, from several different points of view, the dilemma of a young man returning home to his Kiowa pueblo after a stint in the U.S. Army. The book won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Momaday's limited-edition collection of Kiowa folktales entitled "*The Journey of Tai-me*" (1967) was enlarged with passages of Kiowa history and his own interpretations of that history as "*The Way to Rainy Mountain*" (1969), illustrated by his father, Alfred Momaday. Native American traditions and a deep concern over human ability to live in harmony with nature permeate Momaday's poetry, which he collected in "*Angle of Geese and Other Poems*" (1974), "*The Gourd Dancer*" (1976), "*Again the Far Morning: New and Selected Poems*" (2011), and "*The Death of Sitting Bear: New and Selected Poems*" (2020). "*The Names: A Memoir*" (1976) tells of his early life and of his respect for his Kiowa ancestors. In 1989 he published his 2<sup>nd</sup> novel, "*The Ancient Child*", which weaves traditional tales and history with a modern urban Kiowa artist's search for his roots. In the "*Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991*" appeared in 1992, "*Circle of Wonder: A Native American Christmas Story*" in 1994, and "*The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages*" in 1997. In 1999 Momaday published "*In the Bear's House*", a collection of paintings, poems, and short stories that examines spirituality among modern Kiowa. His other works included "*Earth Keepers: Reflections on the American Land*" (2020). He was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 2007.

### **"House Made of Dawn" (1975)**

"*House Made of Dawn*" is a 1968 novel by N. Scott Momaday, widely credited as leading the way for the breakthrough of Native American literature into the mainstream. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1969, and has also been noted for its significance in Native American anthropology.

The action of "*House Made of Dawn*" takes place between July 20, 1945, and February 28, 1952. The narration comprises an undated prologue and four dated sections set in the pueblo of Walatowa (Jemez), New Mexico (prologue and sections 1 and 4) and the Los Angeles area (sections 2 and 3).

### **Study Questions:**

#### **"House Made of Dawn":**

1. Silence has both positive and negative value in "*House Made of Dawn*". Compare a passage or an instance of the positive quality of silence, and one showing silence as negative.
2. What does this novel have to say about language? Consider what Tosamah has to say about language and its power, the passages excerpted from questionnaires and legal documents, and Benally's songs. What makes a given use of language benign or destructive?
3. Momaday is a lyric poet and a painter. Analyze selected passages of description as poetic prose, attending to such elements as metaphor, simile, imagery, and so on.

4. Setting and place are very important in this novel. Contrast the settings of Walatowa and Los Angeles, as described in the novel; how do descriptions portray the atmosphere and mood of these places?
5. Language is expressed in both speech and writing. Discuss examples of different kinds of writing in “*House Made of Dawn*” (for instance, Francisco keeps a diary or journal, and Father Olguin reads a diary written by a predecessor). How is writing used and misused?
6. The title's emphasis on sunrise and dawn is elaborated in scenes and images throughout the book. Discuss images of sunrise and dawn and the importance of events that take place at this time of day.
7. The title of the novel refers to a house. What houses or dwelling places are described in the novel, and how do they relate to the book's major themes?
8. The snake is a creature with ambiguous meaning in “*House Made of Dawn*”. Trace references to snakes in the novel to determine possible significance(s).

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. List of Compulsory Reading

Year of Publication	Title	Genre	Author
1630	History Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647	Journal records	William Bradford
1641	To My Dear and Loving Husband	Poem	Anne Bradstreet
1732-1758	Poor Richard Almanack	Almanac	Benjamin Franklin
1776	Common Sense	Pamphlet	Thomas Paine
1779	The House of Night	Poem	Philip Morin Freneau
1799	Edgar Huntley: Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker	Novel	Charles Brockden Brown
1819	Rip Van Winkle	Short story	Washington Irving
1823-1841	The Leatherstocking Tales	5 novels	James Fennimore Cooper
1827	Tamerlane	Poem	Edgar Allan Poe
1836	Nature	Essay	Ralph Waldo Emerson
1845-1885	10 of the most Famous Poems	Poems	Emily Dickinson
1845	Raven	Poem	Edgar Allan Poe
1845	Woman in 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Tract	Margaret Fuller
1850	The Scarlet Letter	Novel	Nathaniel Hawthorne
1851	Moby-Dick	Novel	Herman Melville
1852	Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life among the Lowly	Novel	Harriet Beecher Stowe
1853	12 Years a Slave	Narrative	Solomon Northup
1854	Walden, or Life in the Woods		Henry David Thoreau
1855	Leaves of Grass	Poetry collection	Walt Whitman
1855	The Song of Hiawatha	Epic poem	Henry Wordsworth Longfellow

1870	The Heathen Chinee, or Plain Language from Truthful James	Poem	Francis Brett Harte
1876	Adventures of Tom Sawyer	Novel	Mark Twain
1881	The Portrait of Lady	Novel	Henry James
1882	A Modern Instance	Novel	William Dean Howells
1882	The Prince and the Pauper	Novel	Mark Twain
1885	Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	Novel	Mark Twain
1889	A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court	Novel	Mark Twain
1895	The Red Badge of Courage	Novel	Stephen Crane
1899	Awakening, or A Solitary Soul	Novel	Kate Chopin
1900	Sister Carrie	Novel	Theodore Dreiser
1901	The Octopus: A California Story	Novel	Frank Norris
1901	Up from Slavery	Autobiography	Booker Taliaferro Washington
1903	The Call of the Wild	Novel	Jack London
1904	The Sea-Wolf	Novel	Jack London
1905	The Gift of the Magi	Short story	O. Henry
1905	White Fang	Novel	Jack London
1906	The Jungle	Novel	Upton Sinclair
1909	Martin Eden	Novel	Jack London
1911	Jennie Gerhardt	Novel	Theodore Dreiser
1914	Chicago	Poem	Carl Sandburg
1919	Ten Days That Shook the World		John Reed
1920	Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott	Novel	Sinclair Lewis
1922	Babbitt	Novel	Sinclair Lewis
1923	Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening	Poem	Robert Frost
1925	American Tragedy	Novel	Theodore Dreiser
1925	The Great Gatsby	Novel	F. Scott Fitzgerald
1926	The Sun Also Rises, or Fiesta	Novel	Ernest Hemingway
1926	The Rich Boy	Story	F. Scott Fitzgerald
1928	Home to Harlem	Novel	Festus Claude McKay



1929	A Farewell to Arms	Novel	Ernest Hemingway
1929	The Sound and the Fury	Novel	William Faulkner
1930	A Rose for Emily	Short story	William Faulkner
1930	The Maltese Falcon	Novel	Samuel Dashiell Hammett
1931	The Good Earth	Novel	Pearl S. Buck
1932	Tobacco Road	Novel	Erskine Caldwell
1933	Death in the Woods	Short story	Sherwood Anderson
1937	Of Mice and Men	Novel	John Steinbeck
1937	Their Eyes Were Watching God	Novel	Zora Neale Hurston
1938	U.S.A. trilogy: The 42 <sup>nd</sup> Parallel, 1919, The Big Money	3 novels	John Dos Passos
1939	The Grapes of Wrath	Novel	John Steinbeck
1939	Little Foxes	Play	Lillian Hellman
1940-1959	The Snopes Clan Novels: The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion	3 novels	William Faulkner
1940	For Whom the Bell Tolls	Novel	Ernest Hemingway
1940	Native Son	Novel	Richard Wright
1944	Dangling Man	Novel	Saul Bellow
1945	Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth	Autobio-graphy	Richard Wright
1946	All the King's Men	Novel	Robert Penn Warren
1947	A Streetcar Named Desire	Play	Tennessee Williams
1948	The Young Lions	Novel	Irwin Shaw
1948	A Perfect Day for Bananafish	Story	Jerome David Salinger
1949	Death of a Salesman	Play	Arthur Miller
1950	I, Robot	Short story collection	Isaac Asimov
1951-1978	From Here to Eternity	Trilogy	James Jones
1951	The Catcher in the Rye	Novel	Jerome David Salinger
1952	The Old Man and the Sea	Novel	Ernest Hemingway
1952	Invisible Man	Novel	Ralph Waldo Ellison

1953	Go Tell It on the Mountain	Semiauto-biographical novel	James Baldwin
1953	Fahrenheit 451	Novel	Ray Bradbury
1956	Long Day's Journey into Night	Drama/Play	Eugene O'Neill
1956	Howl	Poem	Allen Ginsberg
1957	On the Road	Novel	Jack Kerouac
1958	Breakfast at Tiffany's	Novella	Truman Capote
1960-2001	Rabbit Series: Rabbit, Run; Rabbit Redux; Rabbit Is Rich; Rabbit at Rest; Rabbit Remembered	5 novels	John Updike
1961	Catch-22	Novel	Joseph Heller
1962	Ship of Fools	Novel	Katherine Anne Porter
1962	Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?	Play	Edward Albee
1964	Herzog	Novel	Saul Bellow
1965	In Cold Blood	Novel	Truman Capote
1968	The Armies of the Night	Nonfiction novel	Norman Mailer
1969	I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	Autobio-graphy	Maya Angelou
1969	Them	Novel	Joyce Carol Oates
1969	Slaughterhouse-Five, or the Children's Crusade	Novel	Kurt Vonnegut
1970	Rich Man, Poor Man	Novel	Irwin Shaw
1971	Blues Ain't No Mocking Bird	Short story	Toni Cade Bambara
1971	Grendel	Novel	John Gardner
1972	The Optimist's Daughter	Novel	Eudora Welty
1978	Buried Child	Play	Sam Shepard
1979	Not Without Laughter	Novel	Langston Hughes
1982	The Color Purple	Novel	Alice Walker
1982	The Running Man	Novel	Stephen King
1986	Thomas and Belulah	Collection of poems	Rita Frances Dove
1986	It	Novel	Stephen King
1987	Beloved	Novel	Toni Morrison
1990	Lucy	Novel	Jamaica Kincaid
1991	The Firm	Novel	John Grisham
1994	The Man in the Black Suit	Short story	Stephen King

1995	The Dream of the Unified Field	Selected poems	Jorie Graham
1996	The Green Mile	Novel	Stephen King
1997	Black Zodiac	Collection of poems	Charles Wright
1998	Bag of Bones	Novel	Stephen King
2011	11/22/63	Novel	Stephen King

### **Appendix 2. American Writers Who Wrote Their Books in English and Won Nobel Prize**

2020 - Louise Glück  
 2016 - Bob Dylan  
 1993 - Toni Morrison  
 1976 - Saul Bellow  
 1962 - John Steinbeck  
 1954 - Ernest Hemingway  
 1949 - William Faulkner  
 1938 - Pearl Buck  
 1936 - Eugene O'Neill  
 1930 - Sinclair Lewis

### **Appendix 3. Winners of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction**

1917	no award	-
1918	His Family	Ernest Poole
1919	The Magnificent Ambersons	Booth Tarkington
1920	no award	-
1921	The Age of Innocence	Edith Wharton
1922	Alice Adams	Booth Tarkington
1923	One of Ours	Willa Cather
1924	The Able McLaughlins	Margaret Wilson
1925	So Big	Edna Ferber
1926	Arrowsmith	Sinclair Lewis (declined)
1927	Early Autumn: A Story of a Lady	Louis Bromfield
1928	The Bridge of San Luis Rey	Thornton Wilder
1929	Scarlet Sister Mary	Julia Peterkin
1930	Laughing Boy	Oliver La Farge
1931	Years of Grace	Margaret Ayer Barnes
1932	The Good Earth	Pearl S. Buck
1933	The Store	T.S. Stribling
1934	Lamb in His Bosom	Caroline Miller
1935	Now in November	Josephine Winslow Johnson
1936	Honey in the Horn	H.L. Davis
1937	Gone with the Wind	Margaret Mitchell

1938	The Late George Apley: A Novel in the Form of a Memoir	J.P. Marquand
1939	The Yearling	Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
1940	The Grapes of Wrath	John Steinbeck
1941	no award	-
1942	In This Our Life	Ellen Glasgow
1943	Dragon's Teeth	Upton Sinclair
1944	Journey in the Dark	Martin Flavin
1945	A Bell for Adano	John Hersey
1946	no award	-
1947	All the King's Men	Robert Penn Warren
1948	Tales of the South Pacific	James A. Michener
1949	Guard of Honor	James Gould Cozzens
1950	The Way West	A.B. Guthrie, Jr.
1951	The Town	Conrad Richter
1952	The Caine Mutiny: A Novel of World War II	Herman Wouk
1953	The Old Man and the Sea	Ernest Hemingway
1954	no award	-
1955	A Fable	William Faulkner
1956	Andersonville	MacKinlay Kantor
1957	no award	-
1958	A Death in the Family**	James Agee
1959	The Travels of Jaimie McPheeters	Robert Lewis Taylor
1960	Advise and Consent	Allen Drury
1961	To Kill a Mockingbird	Harper Lee
1962	The Edge of Sadness	Edwin O'Connor
1963	The Reivers: A Reminiscence	William Faulkner
1964	no award	-
1965	The Keepers of the House	Shirley Ann Grau
1966	The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter	Katherine Anne Porter
1967	The Fixer	Bernard Malamud
1968	The Confessions of Nat Turner	William Styron
1969	House Made of Dawn	N. Scott Momaday
1970	The Collected Stories of Jean Stafford	Jean Stafford
1971	no award	-
1972	Angle of Repose	Wallace Stegner
1973	The Optimist's Daughter	Eudora Welty
1974	no award	-
1975	The Killer Angels	Michael Shaara
1976	Humboldt's Gift	Saul Bellow
1977	no award	-
1978	Elbow Room	James Alan McPherson

1979	The Stories of John Cheever	John Cheever
1980	The Executioner's Song	Norman Mailer
1981	A Confederacy of Dunces**	John Kennedy Toole
1982	Rabbit Is Rich	John Updike
1983	The Color Purple	Alice Walker
1984	Ironweed	William Kennedy
1985	Foreign Affairs	Alison Lurie
1986	Lonesome Dove	Larry McMurtry
1987	A Summons to Memphis	Peter Taylor
1988	Beloved	Toni Morrison
1989	Breathing Lessons	Anne Tyler
1990	The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love	Oscar Hijuelos
1991	Rabbit at Rest	John Updike
1992	A Thousand Acres	Jane Smiley
1993	A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain: Stories	Robert Olen Butler
1994	The Shipping News	E. Annie Proulx
1995	The Stone Diaries	Carol Shields
1996	Independence Day	Richard Ford
1997	Martin Dressler: The Tale of an American Dreamer	Steven Millhauser
1998	American Pastoral	Philip Roth
1999	The Hours	Michael Cunningham
2000	Interpreter of Maladies: Stories	Jhumpa Lahiri
2001	The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay	Michael Chabon
2002	Empire Falls	Richard Russo
2003	Middlesex	Jeffrey Eugenides
2004	The Known World	Edward P. Jones
2005	Gilead	Marilynne Robinson
2006	March	Geraldine Brooks
2007	The Road	Cormac McCarthy
2008	The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao	Junot Díaz
2009	Olive Kitteridge	Elizabeth Strout
2010	Tinkers	Paul Harding
2011	A Visit from the Goon Squad	Jennifer Egan
2012	no award	-
2013	The Orphan Master's Son	Adam Johnson
2014	The Goldfinch	Donna Tartt
2015	All the Light We Cannot See	Anthony Doerr
2016	The Sympathizer	Viet Thanh Nguyen
2017	The Underground Railroad	Colson Whitehead

Note:

\*Prior to 1948 the category was "novel" rather than "fiction".

\*\*Work published and prize awarded posthumously.

#### Appendix 4. Winners of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

1918	Love Songs*	Sara Teasdale
1919	Cornhuskers*	Carl Sandburg
	The Old Road to Paradise	Margaret Widdemer
1920	no award	-
1921	no award	-
1922	Collected Poems	Edwin Arlington Robinson
1923	The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver; A Few Figs from Thistles; "Eight Sonnets" in American Poetry, 1922: A Miscellany	Edna St. Vincent Millay
1924	New Hampshire: A Poem with Notes and Grace Notes	Robert Frost
1925	The Man Who Died Twice	Edwin Arlington Robinson
1926	What's O'Clock**	Amy Lowell
1927	Fiddler's Farewell	Leonora Speyer
1928	Tristram	Edwin Arlington Robinson
1929	John Brown's Body	Stephen Vincent Benét
1930	Selected Poems	Conrad Aiken
1931	Collected Poems of Robert Frost	Robert Frost
1932	The Flowering Stone	George Dillon
1933	Conquistador	Archibald MacLeish
1934	The Collected Verse of Robert Hillyer	Robert Hillyer
1935	Bright Ambush	Audrey Wurdemann
1936	Strange Holiness	Robert P. Tristram Coffin
1937	A Further Range	Robert Frost
1938	Cold Morning Sky	Marya Zaturenska
1939	Selected Poems	John Gould Fletcher
1940	Collected Poems	Mark Van Doren
1941	Sunderland Capture and Other Poems	Leonard Bacon
1942	The Dust Which Is God	William Rose Benét
1943	A Witness Tree	Robert Frost
1944	Western Star**	Stephen Vincent Benét
1945	V-Letter and Other Poems	Karl Shapiro
1946	no award	-
1947	Lord Weary's Castle	Robert Lowell
1948	The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue	W.H. Auden
1949	Terror and Decorum: Poems, 1940-1948	Peter Viereck
1950	Annie Allen	Gwendolyn Brooks
1951	Complete Poems	Carl Sandburg
1952	Collected Poems	Marianne Moore
1953	Collected Poems, 1917-1952	Archibald MacLeish
1954	The Waking: Poems, 1933-1953	Theodore Roethke
1955	The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens	Wallace Stevens
1956	Poems: North & South-A Cold Spring	Elizabeth Bishop

1957	Things of This World	Richard Wilbur
1958	Promises: Poems 1954-1956	Robert Penn Warren
1959	Selected Poems, 1928-1958	Stanley Kunitz
1960	Heart's Needle	W.D. Snodgrass
1961	Times Three: Selected Verse from Three Decades with Seventy New Poems	Phyllis McGinley
1962	Poems	Alan Dugan
1963	Pictures from Breughel and Other Poems: Collected Poems, 1950-1962	William Carlos Williams
1964	At the End of the Open Road	Louis Simpson
1965	77 Dream Songs	John Berryman
1966	Selected Poems, 1930-1965	Richard Eberhart
1967	Live or Die	Anne Sexton
1968	The Hard Hours	Anthony Hecht
1969	Of Being Numerous	George Oppen
1970	Untitled Subjects	Richard Howard
1971	The Carrier of Ladders	W.S. Merwin
1972	Collected Poems	James Wright
1973	Up Country: Poems of New England, New and Selected	Maxine Kumin
1974	The Dolphin	Robert Lowell
1975	Turtle Island	Gary Snyder
1976	Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror	John Ashbery
1977	Divine Comedies	James Merrill
1978	The Collected Poems of Howard Nemerov	Howard Nemerov
1979	Now and Then: Poems, 1976-1978	Robert Penn Warren
1980	Selected Poems	Donald Justice
1981	The Morning of the Poem	James Schuyler
1982	The Collected Poems***	Sylvia Plath
1983	Selected Poems	Galway Kinnell
1984	American Primitive	Mary Oliver
1985	Yin: New Poems	Carolyn Kizer
1986	The Flying Change	Henry Taylor
1987	Thomas and Beulah	Rita Dove
1988	Partial Accounts: New and Selected Poems	William Meredith
1989	New and Collected Poems	Richard Wilbur
1990	The World Doesn't End: Prose Poems	Charles Simic
1991	Near Changes	Mona Van Duyn
1992	Selected Poems	James Tate
1993	The Wild Iris	Louise Glück
1994	Neon Vernacular: New and Selected Poems	Yusef Komunyakaa
1995	The Simple Truth	Philip Levine

1996	The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems, 1974-1994	Jorie Graham
1997	Alive Together: New and Selected Poems	Lisel Mueller
1998	Black Zodiac	Charles Wright
1999	Blizzard of One	Mark Strand
2000	Repair	C.K. Williams
2001	Different Hours	Stephen Dunn
2002	Practical Gods	Carl Dennis
2003	Moy Sand and Gravel	Paul Muldoon
2004	Walking to Martha's Vineyard	Franz Wright
2005	Delights & Shadows	Ted Kooser
2006	Late Wife	Claudia Emerson
2007	Native Guard	Natasha Trethewey
2008	Time and Materials: Poems, 1997-2005	Robert Hass
	Failure	Philip Schultz
2009	The Shadow of Sirius	W.S. Merwin
2010	Versed	Rae Armantrout
2011	The Best of It: New and Selected Poems	Kay Ryan
2012	Life on Mars	Tracy K. Smith
2013	Stag's Leap	Sharon Olds
2014	3 Sections	Vijay Seshadri
2015	Digest	Gregory Pardlo
2016	Ozone Journal	Peter Balakian
2017	Olio	Tyehimba Jess

Note:

\*The 1918 and 1919 prizes were sponsored by Columbia University and the Poetry Society of America, as Joseph Pulitzer had made no provision for a poetry prize. The Pulitzer Board later formalized the prize.

\*\*Awarded posthumously.

\*\*\*Work published and prize awarded posthumously.

### Appendix 5. Winners of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama

1917	no award	-
1918	Why Marry?	Jesse Lynch Williams
1919	no award	-
1920	Beyond the Horizon	Eugene O'Neill
1921	Miss Lulu Bett	Zona Gale
1922	Anna Christie	Eugene O'Neill
1923	Icebound	Owen Davis
1924	Hell-Bent fer Heaven	Hatcher Hughes
1925	They Knew What They Wanted	Sidney Howard
1926	Craig's Wife	George Kelly
1927	In Abraham's Bosom	Paul Green
1928	Strange Interlude	Eugene O'Neill
1929	Street Scene	Elmer L. Rice
1930	The Green Pastures	Marc Connelly



1931	Alison's House	Susan Glaspell
1932	Of Thee I Sing	George S. Kaufman (writer), Morrie Ryskind (writer), and Ira Gershwin (lyricist)
1933	Both Your Houses	Maxwell Anderson
1934	Men in White	Sidney Kingsley
1935	The Old Maid	Zoe Akins
1936	Idiot's Delight	Robert E. Sherwood
1937	You Can't Take It with You	Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman
1938	Our Town	Thornton Wilder
1939	Abe Lincoln in Illinois	Robert E. Sherwood
1940	The Time of Your Life	William Saroyan
1941	There Shall Be No Night	Robert E. Sherwood
1942	no award	-
1943	The Skin of Our Teeth	Thornton Wilder
1944	no award	-
1945	Harvey	Mary Chase
1946	State of the Union	Russel Crouse and Howard Lindsay
1947	no award	-
1948	A Streetcar Named Desire	Tennessee Williams
1949	Death of a Salesman	Arthur Miller
1950	South Pacific	Richard Rodgers (composer), Oscar Hammerstein II (lyricist/writer), and Joshua Logan (writer)
1951	no award	-
1952	The Shrike	Joseph Kramm
1953	Picnic	William Inge
1954	The Teahouse of the August Moon	John Patrick
1955	Cat on a Hot Tin Roof	Tennessee Williams
1956	The Diary of Anne Frank	Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich
1957	Long Day's Journey into Night*	Eugene O'Neill
1958	Look Homeward, Angel	Ketti Frings
1959	J.B.	Archibald MacLeish
1960	Fiorello!	Jerome Weidman (writer), George Abbott (writer), Jerry Bock (composer), and Sheldon Harnick (lyricist)
1961	All the Way Home	Tad Mosel

1962	How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying	Frank Loesser (composer/lyricist) and Abe Burrows (writer)
1963	no award	-
1964	no award	-
1965	The Subject Was Roses	Frank D. Gilroy
1966	no award	-
1967	A Delicate Balance	Edward Albee
1968	no award	-
1969	The Great White Hope	Howard Sackler
1970	No Place to Be Somebody	Charles Gordone
1971	The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds	Paul Zindel
1972	no award	-
1973	That Championship Season	Jason Miller
1974	no award	-
1975	Seascape	Edward Albee
1976	A Chorus Line	Michael Bennett (choreographer/director), James Kirkwood (writer), Nicholas Dante (writer), Marvin Hamlisch (composer), and Edward Kleban (lyricist)
1977	The Shadow Box	Michael Cristofer
1978	The Gin Game	Donald L. Coburn
1979	Buried Child	Sam Shepard
1980	Talley's Folly	Lanford Wilson
1981	Crimes of the Heart	Beth Henley
1982	A Soldier's Play	Charles Fuller
1983	'Night, Mother	Marsha Norman
1984	Glengarry Glen Ross	David Mamet
1985	Sunday in the Park with George	Stephen Sondheim (composer/lyricist) and James Lapine (writer)
1986	no award	-
1987	Fences	August Wilson
1988	Driving Miss Daisy	Alfred Uhry
1989	The Heidi Chronicles	Wendy Wasserstein
1990	The Piano Lesson	August Wilson
1991	Lost in Yonkers	Neil Simon
1992	The Kentucky Cycle	Robert Schenkkan
1993	Angels in America: Millennium Approaches	Tony Kushner

1994	Three Tall Women	Edward Albee
1995	The Young Man from Atlanta	Horton Foote
1996	Rent*	Jonathan Larson
1997	no award	-
1998	How I Learned to Drive	Paula Vogel
1999	Wit	Margaret Edson
2000	Dinner with Friends	Donald Margulies
2001	Proof	David Auburn
2002	Topdog/Underdog	Suzan-Lori Parks
2003	Anna in the Tropics	Nilo Cruz
2004	I Am My Own Wife	Doug Wright
2005	Doubt: A Parable	John Patrick Shanley
2006	no award	-
2007	Rabbit Hole	David Lindsay-Abaire
2008	August: Osage County	Tracy Letts
2009	Ruined	Lynn Nottage
2010	Next to Normal	Tom Kitt (composer) and Brian Yorkey (writer/lyricist)
2011	Clybourne Park	Bruce Norris
2012	Water by the Spoonful	Quiara Alegría Hudes
2013	Disgraced	Ayad Akhtar
2014	The Flick	Annie Baker
2015	Between Riverside and Crazy	Stephen Adly Guirgis
2016	Hamilton	Lin-Manuel Miranda
2017	Sweat	Lynn Nottage

Note:

\*Awarded posthumously.

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