American Literary Periods

Puritanism to Postmodernism: American Authors get the job done!

A plan

- Early American and Colonial Literature, the Writers of the Revolutionary Period 1776-1820
- The Romantic Period and the Rise of Realism
- Modernism and Experimentation
- American Poetry and Prose

Periods of American Literature:

- Pre-Colonial Period (till 1620)
- 1607-1776: Colonial Period
- 1765-1790: The Revolutionary Age
- 1775-1828: The Early National Period
- 1828-1865: The Romantic Period (Also known as: The American Renaissance or The Age of Transcendentalism)
- 1865-1900: The Realistic Period
- 1900-1914: The Naturalistic Period
- 1914-1939: American Modernist Period

Periods of American Literature:

- 1920s: Jazz Age, Harlem Renaissance
- 1920s, 1930s: The "Lost Generation"
- 1939-present: The Contemporary Period
- 1950s: Beat Writers
- 1960s, 1970s: Counterculture
 - In addition, American Literature recognizes works of:
- African-American Writers
- Native American Writers
- Asian-American Writers

Puritanism

Ionathan Edwards

17th Century: Puritanism is a movement created by extreme Calvinist Protestants who sought to purify religion and society. They believed God would cleanse their feelings through "grace" eliminating envy, vanity, and lust. Puritans valued plainness in all things including their writing.

- "Of Plymouth Plantation" William Bradford
- "Upon the Burning of Our House, July 10 1666"
- "To My Dear and Loving Husband" Anne Bradstreet
- "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" –

Classicism/ The Age of Reason

18th Century: The Age of Enlightenment, or Age of Reason, is an intellectual movement which began in Europe. Writers during this time believed the goals of rational individuals were knowledge, freedom, and happiness. The literary movement which coincided with the Age of Reason was Classicism, based on the study of and adherence to the ancient classic works of Greece and Rome Classicists valued clarity, order, balance, and son instead of imagination. They believed nature is like a machine with fixed, unchanging law

- Poor Richard's Almanack -Benjamin Frankl
- "Speech in the Virginia Convention" Patrick
 Henry
- "The Crisis, Number 1" Thomas Paine
 - "The Declaration of Independence" Thomas

Nationalism in Literature

- Late 18th Century to Early 19th Century:
 Nationalism developed from pride,
 patriotism, and the desire to be distinctly
 different from the Europeans. American writers tried to write stories and poems
 unlike European Romantic writers, but they largely failed in their efforts.
- "Rip Van Winkle" Washington Irving
 The Deerslaver James Fennimore
 Cooper

Romanticism

19th Century: Romanticism is the movement that rebelled against Classicism in favor of the imagination and emotions. Romantic writers favored intuition over reason and were more concerned with the individual than the whole society. They saw art as an imaginative expression of an individual's essence. Romantics viewed nature as a beautiful mystery, and source of moral and spiritual lessons, not a machine. Many American Romantic writers were also Nationalists who used American history and legends as their subject matter.

"Rip Van Winkle" – Washington Irving
The Deerslayer – James Fennimore C

"Masque of the Red Death" and "The Edgar Allan Poe

E.A. Roe

Walden - Henry David Thoreau

"Voung Goodman Brown" - Nathaniel

Transcendentalism

19th Century: American Transcendentalism was created by Emerson who borrowed his ideas from German Transcendentalism and Indian religion to develop a new philosophy.
Transcendentalists believe that the basic truths of the universe transcend the physical world and lie beyond the knowledge that can be obtained from the senses. They feel that every individual has the ability to experience God firsthand in his/her intuition. They value nature and believe in the spiritual unity of all life, stating God, humanity, and nature share a universal soul. They feel that nothing in nature is trivial or insignificant; all is symbolic and important.
They also promoted the belief that every human being is born inherently good.

"Self Reliance" - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Walden - Henry David Thoreau

Woman in the Nineteenth Century - Margaret

Anti-Transcendentalism

- 19th Century: Anti-Transcendentalism (like Transcendentalism) is a subsection of Romanticism. Hawthorne and Melville were far less optimistic than Emerson and his fellow philosophers. The Anti-Transcendentalists believed good and evil coexist in the world and that intuition could lead a person to evil just as easily as it could lead to good.
- The Scarlett Letter, "The Birthmark", "The Minster's Black Veil" Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Moby Dick Herman Melville

Realism

Late 19th Century to Early 20th Century: Realism, unlike Romanticism, places less emphasis on the imagination and more on observed fact. These writers viewed the world and human behavior scientifically, mirroring realities without softening or idealizing them. This movement is often considered a rebellion again Romanticism.

• The Adventures of Hucklebe Mark Twain

My Antonia – Willa Cather

Naturalism

Late 19th Century to Early 20th Century: Naturalism was a significant offshoot of Realism. Many American authors were influenced by this movement. Naturalism demands that writers penetrate the surface of life and human character. It focuses on inherited traits and environmental conditions (nature and nurture). Naturalism usually explores the negative aspects of society. These authors did not judge their characters' morality, but rather viewed them through a social Darwinist lens. Naturalists believed that chance exists but free will is rarely possible.

The Red Badge of Courage - Stephen

Modernism

- First half of the 20th Century: Modernism is a self-conscious break from traditional literary forms and subject matter and a search for a distinctly contemporary mode of expression. It was heavily influenced by the horrors and disillusionment of World War One. These writers are also referred to as "The Lost Generation". Their writing reflects isolation, alienation, and fragmentation. It places emphasis on individual perception, sensibility, and human consciousness.
- "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" T. S. Eliot

"The Short Hanny Life of Francis Macomber

The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald

Harlem Renaissance

- Primarily the 1920's: The Harlem Renaissance, also called the New Negro Movement, is a period of outstanding creativity among African American writers. Many of these works were sophisticated explorations of black life and culture that revealed and stimulated a new confidence and racial pride.
- The Invisible Man Ralph Ellison
- "Lift Every voice and Sing" James Weldon Johnson
- Their Eyes Were Watching od Zora Neale

Post Modernism

The Second half of the 20th Century:
Postmodernists believe that there is no single truth, but rather a variety of perspectives none of which is better or worse than another. This movement neither embraces nor resists the conventional. It accepts everything equally. Postmodern works are often eclectic, and anachronistic. Postmodernists make no distinction between "high art" and popular culture, can blur the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, and often sample other artists' work freely...(very freely).

The Simpsons – Matt Groening

Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas - Hunter S.

Thompson

Spow Falling on Cedar – David Guterson <u>Cartast of Champions</u> – Kurt Vounnegut of Virginia Woolf - Edward Albee Secret Life of Bees - Sue Munk Kidd