

THE AMERICAN 19TH CENTURY 1800-1899

Nineteenth-century American literature is marked by a quest for social justice and personal liberation and by an effort to define a distinctly American subject matter and aesthetic. Literature in the first half of the century, produced almost entirely on the east coast, was imbued with the spirit of Romanticism and paid new attention to nature and other-worldly experience. The fundamental belief in an empowered citizenry and the ideals of the Transcendental movement enlivened demands for the abolition of slavery, educational and labor reform, and the increased enfranchisement of women. In the second half of the century, Realist fiction took a cue from journalism and the new social sciences to chronicle the lives of the working and middle classes in a nation that now spanned the continent.

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highlights

1899

1890: Closing of the western frontier

1863: Emancipation Proclamation

1800: Library of Congress founded

1800

REPRESENTATIVE LITERARY WORKS

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Washington Irving, 1820

The Last of the Mohicans, James Fenimore Cooper, 1826

First tales of Edgar Allan Poe, 1832

“The American Scholar,” Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1837

The Life, Frederick Douglass, 1845

Woman in the Nineteenth Century,
Margaret Fuller, 1845

“Resistance to Civil Government,”
Henry David Thoreau, 1849

The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1851

Moby-Dick, Herman Melville, 1851

Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1852

Leaves of Grass, Walt Whitman, 1855

Little Women, Louisa May Alcott, 1868

The Portrait of a Lady, Henry James, 1881

A Modern Instance, William Dean Howells, 1882

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain, 1884

Poems of Emily Dickinson (posthumous), 1890

The Red Badge of Courage, Stephen Crane, 1895



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