

American Literature Timeline

Time Period	Movement	Themes	Key Texts/ Authors
40,000 - 20,000 BC	Native Americans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oral literature: epic narratives, creation myths, stories, poems, songs. 2. Use stories to teach moral lessons and convey practical information about the natural world. 3. Deep respect for nature and animals 4. Cyclical worldview 5. Figurative language/parallelism 	
1600-1800 First American Colonies Salem Witch Trials	Puritanism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wrote mostly diaries and histories, which expressed the connections between God in their everyday lives. 2. Sought to “purify” the Church of England by reforming to the simpler forms of worship and church organization described in the New Testament 3. Saw religion as a personal, inner experience. 4. Believed in original sin and “elect” who would be saved. 5. Used a plain style of writing 	“Of Plymouth Plantation”- William Bradford
1750-1800 Revolutionary War Founding Documents	Rationalism Age of Reason Enlightenment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mostly comprised of philosophers, scientists, writing speeches and pamphlets. 2. Human beings can arrive at truth (God’s rules) by using deductive reasoning, rather than relying on the authority of the past, on religious faith, or intuition. 	Constitution, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence <i>Autobiography</i> - Benjamin Franklin “Speech to the Virginia Convention”- Patrick Henry “The Crisis”- Thomas Paine

<p>1800- 1860</p> <p>Industrialization</p> <p>War of 1812</p> <p>California Gold Rush</p>	<p>Romanticism</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Valued feeling, intuition, idealism, and inductive reasoning. 2. Placed faith in inner experience and the power of the imagination. 3. Shunned the artificiality of civilization and seek unspoiled nature as a path to spirituality. 4. Championed individual freedom and the worth of the individual. 5. Saw poetry as the highest expression of the imagination. 6. Dark Romantics: Used dark and supernatural themes/settings (Gothic style) 	<p><i>The Scarlet Letter</i>- Nathaniel Hawthorne</p> <p>Emily Dickinson Poetry</p> <p>“The Raven”- Edgar Allan Poe</p> <p>“Fall of the House of Usher”- Poe</p> <p>“Rip Van Winkle” - Washington Irving</p> <p>“Leaves of Grass”-Walt Whitman</p>
<p>1840-1860</p> <p>Abolitionist, Utopian, and Women’s Suffrage Movements</p>	<p>Transcendentalism</p> <p>“The American Renaissance”</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everything in the world, including human beings, is a reflection of the Divine Soul 2. People can use their intuition to behold God’s spirit revealed in nature or in their own souls. 3. Self-reliance and individualism must outweigh external authority and blind conformity to tradition 	<p><i>Nature</i>- Ralph Waldo Emerson</p> <p>“Self-Reliance”- Emerson</p> <p><i>Walden</i>- Henry David Thoreau</p> <p>“Civil Disobedience”- Thoreau</p> <p><i>Life in the Woods</i>- Thoreau</p> <p><i>Little Women</i>- Louisa May Alcott</p>
<p>1850- 1900</p> <p>Civil War</p> <p>Reconstructionism</p>	<p>Realism</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feelings of disillusionment 2. Common subjects; slums of rapidly growing cities, factories replacing farmlands, poor factory workers, corrupt politicians 3. Represented the manner and environment of everyday life and ordinary people as realistically as possible (regionalism) 4. Sought to explain behavior (psychologically/socially). 	<p><i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>- Mark Twain</p> <p>“Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”- Ambrose Bierce</p> <p>“Story of an Hour”- Kate Chopin</p>

<p>1900-1950</p> <p>World War I</p> <p>The Great Depression</p> <p>World War II</p>	<p>Modernism</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sense of disillusionment and loss of faith in the “American Dream”: the independence, self-reliant, individual will triumph. 2. Emphasis on bold experimentation in style and form over the traditional. 3. Interest in the inner workings of the human mind (ex. Stream of consciousness). 	<p><i>The Great Gatsby</i>- F. Scott Fitzgerald</p> <p><i>Death of a Salesman</i>- Arthur Miller</p> <p>“A Rose for Emily”- William Faulkner</p> <p>Robert Frost poetry</p> <p>“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”- T.S. Eliot</p> <p><i>Of Mice and Men</i>- John Steinbeck</p> <p><i>Grapes of Wrath</i>- Steinbeck</p> <p>“The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”- James Thurber</p> <p>Flannery O’Connor Short Stories</p>
<p>1920-1940</p> <p>“The New Negro Movement”</p> <p>Prohibition</p>	<p>Harlem Renaissance</p> <p>Jazz Age</p> <p>Roaring 20’s</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Black cultural movement in Harlem, New York 2. Some poetry rhythms based on spirituals, and jazz, lyrics on the blues, and diction from the street talk of the ghettos 3. Other poetry used conventional lyrical forms 	<p>Langston Hughes poetry</p> <p>Zora Neale Hurston</p> <p>Claude McKay</p> <p>F. Scott Fitzgerald</p>
<p>1950- present</p> <p>Korean War</p> <p>Vietnam War</p>	<p>Postmodernism</p> <p>Contemporary</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Influenced by studies of media, language, and information technology 2. Sense that little is unique; culture endlessly duplicates and copies itself 3. New literary forms and techniques: works composed of only dialogue or combining fiction and nonfiction, experimenting with physical appearance of their work 	<p><i>Joy Luck Club</i>- Amy Tan</p> <p><i>The House on Mango Street</i>- Sandra Cisneros</p> <p>“Sonny’s Blues”- James Baldwin</p> <p>“Everyday Use”- Alice Walker</p> <p>“Still I Rise” - Maya Angelou</p> <p>e.e. cummings poetry</p>