



A Guide to American Literature with Selected Readings

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Part one: The Beginnings of American Literature, 1607--1820

I. General Introduction

In the seventeenth century, the New World seemed a land of promise, an opportunity not only for individuals but for humanity as a whole to make a fresh beginning. The land itself was vast and unconquered, promising riches but yielding its bounty only at great cost. Of the 102 passengers who arrived on the *Mayflower* in 1620, nearly half were dead by 1621. Yet the American colonies grew. Men and women continued to emigrate from Europe, some hoping to gain wealth, some to gain the freedom to lead their lives in accordance with their consciences. Many heeded the call of men such as John Smith, founder of the Jamestown Colony, who described the riches of the new world—the fertile ground, the plentiful game and fish—and asked Englishmen, “Who can desire more content, that hath small means or but only his merit to advance his fortunes, than to tread and plant that ground he hath purchased by the hazard of his life?”

Yet men who came to America because of the promise of an easy living found that they would have to struggle hard to survive. Others who sought religious freedom found that they were members of an authoritarian, sternly repressive church. Still others, who dreamed of organizing a perfect society, found that they could not escape the problems that face all societies—keeping order, reconciling conflicting interests, and making men work together for the common good. Thus, even at the very beginning of American history, there was a conflict between ideals and realities. Often Americans have had to strike some kind of balance between their dreams and the hard facts of existence. But, while Americans have sometimes modified their ideals, they have never abandoned them. Therefore, the history of the English colonies in America cannot properly be understood without also understanding the ideals that inspired many colonists: the ideal of religious integrity, and the ideal of political democracy.

Two Colonial Types

Different sorts of men came to America for different reasons, and it took many different sorts of men to build the colonies and make them prosper. Yet two distinctive

types impressed themselves on early American literature and left a cultural heritage that American writers have continued to draw on ever since. Both types—Puritan and Cavalier—emigrated from England, and both soon began to wrestle with peculiarly American problems and to come to terms with American scenes.

The Puritans. The Puritans came to America to practice Christianity according to their own lights. The word *Puritan* was coined by their opponents and applied to them in scorn. As the name implies, the Puritans wished to purify their religion, to bring Christianity back to the simplicity of the primitive Christian church.

Puritanism is associated with a cheerless, pessimistic outlook, and it is true that the Puritan view of man's nature and his position in the universe is a gloomy one. The Puritans were Calvinists, followers of the Swiss theologian John Calvin. Calvinism emphasizes original sin and man's fall and sees man as an utterly corrupt being who can be regenerated only through God's grace. Because of Christ, man has been given a second chance to be visited by God's grace, but this second chance has been extended only to the "elect," the chosen few whom God has decided to save. All other men are predestined to damnation. No man can know if he is among the elect, but all men are to strive to understand God's will and to spend their lives in an effort to bring themselves closer to Him. Man can bring himself closer to God in two ways: through spiritual growth, by a constant examination of his own soul and conscience; and through understanding the material world around him, since the world is as much a sign of God's will as the soul. The Puritan saw God in all things and events.

The Puritan view was not one of unrelieved gloom, however. A totally pessimistic outlook could not have sustained the Puritans through the hardships of the New World. They were a vigorous, hardy people who had dared to dissent from an established church and passionately held to their own beliefs. The Puritans left a deep impression on New England, where they settled, and it is the Puritan influence which is responsible for a phrase that is associated with the New England character: "plain living and high thinking." But even more, the Puritans left a heritage for the entire country to draw on, one of aspiration toward higher things, an emphasis on spiritual values, an awareness of the relationship between the outer world of material objects and the inner world of the spirit. If, today in the United States, there is a spirit of self-examination, a zeal to improve the country and uplift the character of its citizens, it is to a large extent inherited from the Puritans.

The Cavalier. The Cavaliers established large plantations in the South and, like

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the Puritans, were aware of the presence of an omnipotent God. But, unlike the Puritans, the Cavalier planters' deepest interests were likely to be social, economic, and political rather than religious. Their ideals were derived from the English Cavaliers, supporters of the Royalist cause of Charles I and opponents of the Puritans. Like their English counterparts, the American Southern Cavaliers saw life from an aristocratic perspective, their point of view being haughty and somewhat amused.

Yet the Southern Cavalier was, on the whole, faithful not only to his privileges but to his duties. He saw himself as the model of a gentleman, the justification for the existence of a society in which he stood on the highest level. He supported the advancement of the arts and sciences, and he served his colony by helping to run its affairs and by representing it in England.

America is the richer for its Cavalier and Puritan heritage. If the Puritan upheld an ideal of faithfulness to conscience, the Cavalier promoted a more worldly ideal: that of the man who is an ornament to society not only because of his position but because of his abilities, and who works hard to justify the good fortune of his birth and position. Often the Cavalier, because of the special quality of his point of view, made a contribution to the national literature that no other segment of society could make.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, a sense of national identity was beginning to emerge. Americans were becoming conscious of themselves as a people distinct from other peoples. The American concern with building a society that existed to protect and enlarge man's freedom, not to limit or destroy it, began as early as 1620 when the Pilgrims drew up the Mayflower Compact. In the second half of the eighteenth century, as the conflict between the colonies and the mother country grew more intense, the concern with the relationship between citizens and their government became correspondingly intense. The pens of some of the most gifted men in America were placed at the service of a cause: freedom and independence. During this turbulent era, literature became the record of the mind rather than of the spirit, of minds which grappled with ideas and translated them into speeches, essays, and great political testaments. The literature of this era—the work of men such as Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington—is the literature of dreams in action.

The men who created the literature of colonial America were, by and large, not professional writers. What these men wrote grew out of their busy lives: sermons,

histories, journals, speeches, pamphlets, political documents. Yet such gifted writers as Benjamin Franklin, Jonathan Edwards, and Thomas Jefferson could scarcely help creating a notable literature. In the nineteenth century, other writers—Poe, Longfellow, Irving, Hawthorne— would write more specifically literary works: poems, short stories, and novels. These later writers would attempt to support themselves through their writing, and they would be concerned with the practice of literature as a special kind of endeavor, a special career that has its own skills and obligations. Most of the earlier, colonial, writers had no such awareness. Yet their solid achievements formed the beginning of American literature, the literature of a country-to-be groping for an identity and in need of works of art that would express the national consciousness. [*Adventures in American Literature*, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968]

Materials for Comparative Reading:

1. To the New England Colonies came the puritans. The first to settle (in Plymouth) were the Pilgrims, who wished to separate from the Church of England. Later, non-separatist Puritans came to Massachusetts Bay. The Puritans were called by the name because they had attempted to reform or “purify” the Church of England by simplifying the forms of worship and by abolishing ritual. Believing that God had chosen at the time of their birth those who were to be saved or damned, the Puritans adhered to a strict code of morality and proper behavior. Puritans believed that God’s laws can be understood only through studying the Bible—hence, their emphasis on reading and education in general and the popularity of the sermon as a literary form.

In contrast to the Puritans of New England, the Planters of Virginia and the Southeast were farmers, some of whom established large plantations that depended on a huge work force of white bond servants and African slaves. Thus evolved a rural way of life, based largely on the cash crop of tobacco, and a planting aristocracy. The Southern colonists produced less writing than their New England counterparts.

Between New England to the northeast and the Southern Colonies were the Middle Colonies of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York, nicknamed the “bread colonies” because grain was the major crop. Ethnically diverse and culturally mixed, these colonies included Dutch, Swedish, German, and French-Huguenot refugees. Religious toleration, practiced throughout these Middle Colonies, was the cornerstone of Pennsylvania, where Quakers and other religious groups lived according to the principles of simplicity, truth, and peace. By 1750 the Quaker city of Philadelphia had become the unofficial colonial capital—the site

twenty-six years later for the signing of the Declaration of Independence. [*The United States in Literature*, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1991]

2. Virginia and Massachusetts, says Lowell, were the “two great distributing centers of the English race in America.” From Jamestown and Plymouth flowed two mighty streams of influence, dissimilar and for one hundred years entirely separate, but uniting in the period of the Revolution to form the swift and deep current of a new national life. Two types of men with distinct ideals of life were represented by the founders of these two colonies; in England these types came to be distinguished as “Cavaliers” and “Roundheads,” and in America the qualities for which these terms stand may still to some extent be traced in the distinction between “North” and “South.” The leading families of Virginia were from the higher ranks of English society, and were strongly bound to royalty and the established church; nearly half of the first settlers at Jamestown were called “gentlemen,” men born to wealth and cultivated leisure. They came to the New World, not like the Puritans in pursuit of spiritual ideals, but from love of adventure, or in the hope of great fortune. They did not, like the Puritans, from the very beginning seek permanent homes on this side of the ocean and begin at once the foundation of new social institutions. Of the Plymouth Pilgrims not one returned, while of the Jamestown colonists not one remained who could find means to get back to England. They were lured to Virginia by visions of an El Dorado such as the Spaniards had found in Mexico and Peru; but it was only after many years of suffering and disappointment that the golden treasure was discovered in the tobacco plantations.

The cultivation of only one or two staple products, as tobacco and cotton, the use of slave labor, and the inheritance of a feudal ideal of life, were the determining factors in the social and intellectual development of the southern colonies. Upon their broad plantations the wealthy planters lived in a kind of baronial isolation, surrounded by large families and troops of slaves, and exchanging at infrequent intervals, with a stately and gracious hospitality, the courtesies of social life. In the northern colonies the rule of settlement was centralization, the gathering of the settlers in town and village communities, with common and unifying interests; in the South the rule of settlement was dispersion, the dotting of the country here and there with manorial residences, with no common meeting-place except the courthouse. Education and religion were almost as thoroughly neglected in Virginia as they were thoroughly cultivated in Massachusetts. Culture was confined to the few leading families whose

intellectual tastes were fashioned by English books and instructors. Such conditions were unfavorable for the growth of a native literature, and hence we find that until after the Civil War there was only an incipient and comparatively fruitless literary activity in the South.

But there was the best of English blood in the veins of some of those first Virginians; they were from a race of men born to rule, and their mode of life tended to develop an aptitude for politics and political leadership. The southern colonies did not rear poets and philosophers, but they did rear statesmen, and it is the first distinction of Virginia to be called the “Mother of Presidents.” [Julian W. Abernethy, *American Literature*, Maynard, Merrill, & Co., 1902]

Think and discuss: What are the distinctive features of Southern and Northern English colonies in America? What kind of people are the Puritans who chose to migrate to New England in the 17th century?

II. Biographies and Selected Readings

1. John Smith (1579-1631).

Captain John Smith was a soldier of fortune who had adventures in Europe and Africa before sailing to the New World to establish the first British colony in America, Jamestown. Because of a difficult and hazardous voyage, only 105 of the original party of 143 landed at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Captain Smith was held prisoner by Indians for a time and, according to legend, was sentenced to death and rescued by Pocahontas, daughter of Chief Powhatan. Captain Smith remained in America until 1609, serving as president of the council of Jamestown. During his administration, the settlement began to recover from disease and starvation, strengthened their defenses, and planted crops. In 1608 he wrote *A True Relation of Virginia*, the first English book written in America.

Supplementary comments: Smith has often been accused of boasting, and some have said that he was guilty of great exaggeration or something worse, but it is certain that he repeatedly braved hardships, extreme dangers, and captivity among the Indians to provide food for the colony and to survey Virginia. After carefully editing *Captain John Smith's works* in a volume of 983 pages, Professor Edwin Arber says: "For our own part, beginning with doubtfulness and wariness we have gradually come to the unhesitating conviction, not only of Smith's truthfulness, but also that, in regard to all personal matters, he systematically understates rather than exaggerates anything he did." [Reuben Post Halleck, *History of American Literature*, American Book Company, 1911]

2. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758).

Among the most eminent theologians that America has produced, Jonathan Edwards was born in Connecticut in a long line of Puritan ministers. He was strictly educated in the Calvinistic faith, which emphasized innate human corruption and the doctrine of the elect (people do not win salvation through good works but are "elected")

by God for salvation—or damnation). A child prodigy, Edwards entered Yale University at thirteen and graduated at sixteen. In 1729 he followed his grandfather into the ministry of Northampton, Massachusetts. His powerful preaching helped spark a major religious revival called the Great Awakening that spread through New England in the 1730s and 1740s. Edwards presented a dramatic figure on the pulpit—a tall, spare man with piercing eyes and thin, set lips who, according to a minister who was present, could cause “such a breathing of distress and weeping, that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people and desire silence that he might be heard.” The power of Edwards’s sermons is achieved largely through effective use of metaphor, as can be seen in “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”.

Selected readings:

from “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (Jonathan Edwards, preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741.)

DEUT. XXXII. 35. (申命记, 三十二章 35 节, 他们将失足)

——Their Foot shall slide in due Time ——
布道文都要讲圣经中的某句话, 讨论经典的含义

The Expression that I have chosen for my Text, Their Foot shall slide in due Time; seems to imply the following Things, relating to the Punishment and Destruction that these wicked Israelites were exposed to.

(1). That they were always exposed to Destruction, as one that stands or walks in slippery Places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the Manner of their Destruction’s coming upon them, being represented by their Foot’s sliding. The same is express’d, Psal. 73. 18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery Places; thou castedst them down into Destruction.

(2). It implies that they were always exposed to sudden unexpected Destruction. As he that walks in slippery Places is every Moment liable to fall; he can’t foresee one Moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once, without Warning. Which is also expressed in that, Psal. 73. 18, 19. Surely thou didst set them in slippery Places; thou castedst them down into Destruction. How are they brought into Desolation as in a Moment!...

The Wrath of God is like great Waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, & rise higher and higher, till an Outlet is given, and the

布道文常见格式:
什么意思+引用观点
作为论证
+conclusion(来一些
修辞手法, 从情感
上打动听众)

1. 我们所有人, 总是处于危险之中。
2. 危险总是发生在我们的意料之外。

longer the Stream is stop'd, the more rapid and mighty is it's Course, when once it is let loose. 'Tis true, that Judgment against your evil Works has not been executed hitherto; the Floods of God's Vengeance have been with-held; but your Guilt in the mean Time is constantly increasing, and you are every Day treasuring up more Wrath; the Waters are continually rising and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere 神还没有心情毁灭我们; whims; 上帝毁灭人类可能也没有什么特别的原因, 顺手就干了呗。 Pleasure of God that holds the Waters back that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward; if God should only withdraw his Hand from the Flood-Gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery Floods of the Fierceness and Wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable Fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent Power; and if your Strength were ten thousand Times greater than it is, yea ten thousand Times greater than the Strength of the stoutest, sturdiest, Devil in Hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The Bow of God's Wrath is bent, and the Arrow made ready on the String, and Justice bends the Arrow at your Heart, and strains the Bow, and it is nothing but the mere Pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any Promise or Obligation at all, that keeps the Arrow one Moment from being made drunk with your Blood....

Think and Discuss: What can you deduce about the religious convictions of the average member of Edwards's congregation? Would Edwards be an effective preacher today? Why or why not?

3. Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672).

Curious and intellectually active as a child, Anne Bradstreet received a more comprehensive education than was common for young women of the time. At sixteen, she married Simon Bradstreet, a young graduate of Cambridge, and two years later in 1630 the couple sailed west and arrived in America with the first group of Massachusetts Bay settlers. Both her father and her husband became governors of the colony. In spite of the demands made on her as housewife, mother of eight, and busy hostess, Bradstreet found time to write poems. Her first volume, appearing in London in 1650, was titled The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America. Running as a dominant theme through all her poems is the strong Puritan faith that sustained her in

life's hardships. But many of her most interesting poems were written out of her everyday experience, concentrating on topics such as her eight children, her husband, or her house.

Supplementary comments: “The determination with which she cultivated her slender poetic gifts, under conditions of continuous hardship and ill-health, with the care of her “eight birds hatcht in one nest,” compels admiration and restrains criticism.... The extravagance of the title-page was even surpassed by the praises with which her poems were hailed at home. Cotton Mather pronounced them to be “a monument to her memory beyond the stateliest marbles.” President Rogers of Harvard found himself while reading her verses “sunk in a sea of bliss” and “weltering in delight.” The Rev. John Norton declared in a “dirge for the Tenth Muse” that were Virgil to hear “her lively strain / He would condemn his works to fire again.” (Abernethy)

“Her models were what Milton called the ‘fantastics,’ a school of poets who mistook for manifestations of poetic power, far-fetched and strained metaphors, oddities of expression, remote comparisons, conceits, and strange groupings of thought.”(Halleck) 模仿玄学派, 同时代人。

“They were written in the conventional and exaggerated manner then in vogue in England, and they reveal on her part no real observation of the new country in which she lived. She seems not to have seen the wide difference between the skies and the trees and the flowers and the birds of New England and those of the old England she had left as a bride. “(Brander Matthews, *An Introduction to the Study of American Literature*, American Book Company, 1896)

4. Philip Freneau (1752-1832).

Philip Freneau, whose poetry is closely identified with the American Revolution, was born in New York and attended Princeton University. Freneau's life was a series of adventures—as a schoolteacher, sailor, sea captain, West Indian adventurer, and editor. During the Revolutionary War, Freneau enlisted in the militia and, while serving on an American privateer (a privately owned and armed vessel commissioned by the government to engage in war), was taken prisoner. Later freed, Freneau wrote a poem about the episode entitled “The British Prison Ship.” Freneau's poems seem to

divide naturally into two groups: those devoted to politics and freedom and those given over to nature and romantic fancy. The latter group, which includes “The Wild Honeysuckle,”^{野金银花} comprise nearly all of his best works. Neglected in its time, it is considered the best American nature poem of the eighteenth century and points the way to later poets such as William Cullen Bryant.

Selected readings: The Wild Honeysuckle, (Philip Freneau, 1786)

Fair flower, that dost so ^{pleasant to look at} comely grow, metaphor: flower and woman
Hid in this ^{secret, covered place.} silent, dull retreat,
^{sweet} Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet: To wave in the wind
 No roving foot shall crush thee here,
 No busy hand provoke a tear.

Officious

By Nature’s self in white arrayed,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by;
 Thus quietly thy summer goes,
 Thy days declining to repose.

Be moved by

Smit with those charms, that must decay,
I grieve to see your future doom;
They died--nor were those flowers more gay,
The flowers that did in Eden bloom;
 Unpitying frosts and Autumn’s power
 Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

Following the tradition of 墓园挽歌 elegy
Thomas Gray

From morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being came;
If nothing once, you nothing lose, Live by nothing material, you only live a spiritual live.
For when you die you are the same;
 The space between is but an hour,

The frail duration of flower.

Think and discuss: According to stanza 1, what cause the honeysuckle to remain untouched? How has nature favored the wild honeysuckle, according to stanza 2? What words and phrases create a somber atmosphere that suggests death in the third stanza? In the last stanza, and particularly the last two lines of the poem, the poet suggests a relationship between the life of the flower and the life of human beings. Explain the relationship.

5. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Queen Anne sat on the throne of Great Britain, there were ten British colonies strung along the Atlantic coast of North America. These colonies were various in origin and ill-disposed one to another. They were young, feeble, and jealous; their total population was less than four hundred thousand. In the colony of Massachusetts, and in the town of Boston, on January 17, 1706, was born Benjamin Franklin, who died in the state of Pennsylvania, and in the city of Philadelphia, on April 17, 1790.

In the eighty-four years of his life, Benjamin Franklin saw the ten colonies increase to thirteen; he saw them come together for defense against the common enemy; he saw them throw off their allegiance to the British crown; he saw them form themselves into these United States; he saw the population increase to nearly four millions; he saw the beginning of the movement across the Alleghanies which was to give America the boundless West and all the possibilities of expansion. And in the bringing about of this growth, this union, this independence, this development, the share of Benjamin Franklin was greater than the share of any other man.

With Washington, Franklin divided the honor of being the American who had most fame abroad and most veneration at home. He was the only man who signed the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance with France, the Treaty of Peace with England, and the Constitution under which the American people still live. But not only had he helped to make the nation—he had done more than anyone else to form the individual. If the typical American is shrewd, industrious, and thrifty, it is due in a measure to the counsel and to the example of Benjamin Franklin. In “Poor

Richard's Almanack" he summed up wisely, and he set forth sharply, the rules of conduct on which Americans have trained themselves now for a century and a half. Upon his countrymen the influence of Franklin's preaching and of his practice was wide, deep, and abiding. He was the first great American—for Washington was twenty-six years younger.

Benjamin was the youngest son of Josiah Franklin, who had come to America in 1682. His mother was a daughter of Peter Folger, one of the earliest colonists. His father was a soap-boiler and tallow-chandler; and as a boy of ten Benjamin was employed in cutting wick for the candles, filling the dipping molds, tending shop, and going on errands. He did not like the trade, and wanted to be a sailor. So his father used to take him to walk about Boston among the joiners(细木工), bricklayers, turners(车工), and other mechanics, that the boy might discover his inclination for some trade on land.

Franklin tells us that from a child he was fond of reading, and laid out on books all the little money that come into his hands. Among the books he read as a boy were the "Pilgrim's Progress" and Mather's "Essays to do Good"; and this last gave him such a turn of thinking that it influenced his conduct through life and made him always "set a greater value on the character of a *doer of good* than on any other kind of reputation."

It was this bookish inclination which determined his father to make a printer of him, and at the age of twelve he was apprenticed to his brother James. There was then but one newspaper in America—the *Boston News-Letter*, issued once a week. A second journal, the *Boston Gazette*, was started in 1719. At first James Franklin was its printer, but when it passed into other hands he began a paper of his own—the *New England Courant*, more lively than the earlier journals, and more enterprising. As Benjamin set up the type for his brother's paper, it struck him that perhaps he could write as well as some of the contributors. He was then a boy of sixteen, and already had he been training himself as a writer. He had studied Locke's "On the Human Understanding," and a volume of the "Spectator" of Addison and Steele. This last he chose as his model, mastering its methods, taking apart the essays to see how they were put together, and so finding out the secret of its simple style, its easy wit, its homely humor. His first attempts at composition were put in at night under the door of the printing house; they were approved and printed; and after a while he declared their authorship.

For a mild joke on the government James Franklin was forbidden to publish the *New England Courant*, so he canceled his brother's apprenticeship and made over the paper to Benjamin. But the indentures were secretly renewed; and the elder brother treated the younger with increasing harshness, giving him an aversion to arbitrary power which stuck to him through life.

At length the boy could bear it no longer, and he left his brother's shop. James was able to prevent him from getting work elsewhere in Boston, so Benjamin slipped off on a sloop to New York. Failing of employment there, he went on to Philadelphia, being then seventeen. He arrived there with only a "Dutch dollar" in his pocket. Weary and hungry, he asked at a baker's for a three-penny-worth of bread, and, to his surprise, he received three great puffy rolls. He walked off with a roll under each arm and eating the third; and he passed the house of a Mr. Read, whose daughter stood at the door, thinking the young stranger made a most awkward, ridiculous appearance, and little surmising that she was one day to be his wife.

Franklin worked at his trade in Philadelphia for nearly two years. In 1724 he crossed the ocean for the first time to buy type and a press. He found employment as a printer in London, and he came near starting a swimming school; but in 1726, after two years' absence, he returned to Philadelphia, and there he made his home for the rest of his life. He soon set up for himself as a printer; and, as he was more skillful than his rivals and more industrious, he prospered, getting the government printing and buying the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.

He married Deborah Read; and he made many friends, the closest of whom he formed into a club called the "Junto," devoted to inquiry and debate. At his suggestion the members of this club kept their books in common at the clubroom for a while; and out of this grew the first circulating library in America—the germ of the American public library system. And in 1732 he issued the first number of "Poor Richard's Almanack," which continued to appear every year for a quarter of a century.

It was "Poor Richard's Almanack" which first made Franklin famous, and it was out of the mouth of poor Richard that Franklin spoke most effectively to his fellow-countrymen. He had noticed that almanac was often the only book in many houses, and he therefore "filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want to act always honestly, as, to use here one of

these proverbs, ‘It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.’” By these pithy, pregnant sayings, carrying their moral home, fit to be pondered in the long winter evenings, Franklin taught Americans to be thrifty, to be forehanded, and to look for help from themselves only.

No man had ever preached a doctrine which more skillfully showed how to get the best for yourself; and no man ever showed himself more ready than Franklin to do things for others. He invented an open stove to give more heat with less wood, but he refused to take out a patent for it, glad of an opportunity to serve his neighbors. He founded the first fire company in Philadelphia, and so made a beginning for the present fire departments. He procured the reorganization of the first night watch and the payment of the watchmen, thus preparing for the regular police force now established. He started a Philosophical Society—which still survives as the University of Pennsylvania.

While he was doing things for others, others did things for him, and he was made Clerk of the General Assembly in 1736, and Postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737. In 1750 he was elected a member of the Assembly, and in 1753 he was made Postmaster-general for all the colonies. In 1748 he had retired from business, having so fitting his practice to his preaching that he had gained a competency when but forty-two years old.

The leisure thus acquired he used in the study of electrical science, then in its infancy. He soon mastered all that was known, and then he made new experiments with his wonted ingenuity. He was the first to declare the identity of electricity and lightning. Using a wet string, he flew a kite against a thunder cloud, and drew a spark from a key at the end of the cord. The lightning rod was his invention. Of his investigations and experiments he wrote reports that were printed in England and translated in France. The Royal Society voted him a medal; the French king had the experiments repeated before him; and both Harvard and Yale made Franklin a Master of Arts.

But Franklin was not long allowed to live in philosophic retirement. He was sent to London to oppose the Stamp Act, at first as agent of Pennsylvania only, but in time as the representative of New Jersey, Georgia, and Massachusetts also; and he remained for more than ten years, pleading the cause of the colonists against the king, and explaining to all who chose to listen the real state of feeling in America. He did what he could to get the first Stamp Act repealed. He did all he could to avert the war

which he felt to be inevitable. At last, in 1775, less than a month before the battle of Lexington, he sailed for home.

On the day after he landed he was chosen a member of the Second Continental Congress. He acted as Postmaster-general. He signed the Declaration of Independence, making answer to Harrison's appeal for unanimity: "Yes, we must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately." Then there appeared to be a hope that France might be induced to help the Americans; and in September, 1776, Franklin was elected envoy. Being then seventy years old, he went to Europe for the fourth time.

In France he received such a welcome as no other American has ever met with. He was known as an author, as a philosopher, as a statesman. The king and the queen, the court and the people, all were his friends. His portraits were everywhere, and his sayings were repeated by everybody. In the magnificence of the palace of Versailles Franklin kept his dignified simplicity; and with his customary sagacity he turned to the advantage of his country all the good will shown to himself. After Burgoyne's surrender the French agreed to an open alliance with the United States, and Franklin, with his fellow-commissioners, signed the treaty in 1778.

During the war Franklin remained in France as American Minister, borrowing money, forwarding supplies, exchanging prisoners, and carrying on an immense business on behalf of his country. He bore the brunt of the countless difficulties which beset the American representatives in Europe. At last Cornwallis surrendered; and, with Adams and Jay, Franklin signed the treaty of peace with Great Britain, in September, 1783. The next year Jefferson went to France, and in 1785 relieved Franklin, who was allowed to return to America, being then seventy-nine years of age.

His "Autobiography," which he had begun in 1771 in England, and had taken up again in France in 1783, he hoped to be able to finish now that he was at home again and relieved from the responsibility of office. But he was at once elected a councilor of Philadelphia, and although he would have liked the leisure he had so hardly earned, he felt that he had no right to refuse his duty.

When the constitutional convention met, Franklin was made a member "that, in the possible absence of General Washington, there might be someone whom all could agree in calling to the chair." After the final draft of the Constitution was prepared, Franklin made a speech pleading for harmony, and urging that the document be sent before the people with the unanimous approbation of the members of the convention. Then, while the last members were signing, he said that he had seen a sun painted on

the back of the President's chair, and during the long debates when there seemed little hope of an agreement he had been in doubt whether it was taken at the moment of sunrise or sunset; "but," he said, "now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

He was now a very old man. He said himself: "I seem to have intruded myself into the company of posterity, when I ought to have been abed and asleep." His cheerfulness never failed him, and although he suffered much, he bore up bravely. "When I consider," he wrote in 1788, "how many terrible maladies the human body is liable to, I think myself well off that I have only three incurable ones: the gout, the stone, and old age." He looked forward to death without fear, writing to a friend that, as he had seen "a good deal of this world," he felt "a growing curiosity to be acquainted with some other." He died April 17, 1790, respected abroad and beloved at home. (Brander Matthews)

Selected readings: Speech in the Convention, at the Conclusion of Its Deliberations, September 17, 1787 (Benjamin Franklin)

Mr. President,

I confess, that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present; but, Sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it; for, having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that, the older I grow, the more apt am I to doubt my own judgment of others. Most men, indeed, as well as most sects in religion, think themselves in possession of all truth, and that wherever others differ from them it is so far error. Steele, a Protestant, in a dedication, tells the Pope, that the only difference between our two churches in their opinions of the certainty of their doctrine, is, the Romish Church is infallible, and the Church of England is never in the wrong.

In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution, with all its faults—if they are such, because I think a general government necessary for us, and there is no form of government but what may be a blessing to the people, if well administered; and I believe, further, that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic government, being incapable of any other. I doubt, too, whether any other convention we can obtain, may be able to make a better constitution; for, when you assemble a number of men, to have the advantage of their

joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does; and I think it will astonish our enemies, who are waiting with confidence to hear that our counsels are confounded like those of the builders of Babel, and that our States are on the point of separation, only to meet hereafter for the purpose of cutting one another's throats. Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution, because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors I sacrifice to the public good. I have never whispered a syllable of them abroad. Within these walls they were born, and here they will die. If every one of us, in returning to our constituents, were to report the objections he has had to it, and endeavor to gain partisans in support of them, we might prevent its being generally received, and thereby lose all the salutary effects and great advantages resulting naturally in our favor among foreign nations, as well as among ourselves, from any real or apparent unanimity. Much of the strength and efficiency of any government, in procuring and securing happiness to the people, depends on opinion, on the general opinion of the goodness of that government, as well as of the wisdom and integrity of its governors. I hope, therefore, for our own sakes, as a part of the people, and for the sake of our posterity, that we shall act heartily and unanimously in recommending this Constitution, wherever our influence may extend, and turn our future thoughts and endeavors to the means of having it well administered.

On the whole, Sir, I cannot help expressing a wish, that every member of the convention who may still have objections to it, would with me on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and, to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.

Think and discuss: Cite specific examples in the speech above of Franklin's (a) knowledge of diplomacy, and (b) his sense of practical politics.

不管团结是真的假的，只要别人，我们自己认为我们是团结的，对我们就有好处。

政府给人们创造福祉的力量

本杰明·富兰克林在费城制宪会议最后一天的演讲

我承认，当下我并不完全认可这部宪法，但是，先生们，我不确定自己是不是永远都不会认可它。我已经活了这么久，我有过许多次这样的经历，由于有了更好的信息或更周全的考虑，我被迫在重要的主题上改变主意，我曾经认为自己是**对的**，但发现并非如此，因此，随着我的年纪越来越大，我也越来越怀疑自己的判断，越来越尊重别人的判断。绝大多数人，以及那些形形色色的宗教，总坚信真理永远掌握在自己手中，而一切与之相抵触的观点都是错误的。斯蒂尔——一位新教徒——在一次庆典上对教皇说，我们在教义上的唯一分歧只是罗马教会声称自己是不可违逆的，而英国国教会笃信自己是绝对正确的。绝大多数人都像教会那样冥顽不灵，但鲜少有人可以像一位与姐妹争吵的法国女郎那样自然的讲出，“我也不知道是怎么回事，妹妹，可我从没有遇见过一个总是不犯错的人，除了我自己。”

基于这些感触，先生们，我同意这部宪法，也接受它所有的缺陷——如果有的话；因为我认为，一个总领性的政府对我们而言是有必要的。而如果我们善加利用，无论是哪一种体系，都可以造福我们的人民；而且我也相信，在此后的几年内，我们有能力把它完善健全；这种体系当然可能会像其它的民主制度一般，最终以封建独裁收场，彼时我们的人民是那样愚昧无知，以至于只能建立独裁政府，而排斥一切民主制度。我也怀疑我们所召开的任何其他会议是否能够制定一部更好的宪法，因为，当我们聚集了一批最明智的头脑的同时，我们也不可避免地聚集了他们的偏见，他们的冲动，他们观点中的谬误，他们各自选区的利益以及他们自身的利益。在这样的一次次会议上，我们该怎么得出一个完美的方案？

我惊奇地发现，先生们，如今，这一体系是如此接近于完美；我也相信它会令我们的敌人感到惊讶，他们信心十足地等着听到我们的委员会像巴别塔的建设者们一样莫衷一是，等着听到我们的各邦走向分裂，只是为了互相残杀才坐到一起。因此，先生们，我同意这部宪法，因为我不指望能有比这更好的结果了，而且我也不敢说它就不是最好的。我承认，我的观点并不都是准确无误，但它们都是基于公众的利益做出。我毕生从未向任何一个外人，提及过任何一句关乎国家利益的话。在这幢房屋里我所做的发言，出了这扇门，我会守口如瓶。而如果我们中的哪位，回到自己的选区是要不顾一切地获取选民的支持，来反对决议，政府当然可以出面干涉，阻止其成为大多数意见，但我们也将因此失去在国际和国内所取得的一切优势和有益的进展，无论在此之前，我们所展现的团结是真正如此，还是只不过是一种表象。对任何体系而言，优势和效率都

主要来自于一种信念，一种全体人民对于政府的，对于领导者的理智和正直品格的信念。因此，基于我们自己也是人民中的一员，考虑到我们子孙后代的福祉，我希望，我们能团结一心，一同在这份宪法的框架下建设我们的国家（如果它能被国会以及此次会议批准通过的话），无论它的前景如何，让我们把对未来的所有设想和争论都化作完善它的动力。

总而言之，先生们，此刻的我再也无法按捺这样一种心情，我希望在座的每一位持反对意见的代表，与我一同，暂时放下自己的偏见，让世界见证我们的决心，在这份决议上签下自己的名字。

6. Thomas Paine (1737-1809).

Thomas Paine was an Englishman who came to America in 1774 and speedily made himself master of colonial thought and feeling. Early in 1776 he published a pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, which advocated complete political independence of England. The sledge hammer blows which he struck hastened the *Declaration of Independence*. In the latter part of 1776 Washington wrote, "If every nerve is not strained to recruit the new army with all possible expedition, I think the game is pretty nearly up." In those gloomy days, sharing the privations of the army, Thomas Paine wrote the first number of an irregularly issued periodical, known as the *Crisis*, beginning: "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." Some have said that the pen of Thomas Paine was worth more to the cause of liberty than twenty thousand men. In the darkest hours he inspired the colonists with hope and enthusiasm. Whenever the times seemed to demand another number of the *Crisis*, it was forthcoming. Sixteen of these appeared during the progress of the struggle for liberty. He had an almost Shakespearean intuition of what would appeal to the exigencies of each case. After the Americans had triumphed, he went abroad to aid the French, saying, "Where liberty is not, there is my home." He died in America in 1809.

Supplementary comments: Attracted to France by the struggle for liberty there in progress, he wrote *The Rights of Man*, in answer to Burke's *Reflections upon the French Revolution*. The fame of his political writings has been overshadowed by that of his crude, deistical argument against Christianity, *The Age of Reason*, a worthless book, except as illustrating the tendencies of eighteenth-century thought, to which, however, an exaggerated importance was long attributed. (Abernethy)

7. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826).

When speaking at a dinner for Nobel prizewinners, John Kennedy described the assembly as “the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.” A Virginia planter and aristocrat, a graduate of William and Mary College, an accomplished architect, and a lawyer by profession, Jefferson was one of the Virginia representatives to the Second Continental Congress. At the Congress Jefferson reluctantly agreed to attempt a draft of a document declaring colonial independence. The resulting Declaration of Independence remains his masterpiece. He subsequently served as governor of Virginia, minister to France, Vice-President, and finally President from 1801 to 1809. On retiring from the presidency, Jefferson devoted much time to founding and building the University of Virginia.

Supplementary comments: Jefferson’s most illustrious literary achievement is the “Declaration of Independence.” The sonorous style, as well as the political philosophy of this document, has lost something of its original charm with the lapse of time, but the statement of principles, beginning with the well-worn words: “We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” has continued to be the rallying cry of great political bodies. (Abernethy)

8. Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810).

Charles Brockden Brown was the first professional man of letters in America. Descended from ancestors who came over on the ship with William Penn, Brown at the age of ten had read, with Quaker seriousness, every book that he could find. He did not go to college, but studied law, which he soon gave up for literature as a profession. Depression from ill health and the consciousness that he would probably

die young colored all his romances. Brown deserves a place in the history of American literature for his four romances. These romances show a striking change from the American fiction which had preceded them. They are no longer didactic and sentimental, but Gothic or romantic. Working under English influence, Brown gave to America her first great Gothic romances, of which *Wieland* is considered the strongest.

A big step forward of Gothic story!

腹语术 ventriloquism

Part Two: American Literature of the Romantic Era, 1820-1865

I. General Introduction

For the new nation, the years following the American Revolution were years of tremendous growth and expansion. Pioneers, searching for new land to farm, pushed westward over roads and trails, rivers and canals. Involvement in national politics gave Americans a growing sense of being a part of one country rather than of an alliance of states. The War of 1812 strengthened the American sense of unity and of national identity. But in these early years of the new nation, two elements essential to a strong sense of national identity were missing: a distinctive cultural life and a significant national literature.

In 1820, Sydney Smith, an English clergyman, writer, and wit, posed the question: "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?" That same year, Washington Irving's *Sketch Book* appeared and proved enormously popular both in the United States and in England. Three years earlier, William Cullen Bryant's poem "Thanatopsis" had been published in the *North American Review*. In 1823, James Fenimore Cooper's first novel about Natty Bumppo, *The Pioneers*, was published; and four years later, Edgar Allan Poe issued his first collection of poems. All these writers provided an answer to Smith's question, for they produced literary works that were not only read by Americans but admired by educated Europeans. Cooper and Poe, in particular, made important contributions to Western literature and culture. Cooper's idyllic descriptions of life in the American forest and his creation of

Natty Bumppo, the frontiersman who combined primitive simplicity with ethical discipline, set an ideal of life for the schoolboys of many countries. Poe's cultivation of effects of terror and despair in his tales and poems had a profound effect on the French poet Baudelaire and, through Baudelaire, on modern European poetry.

Yet forty years after the American Revolution, Sydney Smith could pose his question, and it seemed a reasonable question to ask. America had not yet begun to produce its own distinctive literature. Although some able writers had already appeared, notably the poet Philip Freneau and the novelist Charles Brockden Brown, the work of these writers did not achieve the popularity that the works of Cooper, Poe, Irving, and Bryant were later to have. Also, America remained under the cultural domination of England long after it had won its political independence. One scholar has estimated that in 1820, seventy percent of the books that Americans read were published in England, while only thirty percent were brought out by American publishers. By 1850, the ratio was reversed. In the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, book publishers, literary magazines, and newspapers began to prosper. It became possible for a man with literary ambitions to make a living by his writing, although some writers, like Poe, never did manage to rise above poverty. The story of American literature in the early part of the nineteenth century, then, is the story of American writers trying to work out their own cultural destiny, to create a distinctive literature separate from English literature, and to make this literature a significant part of the national life.

While Americans were trying to create their own literature, they were working within a mode of thought and feeling that dominated most nineteenth-century literature of the Western world. Gradually, near the end of the eighteenth century, there was a shift in the fundamental conception of the artist's role and purpose, which is generally characterized as a shift from *classicism* to *Romanticism*. Both classicism and Romanticism are broad terms that are difficult to define exactly. Many painters, writers, and composers can be seen to have both classical and Romantic qualities. But, by and large, the eighteenth century was a classical period in art, music, and literature, while the first part of the nineteenth century was dominated by Romanticism.

Perhaps the best way to define classicism and Romanticism is in terms of a set of contrasts. One French critic, who was hostile to Romanticism, wrote that it was "a movement to honor whatever classicism rejected. Classicism is the regularity of good sense—perfection in moderation. Romanticism is disorder in the imagination—the

rage of incorrectness. A blind wave of literary egotism.” However, the German poet Heinrich Heine wrote that “classic art portrays the finite, Romantic art also suggests the infinite.” Romanticism has been described as “emotion rather than reason, the heart opposed to the head,” as “imagination as contrasted with reason and the sense of fact,” and as “a sense of the mystery of the universe and the perception of its beauty.” It would be fair to say that classical art most highly esteems the traditional, the normal, and the universal; while Romantic art pursues the original, the strange, and the deeply personal. Classical writers generally try to make their writing conform to what they regard as a universal set of rules; they value clarity, balance, and order. Romantic writers usually try to make their writing a reflection of their inmost feelings, and the qualities they value most highly are originality and emotional sincerity.

When Benjamin Franklin undertook to improve his prose style by imitating Addison, an English writer whom he regarded as a fine stylist, he was being a classicist. On the other hand, William Cullen Bryant was expressing the Romantic point of view when he wrote that “the great spring of poetry is emotion... strong feeling is always a sure guide.... It may sometimes transgress arbitrary rules or offend against local associations, but it speaks a language which reaches the heart in all countries and all times.”

Cooper, Irving, Bryant, and Poe, as part of the Romantic movement, shared certain characteristics with other Romantic writers:

An appeal to emotion rather than reason. As you have seen, Bryant regarded emotion as the best source for poetry. Poe believed that a writer should carefully construct his story or poem so that it would have one predominant effect. In the novels of Cooper, the characters who are most highly regarded are usually those who give honest expression to their feelings.

An interest in nature. Perhaps responding to the English poet William Wordsworth’s poem celebrating the beauty of the English countryside, Bryant wrote poems such as “The Yellow Violet,” and “To a Waterfowl”. Some of the finest passages in Cooper’s novels describe the beauties of the American wilderness. Both Bryant and Cooper awakened the imagination of later American writers to the possibility of seeing the American wilderness as a wilder, more primitive, more splendid scene than any to be found in Europe. Even Irving, who spent much of his time in Europe and who wrote mostly about European scenes, was alive to the distinctive beauties of his own country. He wrote that an American “never need...

look beyond his own country for the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery.”

An interest in the picturesque and unusual. Romantic writers were seldom interested in the average and the ordinary, but were always pursuing the strange and out-of-the-way. Washington Irving confessed, “I was always fond of visiting new scenes and observing strange characters and manners,” and he roamed through Europe searching for picturesque scenes and characters. The search for the unusual is reflected in the tales of Edgar Allan Poe, who did not travel from country to country but explored the dark areas of his own mind.

A spirit of nationalism. Many Romantic writers were concerned with exploring the history and traditions of their own nation and bringing out qualities that were special to that nation. In America, Bryant and Cooper described the special beauty of the American landscape. Furthermore, Cooper created the first great American fictional character in Natty Bumppo. Even Irving, who sometimes tried to be more English than the English, warned English writers not to be contemptuous of the new nation, which would yet produce a great culture. Only Poe was indifferent to the claims of nationalism, arguing that all true art is universal in its significance. Yet Poe, as much as the other writers, helped establish a national literature, not by being a fervid nationalist, not by creating a theory of American literature, but by writing important literary works.

From the beginning of Andrew Jackson’s administration to the onset of the War Between the States, the United States was an exciting place in which to live and write. The frontier was pushed to the Rockies, then to the Pacific. The country’s transportation system—roads, canals, steamboats, and railroads—grew enormously, making it easier to travel and transport goods from one part of the country to another, and bringing with it a growing sense of nationhood. Reformers working in various fields advocated broadened suffrage, women’s rights, humane treatment of prisoners and of the mentally ill, and abolition of slavery. It seemed that an era of greatness was at hand.

In this era, one characteristic of the Romantic movement became more and more important: a belief in the innate goodness of the individual man. Man, according to many Romantics, was born good. If some men became evil or did evil, it was because society had led them astray. If man acted in accordance with his own instincts and impulses and lived close to nature, he would remain good. Only society tended to corrupt man. With a remarkable individual like Thoreau, this belief took the form of a

Not every Romantic loves unusual and erotic things.

喜欢天然景观而不是
人造景观；人造花园
到瀑布/荒原等
The theory of
sublime

withdrawal from men and their towns to live in the woods and arrive at universal truths by practicing a simple, contemplative life. With men of great spiritual force like Emerson, this belief took the form of repeated admonitions to individual men to trust themselves, to act in accordance with their own natures, no matter what anyone else might tell them.

But as before, American ideals were tempered by some harsh realities. While men might hope to build the perfect society, they were very far from achieving it. The industrialization of New England brought with it a brutalization of human life, created ugly mill towns where human beings were packed together in unsightly huts and where even small children were put to hard labor. In the South, there was slavery, a condition of life that New England idealists and reformers were finding harder and harder to accept. Gradually, even a thinker like Emerson, who preferred to remain aloof from political questions, found himself drawn to the antislavery cause.

If this period in American literature ended with grave misgivings, it began with a rush of optimism. America was at last developing its own culture and literature, and in Ralph Waldo Emerson it found a great champion. In 1837 Emerson delivered an address at Harvard which he called “The American Scholar” and which is now regarded as one of the most important events in the intellectual life of America. “Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close,” Emerson declared, and he proclaimed the beginning of a new age in which America would be the intellectual leader of the world.

New England was alive with the excitement of ideas, vitalized by the sense that *its* cultural and intellectual time had come. This period in American literature has been called by some scholars the “American Renaissance,” to compare it with a great cultural period of the Western world. In his famous book on the period, *The Flowering of New England*, Van Wyck Brooks has described the contribution of the New England writers of this period: “They threw so many ideas into circulation and wrote so sincerely and so well that they came to be accepted as fathers and sages... They helped to make their country people conscious of the great world-movements of thought and feeling in which they played parts side by side with the intellectual leaders of the older countries. In their scholarship, their social thought, their moral passion, their artistic feeling, they spoke for the universal republic of letters, giving their own province a form and body in the consciousness of the world.”

Although Concord, Massachusetts, was a small town, the writers and thinkers

who congregated there had a major influence on the intellectual life of America. Emerson had settled in Concord in 1834. Living nearby were Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, Orestes Brownson, and Henry David Thoreau. Gradually these serious people got into the habit of gathering at one another's homes of an afternoon. The talk was moral and philosophical and reflected the influence of such English and German writers and philosophers as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Goethe. Although not every member of the group regarded himself as a transcendentalist, eventually the group named itself the Transcendental Club. Out of the Transcendental Club came one of the most influential magazines of the time, *The Dial*, which Emerson and Margaret Fuller edited at different times. Out of the group also came Brook Farm, an experiment in communal living. The philosophy of *transcendentalism*, which members of the club advocated, had a vital effect on many writers of the time, including those who were skeptical or opposed it.

A branch of the larger Romanism movement.

回到自然，就能改善自己，找到自己的真心。因为自然没有被腐蚀

Transcendentalism is difficult to define. Its major importance is not so much as a set of precise doctrines than as a state of mind, a set of attitudes about man, God, and the universe. Put simply, *transcendentalism is the view that the basic truths of the universe lie beyond the knowledge we obtain from our senses, a knowledge that a transcendentalist regards as the mere appearance of things.* Basic truths, it was felt, can be reached only through instinct and intuition and are a matter of private experience, faith, and conviction. To arrive at the truth, man must go beyond or transcend what his eyes and ears tell him or what he can learn from books. He must listen to his inner soul. Much of the philosophy of transcendentalism is expressed in Emerson's words: "Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than any material force, that thoughts rule the world."

like 随心所欲
前提是man is born good
But man is corrupted by the society, you should follow your heart.

Although it was at variance with Puritan doctrines, transcendentalism was in one sense very much *in the Puritan tradition.* It encouraged man to be severe with himself and to aspire. Like Puritanism, it saw all things, both great and small, as interrelated. But, unlike Puritanism, it was a doctrine that preached self-confidence and saw man not as a damned soul, but as *a source of spiritual richness.* It proclaimed that the intellectual life was not a constant poring over dead books, but a living tradition that could be renewed by every man's individual insight. It was a call to man to achieve not material, but spiritual greatness.

Thoreau and Emerson were Concord men. Nearby lived "the Cambridge group"—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell

Lowell—active as writers at about the same time. All three were descendants of old New England families; all were scholars who received training abroad; all were Harvard professors who won fame as men of letters far beyond Cambridge.

While Lowell, Longfellow, and Holmes were not swept away by the fervor of the transcendentalists, they nevertheless responded and paid tribute to Emerson's power to inspire and awaken. It remained for the two great fiction writers of the time—Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville—to enter a serious dissent to transcendentalist optimism and to stress the presence of evil in the universe. As Melville wrote in an appreciation of Hawthorne, "Certain it is that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to the Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance. Both Melville and Hawthorne were concerned with striking the uneven balance, with giving due weight to the "power of blackness." In their stories and novels, they gave powerful expression to their dissenting view as they wrestled with the central riddle of existence, the presence of evil in a world of good intentions. And, like other writers before and after, they pointed to the discrepancy between American ideals and realities. [*Adventures in American Literature*]

Materials for comparative reading:

1. *Romanticism*: Nineteenth-century writing, both American and European, was dominated by the spirit of Romanticism, a movement that flourished in Europe and had as its manifesto the *Lyrical Ballads*, written in 1798 by the British poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Romanticism was a reaction against Classicism, the dominant philosophy of the Age of Reason, which stressed reason, clarity, balance, and order as valued by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Unlike Classicism, Romanticism championed imagination and the emotions.

In a broad sense, Romanticism was an attitude toward nature, humanity, and society that espoused freedom and individualism. Echoing the ideals of equality set forth in the Declaration of Independence, Romanticism offered a parallel to the growing sense of nationalism.

Many trends make up the Romantic Movement, particularly the following: (1) an

emphasis on imagination as a key to revealing the innermost depths of the human spirit; (2) a great interest in the picturesque and exotic aspects of the past; (3) and enthusiasm for portraying national life and character; (4) the celebration of the beauty and mystery of nature; (5) a focus on the individual; (6) a fascination with the supernatural and the gothic; (7) a sense of idealism.

Romanticism characterized the works of America's first group of great imaginative writers—Irving, Cooper, Bryant, and Poe. Out of this tradition emerged immortal literary creations such as Cooper's Deerslayer and Chingachgook, men molded by the frontier wilderness, and Rip Van Winkle and Tom Walker, figures drawn from a national past and from German legend. The eminently Romantic works of Bryant looked to nature and to the past to reveal qualities of the human spirit.

Although he did not share the spirit of idealism of the three other writers, Poe drew from many aspects of the Romantic tradition. In creating the bizarre plots and tormented characters for his short stories and poems, he borrowed from European gothic romances—horror stories and investigations of the supernatural, the most famous of which is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Poe's preoccupation with the dark, irrational side of the imagination pointed toward later writers such as Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose works explore the motives and actions of tormented souls.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, American Romanticism was yielding to the philosophy of Transcendentalism, which, like the earlier movement, upheld the goodness of humanity, the glories of nature, and the importance of the individual.

2. Transcendentalism: a philosophy popular in New England during the 1830s, was an offshoot of the Romantic Movement that preceded it. Both philosophies upheld the goodness of humanity, the glories of nature, and the importance of free individual expression. In addition, Transcendentalism maintained that an awareness of reality, or a sense of truth, is reached through intuition rather than through reasoning or logic. Consequently, individuals should act according to their innermost personal beliefs, or spiritual conviction, rather than follow the dictates of society. Closely related to this idea is that of the integrity of the individual, the belief that each person is inherently good, capable of making rational decisions, and worthy of the respect of every other human being. These ideas found a sympathetic response among a people who had long cherished the democratic and individualistic principles of the early

settlers, statesmen, and citizens.

Inevitably, these ideas were to clash with the doctrines of organized religion. An earlier group of New England intellectuals broke away from Puritanism and founded the Unitarian Church during the late eighteenth century. Their split with the established church was largely due to the intellectual and commercial trends of the age. In a day when commerce and science had become predominant, when material comfort and social mobility were becoming increasingly accessible to more and more people, the old religion—Puritanism—lost its hold. By the 1830s the Unitarians, yesterday's rebels, had become Boston's establishment, dominating the city's intellectual centers, both the church and Harvard University. But Boston's economic, political, and cultural elite found themselves—by the early 1830s—embroiled in yet another intellectual insurrection, though this time it was they who were under attack.

Transcendentalists like Emerson did not limit their attacks solely to questions of theology. To them, sterility in religion had its analogues in both public and private life. They believed that Rationalism, the philosophy from which modern science had sprung, denied the profound sense of mystery that these thinkers found in both nature and humanity. They felt that current thought had reduced God to a watchmaker who once having built and wound up the universe now sat back and detachedly observed it. The individual in this scheme was likewise reduced, as Thoreau said, “to a cog” or wheel in this cosmic machine. Social conformity, materialism, and what they believed to be a lack of moral commitment angered these young men and women. In addition to their writings, their beliefs found expression in various movements: feminism, abolitionism, utopianism, communalism, and even the beginnings of labor unionism.

In opposition to the rationalistic tendencies of the age, Transcendentalism incorporated elements from many philosophies and religions. But Transcendentalism is closest in spirit to the philosophy of Idealism, which held that material objects do not have a real existence of their own. Rather, these objects are diffused parts or aspects of God, the Over-Soul. As the ultimate spiritual force, the Over-Soul encompasses all existence and reconciles all the opposing forces in the world. Material objects therefore mirror or reflect an ideal world. Thus, by contemplating objects in nature, the individual can transcend this world and discover union with God and ideal. The key innate quality used by the individual to achieve this state of union is intuition, granted every soul at birth. [*The United States in Literature*]

3. At first sight, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman seem to

differ from one another more than they agree. For one thing, they are divergent in temperament. Thoreau, Whitman, and—above all—Emerson are prevailingly optimistic. Hawthorne, on the other hand, is at least fatalistic in point of view; while Melville seems to have run the entire emotional gamut from optimism through pessimism to final resignation. Again, all of them differ widely in their choice of subject matter and literary form. Primarily novelists, Hawthorne and Melville are concerned with the psychological and allegorical analysis of certain types of human personality and moral situations; primarily poets and essayists, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman focus, each in his own way, upon the underlying relation of man to nature.

Most widely of all, they differ in their interest and capacity for sustained philosophical thought. None of them could be described as interested in philosophical theory for its own sake—not even Emerson, who is less intolerant of abstract reasoning than the rest. But even within these limits their divergency is still great. For although we can find at least traces of a comprehensive philosophical system in Emerson, the traces become progressively more rudimentary in Thoreau, Melville, and Whitman, until at last in Hawthorne they almost disappear.

Yet this incommensurability is not absolute. Common to them, as to all great writers, is a profound sense of the human predicament, of the questions that beset man as man, and of the relation of these problems to man's defects and potentialities. Their common concern surmounts all differences, as may be seen in Emerson's and Hawthorne's treatment of the problem of evil. When Emerson proclaims the non-existence of evil in an ultimate form and Hawthorne rejects this conception as tragically blind, neither writer is proceeding on the assumption that the problem of evil itself is unreal or trivial. For Hawthorne, as we know, it is the most pressing of all problems, while for Emerson—as the haunting overtones of "Experience" intimate—it is a problem which can be optimistically resolved only after the most desperate of inward struggles and only after attaining a serenity almost stripped of emotion. In other words, the difference between the two lies not in their conception of the importance of the problem but only in their conception of its proper solution. [Robert E. Spiller, *Literary History of the United States*, 1948]

4.... in the nineteenth century the American literary world was very small indeed, so small that most of the writers in this period knew each other, often intimately, or else knew much about each other. They lived, if not in each other's pockets, at least in

each other's houses, or boardinghouses: Lemuel Shaw, from 1830 to 1860 chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and Herman Melville's father-in-law after 1847, for a time stayed in a Boston boardinghouse run by Ralph Waldo Emerson's widowed mother; the Longfellows summered in the 1840s at the Pittsfield boardinghouse run by Melville's cousin, a house where Melville had stayed in his early teens; in Pittsfield and Lenox, Hawthorne and Melville paid each other overnight visits, in Concord the Hawthornes rented the Old Manse, the Emerson ancestral home, and later bought a house there from the educator Bronson Alcott and made it famous as the Wayside; in Concord the Emersons welcomed many guests, including Margaret Fuller, and when the master was away Thoreau sometimes stayed in the house to help Mrs. Emerson with the children and the property. [*Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 1994]

Think and discuss: What are the major differences between classicism and Romanticism as literary movements? Can you make a tentative definition for the terms Romanticism and Transcendentalism? As writers of the same Romantic movement in American literature, Hawthorne and Emerson have much in common; however, the discrepancy between their world views is also great. What conclusion can you draw from those passages above as to their differences?

II. Biographies and Selected Readings

1. Washington Irving (1783-1859).

When Washington Irving was born, his mother reportedly said, "George Washington's work is ended, and the child shall be named for him." The name was appropriate for several reasons. Young Irving's birth occurred in New York on April 3, 1783, five months before peace was established between Great Britain and the colonies. Like his namesake, Washington Irving was also a father of America—a literary patriarch who was the first famous man of letters in the new nation. Significantly, the last work published before Irving's death in 1859 was the fifth volume of his excellent biography, *The Life of George Washington*.

New York was then the capital of the country; it was a spreading seaport; it retained many traces of its Dutch origin; it had in its streets men of every calling and of every color. Here young Irving grew up happy, going to school and getting knowledge out of books, but also lingering along the pier heads, and picking up the information to be gathered in that best of universities—a great city. He was playful rather than studious; and although two of his brothers had been educated at Columbia College, he neglected to enter—a blunder which he regretted all his life, and which Columbia regrets to this day. (Brander Matthews)

In 1815 he went to England, attempting to save his family's import business, which had suffered financial upsets from the War of 1812. Not until the firm was forced into bankruptcy in 1818 did Irving decide that he must support himself by writing. In 1819 and 1820 *The Sketch Book* was sent in installments to America, where it was highly praised by readers and critics alike, and eventually published in book form in England. Although most of the collection involved essays about the charm of English life and manners, it is mainly remembered for two stories, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle." The books that followed—*Bracebridge Hall*, and *Tales of a Traveler*—were almost as popular as his first great success. Irving traveled throughout Europe, making important literary and social friendships everywhere. Highly regarded as a public figure, in 1841 he was appointed minister to Spain. Before his death, his stories and essays were already being studied in classrooms as models of good writing.

2. James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851).

James Fenimore Cooper was born five years before Bryant, six years after Irving. Until he was past thirty he lived an active life in which authorship had no part. Yet once he had taken up his pen, like Bryant and Irving he found new material for literature in a youthful nation. And he surpassed both in national and world-wide fame.

When Fenimore was a year old, his family moved from his birthplace, Burlington, New Jersey, to the new settlement of Cooperstown, which his father had laid out on the shore of Otsego Lake in New York. Though the boy lived in a fine manor house on a thousand-acre tract, his home was surrounded by wilderness, and in

many ways his was the life of a frontier boy. He learned to use the bow and arrow, to ride horseback, to fish, to shoot. He heard much about Indians who not long before had lived in the forests and had paddled canoes on the lake.

At thirteen—not an unusual age for college freshmen at the time—he entered Yale. Studies were not attractive to him. Not surprisingly he was expelled during his second year for a prank; the story is that he tied a donkey to his tutor’s chair. Next he was sent to sea for a year on a merchant ship, and on his return he was commissioned as a midshipman in the Navy. After three years he left the sea to marry. Since his bride did not cherish the role of a sailor’s wife, he settled down as a gentleman farmer. During nine years he moved back and forth between Cooperstown and the Westchester home of his wife’s family.

This outdoor man with his craggy tanned features was living in a newly built farmhouse in Scarsdale when, surprisingly, he turned author—surprising because he was a contented country squire, he had trouble writing even a letter, and he had shown no interest in creative authorship. One evening he flung aside a dull English novel and told his wife he could write a better novel himself. To the astonishment of both his wife and daughter (and perhaps even himself) he did write a novel, *Precaution*, which was published in 1820.

It is questionable that he had made good his boast, for it would be hard to find many novels duller than this one. It had English characters and settings and an English plot, and Cooper was handicapped by the fact that he knew nothing about England at first hand. The book made hardly any impression.

Instead of being discouraged, Cooper set his jaw and started another novel. Luckily, this time he hit upon a congenial subject. Writing *The Spy* (1821), Cooper, as he said, “chose patriotism for his theme” and selected his hero “as the best illustration of his subject.” The story of Harvey Birch’s adventures as a secret agent during the American Revolution succeeded both in America and abroad, and launched its author upon a very successful career in fiction writing.

Cooper wrote thirty-three novels as well as volumes of social comment, naval history, and travel. Some novels, *The Pilot* (1823), for example, used his knowledge of life at sea and won him fame as an early creator of sea stories. But the best and most famous group of books he wrote derived authority from his boyhood memories of life in a frontier settlement. This was the Leatherstocking Series, so called from one of the names applied to their frontiersman hero, Natty Bumppo, one of the most

memorable characters in American fiction. There are five books in the series : (1) *The Pioneers* (1823); (2) *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826); (3) *The Prairie* (1827); (4) *The Pathfinder* (1840); and (5) *The Deerslayer* (1841). To read the story of Natty Bumppo from youth to old age one must read these novels not in the order of composition but, following the numbering above, in this order: 5, 2, 4, 1, 3.

The order in which the books were written shows that they were started without a plan and composed at random, sometimes after long intervals. Not until after publication did Cooper notice that he had changed the name of a character midway through a novel and that at one point he had aged his hero two years in a few paragraphs. There were other signs that the impetuous Cooper had been hasty and careless about details. His style was far from polished, and at times his characters seemed to be reading their lines instead of talking them. Also he followed other writers of the day in making the “gentlemen” in his novel stuffy—“clothes upon sticks,” as James Russell Lowell put it. His “ladies” (or “females”), again in Lowell’s words, “... from one model don’t vary, / All sappy as maples and flat as the prairie.”

Though modern readers may squirm as they read Cooper’s long descriptions, the author should be credited for putting into fiction American mountains, forests, lakes, streams, and prairies. Cooper is widely regarded as the first great American novelist.

3. William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878).

Often regarded as America’s first eminent poet, William Cullen Bryant could trace his ancestry back to a settler in Plymouth Colony. As a youngster in western Massachusetts, he lived among the apple trees, rocky fields, and deep woods of the Berkshire Hills—surroundings that awakened in the future poet a love of nature and later provided the chief subjects of his verse.

Because of his father’s meager income, he was forced at seventeen to drop out of Williams College after a few months of study. As he contemplated the future at the onset of the gloomy New England winter, he began a poem to express the solemn mood with which he faced life. The first draft of “Thanatopsis” was pushed into a pigeonhole of his father’s desk. Six years later, the elder Bryant submitted his son’s poem to the editor of the newly established *North American Review*. The editor, on consulting a friend, was warned, “You have been imposed on; no one on this side of the Atlantic is capable of writing such verses.” Luckily, the doubts were removed, the

15 The desert and illimitable air,--
Lone wandering, but not lost.^[2]

All day thy wings have fann'd
At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land, The bird refuse to stoop to the welcome land
20 Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end,
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon o'er thy sheltered nest.

Suggest the destination of the bird is death.

Summer home: warm, comfortable. At the end of the life everything will be fine. You won't be alone.

"Scream"?

25 Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,^[3]
And shall not soon depart.

He, who, from zone to zone,
30 Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

[1] Synecdoche. The "fowler's eye" represents the hunter who might "mark" or view the bird as a moving target. Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is used to suggest the whole ("Give me a hand") or the whole used for the part (calling a policeman "the law"). Synecdoche is generally used to emphasize a particular characteristic. If you refer to someone as "a wagging tongue" or "a sharp tongue," for example, you are highlighting his or her tendency to gossip or criticize.

[2] The Romantic poets believed that the world of nature provided a key to the human world. Both worlds are directed by a Divine plan.

[3] Anastrophe. Notice it in lines 2, 3, 9, 22, and 27. Anastrophe is the inversion of the usual word order in a sentence. A poet who says, "Sad was I" is reversing the normal sentence order of subject-verb-complement ("I was sad"). Such manipulation of a sentence can be used for emphasis or to preserve rhythm and rhyme.

Think and discuss:

1) Is the journey described in stanzas 5-7 a symbol for another kind of journey? If so, what kind? Why is it significant that the poet sees the bird at sunset?

2) A periodic sentence is one in which the most important part is withheld until the very end. A loose sentence is one in the usual order. The purpose of a periodic sentence is to build suspense by withholding the climax until the end, thus emphasizing the last part of the sentence. In the following periodic sentence by Emerson, what idea is emphasized? “If you have not slept, or if you have headache, or sciatica, or leprosy, or thuderstroke, I beseech you, by all angels, to hold your peace.” In this sentence, the phrase “hold your peace” is like the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle. The reader must know this phrase to understand the entire sentence, and therefore he waits for the phrase expectantly. If the sentence were altered to begin “I beseech you, by all angels, to hold your peace if you have not slept...” the phrase “hold your peace” would lose its emphasis. Two stanzas of “To A Waterfowl” are periodic sentences. One is the first stanza. What idea is emphasized in this stanza? In which stanza is the other periodic sentence? What idea is emphasized?

4. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882).

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in his lifetime the best loved of American poets, was born in Portland, Maine. Along with his contemporaries James Russell Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes, he became known as one of the Fireside Poets—a group of Romantics who entertained the American public with poems about patriotism, nature, and family.

As Washington Irving did in his prose works, Longfellow provided a young American nation with a body of legend and folklore all its own. In addition, Longfellow introduced foreign poetic forms into America. *Evangeline* (1847), and *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) were long narrative poems that followed European forms but treated American legends. No stranger to grief, the poet lost his first wife to illness while he was traveling and studying in Europe. “A voice from my inmost heart at a time when I was rallying from depression” is Longfellow’s own description of “A Psalm of Life,” written three years afterward. Longfellow reportedly wrote the poem in a single day on the blank margins of a note of invitation he had received.

After his death, a bust of him was unveiled in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. He was the first American poet to attain this honor.

Selected readings: A Psalm of Life (1838)

What the heart of the young man said to the psalmist

Psalmist: the author of the poems in the biblical Book of Psalms, many of which comment on the fleeting nature of life. King David of Israel is regarded as the author of most of the psalms.

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
 Life is but an empty dream ! —
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
 And things are not what they seem.

Life is real ! Life is earnest!
 And the grave is not its goal ;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
 Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
 Is our destined end or way ;
But to act, that each tomorrow
 Find us farther than today.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
 And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
 Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
 In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle !
 Be a hero in the strife !

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant !
 Let the dead Past bury its dead !
Act,— act in the living Present !

Heart within, and God o'erhead !

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time ;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Supplementary readings: meter in poetry

Sometimes the rhythm of a poem makes an important contribution to the pleasure with which we read it. We take it for granted that all poems have rhythm, regular or irregular, and that many poems use rhyme. However, some knowledge of the regular rhythms, called *meters*, will add to our enjoyment of poetry by helping us see precisely how the poet uses them.

The basis of meter is the *foot*. Each foot contains one accented syllable and one or more unaccented syllables. The arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables in a foot gives us four basic meters:

(a) *The iamb*. This metrical foot, which consists of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable, as in the word *delight*, is the measure most commonly used in verse written in the English language. Notice how the accents fall in the lines from Freneau's poem "The Wild Honeysuckle": No roving foot shall crush thee here, / No busy hand provoke a tear.

(b) *The trochee*. This two-syllabled metrical foot is the opposite of the iamb. Here the accented syllable precedes the unaccented syllable, as in the word *golden*. Longfellow used this meter in *Hiawatha*: Out of childhood into manhood / Now had

grown my Hiawatha.

(c) *The anapest*. This three-syllabled measure consists of two short or unaccented syllables followed by one long or accented syllable, as in the word *introduce*. It is seldom sustained throughout an entire poem, but many poets gain variety and a swift-moving effect by combining anapestic with iambic feet. The following lines from “Sandolphon,” by Longfellow, illustrate this meter: From the spirits on earth that adore / From the souls that entreat and implore.

(d) *The dactyl*. Like the anapest, the dactyl is a three-syllabled foot, but in the dactyl the long or accented syllable precedes the two unaccented syllables, as in the word *happiness*. Few poems are written entirely in dactylic feet, but Longfellow used this meter frequently in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*: Nothing was heard in the room but the / hurrying pen of the stripling.

Poetry varies not only in meter but also in the number of feet in a line. A line of poetry containing only one foot is said to be written in *monometer*; a line of two feet is called *dimeter*; a line of three feet gives us *trimeter*. *Tetrameter*, a line of four metrical feet, is frequently used by poets. “The Wild Honeysuckle” is written in iambic tetrameter and the meter of *Hiawatha* is trochaic tetrameter. *Pentameter* is a line of five metrical feet.

5. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849).

Edgar Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809. When his mother, an actress herself and the widow of an actor, died in Richmond, Virginia, in 1811, wealthy Mrs. Allan of that city took the boy into her home and bestowed upon him his second name. Abroad with Mrs. Allan and her husband from 1815 to 1820, Edgar attended English schools. Back in Virginia he studied in a Richmond academy and under private tutors. A fine athlete, handsome, winning, intelligent, talented as a flutist and writer of verses, he was doted upon and spoiled by the childless Allans. This pampering, the constant change of his earliest years with wandering actors, his uncertain status in the Allan home (he never was adopted), all have been suggested as unfortunate influences upon his sensitive, nervous, and explosive temperament.

Entering the University of Virginia at seventeen, Poe did well in classes. As the foster son of one of the state’s wealthiest men, though, he took up with some of his

school's high-stepping, aristocratic students. He drank—and for this tense youth even a little drink was disastrous; he played cards recklessly; he piled up formidable debts. Allan sternly refused to pay such debts, withdrew Edgar from the university, and set him to work in the family firm. The boy promptly ran away—to Boston.

Although the break between Edgar and his foster father was partially mended for a few years, the old relationship had been destroyed. Poe served for a time in the army. His foster father secured his admission to West Point; but a disciplined military life was not the career for one so proud and hot-tempered, and he was soon expelled. The death of Mrs. Allan, who had never ceased to love her erratic but brilliant foster son, led ultimately to the final break between Edgar and Mr. Allan.

Edgar was forced to try to make a living with his pen. In the preceding five years he had published three volumes of poetry, but they had made very little money. Now he turned first to writing tales, and, after some success, to work as an editor, in those days a hard means of earning a livelihood for even the steadiest of men. In 1836 he married his cousin, fragile, thirteen-year-old Virginia Clemm. She was constantly ill, and, until her death in 1847, Poe worried about her health and the medical bills. Over the years his life followed a pattern: again and again he made a good start and did well for some time. Then his erratic temperament, his poverty, and his frustrations caused him to lose control of himself, perhaps to turn to drink. In the summer of 1849, hoping to begin a new magazine, Poe returned to Richmond. There he encountered his boyhood sweetheart, Elmira Shelton, now a widow, to whom he became engaged. In September, he left Richmond to attend to some work in the North, and a week later, he was found unconscious in Baltimore, in an alley near a tavern. He died shortly thereafter.

Hard pressed as he was, Poe left his mark on American and world literature. His poems, with their unreal atmosphere and musical effects, were much admired by the French poet Baudelaire and had a considerable influence on the late nineteenth-century French poetry. His definition of the short story, expounded in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, led to a recognition of the short story as a distinct form of literature. His three detective stories—"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter"—inspired the creation of Sherlock Holmes and other brilliant deductive sleuths. But Poe's chief contribution to literature is his exploration of the dark side of human nature, his creation of incidents and symbols that afford disturbing glimpses into a tumultuous

world no further away than a twist of the imagination. His best gothic tales include: “The Fall of the House of Usher”, “The Tell-Tale Heart”, “The Cask of Amontillado”, and “William Wilson”; and his most well-known essay is “The Philosophy of Composition”, which was written as a critical reflection on his poetic masterpiece “The Raven”.

Selected readings: Annabel Lee

a lot of repetition, like nursery line?

It was many and many a year ago,
 In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
 By the name of ANNABEL LEE;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
 Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
 In this kingdom by the sea;
But we loved with a love that was more than love-
 I and my Annabel Lee;
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
 Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
 In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
 My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
 And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulcher
 In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
 Went envying her and me--

Yes!that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we,
Of many far wiser than we;
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling- my darling- my life and my bride,
In the sepulcher there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

Supplementary reading: The magic which Poe's poetry has exerted over several generations of readers lies principally in its matchless melody. Reviewing some of the devices which Poe has used to haunt the ear and to create a mood appropriate to his theme will add to your appreciation of his artistry. (a) *Rhyme*. The *end rhyme*, or rhyme at the end of a line, is only one of the rhyming devices Poe has used. Far more unusual and elaborate is his use of internal rhyme within lines. Read the last stanza of "Annabel Lee" slowly. Notice the *beams* in line 34 rhymes with *dreams* at its end, that the word *rise* in line 36 rhymes with *eyes* at the end of the line, and that *night-tide* and *side* in line 38 rhyme with each other and with *bride* at the end of line 39. (b) *Alliteration*, the repetition of the initial sound of two or more closely related words or accented syllables, is frequently used by Poe. Again referring to the last stanza of "Annabel Lee," notice the alliterative effect of *sepulcher* and *sea* in line 40, and of

sounding and *sea* in line 41. (c) *Assonance*, the resemblance in the sound of the vowel in two or more accented syllables, adds greatly to the musical effect of the poetry. The last stanza of “Annabel Lee” is an excellent example of how Poe mingles assonance and internal rhyme. The long *e* sound of the internally rhymed words *beams* and *dreams* (line 34) is repeated in *me* in the same line, in *Lee* (lines 35 and 37), in *feel* (line 36), and in *sea* (lines 40 and 41). Also, the long *i* sound of the internally rhymed words *rise* and *eyes* (line 36), *night-tide* and *side* (line 38), and *bride* (line 39) is repeated in *bright* (line 36), in *lie* (line 38), in *my* and *life* (line 39), and in *by* (lines 38,40, and 41). Notice that the *o* sound in *moon* (line 34) is repeated in *tomb* (line41) and is closely related to the *o* sound in *beautiful* (lines 35 and 37). (d) *Repetition*, the deliberate repeating of a word or phrase, is particularly striking in Poe’s poetry. Notice, for example, how Poe has repeated in “Annabel Lee” the phrase, *kingdom by the sea*. Poe’s use of *love* in slightly varied phrases also achieves a subtle effect of repetition.

from “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846)

...The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression, for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. ... What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones, that is to say, of brief poetical effects....

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art-- the limit of a single sitting-- and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe" (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. ...

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper length for my intended poem-- a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that throughout the construction, I kept

steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration-- the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. ...

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation- and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones....Now, never losing sight of the object-- supremeness or perfection at all points, I asked myself- "Of all melancholy topics what, according to the universal understanding of mankind, is the most melancholy?" Death, was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length the answer here also is obvious-- "When it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

***from Poe's review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, in *Graham's Magazine*,
May 1842***

写小说第一件事情：想要在读者中唤起怎样的情绪？

A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preestablished design.

The Cask of Amontillado

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled --but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

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.

He had a weak point -- this Fortunato -- although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionaires*. In painting and gemmery, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him: "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado, A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful

of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If any one has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me --"

"Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi--"

"I have no engagement; --come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a *roquelaire* closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of

the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," he said.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi --"

"Enough," he said; "the cough's a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True --true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily --but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damp."

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"Nemo me impunelacessit."

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough --"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement --a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said, "a sign."

"It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to

glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi --"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I

had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said--

"Ha! ha! ha! --he! he! he! --a very good joke, indeed --an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo --he! he! he! --over our wine --he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He!he! he! --he! he! he! --yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"For the love of God, Montresor!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called

aloud --

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again --

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. In pace requiescat!

6. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882).

John Greenleaf Whittier once said of Ralph Waldo Emerson that he was “the one American who is sure of being remembered in a thousand years.” Emerson advocated self-reliance, self-trust, and individualism, qualities that formed the basis of a philosophy called Transcendentalism. Dominating an era of American cultural development with his leadership of the New England Transcendental Movement, he revolutionized American literary thought.

Emerson was born in Boston in 1803. His father, descended from six generations of clergymen, was the minister at the First Church of Boston. While Emerson was young, his father died and left his family destitute. In spite of his poverty, Emerson attended the Latin School and entered Harvard College in 1817. After finishing Harvard, he taught for three years and in 1829 he became associate pastor at the Unitarian Second Church in Boston and married Ellen Tucker. In 1832 he resigned his church position because he believed “the profession was antiquated” and he could no longer perform some of its rituals. It was about this time that Emerson’s wife and two of his brothers died. Distressed by these personal tragedies, he decided to go to Europe. While he was abroad, he discovered German Transcendentalism, which he brought back and made distinctively American by combining his ideas of self-reliance and free-thinking with Romantic Idealism.

In 1835 he remarried and moved to his grandfather’s home, Old Manse, in Concord, Massachusetts, where he read, wrote, prepared lectures, and influenced others in Transcendentalism. Followers such as Henry Thoreau and Bronson Alcott took up social causes, including the abolition of slavery and reforms in education, labor, suffrage, and women’s rights. Emerson’s optimistic philosophy, found in all of his essays, notably “Nature”, “Self-Reliance”, “The Over-Soul”, and “The American Scholar”(which is, in the opinion of Oliver Wendell Holmes, “our intellectual Declaration of Independence), might be summed up in one of his own epigrams: “Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string.”

Supplementary comments: Emerson at his best is one of the genuinely attractive and intelligent figures in nineteenth-century American literature. And yet he is

perhaps the most disliked and despised at the moment. Half the undergraduate papers one reads on American literature contain scathing references to “transcendental gush”, or “Emersonian innocence”. Critics like Yvor Winters describe him as clever, thereby denying him both true intelligence and moral worth; indeed Winters does not scruple to use the word “fraud”. And the scholarship about more favoured writers like Hawthorne and Melville often allows itself tones of preposterous condescension. There has been a lot of choosing of sides in American literature, and Emerson has captained the bad guys in nearly everybody’s scheme for a long time. To the men of the ’twenties he symbolized everything puritan, provincial, and preachy; to those of the ’thirties, everything complacent, genteel, and bourgeois; to those of the ’forties and ’fifties, everything romantic, enthusiastic, naïve—“he knew nothing of the dark side of human nature.” But it is not so much direct attack that has injured him as a barrage of innuendo. We may take as typical Richard Chase’s remark that “the strain of dark and somber drama which characterizes so much of the best American fiction” was the work of the “non-Emersonian” tradition of Hawthorne and Melville...[But] his opinions really were full of tensions and rich ambiguities; it is ironic that he should be almost the only figure in American literature who has been denied these virtues by contemporary criticism. He certainly exemplifies them better than Hawthorne and Melville, who are so much more often credited with them. By comparison with him, neither of them was an intellectual at all...[Martin Green, *Re-Appraisals*, 1965]

Selected readings: from Self-Reliance

I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional. The soul always hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they instil is of more value than any thought they may contain. 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; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost, and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is, that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what

men but what they thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without preestablished harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise, shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

如果不是全心全意的做事情，那么就没有结

metaphor? 所有人都会共鸣?

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and

伟人也是如此（接受命运的安排）；genius=the spirit of their age,

advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text, in the face and behaviour of children, babes, and even brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not. Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces, we are disconcerted. Infancy conforms to nobody: all conform to it, so that one babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play to it. So God has armed youth and puberty and manhood no less with its own piquancy and charm, and made it enviable and gracious and its claims not to be put by, if it will stand by itself. Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me. Hark! in the next room his voice is sufficiently clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold, then, he will know how to make us seniors very unnecessary....

小孩不会conform, 当大人和小孩玩的时候, 大人

7. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862).

Thoreau thought of himself as “a mystic, a Transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher,” but he was much more. He acted out the dictates of his conscience with a determination that was unsettling to those who lived more cautious lives. While Emerson and other Transcendentalists discussed the abolition of slavery, Thoreau helped runaway slaves escape to Canada. When it was not popular to do so, he spoke in defense of the abolitionist John Brown. To register his disapproval of slavery and the Mexican War, he refused to pay his poll tax and went to jail. It is said that while Emerson visited Thoreau on his day in jail, he asked, “Henry, why are you here?” Thoreau answered, “Waldo, why are you not here?” From this civil protest came the essay “Civil Disobedience”, still popular today as a manifesto of the individual’s right to protest immoral acts of government.

Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817. Although he graduated near the top of his Harvard class in 1837, for most of his life he supported himself by manual labor. When Emerson, fourteen years his senior, had given “The American Scholar” address, Thoreau is said to have once walked eighteen miles from Concord to Boston and back to hear Emerson speak. Thoreau became a follower of Emerson’s and at one point lived with his family as a tutor and handyman.

In 1839, on a vacation from teaching, he and his brother John went in a thirteen-day journey down the Concord River and up the Merrimack River. He later wrote about this experience in his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. The book, however, was not well received by the public, and seven hundred out of one thousand copies were sent back to him unsold. He referred to them in this manner: “I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself.”

His experiment in living at Walden Pond began in 1845. He explained his action with these words, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not when I came to die discover that I had not lived.” At Walden he stripped his life to its essentials, noting every aspect of nature around him and putting transcendental ideas to the test. He stayed there for twenty-six months and lived in a cabin he built, ate the

vegetables he grew, and gathered the material for *Walden*, a book that would immortalize him, even though in 1854 only two thousand copies were sold.

Thoreau died from tuberculosis at the age of forty-four. A few hours before his death an aunt asked if he had “made his peace with God,” Thoreau said, “I have never quarreled with Him.”

Supplementary readings: Emerson's Eulogy of May 9th, 1862

...A natural skill for mensuration, growing out of his mathematical knowledge, and his habit of ascertaining the measures and distances of objects which interested him, the size of trees, the depth and extent of ponds and rivers, the height of mountains, and the air-line distance of his favorite summits, — this, and his intimate knowledge of the territory about Concord, made him drift into the profession of land-surveyor. It had the advantage for him that it led him continually into new and secluded grounds, and helped his studies of Nature. His accuracy and skill in this work were readily appreciated, and he found all the employment he wanted.

... He was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the State; he ate no flesh, he drank no wine, he never knew the use of tobacco; and, though a naturalist, he used neither trap nor gun. He chose, wisely, no doubt, for himself, to be bachelor of thought and Nature. He had no talent for wealth, and knew how to be poor without the least hint of squalor or inelegance. ... A fine house, dress, the manners and talk of highly cultivated people were all thrown away on him. He much preferred a good Indian, and considered these refinements as impediments to conversation, wishing to meet his companion on the simplest terms. He declined invitations to dinner-parties, because there each was in every one's way, and he could not meet the individuals to any purpose. "They make their pride," he said, "in making their dinner cost much; I make my pride in making my dinner cost little." When asked at table what dish he preferred, he answered, "The nearest." He did not like the taste of wine, and never had a vice in his life. ...

There was something military in his nature not to be subdued, always manly and able, but rarely tender, as if he did not feel himself except in opposition. He wanted a fallacy to expose, a blunder to pillory, I may say required a little sense of victory, a roll of the drum, to call his powers into full exercise. It cost him nothing to say No;

indeed, he found it much easier than to say Yes. It seemed as if his first instinct on hearing a proposition was to controvert it, so impatient was he of the limitations of our daily thought. This habit, of course, is a little chilling to the social affections; and though the companion would in the end acquit him of any malice or untruth, yet it mars conversation. Hence, no equal companion stood in affectionate relations with one so pure and guileless. "I love Henry," said one of his friends, "but I cannot like him; and as for taking his arm, I should as soon think of taking the arm of an elm-tree."...

... He was of short stature, firmly built, of light complexion, with strong, serious blue eyes, and a grave aspect, — his face covered in the late years with a becoming beard. His senses were acute, his frame well-knit and hardy, his hands strong and skillful in the use of tools. And there was a wonderful fitness of body and mind. He could pace sixteen rods more accurately than another man could measure them with rod and chain. He could find his path in the woods at night, he said, better by his feet than his eyes. He could estimate the measure of a tree very well by his eyes; he could estimate the weight of a calf or a pig, like a dealer. From a box containing a bushel or more of loose pencils, he could take up with his hands fast enough just a dozen pencils at every grasp. He was a good swimmer, runner, skater, boatman, and would probably outwalk most countrymen in a day's journey.....

He had many reserves, an unwillingness to exhibit to profane eyes what was still sacred in his own, and knew well how to throw a poetic veil over his experience. All readers of "Walden" will remember his mythical record of his disappointments: —

"I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks, and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud; and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves."...

Had his genius been only contemplative, he had been fitted to his life, but with his energy and practical ability he seemed born for great enterprise and for command; and I so much regret the loss of his rare powers of action, that I cannot help counting it a fault in him that he had no ambition. Wanting this, instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry party. Pounding beans is good to the end of pounding empires one of these days; but if, at the end of years, it is still only beans!

...He had many elegances of his own, whilst he scoffed at conventional elegance.

Thus, he could not bear to hear the sound of his own steps, the grit of gravel; and therefore never willingly walked in the road, but in the grass, on mountains and in woods. His senses were acute, and he remarked that by night every dwelling-house gives out bad air, like a slaughter-house. He liked the pure fragrance of melilot. ... He loved Nature so well, was so happy in her solitude, that he became very jealous of cities, and the sad work which their refinements and artifices made with man and his dwelling. The axe was always destroying his forest. "Thank God," he said, "they cannot cut down the clouds!"...

There is a flower known to botanists, one of the same genus with our summer plant called "Life-Everlasting," a Gnaphalium like that, which grows on the most inaccessible cliffs of the Tyrolese mountains, where the chamois dare hardly venture, and which the hunter, tempted by its beauty, and by his love, (for it is immensely valued by the Swiss maidens,) climbs the cliffs to gather, and is sometimes found dead at the foot, with the flower in his hand. It is called by botanists the Gnaphaliumleontopodium, but by the Swiss Edelweisse, which signifies Noble Purity. Thoreau seemed to me living in the hope to gather this plant, which belonged to him of right. The scale on which his studies proceeded was so large as to require longevity, and we were the less prepared for his sudden disappearance. The country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost. It seems an injury that he should leave in the midst his broken task, which none else can finish, — a kind of indignity to so noble a soul, that it should depart out of Nature before yet he has been really shown to his peers for what he is. But he, at least, is content. His soul was made for the noblest society; he had in a short life exhausted the capabilities of this world; wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home.

Selected readings: from *Walden*

多数人生活在平静的绝望之中

...The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation....

For more than five years I maintained myself thus solely by the labor of my hands, and I found that, by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living. The whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study. I have thoroughly tried school-keeping, and found that my

expenses were in proportion, or rather out of proportion, to my income, for I was obliged to dress and train, not to say think and believe, accordingly, and I lost my time into the bargain. As I did not teach for the good of my fellow-men, but simply for a livelihood, this was a failure. I have tried trade but I found that it would take ten years to get under way in that, and that then I should probably be on my way to the devil. I was actually afraid that I might by that time be doing what is called a good business. When formerly I was looking about to see what I could do for a living, some sad experience in conforming to the wishes of friends being fresh in my mind to tax my ingenuity, I thought often and seriously of picking huckleberries; that surely I could do, and its small profits might suffice — for my greatest skill has been to want but little — so little capital it required, so little distraction from my wonted moods, I foolishly thought. While my acquaintances went unhesitatingly into trade or the professions, I contemplated this occupation as most like theirs; ranging the hills all summer to pick the berries which came in my way, and thereafter carelessly dispose of them; so, to keep the flocks of Admetus. I also dreamed that I might gather the wild herbs, or carry evergreens to such villagers as loved to be reminded of the woods, even to the city, by hay-cart loads. But I have since learned that trade curses everything it handles; and though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business.

As I preferred some things to others, and especially valued my freedom, as I could fare hard and yet succeed well, I did not wish to spend my time in earning rich carpets or other fine furniture, or delicate cookery, or a house in the Grecian or the Gothic style just yet. If there are any to whom it is no interruption to acquire these things, and who know how to use them when acquired, I relinquish to them the pursuit. Some are "industrious," and appear to love labor for its own sake, or perhaps because it keeps them out of worse mischief; to such I have at present nothing to say. Those who would not know what to do with more leisure than they now enjoy, I might advise to work twice as hard as they do — work till they pay for themselves, and get their free papers. For myself I found that the occupation of a day-laborer was the most independent of any, especially as it required only thirty or forty days in a year to support one. The laborer's day ends with the going down of the sun, and he is then free to devote himself to his chosen pursuit, independent of his labor; but his employer, who speculates from month to month, has no respite from one end of the year to the other.

In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely; as the pursuits of the simpler nations are still the sports of the more artificial. It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do.

One young man of my acquaintance, who has inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, if he had the means. I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue his own way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. The youth may build or plant or sail, only let him not be hindered from doing that which he tells me he would like to do. It is by a mathematical point only that we are wise, as the sailor or the fugitive slave keeps the polestar in his eye; but that is sufficient guidance for all our life. We may not arrive at our port within a calculable period, but we would preserve the true course.

Think and discuss: Epigrams are short, witty sayings often ending with a wry twist. One of Thoreau's best-known epigrams is, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer." Explain what Thoreau means in the following epigrams:

We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us.

I have learned that the swiftest traveller is he that goes afoot.

In my house we were so near that we could not begin to hear, -- we could not speak low enough to be heard.

8. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864).

One of Hawthorne's ancestors was involved in prosecuting the "witches" in Salem, Massachusetts, in the 1690s, and Hawthorne, born in Salem, was haunted by this ancestral guilt. In the introductory essay to his most widely acclaimed work, *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne proclaimed that he took the shame upon himself, and hoped thereby to dispel the family curse.

Hawthorne was the son of a shipmaster who died when the boy was four. After attending Bowdoin College in Maine, he returned home and devoted himself to writing stories, learning his craft while living in isolation. Gradually Hawthorne's tales began to appear in magazines, and in 1837 he gathered a number of these published pieces, such as "The Minister's Black Veil" and "Wakefield", into a volume titled *Twice-Told Tales*.

In 1842 when Hawthorne moved to the house in Concord, Massachusetts, known as the "Old Manse", he wrote in the very room where Emerson had written his essay on nature six years earlier. Famous pieces such as "Young Goodman Brown", "The Birthmark", and "Rappaccinni's Daughter" are among the stories published in 1846 in the collection called *Mosses from an Old Manse*.

Hawthorne was acquainted with the leading Transcendentalists of his time, often meeting with Emerson and his group to discuss the philosophy. He spent several months at Brook Farm, the experiment in communal living founded by a number of these Transcendentalists. Hawthorne married Sophia Peabody, an ardent advocate of Transcendentalism, yet he himself never fully adopted the philosophy. His strong sense of the active presence of evil in the world was more compatible with America's Puritan tradition.

In addition to his novel, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), written a year before Melville's *Moby Dick*, Hawthorne wrote three other notable works: *The House of the Seven Gables*, an account of an ancestral curse; *The Blithedale Romance*, based on

Hawthorne's experiences in the ill-fated experiment in communal living at Brook Farm in the early 1840s; and *The Marble Faun*, a tale of "innocent" Americans in "decadent and treacherous" Italy.

However much Hawthorne criticized his Puritan heritage in his work, he never fully emerged from its shadow. Herman Melville, a close friend and kindred spirit, wrote of him: "... in spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side—like the dark half of the physical sphere—is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black."

Selected readings: The Minister's Black Veil

A Parable

THE SEXTON stood in the porch of Milford meeting-house, pulling busily at the bell-rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on week days. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper's door. The first glimpse of the clergyman's figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

"But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?" cried the sexton in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about, and beheld the semblance of Mr. Hooper, pacing slowly his meditative way towards the meeting-house. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit.

"Are you sure it is our parson?" inquired Goodman Gray of the sexton.

"Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper," replied the sexton. "He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute, of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, being to preach a funeral sermon."

The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. Mr. Hooper, a

gentlemanly person, of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band, and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday's garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat, and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps. But so wonder-struck were they that his greeting hardly met with a return.

"I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

"I don't like it," muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meeting-house. "He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

A rumor of some unaccountable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meeting-house, and set all the congregation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads towards the door; many stood upright, and turned directly about; while several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at variance with that hushed repose which should attend the entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice the perturbation of his people. He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side, and bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner, a white-haired great-grandsire, who occupied an arm-chair in the centre of the aisle. It was strange to observe how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder, till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs, and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation, except for the black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath, as he gave out the psalm; it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures; and while he

prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them.

Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the Word. The sermon which he now delivered was marked by the same characteristics of style and manner as the general series of his pulpit oratory. But there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. 乐意地, 愿意地; 宁愿 A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said, at least, no violence; and yet, with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the centre; some went homeward alone, wrapt in silent meditation; some talked loudly, and profaned the Sabbath day with ostentatious laughter. A few shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery; while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade. After a brief interval, forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of

his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary heads, saluted the middle aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children's heads to bless them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

"How strange," said a lady, "that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!"

"Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper's intellects," observed her husband, the physician of the village. "But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?"

"Truly do I," replied the lady; "and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!"

"Men sometimes are so," said her husband.

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion, the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house, and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin, to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? A person who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling

the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy. From the coffin Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial hopes, that the music of a heavenly harp, swept by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister. The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces. The bearers went heavily forth, and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them, and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind.

"Why do you look back?" said one in the procession to his partner.

I had a fancy," replied she, "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand."

"And so had I, at the same moment," said the other.

That night, the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions, which often excited a sympathetic smile where livelier merriment would have been thrown away. There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister. But the bride's cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike paleness caused a whisper that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one where they tolled the wedding knell. After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the

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hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil.

The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper's black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street, and good women gossiping at their open windows. It was the first item of news that the tavern-keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates that the panic seized himself, and he well-nigh lost his wits by his own waggery. frighten (someone): mischievous merriment, pleasantry,

It was remarkable that of all the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper, wherefore he did this thing. Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers, nor shown himself adverse to be guided by their judgment. If he erred at all, it was by so painful a degree of self-distrust, that even the mildest censure would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime. Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly remonstrance. There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery, before it should grow into a scandal. Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent, after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business. The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil to wrap or cover somebody/something in something 包; 裹; 覆盖 swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, the deputies returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled, except by a

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council of the churches, if, indeed, it might not require a general synod.

But there was one person in the village unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she, with the calm energy of her character, determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper, every moment more darkly than before. As his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister's first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he had seated himself, she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: it was but a double fold of crape, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath.

"No," said she aloud, and smiling, "there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on."

Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly.

"There is an hour to come," said he, "when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then."

"Your words are a mystery, too," returned the young lady. "Take away the veil from them, at least."

"Elizabeth, I will," said he, "so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!"

"What grievous affliction hath befallen you," she earnestly inquired, "that you should thus darken your eyes forever?"

"If it be a sign of mourning," replied Mr. Hooper, "I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil."

"But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?" urged Elizabeth. "Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!"

The color rose into her cheeks as she intimated the nature of the rumors that were already abroad in the village. But Mr. Hooper's mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again--that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.

"If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough," he merely replied; "and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?"

And with this gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy did he resist all her entreaties. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of **mental disease**. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But, in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him.

"And do you feel it then, at last?" said he mournfully.

She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand, and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

"Have patience with me, Elizabeth!" cried he, passionately. "Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil--it is not for eternity! O! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened, to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!"

"Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face," said she.

"Never! It cannot be!" replied Mr. Hooper.

"Then farewell!" said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp, and slowly departed, pausing at the door, to give one long shuddering gaze, that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors, which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges

them all with its own semblance of insanity. But with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardihood to throw themselves in his way. The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk at sunset to the burial ground; for when he leaned pensively over the gate, there would always be faces behind the gravestones, peeping at his black veil. A fable went the rounds that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved him, to the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet afar off. Their instinctive dread caused him to feel more strongly than ^{anything} aught else, that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave plausibility to the whispers, that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. It was said that ghost and fiend consorted with him there. With self-shudderings and outward terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly within his own soul, or gazing through a medium that saddened the whole world. Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret, and never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled at the pale visages of the worldly throng as he passed by.

Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem--for there was no other apparent cause--he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared; though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were the terrors of the black veil, even when Death had bared his visage! Strangers came

long distances to attend service at his church, with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure, because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many were made to quake ere they departed! Once, during Governor Belcher's administration, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach the election sermon. Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council, and the representatives, and wrought so deep an impression that the legislative measures of that year were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway.

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, irreproachable in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper. Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was settled, had been borne away by many a funeral: he had one congregation in the church, and a more crowded one in the churchyard; and having wrought so late into the evening, and done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper's turn to rest.

Several persons were visible by the shaded candle-light, in the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved physician, seeking only to mitigate the last pangs of the patient whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine, who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring minister. There was the nurse, no hired handmaiden of death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary head of good Father Hooper upon the death pillow, with the black veil still swathed about his brow, and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath caused it to stir. All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.

For some time previous, his mind had been confused, wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into

the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side, and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most convulsive struggles, and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse, and breath that grew fainter and fainter, except when a long, deep, and irregular inspiration seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside.

"Venerable Father Hooper," said he, "the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil that shuts in time from eternity?"

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head; then, apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubtful, he exerted himself to speak.

"Yea," said he, in faint accents, "my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted." “是的，”他有气无力地说，“我的灵魂等待着这个时刻，已经疲惫不堪了。”

"And is it fitting," resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, "that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce; is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory, that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity be lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face!"

And thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years. But, exerting a sudden energy, that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both his hands from beneath the bedclothes, and pressed them strongly on the black veil, resolute to struggle, if the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

"Never!" cried the veiled clergyman. "On earth, never!"

"Dark old man!" exclaimed the affrighted minister, "with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?"

Father Hooper's breath heaved; it rattled in his throat; but, with a mighty effort,

grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life, and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed; and there he sat, shivering with the arms of death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful at that last moment, in the gathered terrors of a lifetime. And yet the faint, sad smile, so often there, now seemed to glimmer from its obscurity, and linger on Father Hooper's lips.

"Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!"

While his auditors shrank from one another, in mutual affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it mouldered beneath the Black Veil!

NOTE. Another clergyman in New England, Mr. Joseph Moody, of York, Maine, who died about eighty years since, made himself remarkable by the same eccentricity that is here related of the Reverend Mr. Hooper. In his case, however, the symbol had a different import. In early life he had accidentally killed a beloved friend; and from that day till the hour of his own death, he hid his face from men.

Think and discuss:

(1) Why do you think the author has Hooper officiate at both a funeral and a wedding on the day he first appears with the veil? Do you think that Hooper has actually committed a crime? In commenting on "The Minister's Black Veil," Edgar Allan Poe calls it "a masterly composition" in which the obvious meaning conceals a deeper one that is delicately hinted at. "The moral put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the true import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye (having reference to the 'young lady' [over whose funeral Hooper presides]) has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the

author will perceive.” Do you agree or disagree with Poe’s interpretation that the story is really about “a crime of dark dye”?

(2) *Allegory and Parable*. Basically, allegory refers to the representation of one thing by another. In the allegories illustrated in medieval tapestries, a unicorn frequently stands for purity and innocence. In a literary sense, an allegory is frequently a narrative in which characters or objects stand for abstract qualities or points of view. The most widely read allegory in English, John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, tells of a Christian’s journey to the Celestial City, during which he meets such characters as Hope, Shame, and Despair. A *parable* is a tale from which a moral can be drawn and which may or may not be allegorical. The most widely known parables are those found in the Bible. “The Minister’s Black Veil” is subtitled “A Parable.” Is it also an allegory? Why or why not? Is the minister an allegorical character? Is his veil allegorical?

9. Herman Melville (1819-1891).

Herman Melville was born into a middle-class but financially precarious New York family; in his early years he was raised in a genteel environment. But when his father died in 1832, Melville left school to take on a series of jobs, finally shipping as cabin boy to Liverpool. This voyage, to be described in *Redburn* (1849), was the beginning of many remarkable experiences that would become the foundation for his novels. He next sailed for the South Seas on a whaling ship, the voyage that would later provide the background for *Moby Dick* (1851). He jumped ship at the Marquesas Islands and, as related in *Typee* (1846), took refuge among the cannibalistic Typees. He lived with them a short while and then left on a passing Australian whaler that dropped him off in Tahiti. His stay in Tahiti resulted in *Omoo* (1847). He then enlisted as an ordinary seaman on the frigate *United States* until the ship's eventual return to Boston. His account of the Navy's cruelty and tyranny in *White Jacket* (1850) added fuel to a movement that would shortly result in the abolition of flogging on U. S. Navy ships.

The colorful descriptions of Melville's experiences in *Typee* and *Omoo* won the interest of a curious and fascinated public. He was widely read and became known as the man who had lived among the cannibals. But with succeeding works Melville's fiction became deeper and made more demands on the reader. A public that preferred simple adventure stories had little use for Melville's ambiguities and allegories. When his masterpiece *Moby Dick* was published just five years after his initial success, it was generally ignored, and remained largely unread for over seventy years. Melville was finally rediscovered in the 1920s, and today *Moby Dick* is considered by many to be the greatest American novel ever written.

10. Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888).

As the daughter of a prominent Transcendentalist, Louisa May Alcott grew up surrounded by some of the time's greatest thinkers—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and others. Their influence on her thinking can be seen in her choice of a literary occupation and in the social and moral causes that she

later espoused—the abolition of slavery and women’s suffrage.

In her diary, which she started while her family resided at Fruitlands, her father’s experiment in communal farm living, she commented on the farm’s general lack of success and the lack of practicality in undertaking this idealistic experiment. She was pleased when her family left the farm three years later and settled in Concord by themselves.

With the advent of the Civil War, she went to Union Hospital in Washington, D. C., to nurse wounded soldiers. While she was there, she worked tirelessly, kept a journal, and left only after she became seriously ill with pneumonia.

Her most famous work, *Little Women*, appeared in 1868; it is the story of a family of girls that was based on her personal experiences. *Little Women* brought her not only personal success, but financial security for her family as well. Other books followed such as *An Old Fashioned Girl* in 1870, and *Little Men* in 1871.

11. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896).

When Harriet Beecher Stowe visited President Lincoln in the White House during the Civil War, it is said that he remarked to her, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!” Her novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, was the most widely sold volume of the nineteenth century; and while it did not start the war, it focused national attention on the immorality and cruelty of slavery. The first serial installment of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* appeared in the *National Era*, an antislavery newspaper, on June 5, 1851, and the last on April 1, 1852. When the novel was published in book form in 1852, it was an instant triumph. It sold 350,000 copies during the first year and has since been translated into forty languages with a worldwide readership of many millions. Although *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* has never been considered a literary masterpiece, it is one of the most influential books of social criticism ever written.

12. Walt Whitman (1819-1892).

Although Whitman was a contemporary of Bryant, Poe, Lowell, and Longfellow, there is sufficient reason for considering him America's first modern poet. He embraced the ideal of working-class democracy more fully than any of these writers, and his experiments with free-verse rhythms and realistic imagery inspired many twentieth-century poets.

Whitman's family was poor, and his education ceased early in his teens. When Whitman was four, his family moved to the growing village of Brooklyn. Whitman, much later in life, once remarked that his early friendships with the merchants, sailors, farmers, and fishermen of Brooklyn were "... my best experiences and deepest lessons in human nature."

Between 1839 and 1848 he worked on Manhattan and Brooklyn newspapers as an editor-reporter. Unconsciously, he was developing much of the material and the crisp, objective reporter's style that would later appear in his poetry.

By early July of 1855, he published a thin volume of twelve long, untitled poems. This was the first of many editions of *Leaves of Grass*. Many who read his poetry rejected it as crude or gross. Whittier reportedly threw his copy into a fire. Bryant broke off his friendship with the younger poet. Though the book was a financial failure, some influential readers admired Whitman's revolutionary verse, among them Emerson, Thoreau, and Lincoln.

Whitman was too old to enlist when the Civil War broke out, but he went to care for his brother George, who had been wounded at Fredericksburg. Poems based on his observations of war appeared in later editions of *Leaves of Grass*. After the war, he continued to revise and expand his masterwork, and approved the last edition from his deathbed. Although his later poems decreased in vigor and force, *Leaves of Grass* firmly established him as one of the greatest and most influential American poets.

Selected readings: from "Song of Myself"

["Song of Myself" is Whitman's essential poem, related to his other poems as the hub of a wheel to the spokes. It is Whitman's application of Emerson's advice, "Trust

thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." The various sections of this long poem are not always clearly related to each other, but what unites them all is the personality and soul of the poet, reaching out, discovering, exploring himself and, through himself, the world.]

(1)

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten, [1]
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

(6)

A child said What is the grass? fetching it to me with fullhands,
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark,
and say Whose?

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,

Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.[2]

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colourless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

(52)

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

[1]Creeds and schools for a while sufficed, but are now retiring to the back of the poet's mind.

[2]Canuck is slang for a Canadian. Tuckahoe is a nickname for an inhabitant of eastern Virginia. Cuff, from the African word cuffee meaning "a black person," is a slang for a black American.

Think and discuss: Do you like or dislike the person you meet in this poem? Why? Do you think that if "Song of Myself" were run together as a series of prose paragraphs instead of being divided into verse lines, it would still be considered poetry? Why or why not? Whitman shared Emerson's belief in the interrelation of all things. Find passages that express this idea.

Supplementary reading: Free verse is verse without a regular pattern of meter and usually without rhyme. It differs from conventional verse forms in being “free” from a fixed pattern of rhyme, rhythm, and line length. Free verse achieves its music with poetic devices introduced naturally. Some of these devices are repetition, assonance, alliteration, a speech rhythm of balanced phrases, and a visual rhythm in the ebb and flow of lines. While Whitman was not the first poet to write free verse, it was he who more than any other poet established free verse as an important, acceptable kind of poetic rhythm. In adapting this loose, irregular form, Whitman strove to create a new, peculiarly American kind of poetry. He wished to free poetry from those old conventions. A poem, he thought, should develop as naturally as a tree or a flower. Its rhythms should not be imposed by a metrical pattern but should grow out of the poet’s ideas and feelings. Whitman compares free verse to an ocean: “Its verses are the liquid, billowy waves, ever rising and falling, perhaps sunny and smooth, perhaps wild with storm, always moving, always alike in their nature as rolling waves, but hardly any two alike in size or measure...”

13. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886).

Dickinson once described her concept of poetry: “If I read a book and it makes my 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.” During her life, she published only a handful of the 1,775 poems that she wrote, and her complete poetic works were not published until 1955. She and her poetry never fully belonged to their own time.

Dickinson lived all her life in Amherst, Massachusetts. In her youth she was vivacious and fun-loving. But the society in which she grew up was strict, with precise specifications as to the proper manners and beliefs for young women. In her midtwenties Dickinson gradually withdrew from public life and lived thereafter in almost total seclusion from all but the immediate members of her family. Her poetry writing began in earnest in the late fall of 1861. There are indications that Dickinson realized the quality and possible importance of her work. Yet she had no wish for recognition in her own time and despite the urgings of friends declined to publish. She lived out her life in the family home, dressed always in white, and had little interchange with the outside world.

Selected readings:

I started Early— Took my Dog—

And visited the Sea—

The Mermaids in the Basement

Came out to look at me—

And Frigates-- in the Upper Floor

Extended Hempten Hands—

Presuming Me to be a Mouse—

Aground— upon the Sands—

But no Man moved Me -- till the Tide

Went past my simple Shoe --
And past my Apron -- and my Belt --
And past my Bodice -- too --

And made as He would eat me up --
As wholly as a Dew
Upon a Dandelion's Sleeve --
And then -- I started -- too --

And He-- He followed-- close behind—
I felt His Silver Heel
Upon my Ankle-- Then my shoes
Would overflow with Pearl—

Until We met the Solid Town
No One He seemed to know
And bowing-- with a Mighty look—
At me-- The Sea withdrew—

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover and a bee,
And revery.
Revery alone will do,
If bees are few.

In this short Life
That only lasts an hour
How much—how little—is
Within our power

I like a look of Agony,
Because I know it's true—

Men do not sham Convulsion,
Nor simulate, a Throe—
The Eyes glaze once—and that is Death—
Impossible to feign
The Beads upon the Forehead
By homely Anguish strung.

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—

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The truth's superb surprise
As Lightening to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind—

If you were coming in the fall,
I'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,

Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,
I'd count them on my hand,
Subtracting till my fingers dropped
Into Van Diemen's land.

If certain, when this life was out,
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length
Of time's uncertain wing,
It goads me, like the goblin bee,
That will not state its sting.

I Years had been from Home

And now before the Door
I dared not enter, lest a Face
I never saw before

Stare solid into mine
And ask my Business there—
“My Business but a Life I left
Was such remaining there?”

I leaned upon the Awe—
I lingered with Before—
The Second like an Ocean rolled
And broke against my ear—

I laughed a crumbling Laugh
That I could fear a Door

Who Consternation compassed
And never winced before.

I fitted to the Latch
My Hand, with trembling care
Lest back the awful Door should spring
And leave me in the Floor—

Then moved my Fingers off
As cautiously as Glass
And held my ears, and like a Thief
Fled gasping from the House—

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.

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 –

Think and discuss: In stanza 3 of “Because I could not stop for Death”, the carriage passes a schoolyard, a field of grain, and a setting sun. What stages in life might each of these scenes symbolize? How is the speaker’s vantage point in the last stanza different from that of the first five stanzas?

Part Three American Realism (1865-1900)

I. A General Introduction

In the second half of the 19th century, the fertile, mineral-rich American continent west of the Appalachians and Alleghenies was occupied largely by Europeans, who exploited its resources freely. With these new Americans pushing westward to the Pacific coast, the country's immense natural resources were converted into industrial products both for its own increasing population and for foreign markets.

The Civil War (1861-1865), the seemingly inevitable result of growing economic, political, social, and cultural divisions between North and South, cost the astonishing loss of life and ruin of property, and seemed to have left the country morally exhausted. Within the few decades after the war, however, the country prospered materially over the five following decades. The war effort stimulated technological innovations and developed new methods of efficiently organizing and managing the movement of large numbers of people, raw materials, and goods. After the war these accomplishments were adapted to industrial modernization on a massive scale. The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869; industrial output grew exponentially; agricultural productivity increased dramatically; electricity was introduced on a large scale; new means of communication, such as the telephone, revolutionized many aspects of daily life; coal, oil, iron, gold, silver, and other kinds of mineral wealth were discovered and extracted. With the spread of industrialism, hundreds and thousands of men, women and children flocked to the cities, and modern metropolitan cities emerged and grew. The United States was developing into an industrial giant.

The rapid economic growth and new urban industrial circumstances were accompanied by the development of a national literature of great abundance and variety. New themes, new forms, new subjects, new regions, new authors, new audiences all emerged in the literature of this half century. In fiction, characters rarely represented before the Civil War became familiar figures: industrial workers and the rural poor, ambitious business leaders and vagrants, prostitutes and unheroic soldiers.

Women from many social groups, African Americans, Native Americans; ethnic minorities, immigrants: all began to write for publication, and a rapidly burgeoning market for printed work helped establish authorship as a possible career.

Many of the writers in this period got their start as newspaper journalists. Newspapers had been important to the political, social, and cultural life of America since colonial times. In the decades after the Civil War their numbers and influence grew. Equally important to the development of literary career and literature was the establishment of newspaper syndicates in the 1880s. These syndicates not only published humor, news, cartoons, and comic strips, but also printed both short fiction and novels in installments. Weekly and monthly magazines also published many writers of fiction, providing sources of income and audiences crucial to the further formation of a complex American literary tradition. Many of the periodicals also played a part in the emergence toward the end of the 19th century of powerful works in sociology, philosophy, and psychology, many of them impelled by the spirit of exposure and reform.

In short, as the United States became an international political, economic, and military power during this half century, the quantity and quality of its literary production kept pace. American writers in this period wrote to earn money, gain fame, change the world, and to express themselves in a permanent form. The nature of that form— what might be called the “realistic international art story”— was itself a product of the complex interplay of historical forces and aesthetic developments from the time of the publication of French writer Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856). Among the leading American realists of the period were Mark Twain, Henry James, Edith Wharton, and William Dean Howells, who together encompassed literary style from the comic vernacular through ordinary discourse to impressionist subjectivity. Among them these writers recorded life on the vanishing frontier, in the village, small town, and turbulent metropolis, as well as in European resorts and capitals. They established the literary identity of distinctively American protagonists, specifically the vernacular boy hero and the “American Girl,” the baffled and strained middle class family, the businessman, the psychologically complicated citizens of a new international culture. Together, in brief, they set the example and charted the future course for the subjects, themes, techniques, and styles of fiction we still call modern.

Realism. Broadly speaking, realism is used to label a movement in English, European, and American literature that gathered force from the 1830s to the end of the century. It was, ultimately, nothing more or less than the attempt to write a literature that recorded life as it was lived rather than life as it ought to be lived or had been lived in times past. As defined by William Dean Howells, realism “is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material.” Henry James spoke of the “documentary” value of Howells’s work, thereby calling attention through Howells to realism’s preoccupation with the physical surfaces, the particularities of the sensate world in which fictional characters lived. These characters were “representative” or ordinary characters— characters one might pass on the street without noticing. Realism seeks to create the illusion of everyday life being lived by ordinary people in familiar surroundings— life seen through a clear glass window.

Regional Writing. It is another expression of the realistic impulse, resulted from the desire both to present distinctive ways of life before industrialization dispersed or homogenized them and to come to terms with the harsh realities that seemed to replace these early and allegedly happier times. At a more practical level, much of the writing was a response to the rapid growth of magazines, which created a new, largely female market for short fiction along with correlated opportunities for women writers. By the end of the century, virtually every region of the country had its “local colorist” to immortalize its distinctive natural, social, and linguistic features. Regionalists depicted in meticulous detail the time, place, and historical background in which events in their fiction occurred. They used the speech of the common people and avoided, in general, fantastic plotlines. Though often suffused with nostalgia, the best work of the regionalists both renders a convincing surface of a particular time and location and investigates psychological character traits from a more universal perspective. Regional writing reflects the consciousness of regions and localities that still shapes literary creativity and criticism today.

Naturalism. It is commonly understood as an extension or intensification of realism. Naturalism aims at a detached, scientific objectivity in the treatment of natural man. It conceives of man as controlled by his instincts or his passions, or by his social and economic environment and circumstances. Since in this view man has no free will, the naturalistic writer does not attempt to make moral judgments, and as a determinist he tends toward pessimism. In their works, naturalists generally ignored the highest levels of society and focused on degradation: poverty, alcoholism,

prostitution, insanity, and disease. The characters are often from the fringes and lower depths of contemporary society, characters whose fates are product of degenerate heredity, a sordid environment, and a good deal of bad luck. The movement is an outgrowth of 19th century scientific thought, following in general the biological determinism of Darwin's theory, or the economic determinism of Marx. It stems from French literature, in which Zola emphasizes biological determinism, and Flaubert economic determinism. The leading American naturalists are considered to include Crane, Norris, Herrick, London, and later Dreiser, Dos Passos and Farrell.

II. Biographies

1. Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens, 1835-1910)

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, the third of five children, was born on November 30, 1835, in the village of Florida, Missouri, and grew up in the somewhat larger river town of Hannibal. Clemens's father, an ambitious and respected but unsuccessful country lawyer and storekeeper, died when Clemens was twelve, and from that time on Clemens worked to support himself and the rest of his family.

Clemens was apprenticed to a printer after his father's death; and in 1851 when his brother Orion became a publisher in Hannibal, Clemens went to work for him. In 1853 he began a three-year period of travel, which took him to St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Keokuk (Iowa), and Cincinnati, in each of which he earned his living as a printer hired by the day. In 1856 he set out by steamboat for New Orleans, intending to go to the Amazon; the scheme fell through, and instead he apprenticed himself to Horace Bixby, a Mississippi riverboat pilot. After training for eighteen months, Clemens satisfied a boyhood ambition when he became a pilot himself, practicing this lucrative and prestigious trade until the Civil War virtually ended commercial river traffic in 1861. During this period he began to write humorous accounts of his activities for the *Keokuk Saturday Post*; though only three of these articles were published (under the pseudonym Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass), they established the pattern of peripatetic journalism—the pattern for much of his next ten years.

In 1861, he accompanied Orion to the Nevada Territory, the first of the trips that would take him father west and toward his ultimate careers as humorist, lecturer,

journalist, and author. In *Roughing It*, written a decade later, Clemens told of the brothers' adventures on the way to Carson City and of the various unsuccessful schemes that, once there, Sam devised for getting rich quick on timber and silver. Soon Clemens was once again writing for newspapers, first for the *Territorial Enterprise* in Virginia City and then, after 1864, for the *Californian*. The fashion of the time called for a pen name, and Clemens used "Mark Twain," a term from his piloting days signifying "two fathoms deep" or "safe water." Twain's early writing was largely imitative of the humorous journalism of the time and is important chiefly as an apprenticeship. Twain owed his earliest national audience and critical recognition to his performances as lecturer and to his skillful retelling of a well-known tall tale, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," first published in 1865.

In this same year Twain signed with the *Sacramento Union* to write a series of letters covering the newly opened steamboat passenger service between San Francisco and Honolulu. These letters used a fictitious character, Mr. Brown, to present inelegant ideas, attitudes, and information, sometimes in impolite language. In this series, Twain discovered that he could say almost anything he wanted, provided he could convincingly claim that he was simply reporting what others said and did. The refinement of this technique—a written equivalent of "deadpan" lecturing—which allowed his fantasy a long leash and yet required him to anchor it in the circumstantial details of time and place, was to be Twain's major technical accomplishment of the next two decades, the period of his best work. The first book of this period, and still one of Twain's most popular, was *Innocents Abroad* (1869). It consists of a revised form of letters that Twain wrote for the *Alta California* and the *New York Tribune* during his 1867 excursion on the *Quaker City* to the Mediterranean and the Holy Land. The letters were enormously popular, not only because they are exuberantly funny but also because the satire they leveled against a pretentious, decadent, and undemocratic Old World was especially relished by a young country about to enter a period of explosive economic growth, political consolidation, and, by the turn of the century, imperialist expansion.

In 1870 Twain married Olivia Langdon, a wealthy easterner. They settled in Hartford, Connecticut, where Twain met William Dean Howells, the most influential literary critic of the day. In Howells's *Atlantic Monthly*, Twain recounted his experiences as a riverboat pilot in a series called "Old Times on the Mississippi,"

which he embellished and published eight years later as *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). The publication of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) established Twain as a popular writer of fiction. In this narrative Twain creates a compelling myth of the endless summer of childhood pleasures mingled with the violence, terror, and death that lurk at the edges of the village.

Twain began *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1876 and completed it in 1883. *Huck Finn* has enjoyed extraordinary popularity since its publication more than one hundred years ago. Its unpretentious, colloquial, yet poetic style, its wide-ranging humor, its embodiment of the enduring and widely shared dream of innocence and freedom, and its recording of a vanished way of life in the pre-Civil War Mississippi Valley have instructed and moved people of all ages and conditions all over the world. Twain's use of realism and detail influenced many later writers of American fiction, including Ernest Hemingway, who stated that "all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*."

Two successful books of his later creation are *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894). The former work tells the story of a late-nineteenth-century master mechanic, Hank Morgan, who is transported back in time to sixth-century England, where he tries to "introduce," in Twain's words, the "great and beneficent civilization of the nineteenth century" into the chivalric but decidedly undemocratic world of Camelot. The ironic use of "great and beneficent" to characterize a time and place dubbed "The Gilded Age" by Twain suggests that the lance he aimed at King Arthur had not one but two sharp ends. *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, set in the 1830s, centers on the switching of two babies born on the same day—one the result of miscegenation, the other the legitimate son of a white slave owner. The book reveals the disastrous effects of slavery on victims and victimizers alike—the unearned pride of whites and the undeserved self-hate of slaves. The way in which Twain portrays the twinning of law and custom in sustaining the institution of slavery (like other aspects of this book full of doublings) indicates Twain's despair over the prospects for true racial equality, a despair supported by the terrible facts of Jim Crow laws and the escalation of lynchings in the post-Reconstruction period in which the novel was conceived and published.

In the decade after *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was published, Twain experienced a series of calamitous events. Suddenly, his health was broken: his speculative investments bankrupted him in the panic of 1893; his youngest daughter, Jean, was

diagnosed as an epileptic; his oldest daughter, Susy, died of meningitis while he and his wife, Livy, were in Europe; and Livy began her decline into permanent invalidism. Plagued by financial misfortunes and the deaths of loved ones, Twain's later years found him frequently embittered. In some of his later works, such as "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," Twain brooded over the dark side of human nature. He is chiefly remembered today, however, for capturing the brash, optimistic spirit and youthful vitality of his fellow Americans.

Early and late Twain maintained his magical power with language. His love of language informs his hilarious attack on the novels of James Fenimore Cooper in "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences"(1895). As his friend Howells observed, he was unlike any of his contemporaries in American letters: "Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes—I knew them all and all the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists; they were like one another and like other literary men; but Twain was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature."

2. William Dean Howells (1837-1920)

William Dean Howells was born in Ohio, the son of William Cooper Howells, printer-journalist and abolitionist. His formal education was very slight and was primarily self-taught. While he was a journalist for the *Ohio State Journal*, he wrote *The Campaign Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1860), a book which helped Lincoln elected and won Howells the American Consulate in Venice. After he returned to America in 1865, he worked as editor for several well-known literary journals in different times and carried out his own literary invention as well. Howells was a critic, poet, playwright and a writer of 35 novels.

During his late life, Howells was frequently considered the preeminent American man of letters, and he received many honors both in the U.S and abroad, as well as the offer of many academic posts. In addition to advising his friend Mark Twain, he used his important position to aid and encourage such authors Boyesen, Garland, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Robert Herric. He was an important critical force. His own literary credo was summed up in *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), in which he championed realism and its truthful delineation of the motives, the impulses, and the principles that shape the lives of actual men and women.

For Howells, realism was the appropriate response to the drastic changes taking

place in America in the late nineteenth century. And the writer who could achieve that realism could also be described as the creator of a truly democratic, essentially American art that captured the importance and meaning of the commonplace.

With his first major novel, *A Modern Instance* (1882), Howells moved beyond explorations of manners to the detailed and serious consideration of wider social issues. His novel, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), also demonstrates what he called the “fidelity to experience and probability of motive” that he felt was an imperative for the American storyteller. More than *A Modern Instance*, it also invites the reader to what he called “the appreciation of the common”.

A Hazard of New Fortunes (1898), the most panoramic of all his work, is set in the magazine world of New York city and explores the conflict between labor and capital on both a personal and a general level. It is the one among his major fictions that is most vitally concerned with social injustice— and the most urgently and immediately directed towards the realization of what he termed “democracy in literature.” Such a literature, Howells explained, “wishes to know and to tell the truth.” And that truth was that “men are more like than unlike one another”. That catches a note which is there in all Howells’s criticism and fiction, with its primary stress on human dignity and connection.

Howells never gravitated from realism to naturalism. There is a fundamental benevolence, a belief in human worth and social betterment that is caught in one of the famous remarks in his *Criticism and Fiction*: “our novelists concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life, which are the more American.”

3. Henry James (1843-1916)

Henry James was born in New York on April 15, 1843. His father was an eccentric, independently wealthy philosopher and religious visionary; his slightly older brother, William, was the first notable American psychologist and famous philosopher; two young brothers and a sister completed this remarkable American family. Henry was educated primarily by private tutors. When he was twelve, the family left for the Continent. His father wanted the children to have a rich, “sensuous education,” and during the next four years, with stays in England, Switzerland, and France, they were taken to galleries, libraries, museums, and theaters. Henry mastered French well enough to begin a lifelong study of its literature, and from childhood on

he was aware of the intricate network of institutions and traditions in Europe that he later lamented American novelists had to do without.

James early developed what he described as the “practice of wondering and dawdling and gaping.” He once got a hurt to his back which, disqualifying him from service in the Civil War, must have reinforced his inclination to observe rather than participate. In his later teens his interest in literature and in writing intensified, and by the time he was twenty-one he was publishing reviews and stories in some of the leading American journals. James never married. He maintained close ties with his family, kept up a large correspondence, was extremely sociable and a famous diner-out. His emotional life and prodigious creative energy were invested for more than fifty years in his art. Henry James settled permanently in England in 1876. Later he became a naturalized British subject out of impatience with America’s reluctance to enter World War I.

Leon Edel, James’ biographer, divides the writer’s mature career into three parts. In the first, which culminated with *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), he felt his way toward and appropriated the so-called international theme—the drama, comic and tragic, of Americans in Europe and occasionally of Europeans in America.

In the second period, he experimented with diverse themes and forms—initially with novels dealing explicitly with the social and political currents of the 1870s and 1880s, then with writing for the theater, and finally with shorter fictions that explore the relationship of artists to society and the troubled psychology of oppressed children and haunted or obsessed men and women such as those depicted in *The Jolly Corner* (1908).

In James’s last period, he returned to international or cosmopolitan subjects in an extraordinary series of elaborately developed novels, short fiction, and criticism. Following his advice to other novelists to “dramatize, dramatize, dramatize,” James increasingly removed himself as controlling narrator; in T.S. Eliot’s phrase, he became invisible in his work. The benefits of this heightened emphasis on showing rather than telling were compressions or intensification and enhanced opportunity for ambiguity. The more the author withdrew, the more the reader was forced to enter the process of creating meaning. Such a technique of having the fiction objectified that today we are so accustomed to achieved its fullest expressions in the three great novels of this period— *The Wing of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassador* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). All three return to his international theme, but with a new

focus on the way in which people make their own realities through their perceptions and impressions. American innocence, at this point, becomes a willful refusal to perceive; but only awareness of one's own character and others' provides the wisdom to escape disaster. The treatment of this sophisticated theme is characterized by an extraordinary richness of syntax, characterization, point of view, symbolic resonance, metaphor, and organizing rhythms. The world of these novels, as one commentator has remarked, is like the very atmosphere of the mind. These dramas of perception are widely considered to be James's most influential contribution to the craft of fiction.

Henry James attracted, in his own lifetime, a select company of admirers and made a good living from his writing, even though his intricate style and choice of highly cultivated characters run counter to the vernacular tradition popularized by Mark Twain. The recognition of his intrinsic importance as well as his wide influence as novelist and critic increased in the years between the world wars. He is now firmly established as one of America's major novelists and critics, as a subtle psychological realist, and as an unsurpassed literary stylist and craftsman.

4. Kate Chopin (1851-1904)

Kate Chopin was the first female writer in the United States to portray frankly the passions and discontents of women confined to traditional roles as wives and mothers. For this she was roundly condemned in her time. Critics focused their wrath on the publication of her novel *The Awakening* (1899), the story of a woman who abandons her husband and children to search for her true identity. Reviewers characterized the novel as shocking, morbid, coarse, and vulgar.

Chopin was born Katherine O'Flaherty in St. Louis, Missouri. She grew up in the late Victorian period, a time when the ideal woman gave up her independence and devoted herself to the will of her husband and to the welfare of her children. When Chopin was five, her father died in a railroad accident— an event that is echoed in "The Story of an Hour." She left school, and for the next two years she studied at home with her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Growing up in a household of strong, independent women did much to shape Chopin as a person and a writer.

At age twenty, Kate married Oscar Chopin and moved with him to New Orleans. Business problems, however, soon forced them to move to Oscar's rural hometown of

Cloutierville, Louisiana, an area that would later inspire many of Chopin's stories. When her husband died in 1882, Chopin was left with children to raise and support. She soon moved back to St. Louis to be near her family. When her mother died a year later, Chopin was overwhelmed with grief. At her doctor's advice, she turned to writing and published her first work in 1889.

During the next ten years, Chopin published more than 100 short stories, two story collections, and two novels. She earned praise for early stories that captured the local color of Louisiana. In later stories, Chopin explored women's issues considered controversial in her time. She modeled these stories on the work of Guy de Maupassant, the French master of the Realist short story. Not surprisingly, she had difficulty finding magazines willing to publish her most daring pieces, including "The Story of an Hour."

Though acutely aware of the criticisms many of her stories received, Chopin was not prepared for the reaction to *The Awakening* in 1899. The deluge of negative reviews destroyed her spirit. Chopin continued to write, but by 1903 her health was failing. After spending an entire day at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, Chopin came home complaining of a severe pain in her head. Two days later she died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

For more than fifty years after her death, Chopin's works were ignored. Then, in 1969, at a time when the women's movement in the United States was gaining momentum, Per Seyersted published a biography of Chopin and her complete works. His efforts galvanized modern readers hungry to learn more about the woman who, according to Chopin scholar Emily Toth, had written "the most radical novel of the 1890s." Today *The Awakening* is one of the most read novels in colleges and universities across the United States. Kate Chopin is celebrated as the lonely pioneer who dared to write realistic portraits of women trapped and stifled by the social conventions of their time.

5. Edith Wharton (1862-1937)

Edith Wharton is best known for her novels depicting the intricate codes of conduct that ruled the lives of New York City's aristocracy at the end of the 1800s. Wharton felt that upper-class society discouraged both art and the artist.

Edith Newbold Jones was born into one of New York City's wealthiest and most

distinguished families. Taught by private tutors, she received an excellent education both in the United States and abroad. When she was sixteen, Edith privately published her first book. Her mother may have arranged the publication, hoping that Edith would feel fulfilled, stop writing, and take up interests considered more suited to her social position.

In 1885 Edith married Edward Wharton, a wealthy Boston banker. Shortly after, he began to suffer from both mental and physical illnesses. It was during this time that Wharton began seriously writing fiction with the intention of publishing. She modeled her work mostly after novelist Henry James—combining complicated psychological portraits with critiques of social convention. Throughout the 1890s, she contributed to various magazines and produced two collections of short stories.

Wharton's first novel, *The Valley of Decision*, was published in 1902. Three years later, *The House of Mirth*, which was both popular and praised by critics, appeared.

In 1907, after selling her home and separating from her husband, Wharton permanently settled in Paris, where she felt female artists were more accepted.

As World War I raged in Europe, Wharton worked in support of the French cause—aiding Belgian refugees and raising money from Americans. For this she was given the Cross of the Legion of Honor, the highest honor awarded to a foreigner in France.

This was perhaps the most productive time in Wharton's life, during which she published some of her greatest novels, including *Ethan Frome* (1911), *The Reef* (1912), *The Custom of the Country* (1913), and *Summer* (1917). *The Age of Innocence*, probably Wharton's best-known work, appeared in 1920. For this she became the first woman to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Edith Wharton's greatness came from her ability to depict the interplay between the life of the mind and of society. Alternately tragic and satiric, Wharton's incisive fiction helped to establish Realism as the most important movement of her day.

6. Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

By the time he reached college, Stephen Crane was better known for his baseball-playing skills than for his scholarly achievements. Within a decade, however, Crane's rebelliousness toward his schooling, his upbringing, and society at large would help shape a short but prolific literary career. In his work, Crane embraced a

pessimistic realism that undermined earlier, romanticized visions of human experiences. In fiction, as in journalism, Crane portrayed life as it was, not as one wished it were.

The fourteenth child of a Methodist minister and his devout wife, Crane chafed against the constraints of structured family life. University life left him with much the same feeling, and he attended classes sporadically before leaving college entirely to work as a newspaper writer. As a freelance reporter, Crane lived in the Bowery district of Manhattan, reporting on the poverty of the district's slums through firsthand experience. His observations of Bowery life eventually became the basis for his controversial first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). Crane's sympathetic but starkly realistic portrayal of New York slum life repelled publishers; he finally published the novel at his own expense under the pseudonym Johnston Smith. Crane's harsh story did not sell well. However, critics Hamlin Garland and William Dean Howells noticed Crane's talent and became his mentors.

Crane's second novel, *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War*, appeared first as a syndicated newspaper feature in 1894 and became a bestseller in 1895. At age twenty-four, the struggling journalist had reached international fame with the novel's success. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, Crane turned his power for acute observation inward, exploring the psychology of a Civil War soldier who grapples with his fear, cowardice, and pride in battle. Ironically, Crane became famous for his realistic portrayal of a soldier during battle even though he had not yet experienced war firsthand and was born six years after the Civil War ended. Nonetheless, many veterans applauded his ability to re-create the internal tension experienced during combat. In late 1895, Crane published a book of poems, *The Black Riders and Other Lines*, to less favorable reviews.

Fascinated with danger and war, Crane covered the Greco-Turkish War in Greece and the Spanish-American War in Cuba. He then settled in Sussex, England, in 1899, heavily in debt and ill with tuberculosis and recurrent malarial fever. Years of exposure, poor food, and lack of treatment ended Crane's life at twenty-eight.

Crane is known as a man who "lived quickly and wrote fast." Despite a brief literary career, his studies of characters overwhelmed by uncontrollable circumstances still resonate today. As Sherwood Anderson noted, "Stephen Crane was a craftsman. The stones he put in the wall are still there."

7. Jack London (1876-1916)

Born in 1876 in San Francisco to an unstable mother and a father who refused to claim him, London was raised mainly by a family friend and a stepsister. From the age of eleven, he worked to earn money to help put food on his family's table. London loved the sea, so he hung around the harbor, doing odd jobs and learning to be an expert sailor. While still in his teens, he signed on to a schooner sailing to Siberia. From that adventure came his first published story, "Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan" (1893).

At eighteen, London set off to ride the rails, living the life of a drifter as he traveled across the country on freight trains. This journey became a turning point in his life as he saw up close the raw, painful lives of men and women who did not seem to belong anywhere in society. As a result of the conditions he saw, London vowed to educate himself so he could survive by his mental powers rather than by his physical strength.

After completing high school in just one year, London attended the University of California at Berkeley in 1896, but, short of money, he left after one semester. It was at this time that he joined the Socialist Labor Party and became an active member, speaking at parks and recruiting new members. He embraced both the utopian socialism of Marx and the darker views of Nietzsche and Darwinism. That is, London believed in both the inevitable triumph of the working class and the evolutionary necessity of the survival of the strongest. His sincere intellectual and personal involvement in the socialist movement is recorded in such novels and polemical works as *The people of the Abyss* (1903), *War of the Classes* (1905), *The Iron Heel* (1908), and *Revolution* (1910). In March 1916, London resigned from the Socialist Party, accusing it of having lost its original revolutionary passion. His competing, deeply felt commitment to the law of survival and the will to power is dramatized in his most popular novels, *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *The Sea-Wolf* (1904). Wolf Larsen, the ruthless, amoral protagonist of the latter book, best realizes London's ideal of a Nietzschean "superman". The tension between these competing beliefs is most vividly projected in the patently autobiographical novel *Martin Eden* (1909).

In 1897 Jack London left college and went to the Yukon to join the Klondike gold rush. He never found gold, but he did find something that proved more precious to him: a wealth of raw material for the stories that eventually made him famous. He

came home and turned to writing for his livelihood a year later. In 1903, London published *The Call of the Wild*, the novel that firmly established his reputation. Before long, he became the country's highest-paid author—a stunning reversal of fortune for the once-impoverished writer.

Throughout his life, London worked under pressure to support not only himself but also numerous family members and friends. He set himself the task of writing at least a thousand publishable words every day, and he rarely deviated from that schedule. But despite publishing more than fifty books and becoming the country's first millionaire author, London habitually spent more money than he earned, and he often wrote stories in order to pay off urgent debts.

London claimed to dislike his profession and said that he wrote only for money, but he was for most of his career a disciplined and careful craftsman. He wrote on many subjects, from agronomy to penal reform, from astral projection to warfare. The most enduringly popular of his stories, however, involved the primitive struggle of strong and weak individuals in the context of irresistible natural forces such as the wild sea or the Arctic wastes. Among such stories “To Build a Fire” has become classic. Like his contemporaries Stephan Crane and Frank Norris, London was fascinated by the way violence tested and defined character.

By the time he died in 1916, London had become the best-selling American author around the world. In a writing career of less than twenty years, London produced 20 novels, 198 stories, more than 400 nonfiction works, and thousands of letters. His works have been translated into some 700 languages, and his popularity shows no sign of lessening.

III. Selected Readings:

1. Mark Twain's *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*

Background:

This story takes place in the early 1860s in a small mining town called Angel's Camp, which still exists today in California. In 1848 James W. Marshall discovered rich deposits of gold at Sutter's Mill, near the Calaveras County town of Coloma. This discovery led to the California Gold Rush, during which many adventurous people thronged to California to prospect for gold, hoping to "strike it rich." In the remote mining camps and frontier towns, life was hard and entertainment was scarce. To create some fun, people invented tall tales— stories filled with humorous exaggerations. At Angel's Camp, Twain first heard someone tell the story that he later developed into "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," his most famous western tale.

The story first appeared in the *New York Saturday Press* for November 18, 1865, and was subsequently revised several times. The source of the text below is the version published in *Mark Twain's Sketches, New and Old* (1875) In a note, Twain instructs his readers that "Calaveras" is pronounced *Cal-e-va'-ras*.

The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

In compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler, and inquired after my friend's friend, Leonidas W. Smiley, as requested to do, and I hereunto append¹ the result. I have a lurking suspicion that *Leonidas W. Smiley* is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous *Jim Smiley*, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal² reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded.

¹ *append*: to add as a supplement or to attach

² *Infernal*: awful or thoroughly unpleasant

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's¹, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance². He roused up and gave me good-day. I told him a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named *Leonidas W. Smiley*—*Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley*— a young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that, if Mr. Wheeler could tell me anything about this Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned his initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was anything ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent³ genius in finesse⁴. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once:

Rev. Leonidas W. H'm, Reverend Le—well, there was a feller⁵ here once by the name of *Jim Smiley*, in the winter of '49—or may be it was the spring of '50—I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume⁶ warn't⁷ finished when he first come⁸ to the camp; but any way, he was the curioses⁹ man about always betting on anything that turned up you ever see, if he could get anybody to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit *him*—any way just so's¹⁰ he got a bet, he was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky¹¹; he

¹ *Angel's*: Angel's Camp

² *A tranquil countenance*: a calm face

³ *Transcendent*: surpassing others or superior

⁴ *finesse*: the smooth or artful handling of a situation

⁵ *feller*: fellow

⁶ *flume*: a trough or chute, often inclined, that carries water

⁷ *warn't*: wasn't

⁸ *come*: came

⁹ *curioses*: most curious

¹⁰ *so's*: so long as

¹¹ *uncommon lucky*: uncommonly lucky

most always¹ come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solit'ry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it², and take ary³ side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse race, you'd find him flush⁴, or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dog-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken-fight, he'd bet on it; why, if there was⁵ two birds setting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first; or if there was a camp-meeting⁶, he would be there reg'lar⁷, to bet on Parson Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter⁸ about here, and so he was, too, and a good man. If he even seen a straddle-bug⁹ start to go anywheres¹⁰, he would bet you how long it would take him to get wherever he was going to, and if you took him up¹¹, he would foller that straddle-bug to Mexico but what he would find out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road¹². Lots of the boys here has seen¹³ that Smiley, and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference¹⁴ to *him*—he would bet on *any* thing— the dangdest¹⁵ feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn't going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better¹⁶—thank the Lord for his inf'nit¹⁷ mercy— and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Prov'dence¹⁸, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, “Well, I'll risk two-and-a-half¹⁹ that she don't, anyway.”

Thish-yer²⁰ Smiley had a mare—the boys called her the fifteen-minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that—and he

¹ *most always*: almost always

² *there couldn't be no solit'ry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it*: there could be no solitary thing mentioned which that fellow would not offer to bet on; *but*: that not; *solitary*: single

³ *ary*: any

⁴ Here, *flush* means “having a large amount of money” or “rich.”

⁵ *was*: were

⁶ *A camp-meeting* is an outdoor religious gathering, sometimes held in a tent.

⁷ *reg'lar*: regularly

⁸ *exhorter*: someone who urges by giving strong advice or warnings; here, a preacher.

⁹ *A straddle-bug* is a long-legged beetle.

¹⁰ *anywheres*: anywhere

¹¹ *if you took him up*: if you accepted a bet from him

¹² *he would folleron the road*: 他就是跟着那只屎壳郎一直到墨西哥,也一定要弄清楚它去什么地方路上要走多久。 *foller*: follow; *but what*: but that

¹³ *has seen*: have seen

¹⁴ *it never made no difference*: it never made any difference

¹⁵ *dangdest*: damndest; *dang*: damn

¹⁶ *considerable better*: considerably better

¹⁷ *inf'nit*: infinite

¹⁸ *Prov'dence*: Providence, God.

¹⁹ *risk two-and-a-half*: risk, or bet, \$2.50

²⁰ *Thish-yer* is dialect for “this here.”

used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption¹, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag end² of the race she'd get excited and desperate-like, and come cavorting³ and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose—and always fetch up at the stand⁴ just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down⁵.

And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you'd think he warn't worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as money was up on him, he was a different dog; his under-jaw'd begin to stick out like the fo'castle⁶ of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bully-rag⁷ him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson⁸—which was the name of the pup— Andrew Jackson would never let on but what *he* was satisfied, and hadn't expected nothing else—and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up⁹; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest¹⁰ by the j'int¹¹ of his hind leg and freeze to it—not chew, you understand, but only jest grip and hang on till they throwed up the sponge,¹² if it was a year¹³. Smiley always come out winner on that pup, till he harnessed¹⁴ a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off in a circular saw, and when the thing had gone along far enough, and the money was all up, and he come to make a snatch for his pet holt,¹⁵ he saw in a minute how he'd

¹ *consumption* is another name for tuberculosis.

² *the fag-end*: the last part

³ *cavorting*: running and jumping around playfully

⁴ *fetch up at the stand*: arrive at the grandstand, which was placed at the finish line.

⁵ *cipher it down*: calculate it

⁶ *fo'castle*: fore-castle, a raised deck at the front of the boat.

⁷ *bully-rag*: to intimidate or to abuse

⁸ Andrew Jackson (1767-1845): the seventh US President (1829-1837) who was also a famous military officer. His popular name was Old Hickory. He won battles against Native Americans and defeated the British at New Orleans in the War of 1812.

⁹ *till the money was all up*: 直到钱全都押上了

¹⁰ *jest*: just

¹¹ *j'int*: joint

¹² *throwed up the sponge*: gave up the contest; *throwed*: threw

¹³ *if it was a year*: even if it was a year

¹⁴ Here, *harnessed* means “set up a fight with.”

¹⁵ *a pet holt*: a favorite hold.

been imposed on, and how the other dog had him in the door,¹ so to speak, and he 'peared² surprised, and then he looked sorter discouraged-like, and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out³ bad. He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke⁴, and it was *his* fault, for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take holt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece⁵ and laid down⁶ and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself⁷ if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius—I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances⁸, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n⁹, and the way it turned out.

Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers¹⁰, and chicken cocks¹¹, and tom-cats, and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched¹² a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated¹³ to educate him; and so he never done nothing¹⁴ for three months but set in his back yard and learn¹⁵ that frog to jump. And you bet you¹⁶ he *did* learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right¹⁷, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kep'¹⁸ him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as fur as¹⁹ he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do 'most²⁰ anything—and I believe him. Why, I've seen him

¹ *had him in the door*: had him at a disadvantage or in a tight place

² *'peared*: appeared

³ *shucked out*: beaten or defeated

⁴ *broke*: broken

⁵ *limped off a piece*: 一瘸一拐地走到一边

⁶ *laid down*: lay down

⁷ *hisself*: himself

⁸ *them circumstances*: these circumstances

⁹ *his'n*: his

¹⁰ *rat-tarriers*: dogs (terriers) once used for catching rats

¹¹ *chicken cocks*: adult male chickens (roosters) that are trained to fight

¹² *ketched*: caught

¹³ *cal'klated* is dialect for *calculated*, meaning “planned.”

¹⁴ *never done nothing*: did nothing

¹⁵ Here, *learn* means “teach.”

¹⁶ *you bet you*: you bet

¹⁷ *come down flat-footed and all right*: 落下了四脚着地，稳稳当当

¹⁸ *kep'*: kept

¹⁹ *as fur as*: as far as

²⁰ *'most*: almost

set Dan'l Webster¹ down here on this floor—Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog—and sing out, “Flies, Dan'l, flies!” and quicker'n² you could wink, he'd spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n³ the counter there, and flop down on the floor ag'in⁴ as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightfor'ard⁵ as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a dead level⁶, he could get over more ground at one straddle⁷ than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up⁸ money on him as long as he had a red.⁹ Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had traveled and been everywhere, all said he laid over any frog that ever *they* see.

Well, Smiley kep' the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller—a stranger in the camp, he was—come acrost¹⁰ him with his box, and says:

“What might it be that you've got in the box?” And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, “It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, may be, but it ain't¹¹—it's only just a frog.”

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, “H'm—so 'tis¹². Well, what's *he* good for?”

“Well,” Smiley says, easy and careless, “He's good enough for *one* thing, I should judge— he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county.”

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back¹³ to Smiley, and says, very deliberate¹⁴, “Well, I don't see no p'int¹⁵ about that

¹ *Dan'l Webster*: Daniel Webster (1782–1852), a famous orator who served as a U.S. senator (1827–1841, 1845–1850) and a U.S. secretary of state (1841–1843, 1850–1852).

² *quicker'n*: quicker than

³ *off'n*: off on

⁴ *ag'in*: again

⁵ *straightfor'ard*: straightforward

⁶ *jumping on a dead level*: 从某一固定点起跳

⁷ Here, *straddle* means “to jump.”

⁸ *ante up*: to bet

⁹ *a red*: a red cent, meaning “any money at all.”

¹⁰ *acrost*: across

¹¹ *it ain't*: it isn't

¹² *so 'tis*: so it is

¹³ *give it back*: gave it back

¹⁴ *says, very deliberate*: said, very deliberately

¹⁵ *P'int* is dialect for *points*, meaning “qualities” or “characteristics.”

frog that's any better'n any other frog.”

“May be you don't,” Smiley says, “May be you understand frogs, and may be you don't understand 'em¹; may be you've had experience, and may be you an't only a amature², as it were. Anyways, I've got my opinion, and I'll risk forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county.”

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, “Well, I'm only a stranger here, and I ain't³ got no frog; but if I had a frog, I'd bet you.”

And then Smiley says, “That's all right—that's all right—if you'll hold my box a minute, I'll go and get you a frog.” And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley's, and set down⁴ to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a teaspoon and filled him full of quail shot⁵—filled him pretty near up to his chin— and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

“Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his fore-paws just even with Dan'l, and I'll give the word.” Then he says, “One—two—three—jump!” and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan'l give a heave, and hysted⁶ up his shoulders—so—like a Frenchman, but it warn't no use⁷—he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn't no more stir than⁸ if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders—this way—at Dan'l, and says again, very deliberate, “Well, I don't see no p'int about that frog that's any better'n any other frog.”

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan'l a long time, and at last he says, “I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw'd off⁹ for—I wonder

¹ *'em*: them

² *you an't only a amature*: you are only an amature

³ *I an't*: I haven't

⁴ *set down*: sat down

⁵ *Quail shot*: ammunition made up of small lead pellets

⁶ *hysted*: hoisted

⁷ *it warn't no use*: it was no use

⁸ *couldn't no more stir than*: couldn't stir any more than

⁹ *throw'd off*: threw off

if there ain't something the matter with him—he 'pears to look mighty baggy, somehow.” And he ketched Dan'l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, “Why, blame my cats, if he don't weigh five pound!” and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man—he set the frog down and took out after¹ that feller, but he never ketched him. And—”

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.] And turning to me as he moved away, he said: “Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy—I ain't going to be gone a second.”

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond *Jim Smiley* would be likely to afford² me much information concerning the *Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley*, and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he buttonholed³ me and recommenced:

“Well, thish-yer Smiley had a yaller⁴ one-eyed cow that didn't have no tail, only jest a short stump like a bannanner⁵, and——”

“Oh! hang Smiley and his afflicted cow!” I muttered, good-naturedly, and bidding the old gentleman good-day, I departed.

Questions:

1. Why do you think Mr. Wheeler is so eager to tell the stories about Jim Smiley?
2. Does his audience share his enthusiasm in telling the stories?
3. How would you characterize Wheeler's use of language? How about the narrator's?
4. If we say the story is saturated with the flavor of the Old West during the Gold Rush, can you justify it?
5. What contributes to the great humor in this text?

¹ *took out after*: 追赶

² *afford*: to give or to provide

³ *buttonholed*: detained in conversation

⁴ *yaller*: yellow

⁵ *bannanner*: banana

2. Jack London's *To Build a Fire*

Background:

On July 17, 1897, sixty-eight miners arrived in Seattle on the steamship Portland, carrying boxes, suitcases, and gunnysacks filled with more than two tons of gold. Thousands of prospectors soon poured into the Klondike region of Canada, where gold had been discovered in the sands of Bonanza Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River. Many of the prospectors were unprepared for the brutal conditions in the north, where temperatures could sink below minus fifty degrees Fahrenheit.

The Klondike River is a tributary of the Yukon River, which is about 1,875 miles long and has a drainage basin of 330,000 square miles in the Yukon Territory in Canada and in the eastern and central parts of Alaska. The Yukon and its tributaries flow across Alaska's interior plateau, which comprises millions of acres of subarctic forest.

The story was first published in *The Youth's Companion* for May 29, 1902, in a version of 2,700 words—"for boys only" according to London. The later, widely anthologized version of 7,235 words was first published in *The Century Magazine* 76 (August 1908), the source of the text printed below.

To Build a Fire

Day had broken cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon¹ trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the sky-line and dip immediately from

¹ *Yukon*: the Yukon River. The river was a major route to the Klondike goldfields.

view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations¹ where the ice jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hairline that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hairline was the trail—the main trail—that led south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato², and finally to St Michael, on Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this—the mysterious, far-reaching hair-line trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all—made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a *chechaquo*,³ and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear-flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow, but this

¹ *undulations*: rippling or wavelike forms or outlines.

² Dyea was a mining village in Alaska at the beginning of the route to the goldfields. The trail led through the Chilkoot Pass and to northern gold-mining centers in the Yukon such as Dawson and Nulato.

³ In the language of the Chinook, Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, a *chechaquo* is a “newcomer” or a “tenderfoot.”

spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below— how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim¹ on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide² from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibility of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, travelling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheekbones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheekbones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted³ movement of the man as if expecting him to go

¹ A *claim* is a piece of land registered for mining rights.

² A *divide* is a ridge of land that separates two river drainage systems.

³ *Unwonted* means "unusual."

into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystallized breath. The man's red beard and mustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobacco chewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer¹ at Sixty Mile he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat of nigger heads, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half-past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man sung along the creek bed. The furrow of the old sled trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to; and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had

¹ A *spirit thermometer* is an alcohol thermometer. It is used in areas of extreme cold, where the more common mercury thermometer would freeze.

never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheekbones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But, rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheekbones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose strap of the sort Bud wore in cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? a bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.

Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied¹ abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek he knew was frozen clear to the bottom - no creek could contain water in that arctic winter — but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the

¹ *shied*: moved suddenly, as in fear.

danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts¹ of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half-past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of his exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead, struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bit of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

¹ Here, *crypts* means "hidden recesses."

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned to his feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulphur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it was cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and thrashing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his firewood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the ear flaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. The man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space whence this cold came. On the other hand, there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whip lash and of harsh and menacing throat sounds that threatened the whip lash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to it with the sound of whip lashes, and the dog swung in at the man's heels and followed after.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his mustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity

beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his footgear. This was imperative at that low temperature— for he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high water deposit of dry firewood— sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire— that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long

as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly¹, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it with twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet footgear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the advice of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-timers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head, and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger ends.

All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron halfway to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numb fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath knife.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully

¹ *Willy-nilly* means "without choice."

freighted. Each time he had pulled on a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree - an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a trail mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail mate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build a fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready.

Such were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind. He made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open, where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high water flotsam¹. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fire gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness² in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it and kept calm. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and thrashed his arms back

¹ Flotsam (flot' s m) is floating debris, here left behind by a river or stream in the spring when the water rises with the runoff from melting snow and ice.

² *Wistfulness* means "thoughtful sadness."

and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. He did this sitting down, and he stood up to do it; and all the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf brush of a tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf ears pricked forward intently as it watched the man. And the man, as he beat and threshed with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy as he regarded the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first faraway signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet, and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side the bunch, he closed them - that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were down, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As if flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch bark. But the burning brimstone¹ went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically². The match fell into the snow and went out.

¹ *Brimstone* is sulfur.

² *Spasmodically* means "in a sudden, violent manner" or "convulsively."

The old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued¹: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm muscles not being frozen enabled him to press the hand heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulphur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bundle to the birch bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer and crawled inside the carcass, and so

¹ *Ensued* means “happened afterward” or “followed.”

was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such a way before. Something was the matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger— it knew not what danger, but somewhere, somehow, in its brain arose an apprehension of the man. It flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, and its restless, hunching movements and liftings and shiftings of its forefeet became more pronounced; but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly¹ away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke peremptorily², with the sound of whip lashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the fingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his sheath knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away surveying him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward.

The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began thrashing his arms back

¹ *Sidled mincingly* means “moved sideways in a careful manner.”

² *Peremptorily* means “authoritatively” or “dictatorially.”

and forth, beating the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in his hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek bed along the old, dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life.

Slowly, as he plowed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again - the banks of the creek, the old timber jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface, and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury¹, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it; he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next

¹ In Roman mythology, *Mercury* is the messenger of the gods. He is portrayed wearing a winged hat and winged sandals.

time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him, facing him, curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off—such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anesthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

"You were right, old hoss; you were right," the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened out its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food providers and fire providers.

Questions:

1. Where is the man going and what is his attitude toward his journey? What can you infer about the man's personality and character based on the first five paragraphs?
2. What mishap occurs shortly after the man eats lunch and resumes his journey? What external and internal forces must the man struggle against?
3. What happens to the man and his dog at the end of story?
4. How important is the setting to the development of the plot and character in the story?
5. What elements of Naturalism does the story contain? How might the story have been different if it had been written by a Romantic writer?
6. In an age of computers, cellular phones, and GPS devices, do you think the theme of man battling against nature is still prevalent? If a writer in our time is to write about such a theme, how might he or she deal with it?

IV: Modern American Literature (1900-1945)

I. General Introduction

The rubric of American modernism refers not just to an arts movement, a literary period term, or a particular cultural nationalism but, more broadly, signals the expansive paradigm shift. It encompasses the global contexts of social change roughly between 1890 and 1939 in industry, commerce, technology, politics, and aesthetics of what came to be considered as a distinctively American public sphere. Slowed down by the First World War and virtually exterminated in the 1920s and 1930s in totalitarian countries, it bounced back into vigorous life in 1945 once again, to make it new. Then, in the 1960s, it died, as historical periods will.

Modernism is hard to define. Its exemplars cover so vast and varied a terrain – painting and sculpture, prose and poetry, music and dance, architecture and design, theatre and movies. In truth, “modernism” has been applied to innovations in every domain, to any object that can boast a modicum of originality. Not surprisingly, then, cultural historians intimidated by the chaotic, steadily evolving panorama they are trying in retrospect to reduce to order have sought refuge in a prudential plural: “modernisms.” But to renounce the admittedly imprecise, all-embracing singular “modernism” is ultimately an unsatisfactory strategy.

The one thing that all modernists had indisputably in common was the conviction that the untried is markedly superior to the familiar, the rare to the ordinary, the experimental to the routine. The modernist style was a climate of thought, feeling, and opinion. “Astonish me!” was a good modernist slogan.

For all their palpable differences, modernists of all stripes shared two defining attributes: first, the lure of heresy that impelled their actions as they confronted conventional sensibilities; and second, a commitment to a principled self-scrutiny.

[Peter Gay, *Modernism: the lure of heresy*, 2008]

The period from 1915 to 1945, which encompassed two of the most eventful and memorable decades in American history – the Jazz Age of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s, presented the most notable modernist works. Separating these decades was the stock market crash of 1929, which drastically changed American life. Quick fortunes, high living, and extravagant dreams gave way to unemployment, poverty, and soup lines; optimism was replaced with despair, and complacency yielded to threats of political and social upheaval. The two World Wars that bracketed this era uprooted people and radically changed their lives, bringing social and political shifts and turns that were often exhilarating, sometimes bewildering, and frequently frightening.

The events of this period were so dramatic, the changes so drastic and disorienting, that they might have overwhelmed sensitive creative talent. But instead the times seemed to inspire literary imaginations and to challenge American writers to ever greater creative achievement. The era has emerged as one of the richest periods in American literary history.

World War I exploded the propriety and stability so cherished by Victorian society. Novelists, poets, and dramatists turned for inspiration to such earlier literary rebels as Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. Free verse and other innovative poetic forms, though still unacceptable to most readers, became the rallying cry of young poets as diverse as Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and Carl Sandburg. At the same time, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner deliberately disrupted the chronological time sequences found in traditional works and focused on seemingly uneventful but emotionally crucial moments. Hemingway's distinctive prose style stripped descriptions and narrative accounts to the barest – but highly suggestive – minimum.

Writers were influenced by new psychological theories such as those of the Austrian Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939) and the American William James (1842 - 1910). James coined the term stream of consciousness, a technique that dramatized

the random flow of thoughts running through the minds of characters during particular moments of their lives. This technique was refined and perfected in the novels of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner.

The New Fiction

A number of novelists of the period witnessed firsthand the movement from the farm to the city, the “revolt against the village,” which characterized this era. Willa Cather memorialized her native Red Cloud, Nebraska, in such novels as *My Antonia* (1918), and Sherwood Anderson imaginatively transfigured his hometown of Clyde, Ohio, into *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). Near the end of both works, the “heroes” set off for the big city. A work often compared with *Winesburg, Ohio*, Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923), explored the hardships and joys of the Southern black rural experience.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896 - 1940) chose a different focus in his works. The protagonist of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), lamented that he had “grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.” The titles of Fitzgerald’s collections of short stories – *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920) and *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922) – suggest why he was regarded as spokesman for the reckless youth of the 1920s. In fact, his masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), about the wealthy, who in their carelessness leave destruction and death in their wake, provides one of the best descriptions of this era in American literature.

Apart from Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961) also helps to define fiction of the 1920s. The publication of Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) created a sensation then. It portrayed a “lost generation” of Americans, wounded spiritually and physically by World War I, wandering aimlessly around Europe seeking for their lives. The style – simple, direct, terse – seemed exactly right for a war-weary, cynical generation. Hemingway’s later works, such as *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), made him an admired and imitated novelist around the world.

With an elaborate, intricate style in direct contrast with Hemingway’s spare prose, William Faulkner probed the effects of modern experience and change on

Southern traditions and identity. To explore this theme in depth, he chronicled the lives and times of his privately created mythical county of Yoknapatawpha, Mississippi, in many novels, the best-known being *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).

If F. O. Matthiessen regards the “flowering of New England” in the first half of the nineteenth century as an “American Renaissance” then the decade of the 1920s, with a greater number of great writers producing a voluminous amount of distinguished literary works, can be termed the second renaissance in the history of American literature.

The 1930s also witnessed a burst of fiction writing in America, though it presented a rather bleak, gloomy and sometimes angry picture. Perhaps the foremost protest novel was John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), a vivid account of the aftermath of the Great Depression (1929-1933), the bankruptcy of American agriculture. It traced in accurate, moving detail the desperate exodus of an Oklahoma family from their ancestral farm, destroyed by dust storms, to the migrant-worker camps of California, where they struggled to hold on to their family ties and self-respect. [James E. Miller, Jr. etc., *The United States in Literature*, 1989]

Modernist fiction may vary in thematic concerns over time, yet there is still something in common. In short, modernist fiction undermined accepted criteria for literary verdicts – coherence, chronology, closure, let alone reticence – and turned inward, shockingly. Modernist mirrors reflected mainly the author. Humble realities were left behind, panting. (Peter Gay, *Modernism: the lure of heresy*, 2008)

The New Poetry

The twentieth century was to witness an explosion of poetry in America. The modernist experiment was to be sustained through such poetic movements as Imagism, Vorticism, and Objectivism. Bridging the gap between all these later tendencies and the verse of an earlier period are several poets whose work reflects the search for form, and forms of belief, that characterizes so much of the writing around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With poets like Edwin Arlington Robinson (1865 -

1935), Robert Frost (1874 - 1963), and Robinson Jeffers (1887 - 1962), in particular, the reader is confronted with work that negotiates its way between the solidity and the subversion of the moral self and poetic structure, the pursuit of form, discipline and the impulse towards fragmentation, doubt. Their work, with its questioning rather than collapsing of traditional measures, shades into the old modes of writing as much as into the new.

The first years of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of Imagism, a new poetic vogue. It flourished in England, and even more vigorously in America, between the years 1912 and 1917. It was planned and exemplified by a group of English and American writers as a revolt against what Ezra Pound called the “rather blurry, messy ...sentimentalisticmannerish” poetry at the turn of the century. Pound, the first leader of the movement, outlined his ideas about Imagist poetry as: “1. To Paint the thing as I see it. 2. Beauty. 3. Freedom from didacticism. 4. It is only good manners if you repeat a few other men to at least do it better or more briefly.” To paraphrase his words, the Imagist poetry pays special attention to the precision of diction and image, freedom in the choice of subjects, and a controlled freedom of rhythm based on musical cadence and not on traditional meters (free verse, in other words). The Imagist poem undertakes to render as precisely and tersely as possible, and without comment on or generalization, the writer’s impression of a visual object or scene; often the impression is rendered by means of metaphor, or by juxtaposing, without indicating a relation, the description of one object with that of a second and diverse object. Other leading participants, for a time, were Amy Lowell, and H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), William Carlos Williams, and Richard Aldington.

The poetic renaissance, slowed during World War I, gained momentum in the 1920s, a period of drastic social change. Freudian psychology, enlarged economic opportunities and political rights for women, the development of science and technology – all suggested new possibilities for poetry. Religious skepticism, growing since the last century, and the moral disillusionment caused by the war were recurrent themes in the new poetry. The spiritual emptiness of an industrialized civilization and

the sense of alienation and futility experienced by many were the themes of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and *The Waste Land*.

By the 1930s the ideals of the new poetry had been accepted and no longer seemed radical or even controversial. Free verse was the preferred technique of many poets, and Imagism as a distinct movement no longer existed, though it was still a minor influence. Significant work in traditional forms continued, of course.

T. S. Eliot, looking back in 1953, remarked: "In the nineteenth century, Poe and Whitman stand out as solitary international figures; in the last forty years, for the first time, there has been assembled a body of American poetry which has made its total impression in England and Europe." The same could be said of American fiction in these decades, during which the world recognized that American literature had blossomed into full maturity.

Materials for comparative reading:

1. **Modernism.** The term modernism is widely used to identify new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts, and styles of literature and the other arts in the early decades of the 20th century, but especially after World War I (1914-1918). The specific features signified by "modernism" vary with the user, but many critics agree that it involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases not only for Western art, but of Western culture in general.

Literary historians locate the beginning of the modernist revolt as far back as the 1890s, but most agree that what is called high modernism, marked by an unexampled range and rapidity of change, came after the first World War. The year 1922 alone was signalized by the simultaneous appearance of such monuments of modernist innovation as James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, as well as many other experimental works of literature. The catastrophe of the war had shaken faith in the moral basis, coherence, and durability of Western civilization and raised doubts about the adequacy of traditional literary

modes to represent the harsh and dissonant realities of the postwar world.

Most works of modernist fiction subvert the basic conventions of earlier fiction by breaking up the narrative continuity, departing from the standard ways of representing characters, and violating the traditional syntax and coherence of narrative language by the use of stream of consciousness and other innovative modes of narration.

A prominent feature of modernism is the phenomenon called the **avant-garde**, that is, a small, self-conscious group of artists and authors who deliberately undertake, in Ezra Pound's phrase, to "make it new." The avant-garde artists represent themselves as "alienated" from the established order, against which they assert their own autonomy. A prominent aim is to shock the sensibility of the conventional reader and to challenge the norms and pieties of the dominant bourgeois culture.

(M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, seventh edition, 1999, p.167)

2. The Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance, known also as the New Negro Movement, was an important cultural manifestation of the midtwenties. With Harlem as its center, the Renaissance was an upsurge of new racial attitudes and ideals and an artistic and political awakening on the part of black Americans. Harlem writers and artists were, like their white counterparts, in quest of new images, forms, and techniques. They too were skeptical and disillusioned. What chiefly differentiated them, however, was their view of artistic endeavor as an extension of the struggle against oppression.

Writing in both free and conventional verse, the Harlem poets expressed racial pride more boldly than their predecessors, affirming their African heritage. Jazz rhythms, images from big-city life (Harlem's in particular), and themes from history and folklore were found in the works of the Harlem poets, several of whom, like Jean Toomer, were also novelists.

Think and Discuss: 1. How to define American modernism and Imagism? 2.

Can you briefly talk about the Jazz Age and the Lost Generation? 3. What is the fiction of the 1920s like? And what are the major features of American literature of the 1930s?

II. Biographies and Selected Readings

1. Robert Frost (1874-1963)

A man who lived most of his life with great simplicity in New England where nine generations of his ancestors had lived before him, Robert Frost more than most poets was a nationally known figure. Four times winner of the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, he did much to win acceptance for modern poetry.

Frost was born in San Francisco. At the age of ten when his newspaper-editor father died, he moved with his Scottish-born mother and his sister to Lawrence, Massachusetts. He finished high school there. In 1897, after marrying Elinor White, he entered Harvard University. After two years Frost left Harvard and moved to a farm near Derry, New Hampshire, which had been given to him by his grandfather. For eleven unprofitable years he farmed, then for four more taught school. Determined to find out once and for all whether he could make a living from his poetry, he sold his farm and in 1912 moved with his family to Gloucestershire, England. His poetry was enthusiastically received by the British public and shortly republished in the U.S.

When Frost returned to America in 1915, he found himself famous. By 1955 he had so many honorary degrees that he could have his doctoral hoods sewn together to make a quilt for his bed. And by the 1960s, he was sufficiently famous to be invited to read a poem at the inauguration of President Kennedy. Yet through all this, he was haunted by personal misfortune. Two children died in infancy, a son committed suicide, and one of his daughters was committed to a mental institution. And, not just at moments of crisis such as these, he sprinkled his journals with remarks such as: “one of the hardest disciplines is having to learn the meaningless,” or, more simply,

“nature is chaos.”

Robert Frost was drawn towards traditional forms. For him, traditional meters were a necessary discipline, something against which he could play off the urgencies of his own speaking voice, the chance movements of his emotions, the catch and the tilt of his breath.

What he was after, in effect, was a casual but crafty play of speech and vision. The incessant coupling of opposites is precisely what characterizes Frost’s work. It makes all his best lyrics, like “Stopping by Woods on the Snowy Evening,” “Fire and Ice”, and “The Road Not Taken”, essentially dramatic in that they enact internal conflicts, savage dualisms of thought and feeling. In turn, it makes all of his best dramatic poems essentially lyrical in that they reproduce, in beautifully individualized form those same conflicts, turning them into intimate human communication.

Another simpler way of describing the character of Frost’s work is to say that he is the supreme example of the skeptic in modern American poetry: the person who mistrusts categorical answers, utopian solutions, and who cannot or will not make up his mind. (Richard Gray, *A Brief History of American Literature*, 2011)

Selected readings:

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

- Whose woods these are I think I know ,
- His house is in the village though.
- He will not see me stopping here ,
- To watch his woods fill up with snow.
-
- My little horse must think it queer ,
- To stop without a farmhouse near,
- Between the woods and frozen lake,
- The darkest evening of the year.

-
- He gives his harness bells a shake,
 - To ask if there is some mistake.
 - The only other sound's the sweep ,
 - Of easy wind and downy flake.

 - The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
 - But I have promises to keep,
 - And miles to go before I sleep.
 - And miles to go before I sleep.

Think and discuss: 1. What time of year is it? And What time of day has the speaker stopped? 2. What differences in attitude are implied among the speaker, his horse, and the owner of the woods? 3. What examples of alliteration and assonance do you find in the poem? What is the effect of repetition in the last two lines? 4. Do you think this is a poem about a snowy woods or about something else? Explain.

2. Ezra Pound (1885 - 1972)

Of all the writers of this period associated with Imagism, none revealed fuller commitment to poetic experiment – a great belief in the need, as he put it, to “make it new” – Ezra Pound.

Born in Idaho and reared in Pennsylvania, Ezra Pound became a controversial figure in American letters because of his pro-Fascist broadcasts during World War II and his subsequent internment in a mental hospital. Nonetheless, he was the prominent shaper of modern poetry and a tireless promoter of other poets, including T. S. Eliot, who referred to his peer as “the better craftsman.”

Pound fled what he thought was a stifling, provincial America for Europe in 1908 and became involved in many avant-garde movements. In spite of his exile and his criticism of America, he remained an American poet to the end.

The Cantos is always regarded as his masterpiece, which Pound began very early in his career, and was still writing shortly before his death. It is also Pound’s epic, which he defined as a “poem including history.” There is a quest at the basis of the *Cantos* which can be likened to Odysseus’ ten-year quest in search of his home. The difference is that this quest is unending, involving as it does the human being’s perpetual search for civilization, his constant attempts to rediscover the springs of skill or delight. “In a Station of the Metro” is his most frequently anthologized Imagist poem, which illustrates the principles of Imagism and the influence of Chinese poetry and Japanese *haiku*.

Selected readings:

- **In a Station of the Metro**
- The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Think and discuss: 1. What is the dominant image in the poem? Why is the poem

defined as an Imagist poem? 2. What do “petals” and “bough” stand for? 3. Why does the poet call the faces of pedestrians “apparition”?

3. William Carlos Williams (1883 - 1963)

William Carlos Williams was a poet of the local, concerned with the specifics of a specific place. For Williams the everyday event had beauty, interest, and significance. His poetry deals with such common things as spring, plums, a wheelbarrow – things that one might see every day yet never notice. Williams, then, is the great populist in American poetry, for whom the world is a democracy of objects. There are no hierarchies, no one thing is more important than another, each is to be valued for itself. And there are no allegories: no one thing is to be used as a tool, a vehicle to refer to another thing – it does not mean, it simply exists. And the immediate consequence of this is, not surprisingly, a commitment to free verse: rhythms that follow the shape of the object and that respond to the exigencies of a specific occasion.

Selected readings:

The Red Wheelbarrow

So much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

Think and discuss: 1. What is the most visually compelling word in each of the last three pairs of lines? What is the effect? 2. How to understand the poem in terms of its structure?

4. Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961)

Ernest Hemingway's deceptively simple, intensely compressed literary style has influenced countless writers around the world. He once explained the style to an interviewer: "I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it underwater for every part that shows. Anything you know, you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg. It is the part that doesn't show. If a writer omits something because he does not know it, then there is a hole in the story." He sometimes called this verbal art the art of omission. "You could omit anything if you knew that you omitted, and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood."

For Hemingway life *was* war, nasty, brutal, and arbitrary. He came to feel that "abstract words such as glory, courage, or hallow were obscene". "It was all nothing," observes the lonely protagonist of the short story "A Clean Well-Lighted Place", "and man was a nothing too." In the face of palpable nothing, meaninglessness, there are, finally, only the imperatives of conduct and communion with one's own solitaires. For an epigraph to his novel, Hemingway quoted something that the writer Gertrude Stein once said to him: "You are all a lost generation." The name came to characterize the self-exiled artists and writers who were his contemporaries.

And what seals the compact, and confirms the starkness is, always, the pellucid clarity of expression, the stark, simple economy of the terms in which Hemingway's lonely heroes are rendered to us. "A writer's job is to tell the truth," Hemingway observed. And he told that truth in a style that was a verbal equivalent of the grace under pressure shown by his finest protagonists: concrete, contained, cleaving to the hard facts of life, only disclosing its deeper urgencies in its repetitions

and repressions – in which its rhythms implied what it did not say.

Hemingway grew up in Oak Park, Illinois. During vacations, he hunted with his father, a physician, in northern Michigan. After graduation from high school, he worked as a newspaper reporter in Kansas City, where his interest in boxing acquainted him with prizefighters and gunmen. Before the United States entered World War I, he served in a French ambulance unit and was seriously wounded. After the war, Hemingway went to Paris where he worked as correspondent for American newspapers and became acquainted with other American expatriates, including F. Scott Fitzgerald. Hemingway brought out a book of short stories, *In Our Time*, in 1924, and his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, in 1926. He solidified his reputation as a writer with *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) was considered by some to be his finest novel, which grew out of his experience in the Spanish Civil War. In 1952, he published *The Old Man and the Sea*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. The following year he received the Nobel Prize for literature. He died from a gunshot wound. It is generally believed that he committed suicide, as his father had before him.

Selected readings:

Hills Like White Elephants (1927)

The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white. On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies. The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building. It was very hot and the express from Barcelona would come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes and went to Madrid.

'What should we drink?' the girl asked. She had taken off her hat and put it on the

table.

'It's pretty hot,' the man said.

'Let's drink beer.'

'Dos cervezas,' the man said into the curtain.

'Big ones?' a woman asked from the doorway.

'Yes. Two big ones.'

The woman brought two glasses of beer and two felt pads. She put the felt pads and the beer glass on the table and looked at the man and the girl. The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

'They look like white elephants,' she said.

'I've never seen one,' the man drank his beer.

'No, you wouldn't have.'

'I might have,' the man said. 'Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything.'

The girl looked at the bead curtain. 'They've painted something on it,' she said. 'What does it say?'

'Anisdel Toro. It's a drink.'

'Could we try it?'

The man called 'Listen' through the curtain. The woman came out from the bar.

'Four reales.' 'We want two Anis del Toro.'

'With water?'

'Do you want it with water?'

'I don't know,' the girl said. 'Is it good with water?'

'It's all right.'

'You want them with water?' asked the woman.

'Yes, with water.'

'It tastes like liquorice,' the girl said and put the glass down.

'That's the way with everything.'

'Yes,' said the girl. 'Everything tastes of liquorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe.'

'Oh, cut it out.'

'You started it,' the girl said. 'I was being amused. I was having a fine time.'

'Well, let's try and have a fine time.'

'All right. I was trying. I said the mountains looked like white elephants. Wasn't that bright?'

'That was bright.'

'I wanted to try this new drink. That's all we do, isn't it - look at things and try new drinks?'

'I guess so.'

The girl looked across at the hills.

'They're lovely hills,' she said. 'They don't really look like white elephants. I just meant the colouring of their skin through the trees.'

'Should we have another drink?'

'All right.'

The warm wind blew the bead curtain against the table.

'The beer's nice and cool,' the man said.

'It's lovely,' the girl said.

'It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig,' the man said. 'It's not really an operation at all.'

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

'I know you wouldn't mind it, Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in.'

The girl did not say anything.

'I'll go with you and I'll stay with you all the time. They just let the air in and then it's all perfectly natural.'

'Then what will we do afterwards?'

'We'll be fine afterwards. Just like we were before.'

'What makes you think so?'

'That's the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy.'

The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads.

'And you think then we'll be all right and be happy.'

'I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it.'

'So have I,' said the girl. 'And afterwards they were all so happy.'

'Well,' the man said, 'if you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to. But I know it's perfectly simple.'

'And you really want to?'

'I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you don't really want to.'

'And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?'

'I love you now. You know I love you.'

'I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?'

'I'll love it. I love it now but I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry.'

'If I do it you won't ever worry?'

'I won't worry about that because it's perfectly simple.'

'Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me.'

'What do you mean?'

'I don't care about me.'

'Well, I care about you.'

'Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine.'

'I don't want you to do it if you feel that way.'

The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station. Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees.

'And we could have all this,' she said. 'And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible.'

'What did you say?'

'I said we could have everything.'

'We can have everything. '

'No, we can't.'

'We can have the whole world.'

'No, we can't.'

'We can go everywhere.'

'No, we can't. It isn't ours anymore.'

'It's ours.'

'No, it isn't. And once they take it away, you never get it back.'

'But they haven't taken it away.'

'We'll wait and see.'

'Come on back in the shade,' he said. 'You mustn't feel that way.'

'I don't feel any way,' the girl said. 'I just know things.'

'I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do -'

'Nor that isn't good for me,' she said. 'I know. Could we have another beer?'

'All right. But you've got to realize -'

'I realize,' the girl said. 'Can't we maybe stop talking?'

They sat down at the table and the girl looked across at the hills on the dry side of the valley and the man looked at her and at the table.

'You've got to realize,' he said, 'that I don't want you to do it if you don't want to. I'm perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you.'

'Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along.'

'Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want anyone else. And I know it's perfectly simple.'

'Yes, you know it's perfectly simple.'

'It's all right for you to say that, but I do know it.'

'Would you do something for me now?'

'I'd do anything for you.'

'Would you please pleasepleasepleasepleaseplease stop talking?'

He did not say anything but looked at the bags against the wall of the station. There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights.

'But I don't want you to,' he said, 'I don't care anything about it.'

'I'll scream,' the girl said.

The woman came out through the curtains with two glasses of beer and put them down on the damp felt pads. 'The train comes in five minutes,' she said.

'What did she say?' asked the girl.

'That the train is coming in five minutes.'

The girl smiled brightly at the woman, to thank her.

'I'd better take the bags over to the other side of the station,' the man said. She smiled at him.

'All right. Then come back and we'll finish the beer.'

He picked up the two heavy bags and carried them around the station to the other tracks. He looked up the tracks but could not see the train. Coming back, he walked through the bar-room, where people waiting for the train were drinking. He drank an Anis at the bar and looked at the people. They were all waiting reasonably for the train. He went out through the bead curtain. She was sitting at the table and smiled at

him.

'Do you feel better?' he asked.

'I feel fine,' she said. 'There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine.'

Think and discuss:1. What is the nature of the relationship between the two characters? 2. Do they communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively? Find the examples in the story. 3. According to Hemingway's theory of omission, what is omitted? Does "the omitted part strengthen the story"?