

AML 2011—Notes.**American History and American Literature**

Overview

- I. Beginnings to 1800 / Absolutism (Dichotomous Thinking)
 - A. Visions and Voyages (1400s to 1600s)
 - Exploration Narratives.
 - B. The Examined Life (1620-1750)
 1. Wealthy English Landowners in Virginia/South (MD, VA, NC, SC, GA) – Florida is Spanish until 1763
 - John Smith, Native Americans, Slavery roots and sustains
 2. Puritans in the North → New England (ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT) – 1620, Roots of Democracy
 - "jeruSALEM" – Salem Witch Trials, Thanksgiving, Democracy

Foundation of Religion vs. Money → Roots of Civil War in Postcolonial State

 3. The Dutch → Mid Atlantic (NY, NJ, DE, PA) (Dutch/German) Business
 4. African Slave → Settle All Areas (1619 approx start date of slavery in Colonies)
 - C. American Dream (1750-1800) / Rationalism (1700-1789) – Colonial-Federal Period.

America Begins to Speak for itself / North vs. South emerges / Logic not Violence—Lessons in Argument—Democratic Republic

"Europe was created by history. America was created by philosophy." – Margaret Thatcher.

"History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake." – James Joyce

 1. Thirteen Colonies
 2. American Revolution
 3. Start of the United States
- II. American Romantic Period (1800-1860)
 - A. Identity Stories (1800-1820)—Irving, PostColonialism
 - B. Main Romantics (1825-1850)
 1. Transcendentalists—Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller
 2. Dark Romantics/Gothics—Poe, Hawthorne, Melville
 - C. American Renaissance (1850-1860/65...)
 - *Moby Dick*, *Scarlet Letter*, *Leaves of Grass*, *Walden*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
 - Slave Narratives (1845-1860)

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American History and Literature -- Settlement

→From Exploration to Settlement

1492—Columbus Lands in Bahamas/Hispanola

1528-1536—Cabeza de Vaca gets lost in Florida

1586—Roanoke VA “The Lost Colony”

1607—Jamestown, VA settlement

1610-1611—Henry Hudson Explores mid-Atlantic (New York, NJ)

1619—Slaves introduced to Jamestown, VA

1620—Puritans land at Plymouth Rock

Puritans settle New England (ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT)

Dutch Settle Mid-Atlantic (NY, NJ, DE, PA)

Wealthy British South (VA, MD, NC, SC, GA)

Slaves settle all of American Colonies.

Conflict of Religion:

(476-1517) – One form of Western Christianity –Catholicism and the Catholic Church in Rome

1414 Renaissance Begins

1517 Martin Luther – Germany begins the Protestant Revolution/Split

1534 Henry VIII – Church of England (Anglican/Episcopalian)

1560 Puritans Begin—Wish to “purify” the church

Believed in a “bottom up” model of election, rather than the Absolutist model of “top down.” Helped to rekindle Democratic thought, but was still absolutist in scope.

1610 Charles I of England goes after the Puritans—Exodus to colonies

1640-1650 English Civil War: “Cavaliers” (wealthy British) vs. “Roundheads” (Puritans).

1660s Charles II Restored to the Throne, then James II, then William (of Orange) and \ Mary

Christopher Columbus – (1451-1506) [Picture](#)

Voyages from 1492-1504

Cabeza de Vaca (1490-1558) [picture](#)

Adventure in the Unknown Interior of America (1555)

Acculturation to natives for survival and cross-cultural views.

Voyages 1527-1537

[Map of his Voyages](#)

John Smith (1580-1631) [picture](#) [Powhatan](#)

The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles (1624)

William Bradford (1590-1657) [picture](#)

- Comes over on the Mayflower, lands at Plymouth
- Becomes a leader of the Puritans [Pilgrims], as Governor
Of Plymouth Plantation (1647) [details 1608—1647]

Puritans

- Wanted to “purify” the Church
- Broke from Catholic Church and Church of England
- Believed in predestination:
 - only the “select” get to heaven
 - hard work—Puritan Work Ethic
- Believed in Private Study of the Bible, hence the populace needed to be educated (literate)
- Keeping the Sabbath was not optional
- Religious Freedom and democratic ideals (bottom up model of thinking), but still Absolutist in their thinking about their own religions.
- Believed in a general concept that Man was Naturally Evil and born in Sin. However, there is little outlet for this psychology, and **REPRESSION** begins to play a large role in American Literary Thinking.

Puritans write in **PLAIN STYLE**—writing that stresses simplicity and clarity of expression. They are not trying to be creative. It is modeled after the style (in English) of the Bible (King James Version).

Puritans also make use of **ALLUSION**—a reference to another story, artwork, or history in order to help to put the moment in context and to add understanding.

Major sources of Allusions (including symbolic imagery):

- Greek Myth
- The Bible
- Shakespeare
- Other Literature [after 1940]
- [modern – films, memes, pop culture – however these seem to have little staying power]

17th Century England also followed different **SYNTAX**—the rules and logic that guide how words in a language (including slang) are used and put together.

John Winthrop (1587-1649) [Picture](#)

Helps to found the Massachusetts Bay Colony (MBC)—lands at Salem (1630) [image](#)
“A Model of Christian Charity” – 1630 –

- “For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill” (ref to Matt 5.14-5.15) [multiple references in culture](#) [original Bible reference](#)

[Simple map of New England](#)
[Colonial Map of New England](#)

Roger Williams (1603-1683) [picture](#)

Part of Massachusetts Bay Colony (1631-1635)

Major beliefs ran contrary to the colony's theocratic ideals:

1. King cannot claim or give land that already belonged to the Native Americans
2. No innocent person should be forced to worship or swear in court.
3. The MBC Puritans should leave the C of E and repent being a part of it
4. Civil courts had no jurisdiction over spiritual matters (separation of Church and State authority)

Becomes unwelcome in both Plymouth and Boston/Salem

Settles Rhode Island (Providence) after being exiled in 1635 (1636)

"Letter to the Town of Providence"

Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) [picture](#)

Poetess (published without knowledge at first) 1650

Groundbreaking of sorts for a Puritan woman to voice her ideas through poetry as she did, and to invoke the Greeks in doing so. Simple joys in life, strength in trying times of loss, and sense of true faith pervades her rather humanistic experience poetry.

--Poetic Devices used: INVERSION "Yoda Speak" – inverting word order for poetic reason (rhyme, meter, emotional impact)

METAPHOR – saying one thing is another thing in order to convey a symbolic comparison.

APHORISM – A statement of Simple Truth (plain truth stated simply)

Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705) [image](#) [image 2](#)

Judgement always at hand. "The Day of Doom" (1662) first Puritan bestseller
 Common Hymn meter ("Fourteener") – alternating rhymed lines of eight and six Syllables

"His pen did once Meat from the Eater take
 And now he's gone beyond the Eater's reach
 His body once so thin was next to none
 From hence he's to unbodied spirits flown.
 Once his rare skill did all diseases heal
 And he doth nothing now uneasy feel.
 He to his paradise is joyful come
 And waits with joy to see his Day of Doom."

--Cotton Mather (epitaph for Wigglesworth)

JEREMIAD – long work warning of evil and downfall to come.

What role does the doomsday/apocalyptic vision or fascination play in the construction of a worldview? What purpose does it serve?

Related thematic discussion: Leonard Cohen lyric—“When you’re not feeling Holy/ Your Lonliness says that you’ve sinned” -- “Sisters of Mercy” (20th cent.)

Cotton Mather (1663-1728) [image](#)

The Wonders of the Invisible World (1692)

Magnalia Christi Americana (1702)

The Negro Christianized (1706)

The Christian Philosopher (1720)

Diary (1681-1724)

Agricola (“farmer”) (1725)

Manductio ad Ministerium (1726)

Tried to use science as a form of proof of the “Invisible world,” but gets is upside down. However, his approaches to things like inoculation do save lives and indicate a practicality that unpins his sense of religion. Found satisfaction in doing good works in society, even though at times he is demonized for his role in the Salem Witch Trials.

Salem Witch Trials (Feb 1692-May1693) [image](#)

Underpinning Gender themes in his stereotypes—“A People of God in the Devil’s Territories” Forest is considered a “wild” place, one of the “devil” ...civilized society is considered “of God” and good. Matriarchal vs. Patriarchal imagery, as well as setting up the Romantic/Classical dichotomy of later Romantic Period

[Link to Clip from Tim Burton film](#) this clip helps to show the stereotypes established here and how they still can pervade our culture.

William Byrd II (1674-1744) [image](#) [his plantation house](#)

Southern Planter – Opposing view of the New England Puritan. Aristocratic in nature and usually by birth. Usually belonged to the Church of England. Enjoyed the worldly aspects of life, which Puritans shunned.

A “Cavalier” – holdover from the British Civil War and the Commonwealth of Cromwell (who was Puritan “Roundhead”)

Renaissance man—privilege of wealth: Westover Plantation (2,000 acres in VA).

1728 – Laying out the border of Virginia and North Carolina. Often invoked satire and wit in his writing.

The History of the Dividing Line vs. The Diary of William Byrd (Secret History)

Examples of Slave Cruelty in the Diary:

September 3, 1709: I ate roast chicken for dinner. In the afternoon I beat Jenny for throwing water on the couch.

December 1, 1709: Eugene was whipped again for pissing in bed and Jenny for concealing it.

December 3, 1709: Eugene pissed abed again for which I made him drink a pint of piss.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) [Image](#) “The Last Puritan”

Deeply involved in observation of the physical world. \

Was instrumental in bringing about the “Great Awakening” – Spiritual Revival in response to emerging Enlightenment thinking.

“Great Awakening” – 1730s-1740s – an opening of the Church to “unregenerate” Christians as a way of filling the falling off enthusiasm for Puritan Doctrine.

Edwards—unrelenting in his pulpit, leader of Northampton, MA. Eventually made president of Princeton (College of New Jersey). He eventually died after a smallpox inoculation.

Serves as a bridge between two ages—Absolutism and Enlightenment thinking.

Sometimes his thinking prefigures the Transcendentalism of Emerson...minus the absolutist outlook. However, seeking a higher power in the natural world is very much like that.

“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

Colonial / Federal Period (1700-1789) “Path to Revolution”

Shift from ABSOLUTISM to RATIONALISM

Absolutism (pre-1700) – Right or Wrong—no middle ground. Kings had (mostly) absolute power. Issues are all or nothing. Reliance on tradition and might.

Rationalism (1700-1789/1800) – Question evidence, consider cause and effect. Take the good from tradition, religion, and leadership, but try to change the bad. Use logic and reasoning, not blind faith in tradition.

→In America, sparked by the Salem Witch Trials and the influence by Europe.

→In England, sparked by the “social hangover” from the Restoration (1660-1714)

Rationalism is backed up by the The Enlightenment (looked to the Renaissance, which looked to Ancient Greece and Rome)

Rise of DEISM→mixes religion and rationalism in almost an inverse why that the Puritans did. Believes that God made the universe like a wind up toy, and science is a way to understand Gods potential plan or how to understand the presence of the devine. ["and God said..."](#)

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) [image](#)

In many ways, the original “American Dream” – Born in Boston, runs away to Philadelphia (migration from New England to Mid-Atlantic in his youth). He creates his own “brand” of sorts, and cultivates a public persona as one that covers a gamut of traits. Practical and enlightened, yet shrewd and political.

Franklin was a DEIST—one who believed in God in that Nature and Reason were the way to know and understand the Divine. “Clockwork Universe” sets the stage for a nice melding of religion and science as compatible.

Understood the Nature of Man to be good and innocent, but failing and learning through failure. Self-reflection upon the “blank slate” (based on John Locke).

The Autobiography (page 496---entry into the city)

Poor Richard’s Almanac (1733) – “The Way to Wealth”

Aphorisms of Poor Richard

Heavily uses IRONY to express his ideals

Various visions of America in Philosophy, shaped by Deist outlook—America is not a finished product, and indeed exists only in the people who are its citizens. Hence, America should be continuously self-reflective.

[join or die](#) (1754) [possible seal](#) [Gadsden Flag image](#) (1775-1776)

[Advice to a Young Man on Choice of a Mistress](#)

Crèvecoeur (1735-1813) [image](#)

“Broken Heart” in French.

1769—Settles in Orange County, New York, and becomes an “American Farmer”

Letters from an American Farmer (1782)

In many ways, finally formalizes the question, “What is an American?”

Articulates the ideas that rich and poor are not so far apart as in Europe, and that in many ways America can be a class-less society.

Sets up certain stereotypes in that Americans are less sophisticated than Europeans, but in many ways more in touch with their sense of self and sense of practicality. Perhaps in a way Americans are free from history in a way that Europeans are not, and so they may be the closest thing to a Locke “blank slate” that man can offer. One of the founding guides of the eventual Romantic stereotype of the “Noble Savage.”

However, reveals the contradictions within his thinking—raises the question: is he projecting his hopes for the best, or just describing the best of America.

Question of Slavery horrifies him. “Charles-Town”

John Adams (1735-1826) [image](#) 2nd President of US

Abigail Adams (1744-1818)

“It is more important that innocence be protected than it is that guilt be punished, for guilt and crimes are so frequent in this world that they cannot all be punished. But if innocence itself is brought to the bar and condemned, perhaps to die, then the citizen will say, ‘whether I do good or whether I do evil is immaterial, for innocence itself is no protection,’ and if such an idea as that were to take hold in the mind of the citizen that would be the end of security whatsoever.”

--Delivered in defense of the Soldiers of the Boston Massacre (1770)... founded on Blackstone’s Ratio (better that ten guilty men go free than one innocent man be punished—1765) Innocent until proven Guilty (an Enlightenment belief).

Interesting glimpse of intersection of Private and Political/Public life.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) [image](#)

Author of the Declaration of Independence; 3rd President of the United States ; First Secretary of State ; Minister to France ; Governor of VA, author of Virginia Statue for Religious Freedom ; and Founder and Architect of the [University of Virginia](#). Lived at [Monticello](#) in [Charlottesville, VA](#). [Jefferson’s Grave](#)

Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) [image \(disputed\)](#) [image 2](#)

First major Slave Narrative in American Literature.

[Triangle Trade involving Slaves](#) [Classic Triangle Trade](#)

Slave trade was the “Middle Passage” -- kidnapping and movement of slaves from Africa to Carribean or America.

[Image of Slave Ship Cargo](#)

[Clip from Amistad](#)

Charles Brocken Brown (1771-1810) [image](#)

Often seen as America’s first real novelist. One of the first to make a full living by writing, but did not fully succeed. Born wealthy in to a Quaker Philadelphia family. Moves to New York.

Novels (1798-1801):

Wieland (most famous)

Ormond

Edgar Huntly

Arthur Mervyn

Alcuin

Clara Howard

Jane Talbot

His novels explore psychology, and question the nature of “fact” – they are making the novel distinctly “American” in scope. Also, one could argue that his novels have a feminist slant for the time. *Wieland* is perhaps the most fascinating and gothic.

TIMELINE RECAP:

Absolutism (--1700) → Rationalism (1700-1789/1790)

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Life gets better, easier.

1730-1750→ Industrial Revolution influences England, the New England Colonies.

Hence, sweatshops rise due to increased demand.

Though the Enlightenment and Rationalism made things better, there is a darker side to it via the industrial revolution and thinking of Pure Science. Hence, the Great Awakening in America (spiritual revival). Industry looked at people like replaceable parts in a machine.

→people become “worthless”

→they begin to reject or question the concept of the “Absolute Rationalist” – the pure logic scientist

→People React to this and begin to reexamine Humanity and the Role of Emotion
What are the things that Science and Logic cannot explain?

Hence Absolutism→Rationalism→Romanticism (England 1790-1830) (USA 1800-1860)

The American Romantic Period (1800-1860) [Image Fuseli the Nightmare](#)

A. England (1790-1830) – Poets react to the Industrial Revolution, loss of pastoral lifestyle, and the political impact of the [French Revolution](#) (1789). Influence on US

→Two Generations:

(1790-1810) Wordsworth & Coleridge (*Lyrical Ballads* 1798)

Blake (*Songs of Innocence & Experience* 1789/1794)

(1810-1830) Byron, Keats, Shelley, Mary Shelley

B. United States (1800-1860) Influence on US from Europe, England, Germany, France. However, US is in a special Postcolonial state, seeking its own identity as a Nation at a time when Romanticism sought to figure out the nature of Identity. Hence, it lasts longer in US and culminates (and ends) in Civil War.

War of 1812 (second war of independence)

Louisiana Purchase (1803)

4 parts to American Romantics:

1. Identity Romantics (1800-1825)

- a. Washington Irving (“Legend of Sleepy Hollow”; “Rip Van Winkle”) (NY)
- b. Charles Brockden Brown (*Wieland*) (PA)
- c. Fireside Poets – [Bryant, Longfellow, Holmes] (New England)

2. Second Generation American Romantics (1825-1860)

Two types of this generation:

- a. Transcendentalist (Concord, MA;--New England)
 - Ralph Waldo Emerson (“Nature”; “Self Reliance”)
 - Henry David Thoreau (“Resistance to Civil Government”; *Walden*)
 - Margaret Fuller (*The Dial*)
- b. Dark Gothics
 - Edgar Allan Poe (“The Fall of the House of Usher”; “The Raven”) (VA)
 - Nathaniel Hawthorne (“Young Goodman Brown”; *The Scarlet Letter*) (MA)
 - Herman Melville (*Moby Dick*; “Bartleby, the Scrivener”)

3. The American Renaissance (1850-1855)

- ➔ Romantic writers explode in art, creating many of the classics in a short period of time. Major Lasting Symbols of the era emerge. *Moby-Dick*, *Scarlet Letter*, *House of the Seven Gables*, *House of Usher*; *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Walden Pond*, *Leaves of Grass*—Walt Whitman,

4. The Slave Narrative (1830-1864)

Begins with Equiano (1789 narrative)

Frederick Douglass, William & Ellen Craft; Jacob D. Green; Harriet Jacobs; Harriet Wilson (the “Free Black” narrative);

Elements in a Slave Narrative:

1. Needed to be truthful—introduced by a white person
2. Need to speak for those who could not—collective element to narration.
3. Seeks its own voice amid pre-determined expectations and stereotypes (part of the postcolonial nature of the narrative).



THE HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES - 1848 - SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Elements of the Hero – Classic vs. Romantic (both exist in the Romantic Period)

Classic (ethos, logos)	Romantic (pathos, logos)
Older (35-50) Experienced and Knowing (teacher) Sense of Humor based on tradition, law Respected, well-known, has a good reputation Well trained, disciplined, formal learning, logic-based thinking Loves the city, has refined taste for things Works for king and country Tends to be based on the British model	Younger (18-30) Innocent and Pure of Purpose Based on sense of right and wrong (not law) Misfit, outcast, rebel, shuns society Knows people with deep natural understanding Loves nature, keeps life simple, no material goods Seeks higher purpose in knowledge (usually starting with self).
<u>Examples:</u> James Bond Obi-Wan Kenobi/Yoda King Arthur Darth Vader Tom Sawyer Frederick Douglass C-3PO Starbuck/Ishmael	<u>Examples:</u> Indiana Jones Han Solo Natty Bumppo Boba Fett Huck Finn Jacob D. Green R2-D2 Ahab / Queequeg

Basic Principals of Romanticism:

- Emphasis on Youth
- Nature and the Natural, sometimes supernatural (in a non-religious sense)
- Emotion, Feelings, Passion
- Seeing the Extraordinary in everyday life
- “Carpe Diem”
- Society and Material Goods corrupt and distract from Natural Truth
- Question Authority

Guiding Literary Theories

Psychoanalysis (Freud / Lacan)

OEDIPUS COMPLEX – Mommy ← → ME ← → Daddy

--father and son battling for power over “mommy” attention.

Baby understands that daddy has “phallus”—that thing which represents the Power the baby wants to get mommy back. ([Clip](#) [starwars III](#) [star wars iV](#))
 Hence, the father and child are at odds to claim “mommy” and the “phallus” leading to either the death/castration of the father, or the castration of the son. However, the potential patricide (if successful) will haunt the consciousness of the father.

The Oedipus Metaphor also extends beyond to the next level, with Eteocles and Polynices (sons of Oedipus); battling over missing father’s power, slaying each other simultaneously—hence, “civil war” among sons once daddy is gone/castrated.

New Historicism

Puts literary texts back into historical context in order to uncover true or lost meanings do to hegemonic or teleological narrative structures. A scholar can better understand a story by incorporating lost little details that fill out the larger historical context and picture.

Terms to know:

POWER – power is not something someone has, it is more a force that gets directed and controlled the way a dam controls a river. Institutions tend to direct it, social structures tend to manipulate and sustain it.

DISCOURSE—the language and manner in which relationships and ideas are discussed in relation to power.

THICK DESCRIPTION—bringing the text back into a historical context using historical detail and description, no matter how small. As a result, one can see the different and sometimes contradictory flows of power within a society.

EPISTEMOLOGY—the study of how things have come to be the way they currently are. It basically tries to trace the history of ideas and how knowledge comes to be—especially with regard to the concept of Power.

SELF-POSITIONING—understanding that one is a production of Power and Discourse oneself, and that can enable bias to take hold. It is a practice of setting aside (as much as possible) one's current ideas to understand the manner in which Power flowed in a different time. Self-awareness of the lens through which a reader is seeing the text.

Some scholars to know:

[Michel Foucault](#) (grandfather, establisher of methods). Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Benn Michaels, Jane Tompkins (*Sensational Designs*), Michael Davitt Bell (*The Development of American Romance*)

Major ideas:

- The time of a work influences how it is produced (as well as the author).
- The time of a work influence how an audience perceives works.
- Creating a “text” is embedded in a network of material practices.
- study of a “text” is subject to the same types of forces that created that text, and therefore no true analysis can be “outside” of the forces it studies
- Literary and non-literary “texts” are equally important in the epistemology of Power and Knowledge. Therefore, they are inseparably intertwined with each other.
- No discourse can cement any universal sense of “Truth” or “Immutability”

Washington Irving (1783-1859) [image](#)

Born in New York, first major writer to grow up post-1776, comes of age in America, not the Colonies. –Grows up in Dutch-Settled New York. As a result, he looks to the Dutch as an alternate identity to the British Patriarchy. Eventually settles at [Sunnyside](#) in New York. [Sleepy Hollow](#) in the Hudson River Valley becomes his most famous area. Is the first to call New York “Gotham.” (1807 in *Salmagundi*)

Has various pen names for literary effect—Jonathan Oldstyle, [Diedrich Knickerbocker](#), Geoffrey Crayon, “Washington Irving” (character of himself),

Major Works:

1802 –Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle

1807-08 – *Salmagundi* (journal)

1809 – *A History of the New York*

1819-1820 – *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon*

1822 – *Bracebridge Hall*

1824 – *Tales of a Traveller*

1828 – *Life and Travels of Christopher Columbus*

1855-1859 – *Life of George Washington*

Uses “nested narration” and pseudonyms to add layers to his stories. Helps to pre-antique a history of a very young nation. Gives it a rich subversive history rather than one that is “official” and then goes to help to make it official.

Example: “Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

Irving [Crayon [Knickerbocker [Hudson Townsfolk { Land itself--history }]]]

Layers create different and multiple points of view, each adding commentary and enriching the tale and story. Mostly using satire and inflated language to deal with issues that are really quite scary psychologically in a postcolonial way. Trying to assuage the fears of an emerging nation.

Points of View:

First person – 1st (I, We, Us, Our) -- More direct and personal, but also more unreliable at times.

Second Person – 2nd (You, Your) – only used to bring the reader into the experience or add moral commentary (Greek Chorus style).

Third Person – 3rd (He, She, It, They) – there are three types:

3rd Objective—reader only knows what is presented visually. No thoughts, no attachment to any one character in a personal sense. Like an announcer watching a football game. Requires reader to “read” actions and pay close attention to words.

3rd Limited—reader sees thoughts of one person, but is objective to rest of the characters. Narrator is like a “chase camera” or guardian angel for one character. Attaches reader closer to one character over others.

3rd Omniscient—Narrator is god-like. Can see all and tell all, jump from place to place, move through time and memories and space. Used to show all characters to show complexity of situations and morals.

Lydia Sigourney

William Cullen Bryant

William Apess

Lydia Maria Child

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882): [Image](#) (MA/New England)—Boston/Concord

Wrote Essays and Poetry...no short stories.

Transcendentalism – In many ways, he is considered to be a father of American

TRANSCENDENTALISM → Romantic Philosophy

In America, has roots in Puritanism/Unitarianism

“Feminist” in Scope—matriarchal with focus on Nature

Very Positive in outlook – Sunshine Boys (Emerson/Thoreau)

Pantheistic—“God is everywhere and flows through all things,
especially Nature” Think of how Obi Wan

describes the [The Force](#) in Star Wars. [Another link](#)

There is an emphasis on Feeling and Emotion as an unscientific
but accurate sense of things. The opposite of this would be
CYNICISM—bitterly distrustful. The middle ground would be
Realism, which comes after the Civil War. This Cynicism gets
expressed through the Dark Romantics or Gothics.

--Believed that there was an “ideal” state that transcended physical and empirical
states and could only be reached by feeling and being in touch with Nature and emotion.

Major Works

Nature (1836)

“The Over-Soul”; “Self-Reliance”; “The American Scholar”;

He embraced Paradox, and his writings are filled with Aphorisms. He is a very quotable
“hallmark” inspirational writer, but he is also commonly taken out of context.

Major Landmark work was *Nature* (1836)—Becomes the guiding manifesto of
Transcendentalism of sorts.

Nature (1836): Major Landmark work was Nature (1836)—Becomes the guiding manifesto of Transcendentalism of sorts.

--Our age is retrospective. There are new men, new thoughts, new lands. No questions which are unanswerable—if the order of things can spark a question, then it can satisfy it as well.

Question: To What End is Nature? -- The Universe is made of Nature (me) and the Soul (not me)

Four Factors of Nature:

Commodity—useful acts using Nature (think basis roots in Deism)

Beauty—perceptions of natural forms as delight; higher spiritual noble acts; new creations from the combination of both.

Language—Words are signs of Natural Facts; Natural is symbol of spiritual facts (think metaphor); Nature is Symbol of the Spirit.

Discipline—Discipline is the understanding of intellectual Truths
Nature conforms to the Spirit.

Chapter I:

If a man wants to be alone, let him be with Nature, not Art. From nature, he gets a presence of the sublime. Most Adults cannot truly see Nature—but the child can. Setting always fits mood or emotion. In the woods (Nature) there is perpetual Youth—the glimpse into the self –[Emersonian Eye](#); Hint of an occult relationship between man and Nature. Nature always wears the colors of the Spirit.

Chapter II: Commodity (level 1)

Lowest form of Nature, but perfect because everyone understands it. it is Process and Result—not just material—“useful arts” combinations of wit and man.

A man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work.

Chapter III: Beauty (level 2)

--The perception of natural forces as a delight

--There is a presence of a higher, spiritual element (noble act)everything shines is thoughts are of equal greatness to acts.

--An object of intellect leading to the creation of Art—not for barren contemplation, but for new creation. Taste/art

--the soul seeks beauty, in the invisible element in the experience of the creative act of art. The meaning in oneness

--Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are part of the same “Allness”

Chapter IV: Language (Level 3)

- Words are signs of natural fact. Everything is taken from some material Appearance
- Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact—metaphor connects it all. The state of mind becomes like a picture to read and vice-versa.
- The Whole of Nature is a Metaphor for the Human Mind. The Relation between mind and matter stands in the will of God. Any man can Know it—the light of higher laws shines through it. A fact is the end or last issue (product) of the spirit. (cyclical).

Romantic Thought:

Basic dichotomy for starters—however, there were many shades of these thoughts.

Transcendentalist Thought	Dark Romantics / Gothic
<p>God is in Everything / Man is Naturally Good Literature can have a “Moral” as Meaning (a teleological lesson) Idealism based on the concept of a Platonic Ideal –perfection (from Plato)—even though man can never fully reach it, it does not mean one should not try. Very Positive in outlook – Sunshine Boys (Emerson/Thoreau) Pantheistic—“God is everywhere and flows through all things, especially Nature” There is an emphasis on Feeling and Emotion as an unscientific but accurate sense of things. The opposite of this would be CYNICISM—bitterly distrustful.</p>	<p>Questions God / Unsure of God (Agnostic, yet belief in supernatural—however even if there is a God it does not mean he is good or cares). Man is Naturally Evil / Self-Destructive (Byronic Hero) Literature is for the exploration and expression of emotions and ideas, but does not need to be teleological in scope or have a Moral—untidy themes and Allegory do not need to instruct, they need only express. Ideals may exist, but they are unrealistic and cause for self-destruction, madness. Violence will happen—it will find you even if you don’t go looking for it or engage it. Very Cynical and Ironic in scope—Irony plays a huge part in the Gothic (in a negative way). Common elements: Doppelganger/Double Nature does not care Man is naturally evil Melancholy, darkness, decay, madness Heavily psychological</p>
<p>Resource to look at : The Sickly Taper: Bibliography of Gothic Scholarship</p>	

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) – “Gentleman’s Gothic”

Born in Salem, MA on July 4, 1804

--Great Great Grandfather is was Capt. William Hathorne (Puritan Soldier and Judge) (1606-1681)

--Great Great Grandfather was Judge John Hathorne (Salem Witch Trial judge) (1641-1717)

Father dies, Raised by mother and aunt and uncle (Manning) – Father and Uncle were sailors

At age 16-17, begins to add the “W” to his name – Symbolic meaning “Double-You” in a sense.

Both proud and haunted by his family history, his connections vague and yet ever present in material surroundings.

Wrote short stories (early life); Novels (later life)

Absolution – Forgiveness (of society/self). Man’s conflict with his natural corruptible state.

Often wrote in **ALLEGORY** – a heavily symbolic story (often used to instruct, like a fable or parable), but Hawthorne turns it dark, brooding, and non-teleological. He makes his Allegories more **UNCANNY** and experiential, leaving the reader to ponder the idea, and conclude to himself.

[Links to images](#)

Common Themes:

Secret Sin

Guilt, Lack of Forgiveness of self; Shame vs. Guilt and the interweaving of the two.

Anti-Science /Anti-Rationalism

Presence and haunting of the Past

Escaping the Past

Temptation, corruption of the innocence of man

Famous Works:

“Young Goodman Brown”

“My Kinsman, Major Molineux”

“The Birthmark”

“Rappaccini’s Daughter”

“The Minister’s Black Veil”

“Drowne’s Wooden Image”

The Scarlet Letter

The House of the Seven Gables

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) [Young Image](#) [Older Image](#)

Grandfather was a Revolutionary War General – Gen. David Poe (Baltimore)

Father, David Poe (1784-1811) was an Actor (not a good one).

Mother, [Eliza Poe](#) (1787-1811) was an actress (good one) – Poe born in Boston

2 siblings –William Henry Leonard Poe (older), Rosalie Poe (younger)

After Father’s abandonment and Mother’s death, Edgar is taken in (not adopted) by

John Allan and and Frances Allan, taken to Richmond, Virginia.

Treated as a second class member of the family—Raised in the South (geographically alienated)

1826—Poe attends the [University of Virginia](#); eventually expelled for non-payment of debts (John Allan abandons him financially).

1830s to 1845 – Poe is publishing his short stories, and during that time perfects the short story and invents the Detective tale. Relies heavily on atmosphere due to the concept of “experiencing a text” – trying to produce an emotional effect that will result in contemplation and reflection on the ideas....not a moral or didactic lesson.

Gothic Stories

“The Fall of the House of Usher”

“The Black Cat”

“The Cask of Amantillado”

“Ligeia,” “Morella,”

Philosophical Gothic – “The Imp of the Perverse”

Science Fiction Gothic precursors -- “MS. Found in a Bottle”

Novel

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket

Poetry

“The Raven” – made him a superstar.

Criticism/Philosophy

“The Poetic Principle”

“The Philosophy of Composition”

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)

[Uncle Tom’s Cabin & American Culture](#) – a good website (albeit older) from [Stephen Railton](#) at the University of Virginia.

Books: *The Mayflower* (1843)

[Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly](#) (1851-52)

The Establishment of Stereotypes and Categorization:

(Please understand these terms are for education/knowledge purposes and are not meant to offend)

“Mulatto” – biracial (half black/half white)

“Quadroon” – one quarter black

“Octoroon” – one eighth black

“Mustefino” – “quintroon,” “hexadecaroon” – one sixteenth black

All of these would gain a special status with slave narratives and popular culture. They also play a role in the concept of “*Passing*” as white.

Common Stereotypes

The Mammy – a subservient nanny slave figure that the white child could order around.

[Link to UVA site about this Stereotype](#)

The Sambo – term derives from British concepts of Indians in India, it is subservient slave that is clever enough to get out of work or to gain power, usually by acting “race-traitor” and pretending to be like his master.

Blackface Minstrelsy – “Bones” “Tambo” and “Sleepandeat”

Performing stereotypes of African Americans used on stage well into the 20th Century to lampoon and make slavery funny [Link to montage of film examples](#) on Youtube

The Buck – hypersexualized male slave who is more prone to “animal instincts” and is a threat to white women’s virtue and white male authority—presented as violent, rude, and hypersexual. Sometimes referred to as a “Mandingo” / Modern equivalent is the use of the term “thug” in racial connotation or in “urban” context. [Link to discussion of this Stereotype](#) And [here is another on the “Black Brute” Stereotype](#)

The Jezebel – The female equivalent of the “Buck” for men, this stereotype presents the female slave or African American woman as hypersexual, super fertile, engaging in manipulation using sex, and then accepting no responsibility for the aftermath. The modern equivalent is the inner city “[welfare queen](#)” single mother stereotype.

The Sapphire – The Sapphire is a stronger, more assertive version of the Jezebel, an can be characterized in two ways—as a social climber who manipulates the white man into gaining privilege through her beauty and sexuality, or as the emasculating strong woman who enslaves her man and tricks him.

The “[Magical Negro](#)” –A combination of the Noble Savage stereotype and the Uncle Tom Stereotype, the “Magical Negro” is an African American (usually male) that appears in popular culture to help white people out with their issues, and then usually fading in to the background. [Some examples are debatable](#), but examples like Uncle Remus, John Coffey, and [others are not](#) . Often it is an Older Black man imparting wisdom to a young white man.

The Savage – Unlike the Buck, this is the “tribesman” stereotype, and is more based on 17th and 18th century colonial British Stereotypes.

The “[Pickaninny](#)” – The “wild child”. The Motherless/Parentless “Topsy” or “Buckwheat” character in need of a good education and civilizing from proper white culture.

Slave Narratives:

Frederick Douglass

Harriet Jacobs

Harriet Wilson

Jacob D. Green

Others : Willam and Ellen Craft, William “Box” Brown

Henry David Thoreau

Walt Whitman

Herman Melville (1819-1891) [image \(young\)](#) [image \(older\)](#) [image \(later in life\)](#)

Kinds of writings: Short Stories, Novels, Poetry (his poetry is often considered to be not very good).

--Gets his start writing Novels, chronicling his adventure in the south seas and travel narratives ([Marquesas Islands](#)).

From New York (Manhattan), connected in New York (Mother is Maria Ganesvoort).

Father was a financial Failure and paternal failure (Allan Melvill)—his father dies 1832.

His mother finds out his father had a daughter with another woman. Herman adds an “E” to his last name to differentiate and distance himself from his father (both his history and his credit).

--in 1839, he becomes a sailor due to his brother’s bankruptcy. Returns, becomes a teacher, and seeks work out west with his uncle. Fails at this task. In 1841, He returns to sailing and sets out on a Whaler to voyage to the South Seas. In July 1842, he goes AWOL from the Whaling Ship and lives among the Cannibal Natives, the Typee.

In August of that year, he leaves on an Australian Whaler, and engages in a Mutiny in the [Tahiti](#). After other travels, he returns to the US in 1844, in Boston. Begins Writing, gets published in 1846.

1847, marries Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of Lemuel Shaw –Father in Law was Chief Justice of the MA Supreme Court.

Important Works:

Typee (1846); *Omoo* (1847); *Mardi* (1849) – All deal with travel and adventure in the South Seas, fictional travel narratives based on his experiences. All are big sellers.

Redburn (1849) and *White Jacket* (1850) – deal with the harshness and politics and life in the navy and aboard the world of the ships at sea.

[Moby-Dick; or, The Whale](#) (1851) – Melville’s masterpiece, and he knew it. He pours his heart, soul, and psyche into this work, using it as a metaphor for multiple things at once—the greatest image of the American Renaissance—The White Whale—upon which multiple meanings can be read. Melville goes slightly crazy during this time, eventually becoming violent with his wife, who removes herself from the situation temporarily.

Melville sequesters himself in New York to finish it. It is poorly received by his readers, who want travel narrative fluff, not deep allegory. Melville loses faith in his audience. Novel partially based on the seas real legend of [Mocha Dick](#) (a famed white whale) and and the whale ship [Essex](#). The Fictional ship follows the [Pequod](#) ([map](#)) as [Captain Ahab](#) ([other image](#)) and his first mate [Starbuck](#) (along with the Narrator, Ishmael) hunt down the [White Whale](#). [Image](#) [image](#) [image](#) [image](#) and [jaws \(2\)](#) and [squid \(kraken\)](#) ([squid & whale](#))
[Chapter 59](#) – “[Squid](#)”

Pierre (1852) and *The Confidence Man* (1857) – Deal with the angst and frustration of the writer and his audience that doesn't see truth. *Pierre* deals with that from the author's side, and is very bitter, dark, gothic, cynical, and almost a descent in the hell of the mind of the writer (New York Gothic). *The Confidence Man* is a sardonic satire of his audience.

The Piazza Tales (1856 – stories written between 1852 and 1856) – “Bartleby, the Scrivner” (1853), “Benito Cereno” (1855). Reflect both his frustration with writing, and the issue of Slavery.

Billy Budd, Sailor (1891—not published until 1924): Interesting allegorical story that deals with possible issues of homosexuality, repression, and ethical conflicts and concerns regarding the concepts of strict codes (via the Navy). Claggart as antagonist, Billy Budd as innocence attacked, Captain Vere as neutral interpreter of code....lots of allegorical aspects.

All of Melville's major works seem to be proto-versions of Naturalism, Nihilism, and existentialism rolled into a big ball before they are parsed out. Perhaps this accounts for why his audience did not “get” his deepest work—they were not ready for it.

Central Themes:

The Garden – Civilization can corrupt man's natural state and destroy his Eden, that is, of course, if man's natural state is not evil. Contrast with **the Sea**.

The Quest (often futile or self destructive)—Man's commitment to search for moral truths and harmony, or to make sense of the insanity of existence, or to seek justice against the universe...often futile and self-destructive.

Individualism—Man's identity is lost when conforming to the expectations of society. Yet, monomania and ignorance of reason and lead to the Byronic Hero self-destruction.

Sub Themes – Conflict between good and evil; Life as confinement; man's place is in a seemingly uncaring and hostile Universe; Causes and results of violence; Knowledge of the world does not ensure knowledge of human nature; Intricate problems of moral responsibility; Profound passion needs no grandiose stage to be enacted; Men on land tend to be sophisticated, men at sea tend to be more native and “human” – for good or bad (naïve;

juvenile; democratically ordered in strict sense); Artificial conventions vs. Natural Law; Meaningless and pettiness of most activities in the world; Evil triumphs when man is unaware of it and does not resist it; in the high impersonality of the law, there is no distinction. As a result, it is dangerous to both the individual and society; faith in the ability of the common man to see beyond the distortions of established “truth” (this is where he wavered at the end).

Techniques