

Advanced Placement United States History

Important American Authors

James Fenimore Cooper

First great American author; wrote in the early 19th century; wrote *The Last of the Mohicans*, popularized naturalist literature, and explored the line between civilization and nature

Washington Irving

Another famous American author writing in early 19th century; often wrote about New York or the Hudson River Valley; created “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Transcendentalist essayist and philosopher from New England; icon of the Romantic Age; wanted people to embrace change and value individuality; wrote “Self Reliance”

Henry David Thoreau

Follower of Emerson and a believer in the power of the individual to triumph over evil social pressures; wrote “Civil Disobedience” and *Walden*

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Northeastern Romantic Age writer of the mid-19th century; often wrote about colonial New England; most famous for *House of Seven Gables* and *The Scarlet Letter*

Edgar Allan Poe

Romantic Age writer and poet; wrote about the dark side of mid-19th century society; famous short stories include “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Pit and the Pendulum”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Poet and writer of the mid-19th century; wrote *Hiawatha* and the poem “Paul Revere’s Ride”

Herman Melville

Northeastern writer of late 19th century; most of his books were nautical in theme; most famous book is *Moby Dick*

Walt Whitman

Romantic poet and essayist of the mid-19th century; most famous work is *Leaves of Grass*, free verse collection reveling in emotions and sensations

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Northeastern political writer; *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* dramatized slave society, became an international hit, and a weapon used by abolitionists to alert people to evils of slavery

Mark Twain

Perhaps the most famous American author; rooted in the realist tradition, Twain used humor and satire to dramatize life during the Gilded Age; works include *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, *The Innocents Abroad*

Henry James

A contemporary of Twain, James depicted the complexities of characters in sophisticated post-bellum society; works include *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Bostonians*

Upton Sinclair

Used novel format to alert readers to social ills; specifically, *The Jungle* sensationalized and dramatized the lack of safety and sanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry

Edith Wharton

First great female writer of the modern era; her 1920 book *The Age of Innocence* details the vanishing world of old money New York society

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The most famous of the jazz era authors; hard working, hard partying chronicler of the reckless abandon and spiritual hollowness of the twenties; famous works include *The Great Gatsby* and *This Side of Paradise*

Sinclair Lewis

A contemporary of Fitzgerald, his *Main Street* focused on exposing the provincality and middle-class meanness of small-town society

William Faulkner

Pioneering author describing complexities of life in the South; first to succeed with modern technique of multiple points of view; famous works include *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom*

John Steinbeck

Most important of the Depression Era authors including John Dos Passos and Thomas Wolfe; most famous book *The Grapes of Wrath* chronicled Joad family's migration from Oklahoma to California

Ernest Hemingway

Famed for his hard living, his masculine prose, and his spare writing style; wrote *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Sun Also Rises*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*

J.D. Salinger

Reclusive author; careful and studious style; most famous work is *The Catcher in the Rye*, a story about youth and disillusionment in post-War America

Jack Kerouac

Most famous of the "beat" generation of writers: violent and free-spirited youths wandering in post-War America; books include *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums*

Joseph Heller

Author of *Catch-22*, which typifies post-War disillusionment by satirizing war