

American Literature

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Chapter 1 Colonial period to War of Independence

1. The Development of the American as a Nation.

- Though American literature has a history of only about 200 years, it is closely related with the development of the American as a nation.
- The native people in the continent of US are Indians. In the beginning of 17th century black people were shipped from Africa to America and became slaves of southern planters. Other immigrants were from different nations of Europe. People of different nationalities live together generation after generation. Gradually a new nation, the nation of America came into being.

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2.The early development of American literature

- The early development of American literature is slow, as then America was at the period of development with low living standard. The first problem immigrants had to solve was food, really hard for them to care for the spiritual enjoyment. In 1704, first newspaper got published in America. In 1731, first library was established. In 1752, first professional troupe was set up. What was put on the stage were English plays. It was not until 1767 that the first play by American writer was put on the stage. It was after the war of Independence that novels appeared.

3. Main literary writers and writings of this period

- The writings of this period were diaries, travel notes and works of religion. Though they couldn't be regarded as the birth of American literature, to some extent, they reflected the living situation and social customs of the early colonized place, which had played an important role in the cultural life of American people, thus influenced the following American literature.

- American Movement of Enlightenment **(P.27-28)**

Writers of enlightenment

Benjamin Franklin: *The Authobiography; Poor Richard's Amanack*

The Importance of Benjamin Franklin's "The Autobiography". **(P. 35-37)**

Thomas Paine: *Common Sense*;

Thomas Jefferson: *The Declaration of Independence*

Chapter 2 Independence War to American Civil War

- After the independence, great changes had taken place in US. However, US still lagged behind UK culturally. Western part of US had not been opened; southern part was under the control of slaveowners.
- Though it was, there were still many writers and writings in US at that time.

The first peak of literature in US

- Two stages of Romanticism in the first half of 19th century of US:
- * First stage:
- Washing Irving: Father of American literature; the first American writer of imaginative literature to gain international fame
- *A History of New York*
- *The Sketch Book: “Rip Van Winkle” “Sleepy Hollow”*
- James F. Cooper:
- Leather-stocking Tales: *The Pioneer*
- *The Last of the Mohicans*
- *The Prairie*
- *The Pathfinder*
- *The Deerslayer*

- * Second stage:
 - Transcendentalism (p.56-59)
 - Ralph Waldo Emerson: Nature
 - Henry David Thoreau: Walden
 - Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter
 - Herman Melville: Moby Dick
 - Edgar Allan Poe: Gothic novels
 - “Tales of Grotesque and Arabesque”
 - Poe’s position in the world literature
- (P.114-115)**

- Poets of New England:

Walt Whitman: *Leaves of Grass*

Emily Dickinson: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*

Chapter 3 American Civil War to World War I

1. Local Literature

- After the Civil War, there comes the “local literature”, that is, the writer adopts the local dialect and describes the local customs and lives in a humorous way. It has a strong sense of localism, i.e., local colorism. **(p.130-132)**
- Writers:
- Hamlin Garland: *Main Travelled Roads*
- Francis Bret Harte: *The Luck of Roaring Camp*
- Harriet Beecher Stowe: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

2. Realistic literature

- US realistic literature lagged behind European realistic literature for about half a century. **(P.117-118)**
- William Dean Howells: *A modern Instance*
- *The Rise of Silas Lapham*
- Mark Twain: *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*
- *The Innocent Abroad*
- *The Gilded Age*
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- Henry James: *The American*
- *Daisy Miller*
- *The Portrait of a Lady*
- *The Golden Bowl*
- Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth*
- *The Age of Innocence*

3. Naturalism in US literature

- French naturalism has some influence on American literature. In this period, some American literature combined both realism and naturalism.
- Stephen Crane: Maggie
- The Red Badge of Courage **(p.143-145)**
- Frank Norris: The Octopus
- Theodore Dreiser: Sister Carrie
- An American Tragedy
- O. Henry: The Pop and the Anthem
- Maggie's Gift
- Jack London: The Call of the Wild
- The Sea Wolf
- Upton Sinclair: The Jungle

Chapter 4 American literature between Two World Wars

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1. Lost Generation (The Second Peak of American Literature)

- Definitions of Lost Generation
- Ernest Hemingway *The Sun Also Rises*
- *Farewell to Arms*
- *The Old Man and Sea*
- *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*
- *Fitzgerald's greatness (P.222)*

- Sherwood Anderson: Winesburg, Ohio
- Sinclair Lewis: The Main Street
- Babbitt
- John Dos Passos: USA
- John Steinbeck: The Grapes of Wrath

- Poetry:
- T.S. Eliot: *The Waste Land*
- William Carols Williams
- Ezra Pound:
- Plays:
- Eugene O'Neill: Beyond the Horizon
- The Iceman Cometh

Chapter 5 World War II to 1980s

After the war, there are two tendencies in American literature: popular and serious literature.

- 1950s: the beat generation.
- Jack Kerouac: On the Road
- William Burroughs: Junkie; Naked Lunch
- Allen Ginsberg: Howl

- 1960s: black humor
- Thomas Pynchon: The Gravity's Rainbow It is a masterpiece by a contemporary writer whose life is little known
- Joseph Heller: Catch 22 It was the first book in America to treat the absurdist theme with absurdist techniques. **(p.81)**
- John Barth: Giles Goatboy
- Vladimir Nabokov: Lolita

- 1970s to 1980s:
- Southern Writers:
- The Southern Renaissance (**P. 235-236**)
- William Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury
- As I Lay Dying
- Light in August
- Robert Penn Warren: Night Rider
- All the King's Men
- Trumen-Capote: Other Voices, Other Rooms
- In Cold Blood
- William Styron: Sophie's Choice

- Jewish Writers:
- Saul Bellow: Dangling Man
- Isaac Bashevis Singer: Gimpel the fool
- Bernard Malamud: Dubin's lives
- Norman Mailer: The Naked and the Dead
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- Black writers:
- Richard Wright: Uncle Tom's Children
- Native Son
- Ralph Ellison: Invisible Man
- James Baldwin: Go Tell it on the Mountain

- Female Writers:
- Katherine Anne Porter: Flowering Judas
- Ship of Fools
- Eudora Welty:
- Carson McCullers:
- Flannery O'Connor
- Joyce Carol Oates: Them
- Wonderland

Poems after the War

- The Black Mountain Poets:
 - Charles Olson Robert Creeley
 - Robert Duncan Denise Levertov
- Beat poets:(**P.373-376**)
- Allen Ginsberg Gary Snyder Gregory Corso

Confession poets:

Robert Lowell John Berryman Sylvia Plath

New Surrealist poets:

Robert Bly James Wright

Plays after the War

- Arthur Miller: Death of a Salesman
- Tennessee Williams: The Glass Menagerie

Chapter 6 Modern Best Sellers

- Detective stories
- Western stories
- Colleen McCullough: The Thorn Birds
- Mario Puzo: The Godfather
- Arthur Hailey: Airport
- Sidney Sheldon: The Stars Shine down
- Louis L'Amour: Son of A Wanted Man