## Overview of American literature

* **Colonial literature**

The first written record of America, though not the mainland, came from Christopher Columbus on the October 12, 1492 in *The Journal of the First Voyage of Christopher Columbus* (1492–3).

American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales and lyrics of Native American culture.

The plantation owners, who were mainly Anglicans, produced a lot of writing, ranging from **sermons and hymns to autobiographies and diaries**. **Letters, journals and reports from the voyage** thus became one of the most popular and earliest genres of American literature. They mostly contained geographical description and potential dangers.

Captain John Smith is considered to be the first American writer. He published a report from the New World about the search of the colonists for a place of settlement, their early disagreements with the Indians, their explorations, and their first desperate struggles with illness: *The General History of Virginia*, famous for the story of Pocahontas.

**Puritans**

Total depravity – inability of man to work out his own salvation: God is all, man is nothing and is the source of all evil. Unconditional election – God saves or “elects” who he will with no reference to faith or good works: He knows beforehand who will be saved. Limited atonement – Christ did not die for all, but only for those who are to be saved. Irresistible grace – God´s grace is freely given and can neither be earned nor refused.

**Puritan Chronicles:** William Bradford: elected the governor of Plymouth in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the first historian of his colony: *Of Plymouth Plantation*. William Byrd: *History of the Dividing Lane*. Cotton Mather: *Magnalia Christi Americana* (*Ecclesiastical History of New England*) – chronicles of the settlement of New England.

All writings were meant to cultivate and define a holy life. The works written chiefly for entertainment, such as theatrical plays or novels, were not appreciated. The Puritans supported only **religious, scientific and didactic writings**, yet there were several poets who, aside from keeping to the **spiritual and religious poetry**, were recognized even in Europe.

**Poetry**

Anne Bradstreet: the first published book of poems by an American was also the first American book published by a woman: *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*:

In silent night when rest I took,

For sorrow near I did not look,

I wakened was with thund’ring noise

And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.

That fearful sound of “fire” and “fire,”

Let no man know is my Desire.

I, starting up, the light did spy,

And to my God my heart did cry

To straighten me in my Distress

And not to leave me succourless.

Then, coming out, behold a space

The flame consume my dwelling place.

And when I could no longer look,

I blest His name that gave and took,

That laid my goods now in the dust.

Yea, so it was, and so ‘twas just.

It was his own, it was not mine,

Far be it that I should repine;

He might of all justly bereft

But yet sufficient for us left.

When by the ruins oft I past

My sorrowing eyes aside did cast

And here and there the places spy

Where oft I sate and long did lie.

Here stood that trunk, and there that chest,

There lay that store I counted best.

My pleasant things in ashes lie

And them behold no more shall I.

Under thy roof no guest shall sit,

Nor at thy Table eat a bit.

No pleasant talk shall ‘ere be told

Nor things recounted done of old.

No Candle e'er shall shine in Thee,

Nor bridegroom‘s voice e'er heard shall be.

In silence ever shalt thou lie,

Adieu, Adieu, all’s vanity.

Then straight I ‘gin my heart to chide,

And did thy wealth on earth abide?

Didst fix thy hope on mould'ring dust?

The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?

Raise up thy thoughts above the sky

That dunghill mists away may fly.

Thou hast a house on high erect

Frameed by that mighty Architect,

With glory richly furnished,

Stands permanent though this be fled.

It‘s purchased and paid for too

By Him who hath enough to do.

A price so vast as is unknown,

Yet by His gift is made thine own;

There‘s wealth enough, I need no more,

Farewell, my pelf, farewell, my store.

The world no longer let me love,

My hope and treasure lies above.

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43707/verses-upon-the-burning-of-our-house-july-10th-1666>)

Edward Taylor: *Preparatory Meditations*. Michael Wigglesworth: *The Day of Doom* – appalling portrait of damnation to hell in ballad meter.

Indian Captivity Narrative: Mary Rowlandson: a minister´s wife who gives an account of her 11-week captivity by Indians – *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*.

* **Writing of the American Revolution**

In the 18th century the Puritan heritage was changing and adapting to the “Age of Reason.” The population increased, there were armed conflicts with the Indians and rise of slavery. The public figures became more liberal and more political. The writing of that time mostly reflected the struggle for independence (1775–1783). The main forms were thus **essays and pamphlets**. One of the essential concepts of Enlightenment was the rise of nationalism – the ideals of justice, liberty and equality as the natural rights of man.

Benjamin Franklin: practical, hard-working and successful writer, printer, publisher, scientist, philanthropist and diplomat, the first self-made man in America – *Autobiography, Poor Richard´s Almanack*.

Political pamphlets: filled the role of drama as they were often read aloud in public to excite audiences, appeal to the voters. Thomas Paine: “Common Sense.”

Poetry: Philip Freneau: the poet of American revolution – “The British Prison Ship,” “American Libery,” “George the Third´s Soliloquy.”

Noah Webster: *American Dictionary, Spelling Book*.

Fiction: Washington Irving: The Sketch Book – “Rip Van Winkle,” “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” James Fenimore Cooper: the powerful myth of a golden age – *The Last of the Mohicans, The Prairie, The Pioneers*.

Example from The Declaration of Independence:

**IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776**

**The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America**

****hen in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

(<https://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/index.html>)

* **Transcendentalism**

It was a reaction against 18th century rationalism, based on a belief in the unity of the world and God, self-reliance and individualism. Connected with Concord, the Transcendentalists published a quarterly magazine The Dial. They were abolitionists, insisted on individual differences, a unique viewpoint of the individual.

 Ralph Waldo Emerson: the founder of the movement had a religious sense of mission influenced by British Romanticism. Essay “Self-Reliance” – call for the birth of American individualism inspired by nature, *Nature*.

Henry David Thoreau: ecological consciousness, do-it-yourself independence. *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, essay “Civil Disobedience” – theory of passive resistance based on the moral necessity for the just individual to disobey unjust laws.

Margaret Fuller: an essayist, the first professional woman journalist in America, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*.

* **Beginnings of modern American prose in the 19th century**

There were three writers who expressed their doubts and disbelief in the American optimism and progress. Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) and Herman Melville (1810–1891) searched the darker aspects of human existence, American past and nature.

Edgar Allan Poe:a southerner with darkly metaphysical vision mixed with elements of realism and parody, his tragedies feature doomed characters, theme of death-in-life, he was fascinated with the mind and the unsettling scientific knowledge, explores the psyche, madness and extreme emotions. “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Premature Burial,” The Tell-Tale Heart.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne: born in Salem, Massachusetts to a prominent New England family. This is also a region where he set most of his stories. His fiction deals mainly with his Puritan heritage, on one hand he was proud of his ancestors, yet he also felt guilt, especially because one of his forefathers, John Hathorne, was a judge in Salem witchcraft trials. Though he became known for his stories, his most influential book was a romance *The Scarlett Letter*.

Herman Melville: born into an eminent family claiming war heroes and wealthy merchants. His most famous novel is *Moby Dick, or The Whale* (1851), inspired by epics of Homer, Chamoes and William Shakespeare. Melville’s captain Ahab pursuits the whale and in one scene he talks to a skeleton of a whale, his black cabin boy Pip turns insane. Melville was also inspired by Shakespeare’s style.

* **Modern poetry**

Walt Whitman: a part-time carpenter, self-taught. *Leaves of Grass* – innovative, free verse, open celebration of sexuality, democratic sensibility.

Emily Dickinson: a radical individualist, loved nature, terse, frequently imagistic style, combines concrete things with abstract ideas, explores the dark and hidden objects.

Example from Emily Dickinson:

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -

The Stillness in the Room

Was like the Stillness in the Air -

Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -

And Breaths were gathering firm

For that last Onset - when the King

Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away

What portion of me be

Assignable - and then it was

There interposed a Fly -

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -

Between the light - and me -

And then the Windows failed - and then

I could not see to see –

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45703/i-heard-a-fly-buzz-when-i-died-591>)

Edgar Allan Poe: “The Raven.”

* **Realism**

Realism stresses the common and ordinary everyday life. Realists concentrate on common characters living ordinary lives and having the same, or at least, similar experience as the reader. Realists try to represent life as it is, the characters speak in a colloquial language and act according to understandable motives, and the writer captures the manners and values of his time. Local colour realism concentrates on particular region, its traditions and people.

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens, 1835–1910): grew up in the Mississippi River frontier town of Hannibal, Missouri. Ernest Hemingway's famous statement that all of American literature comes from one great book, Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Satirical novel about prosperity vs. corruption – *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, gave the era its nickname.

Kate Chopin: a novel about a woman´s doomed attempt to find her own identity through passion: *The Awakening*.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: “The Yellow Wallpaper.”

Henry James: complex relationships between naïve Americans and cosmopolitan Europeans. *The American, Daisy Miller, The Portrait of a Lady*.

* **Naturalism**

Realism turned into naturalism under the influence of the theories of Darwin, Marx and Freud. It is a literary expression of determinism. Associated with **bleak, realistic depictions of lower-class life**, determinism denies religion as a motivating force in the world and instead perceives the universe as a machine. Eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers had also imagined the world as a machine, but as a perfect one, invented by God and tending toward progress and human betterment. Naturalists imagined **society as a blind machine, godless and out of control**.

Stephen Crane (1871-1900): started as a journalist, also wrote fiction, essays, poetry, and plays. He was the first writer to write an impressionist novel about the Civil War: *The Red Badge of Courage*. His last novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) is one of the earliest naturalistic novels.

Jack London (1876-1916): became famous after the publication of his first collection of stories, *The Son of the Wolf* (1900), set in the Klondike region of Alaska and the Canadian Yukon. Other of his best-known books include *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *The Sea-Wolf* (1904) that made him the best paid writer in the United States of his time.

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945): explored the dangers of the American dream – *An American Tragedy*.

* **Modernism**

Modern era: two world wars, huge changes in industry and technology, the rise in power and influence of international corporations, cultural exchanges, global transportation and communication, the modern values included industrialization, individual political rights, democracy, mass literacy and education, private ownership, the scientific method.

**Characteristics of Modernism in Literature:**

1) uses images and symbols as typical and frequent literary techniques

2) uses colloquial language rather than formal language

3) poetry close to a sculpture or a painting

5) form, style, and technique become as important as the content.

Ezra Pound: born in Hailey, Idaho, in 1885. He became one of the major figures of modernism, as he was the one who defined and promoted a modernist aesthetic in poetry. He started a crucial exchange of work and ideas between British and American writers. “The Cantos.”

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965): Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri. His poem “The Waste Land”published in 1922 is still considered by many to be the most influential poetic work of the twentieth century. He was influenced by the English metaphysical poets of the 17th century (especially John Donne) and the 19th century French symbolist poets. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”

e. e. cummings (Edward Estlin Cummings): radical experiments with form, punctuation, spelling and syntax:

why must itself up every of a park

anus stick some quote statue unquote to

prove that a hero equals any jerk

who was afraid to dare to answer "no"?

quote citizens unquote might otherwise

forget(to err is human;to forgive

divine)that if the quote state unquote says

"kill" killing is an act of christian love.

"Nothing" in 1944 AD

"can stand against the argument of mil

itary necessity"(generalissimo e)

and echo answers "there is no appeal

from reason"(freud)—you pays your money and

you doesn't take your choice. Ain't freedom grand

(<https://poets.org/poem/why-must-itself-every-park>)

* **The Lost generation**

The generation raised during this time felt abandoned by their country. Many of the defining literary figures of the Lost Generation (Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald) felt that the America they knew was gone and could not be revived. The war experience also affected the Lost Generation’s relationship with their predecessors. They felt as outsiders, who can, because of their war experience, provide an external perspective on America and relationships in general.

Ernest Hemingway: *A Farewell to Arms, The Sun Also Rises, For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night*, “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.”

* **Drama until WWII**

American drama imitated English and European theatre, also plays about social problems such as slavery appeared and sometimes adaptations of novels like *Uncle Tom´s Cabin.*

Elmer Leopold Rice: reflected the social and political issues. *On Trial* – the first American play to use flashbacks. *The Adding Machine* – satirizing the dehumanizing effects of machines.

Eugene O´Neill: Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936, deals with obsessions and sex inspired by Freud. *Desire Under the Elms, The Great God Brown, Mourning Becomes Electra* – based on the Oedipus trilogy.

Thornton Wilder: *The Skin of Our Teeth, Our Town* – positive American values, sentimentality and nostalgia, innovative elements such as ghosts, voices from the audience.

Clifford Odets: social drama, Jewish immigrant background. *Awake and Sing!, Waiting for Lefty* – experimental one-act drama advocating labour unions.

* **Postwar drama**

Arthur Miller (1915–2005): became one of the most important American play writers. His main theme is the false ideal of American dream and the unnecessary suffering and deaths caused by the will to succeed. His plays were never complicated or symbolical and therefore gained wide audiences. *All my Sons, Death of a Salesman* – about the falseness of the American dream, *View from the Bridge, Incident at Vichy* – shows that indifference to evil is the same as committing evil acts.

Tennessee Williams (1911-1983): openly reflected sexual and psychological aspects of relationships which are traditionally controversial. His plays are full of neurotic characters, sexually obsessed men and women, violence, both physical and mental. One of the main motifs of Williams's plays is the contrast and conflict between fragile, highly sensitive character and the world or other characters that represent the animalistic, aggressive forces, there are no black and white characters. 1) Early plays: *A* *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Glass Menagerie* are the most realistic plays presenting themes of contrast of illusion and reality, body and soul. 2) Surrealistic plays: The Rose Tattoo, Camino Real. 3) Critical plays: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* – moral decay of a Southern family, *Orpheus Descending* – criticism of contemporary society.

Example from *A* *Streetcar Named Desire*:

BLANCHE [faintly to herself]: I've got to keep hold of myself!

[Stella comes quickly around the corner of the building and runs to the door of the downstairs flat.]

STELLA [calling out joyfully]: Blanche!

[For a moment they stare at each other. Then Blanche springs up and runs to her with a wild cry.]

BLANCHE: Stella, oh, Stella, Stella! Stella for Star!

[She begins to speak with feverish vivacity as if she feared for either of them to stop and think. They catch each other in a spasmodic embrace.]

BLANCHE: Now, then, let me look at you. But don't you look at me, Stella, no, no, no, not till later, not till I've bathed and rested! And turn that over-light off! Turn that off! I won't be looked at in this merciless glare! [Stella laughs and complies] Come back here now! Oh, my baby! Stella! Stella for Star! [She embraces her again] I thought you would never come back to this horrible place! What am I saying? I didn't mean to say that. I meant to be nice about it and say--Oh, what a convenient location and such--Haa-ha! Precious lamb! You haven't said a word to me.

 STELLA: You haven't given me a chance to, honey!

[She laughs, but her glance at Blanche is a little anxious.]

BLANCHE: Well, now you talk. Open your pretty mouth and talk while I look around for some liquor! I know you must have some liquor on the place! Where could it be, I wonder? Oh, I spy, I spy!

Edward Albee (1928-2016): combined the traditional and the avant-garde, the realistic with the surrealistic. *The Zoo Story, The American Dream, Who´s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

David Mamet (1947): uses vulgar dialogues, explores masculinity. *The Duck Variations, Sexual Perversity in Chicago*.

* **Postwar poetry**

The American **Beat Generation** of the 1950s names both a literary trend and a broader cultural mood. Rejecting the conformism "normality" of the Truman and Eisenhower years, the Beats emphasized a liberal approach to sexuality, religions, and spirituality.

Major writers: **Jack Kerouac** – *On the Road,* **Allen Ginsberg** – *The Howl,* **William Burroughs** – *The Naked Lunch*.

Example from *The Howl*:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,

dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,

angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night,

who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,

who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs illuminated,

who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war,

who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull,

who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall,

who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana for New York,

who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night

with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls,

incomparable blind streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind leaping toward poles of Canada & Paterson, illuminating all the motionless world of Time between,

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn, ashcan rantings and kind king light of mind,

who chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy Bronx on benzedrine until the noise of wheels and children brought them down shuddering mouth-wracked and battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance in the drear light of Zoo,

who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford’s floated out and sat through the stale beer afternoon in desolate Fugazzi’s, listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox,

who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge,

**Confessional poets** wrote from their personal experience, usually extreme moments and personal traumas, dealt with topics of mental illness, sexuality and suicide.

Robert Lowell: *Land of Unlikeness, Lord Weary´s Castle* – influenced by his conversion to Catholicism.

Sylvia Plath: her relationship with her authoritarian father, who died when she was eight influenced her poetry, she was married to Ted Hughes, she suffered from depression and committed suicide. *Colossus, Ariel*, a semi-autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*.

Example from “Daddy” by Plath:

You do not do, you do not do

Any more, black shoe

In which I have lived like a foot

For thirty years, poor and white,

Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.

You died before I had time——

Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,

Ghastly statue with one gray toe

Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic

Where it pours bean green over blue

In the waters off beautiful Nauset.

I used to pray to recover you.

Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town

Scraped flat by the roller

Of wars, wars, wars.

But the name of the town is common.

My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.

So I never could tell where you

Put your foot, your root,

I never could talk to you.

The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.

Ich, ich, ich, ich,

I could hardly speak.

I thought every German was you.

And the language obscene

An engine, an engine

Chuffing me off like a Jew.

A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.

I began to talk like a Jew.

I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna

Are not very pure or true.

With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck

And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack

I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of *you,*

With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.

And your neat mustache

And your Aryan eye, bright blue.

Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You——

Not God but a swastika

So black no sky could squeak through.

Every woman adores a Fascist,

The boot in the face, the brute

Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,

In the picture I have of you,

A cleft in your chin instead of your foot

But no less a devil for that, no not

Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.

I was ten when they buried you.

At twenty I tried to die

And get back, back, back to you.

I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,

And they stuck me together with glue.

And then I knew what to do.

I made a model of you,

A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.

And I said I do, I do.

So daddy, I’m finally through.

The black telephone’s off at the root,

The voices just can’t worm through.

If I’ve killed one man, I’ve killed two——

The vampire who said he was you

And drank my blood for a year,

Seven years, if you want to know.

Daddy, you can lie back now.

There’s a stake in your fat black heart

And the villagers never liked you.

They are dancing and stamping on you.

They always *knew* it was you.

Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through.

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48999/daddy-56d22aafa45b2>)

Anne Sexton: diagnosed with postpartum depression, committed suicide, central issue in her poetry is the experience of being a woman, brought subjects like menstruation, abortion and drug addiction into her work. *To Bedlam and Part Way Back, Live or Die*.

* **Postwar prose**

After the war, there was a period named after one American senator, Joseph McCarthy. War became one of the main themes of American literature: Joseph Heller (1923–1999): *Catch 22*, Norman Mailer (1923): *The Naked and the Dead*, Herman Wouk (1915): *The Winds of War*, Irwin Shaw (1913–1984): *Young Lions* and Leon Uris (1924–2003): *Mila 15*. In the war novels written at that time, the enemy was not so much the fascists but the war and American army.

Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007): wrote pessimistic and satirical novels. *Player Piano* – set in the future, labelled him as a science-fiction writer. *Cat´s Cradle* – deals with the end of the world, criticism of dictatorship. *Slaughterhouse-Five* – based on his experiences in Dresden, Germany.

Example from “The Big Trip Up Yonder:”

"Silence!" cried Gramps. "Next one shoots off his big bazoo while the TV's on is gonna

find hisself cut off without a dollar--" his voice suddenly softened and sweetened--"when they wave that checkered flag at the Indianapolis Speedway, and old Gramps gets ready

for the Big Trip Up Yonder." He sniffed sentimentally, while his heirs concentrated desperately on not making the slightest sound. For them, the poignancy of the prospective Big Trip had been dulled somewhat, through having been mentioned by Gramps about once a day for fifty years. "Dr. Brainard Keyes Bullard," continued the commentator, "President of Wyandotte College, said in an address tonight that most of the world's ills can be

traced to the fact that Man's knowledge of himself has not kept pace with his knowledge

of the physical world."

"\_Hell!\_" snorted Gramps. "We said \_that\_ a hundred years ago!"

"In Chicago tonight," the commentator went on, "a special celebration is taking place in

the Chicago Lying-in Hospital. The guest of honor is Lowell W. Hitz, age zero. Hitz,

born this morning, is the twenty-five-millionth child to be born in the hospital." The commentator faded, and was replaced on the screen by young Hitz, who squalled furiously.

"Hell!" whispered Lou to Emerald. "We said that a hundred years ago."

"I heard that!" shouted Gramps. He snapped off the television set and his petrified

descendants stared silently at the screen. "You, there, boy--"

"I didn't mean anything by it, sir," said Lou, aged 103.

"Get me my will. You know where it is. You kids \_all\_ know where it is. Fetch, boy!" Gramps snapped his gnarled fingers sharply.

Lou nodded dully and found himself going down the hall, picking his way over bedding

 to Gramps' room, the only private room in the Ford apartment. The other rooms were the bathroom, the living room and the wide windowless hallway, which was originally

intended to serve as a dining area, and which had a kitchenette in one end. Six mattresses and four sleeping bags were dispersed in the hallway and living room, and the daybed, in the living room, accommodated the eleventh couple, the favorites of the moment.

(<https://archive.org/stream/thebigtripupyond30240gut/pg30240.txt>)

E.L. Doctorow (1931–2015): a Jewish-American writer who is famous for his rewriting of American history. He is combining fictional and real historical figures to bring back the political and social climate of that time. He concentrates mainly on the first half of the 20th century. *Welcome to Bad Times* – an anti-western, *The Book of Daniel* – based on the case of the Rosenbergs, *Ragtime*.

Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977):born in St. Petersburg into a wealthy family. In 1937 he moved to Paris, where he met the Irish modernist James Joyce. In 1939 with the help of a loan from Rachmaninov (famous music composer), he moved with his family to America. He became famous with his novel *Lolita*.

Ken (Elton) Kesey (1935-2001): a counterculture hero and a guru of psychedelic drugs, called the Pied Piper, who changed the beat generation into the hippie movement. *One Flew Over The Cockoo´s Nest*.

Jerome David Salinger (J. D. 1919-2010): published two experimental novels that are interconnected – *Franny and Zooey, Raise High The Roof Beam, Carpenters*. The best-known novel is *The Catcher In The Rye* – a growing up novel.

Truman Capote (1924-1984): a novelist, short story writer and playwright, *Other Voices, Other Rooms, Breakfast At Tiffany´s, In Cold Blood* – an account of a real life crime.

* **African American literature**

Frederick Douglass: the leader of the journalist group, fought for civil rights and against lynching and the Ku Klux Klan. Save narratives *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and my Freedom, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass.*

Richard Wright: *Uncle Tom´s Children, Native Son*.

James Baldwin: called national attention to things in the society that needed to be corrected and things that needed to be celebrated. *The Fire Next Time* – search for place and definition.

Amiri Baraka: the best known African American poet. Example from “Somebody Blew Up America:”

Somebody Blew Up America

They say its some terrorist,

some barbaric

A Rab,

in Afghanistan

It wasn't our American terrorists

It wasn't the Klan or the Skin heads

Or the them that blows up nigger

Churches, or reincarnates us on Death Row

It wasn't Trent Lott

Or David Duke or Giuliani

Or Schundler, Helms retiring

It wasn't

The gonorrhea in costume

The white sheet diseases

That have murdered black people

Terrorized reason and sanity

Most of humanity, as they pleases

They say (who say?)

Who do the saying

Who is them paying

Who tell the lies

Who in disguise

Who had the slaves

Who got the bux out the Bucks

Who got fat from plantations

Who genocided Indians

Tried to waste the Black nation

Who live on Wall Street

The first plantation

Who cut your nuts off

Who rape your ma

Who lynched your pa

Who got the tar, who got the feathers

Who had the match, who set the fires

Who killed and hired

Who say they God & still be the Devil

Who the biggest only

Who the most goodest

Who do Jesus resemble

Who created everything

Who the smartest

Who the greatest

Who the richest

Who say you ugly and they the goodlookingest

(<http://www.lem.seed.pr.gov.br/arquivos/File/livrosliteraturaingles/sbua2.pdf>)

Maya Angelou: a writer of poetry – *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ´fore I Diiie*, plays and memoir – *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* Example from “Caged Bird:”

A free bird leaps

on the back of the wind

and floats downstream

till the current ends

and dips his wing

in the orange sun rays

and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks

down his narrow cage

can seldom see through

his bars of rage

his wings are clipped and

his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze

and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees

and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn

and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams

his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream

his wings are clipped and his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48989/caged-bird>)