

UZBEK STATE WORLD LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY

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Маъруза матни

HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Lectures

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ANNOTATION

This course of lectures is designed to acquaint students with the main outlines of American literature and provides an overview of its evolution covering several centuries, from the time of America's discovery to modern time. The thematic structure should assist students of Bachelor Departments in their studies. The text of lectures will be an important addition to available sources of information on American literature.

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THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Christopher Columbus found the coastline of the new world in 1492, but only in the beginning of the 17th century Europeans began to explore the new land. During the 17th century English colonies were planted in America. The first state was Virginia (1607), the last - a state of George (1753). The process of the formation of the American culture has some peculiarities. People who inhabited these colonies were puritans. They left England because they were in opposition to the English monarchy and after the restoration of Stewart dynasty they were persecuted. Their psychology has influenced the American literature. On one hand they reflected the spirit of revolution, of insurrection, but on the other hand they propagated the most reactionary religious theory. The fact is that the puritans were rather contradictory. In the 17th century Negroes were brought to America as slaves. Their specific folklore also influenced the American literature and art.

That period in America was the epoch of theocracy (the domination of priesthood including all spheres of literature, art). Religious psalms, disputes, essays represented the American belle-letters in those far off days. It was the epoch of talents. But the end of the late years of the 17th century was the colorless, not a single notable book appeared, not a single writer emerged on those days.

Theme 1: AMERICAN LITERATURE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Plan:

1. American Revolution and the War for Independence.
2. American Enlightenment
3. Benjamin Franklin

In the 70-ties of the 18th century the British colonies rose in arms against Britain. Among them was America. It lasted from 1776 to 1783. The struggle ended in the formation of a federative bourgeois republic – the United States of America. The spiritual life in the colony developed in the frame of enlightenment. It was obvious, that the representatives of Enlightenment were progressive who were opposed to the colonial order and to religious obscurantism. The representatives of enlightenment set themselves a task to disseminate knowledge and advocate revolutionary ideas. Most of them personally took part in the war for independence. In general, American Enlightenment contributed very much to the cause of the victory in war for independence. They brought to life secular

education and literature. In its initial period the American Enlightenment found its expression only in journalism. The American reading public showed great interest in the works of English scientists and writers such as Newton, Swift. The writings of the French enlighteners Diderot, Voltaire became popular and people studied their works. One of the most popular first American enlightener was Benjamin Franklin.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790)

He was a son of a small grocer, he was born in Boston, only one year he attended school, but all his life he kept educating himself. At the age of 12 he became an apprentice at a printing house owned by his elder brother who published the Boston Gazette. In 1723 he moved to Philadelphia where he found a society of artisans, traders and apprentices, the society called "Junta". The aim of the society was self-education and dissemination of knowledge. It was in the basis of "Junta" that philosophical society was formed.

In the 40-ties Franklin opened his own printing house in which he published Pennsylvania Gazette. He edited this newspaper for 25 years. In this paper he published "Poor Richard's Almanac", which contained information concerning agriculture, meteorology and alongside with these, proverbs, stories.

This almanac contributed great deal to the enlightenment.

He read extensively. He carried on research work on physics. He discovered something concerning electricity. His activity was many-sided. He organized a library and hospital in Philadelphia. In general he became a famous public figure. Prior to the war he was given a high post in the colonial government. He went to London in 1757 as the representative of the American colonies. He returned to America only before the Revolution and took an active part in it. He was abroad almost 20 years. He was elected a member of the Committee which had to draw a new declaration of independence. Soon after, he was sent on a diplomatic mission to France. His objective was to seek a financial help on behalf of a new American Republic. In the last years of his life Franklin took an active part in the political life of his country.

As a writer he will be remembered for his essays and "Autobiographic" (1771-90). Most of his works were printed in his Almanac. He was a great humanist. In his works he raised his voice against slavery, extermination of Indians. Some of his articles bear satirical character and are directed to the British Government. Franklin was known in Russia. Radishchev, a great critic and writer thought much of him as a scientist and revolutionary.

Summary

Theme 1: The brief outline of the dawn of American history; American Revolution and the War for Independence; the development of American Enlightenment and the life and work of its best representative – Benjamin Franklin.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 1

Enlightenment

Obscurantism

Disseminate

Advocate

Secular education

Apprentice

Almanac

Extermination

Questions

1. When did Christopher Columbus find the coast line of America?
2. When did the first English colonizers come to America?
3. What characteristic feature the epoch of theocracy in America had?
4. How did the spiritual life develop in America?
5. What was the contribution of American enlighteners to the Revolution?
6. Who was the best representative of American Enlightenment?
7. What is Benjamin Franklin's most popular work?

Theme 2: ROMANTICISM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Plan:

1. The beginning of American Romanticism
2. Washington Irving
3. James Fennimore Cooper
4. Nathaniel Hawthorne
5. Edgar Allan Poe
6. Herman Melville

The American bourgeois revolution worked great changes in the life of the country. Rapid progress of the industry and trade, a great abundance of free lands and the newly gained independence filled the hearts of the broad sections of people with the hope of the better future. But this bourgeois revolution failed in solving many problems. Contradictions were strong as ever; negro slavery was flourishing

in the South and Indians were mercilessly exterminated. That is the beginning of romanticism in America. The romanticists created the first important works in American literature and laid a foundation of American Literature. Representatives are Bryant, Irving, Cooper and others. Critical tendencies blended with optimistic belief in social progress. One of the major themes is nature. It was the time of courageous pioneers in penetrating into the wilderness and boundless forests and prairies. The romance of the men's struggle against the nature and their victory inspired many American writers.

WASHINGTON IRVING (1783-1859)

Washington Irving is the first American classic to be acknowledged in Europe. He is the founder of the short story genre in America. He was born in New York in the family of prosperous merchant. He was fond of reading since childhood. His favorite books were those of Chaucer, Defoe, and Arabian Tales. In 1793, he entered a Law Office but the state of his health made him leave this office. In 1804, He left America and went to Europe to make a tour. He traveled extensively, lived in England, Italy, France, and Spain. He returned to America in 1806 and became a lawyer. Some time later, he founded his own office. While he was working as a lawyer he began to write. In his early humorous short stories and sketches, he criticized the bourgeois money-grabbers and contradictions of the bourgeois progress, he protested against the destruction of Indian tribes. In 1809, he published his first book "The history of New York". He described in satirical manner the mode of life of inhabitants of old New York in the epoch of Holland settlers. He exposed the American bourgeoisie who made its success at the expense of common people. After publication of his book, Irving again went to England, where he lived for some years, devoting himself entirely to the literary work. In 1819-1820, he published his famous "The Sketch Book" ("Книга скетчей"), which won him world fame. This book was a collection of articles, lyrical and fantastic stories. In many of his stories the action takes place in Europe. By means of his book he acquainted the American public with mode of life of Europe. In these sketches we find vivid pictures of American nature. In some of his stories Irving idealizes the past of America, here he appears as a representative of romanticism. Numerous tales of Irving are found in legends dealing with prairies, pirates, hunting. As a result of his diplomatic work in Spain, he wrote a number of fascinating works about Spanish history. They also brought him fame. Among them is "The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus", 1828. But the satire of his first books didn't become the leading thread in his books. Gradually the conservatism and antidemocratic mood was felt in his works. He glorified the bourgeois ownership and the colonial policy of the American ruling classes. The story "The Devil and Tom Worker" has romantic and realistic features. Tom Worker sold his soul to the devil and got the fortune, nevertheless the devil took him to the hell.

W. Irving rarely dealt with themes of social significance in his tales. But when he did he treated them in a romantic way. Instead of giving a reader a picture taken from actual life he preferred to fill his tales with romantic fantasy based on folklore. He was not a mystic and while being quite ironical about his devil he expected his reader to share in his irony. Therefore, to get to the heart of the story the reader must strip off its fantastic elements, and then it'll become clear that Irving was criticizing bourgeois greed and burst for good, the cult which has so widely spread in America since the early stages of its bourgeois development.

Belinsky, a Russian critic and writer, once called Irving an extremely gifted storyteller than anybody else but not a brilliant novelist.

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1789-1851)

James Cooper was born in a family of a wealthy judge and owner of a big estate in Cooperstown. It was only a village of a pioneer-settlement not far from state of New York. Here the boy saw a varied life. In 1803 he entered the Yale University but he was dismissed in 3 years and served in the American Navy. In 1811 he got married and then he settled in Cooperstown. His first novel was "The Spy" (1821). It referred to the period of Independence War. It made him famous. But he is famous not by this novel but by a series of novels about an Indian Hunter "Leather Stocking". In 1823 he published his first novel of this series, "The Pioneers", then "The Last of the Mohicans" (1826), and "The Prairie" (1827). All these novels are devoted to the life and adventures of his favorite noble Indian Hunter Nathaniel Bumppo (nickname – Leather Stocking). During 1826-1833 he went for a journey to Europe. After his returning home he wrote a number of stories, sketches, three novels in which he reflected his views and impressions of Europe. "The Bravo" (1831) where the scene is laid in Venice of the Middle Ages. In 2 other novels the action is laid in Switzerland and Germany. In the 40-ties of the 19th century he returned to his works at his "Leather Stocking's" series. This series include also "The Pathfinder" (1840), "The Deerslayer" (1841). The value of these novels lies in vivid graphic descriptions of American nature, in the protest against the colonizers and also in the song he sings to the honest, simple and courageous people. He also wrote a number of novels dealing with the sea. Belinsky noted, saying that Cooper has created two distinct types of a novel –

- 1) the description of American prairies
- 2) the sea novel, and among them "The Pilot" (ЛЮЦМАН) (1824), "The Red Rover" (1827), "The Two Admirals" (1842)

He was a master of seascape and landscape. He is a romanticist of his time but there are some critical tendencies in his works. He created a number of novels in which he satirically showed the bourgeois reality. "The Monikins", (1835), is a

satirical novel. Here he describes some distinct country inhabited by monikins. It is an allegorical exposal of the system of the USA, corruption of money worship. His satire remained its force till our days.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804-1864)

Nathaniel Hawthorne, a fifth-generation American of English descent, was born in Salem, Massachusetts, a wealthy seaport north of Boston that specialized in East India trade. One of his ancestors had been a judge in an early century, during trials in Salem of women accused of being witches. Hawthorne used the idea of a curse on the family of an evil judge in his novel *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Many of Hawthorne's stories are set in Puritan New England, and his greatest novel, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), has become the classic portrayal of Puritan America. It tells of the passionate, forbidden love affair linking a sensitive, religious young man, the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, and the sensuous, beautiful townsperson, Hester Prynne. Set in Boston around 1650 during early Puritan colonization, the novel highlights the Calvinistic obsession with morality, sexual repression, guilt and confession, and spiritual salvation. The book is superbly organized and beautifully written. Appropriately, it uses allegory, a technique the early Puritan colonists themselves practiced.

For its time, *The Scarlet Letter* was a daring and even subversive book. Hawthorne's gentle style, remote historical setting, and ambiguity softened his grim themes and contented the general public, but sophisticated writers such as Ralph Emerson and Herman Melville recognized the book's "hellish" power. It treated issues that were usually suppressed in the 19th century America, such as the impact of the new, liberating democratic experience on individual behavior, especially on sexual and religious freedom.

Hawthorne's reputation rests on his other novels and tales as well. In *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), he again returns to New England's history. The crumbling of the "house" refers to a family in Salem as well as to the actual structure. The theme concerns an inherited curse and its resolution through love. As one critic has noted, the idealistic protagonist Holgrave voices Hawthorne's own democratic distrust of old aristocratic families. "The truth was, that once in every half-century, at least, a family should be merged into the great, obscure mass of humanity, and forget about its ancestors."

EDGAR ALLAN POE
(1809-1849)

Edgar Poe was an American romanticist. But, unlike many English romantic writers he had no special interest in the feudal times. As the history of America had not known a feudal period, it was natural that Poe and other American writers took slight interest in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, neither had Poe that revolutionary spirit of protest, which made the poetry of Shelley and Byron. But, as some romantic authors in England and other countries, Poe was fond of the mysterious, the horrible and the supernatural. His life was most unhappy, his health weak, and his mind often took an unhealthy pleasure in playing with the awful and the mystic.

The contemporary reader is interested in Poe not so much when he tells of horrible and impossible things, as when he mingles scientific facts with fantastical impossibilities or displays accurate reasoning and his knowledge of human psychology. Thus in "The Adventures of one Hans Pfall" he tells us about the adventures of a man, who made a wonderful balloon and flew to the moon. In other stories he solves the mystery of a crime by careful observation of psychology and analysis of the details of the case. This makes him one of the principle founders of the modern detective story.

But Poe was also well-known as a poet. He had a peculiar manner of writing. He considered that the poem should be short, should have the force of "monotone" and should serve to one purpose which he himself called "totality effect".

HERMAN MELVILLE
(1819-1891)

Herman Melville, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, was a descendant of an old wealthy family that fell abruptly into poverty upon the death of the father. Despite his patrician upbringing, proud family traditions, and hard work, Melville found himself in poverty with no college education. At 19 he went to sea. His interest in sailors' lives grew naturally out of his own experiences, and most of his early novels grew out of his voyages. In these we see the young Melville's wide, democratic experience and hatred of tyranny and injustice. His first book, *Typee*, was based on his time spent among the supposedly cannibalistic but hospitable tribe of the Taipis in the Marquesas Islands of the South Pacific. The book praises the islanders and their natural, harmonious life, and criticizes the Christian missionaries, who Melville found less genuinely civilized than the people they came to convert.

Moby-Dick; or The White Whale, Melville's master-piece, is the epic story of the whaling ship *Pequod* and its "ungodly, god-like man." Captain Ahab, whose

obsessive quest for the white whale *Moby-Dick* leads the ship and its men to destruction. This work, a realistic adventure novel, contains a series of meditations on the human condition. Whaling, throughout the book, is a grand metaphor for the pursuit of knowledge. Realistic catalogues and descriptions of whales and the whaling industry punctuate the book, but these carry symbolic connotations. Although Melville's novel is philosophical, it is also tragic. Despite the heroism, Ahab is doomed and perhaps damned in the end. Nature, however beautiful, remains alien and potentially deadly. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville challenges Emerson's optimistic idea that humans can understand nature. Moby-Dick, the great white whale, is an inscrutable, cosmic existence that dominates the novel, just as he obsesses Ahab.

The novel is modern in its tendency to be self-referential, or reflexive. In other words, the novel often is about itself. *Moby-Dick* has been called a "natural epic" – a magnificent dramatization of the human spirit set in primitive nature – because of its hunter myth, its initiation theme, its Edenic island symbolism, its positive treatment of pre-technological peoples, and its quest for rebirth. In setting humanity alone in nature, it is eminently American.

Summary

Theme 2: The brief presentation of peculiarities of American romanticism and life-stories and creations of its best representatives: W. Irving, J.F. Cooper, N. Hawthorne, E.A. Poe, H. Melville.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 2

Abundance

Blend

Wilderness

Inspire

Extensively

Money-grabber

Mode of life

Strip off

Burst for good

Seascape

Obsession

Spiritual salvation

Subversive

Ambiguity

Sophisticated

Punctuate

Quest

Questions

1. What are the specific features of American Romanticism?
2. Who are its best representatives?
3. What is W. Irving's contribution to American literature?
4. What are J.F. Cooper's novels about American Indians?
5. Which novel has become the best portrayal of Puritan America?
6. Why is E.A. Poe acknowledged as a founder of a genre of a detective story?
7. What do you know about "Moby-Dick"?

Theme 3: LITERATURE OF ABOLITIONISM

Plan:

1. Abolitionism as a social movement.
2. The Civil War in America.
3. Harriet Beecher-Stowe
4. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Abolitionism was the movement, which was directed at the abolishment of slavery at the Southern States of America. From the beginning of the 19th century these Southern States began to play great role in the political life of the USA. The North of America was industrial. The plantation owners wanted to have more and more territories. In the West, there were free lands and the plantation owners claimed their hands to new territories.

There were sharp contradictions between industrial North and slavery South. The progressive elements of bourgeoisie in the North opposed the claims of slave-owners and they started the movement of abolitionism. In the 30-ties, there were a number of Negro uprisings. Most of them were led by a farmer-abolitionist, John Brown. He led an uprising in 1859. It was defeated. And John Brown was hanged but his name is popular even now among the broad masses of people. The contradictions became sharper and sharper and were resulted in Civil War 1861-1865. The immediate cause of this war was the election of Abraham Lincoln to the post of the American President. He was a sworn enemy of slavery. This aroused the dissatisfaction in Southern States. When he was elected there was a revolt in the South. Two Armies were formed, of the Southerners and the Yankee Army. That war lasted during 5 years. It was ended by the victory of the North and the abolition of slavery. Under the banner of abolition all progressive people of America were united and they began to publish an abolitionist paper "The Liberator". It was started by William Garrison. The paper exposed the slave-owners of the South.

HARRIET BEECHER-STOWE (1811-1896)

Harriet Beecher-Stowe was born in Litchfield in the North of America. She was a daughter of a clergyman. In 1830 the family moved to Cincinnati. In January 1834 she published "Uncle Lot" which won in the magazine "Western Monthly". It was followed by a great number of other stories and later she made it a collection under the title "Mayflower, or Sketches of Scenes and characters among the Descendants of Pilgrims", 1843. These early writings were rather primitive, they did not contain any serious conflict in social life. Cincinnati was on the border of North and South. The inhabitants of the town heard much more horrible stories about cruel treatment of the Negroes. Her father was a President of an ecclesiastical Seminary and the students of this seminary established an anti-slavery society and opened local schools for Negro population. Very many abolitionists lived in this town. The slave-owners were enraged of Negroes and their defenders. They did everything to terrorize black people and their supporters. Under those conditions the writer had all opportunity to learn the life of black people in the South. She wrote many articles and short stories but she considered it insufficient and she set herself a task of creating an antislavery novel.

Beecher-Stowe carried out her task in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" which was published in the magazine "The National Era" (1851-1852), in the serial form. The novel is against the oppression of the slaves, the cruel treatment of them by plantation owners. The book produced a tremendous impression on the readers. And immediately the voices of attack, a campaign of slander came. They said it was untrue to reality and falsification of life. In answer she published a "Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin" (1853), a collection of real, authentic documents on which the story was based. The book aroused such an interest throughout the world that during some months it was translated into a dozen of world languages. It was for the first time in history the slave-owners were portrayed as they were with all their atrocities. When "Uncle Tom's Cabin" saw light all the right thinking people came out demanding the immediate emancipation of slaves.

As for the views of the writer herself, she was far from being radical. She did not call people to raise arms against the slavery. She thought that was the task of the church that might preach to the people how to eradicate slavery. Her views were temperate. The popularity of the book made the author the great public figure. She received so many letters, so many facts after the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin", that then she could write another book "Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp", 1856. Her negro in this novel is a leader of an uprising, he is a rebellious slave. In this book we see a new approach of the author to the problem.

When in 1861 the Civil War broke, it found in Beecher-Stowe a supporter. She spoke at meetings, she was proud that her son fought in the Yankee Army. She was personally invited by Lincoln to the White House. After the Civil War she

wrote a number of books, unfortunately neither of social nor artistic interest. Harriet Beecher-Stowe's writing is the transition from romanticism to realism. At the same time she is the creator of a social novel in American literature.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882)

He was the greatest poet of America, the household poet of American people. He was born in Portland. He was a son of a prosperous lawyer and he was educated at Bowdoin College where he took his degree in 1825. In 1826 his father sent him to complete his education abroad. For 4 years he traveled and visited Germany, Spain. When he returned in 1830 he took his professorship in Modern Languages at the same college. He worked only for 4 years and then went to Europe in 1834. He revisited Germany, visited Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland. Upon his return in 1836 for 18 years running he held the chair of modern languages and literature at Harvard University. After that he retired in 1854 and traveled very much. In 1842 he visited Europe for the third time. His life was a quiet life of an intellectual while it was a stormy period in America (Abolitionism, Civil War). He didn't take an active part in those events. His first poems were entitled "Voices of Night" (1839). It was succeeded by another collection "Ballads and Other Poems" (1841). In his lyrics Longfellow was the singer of the quiet joys of the family hearth. During the period of the fierce struggle Longfellow was preaching reconciliation with social injustice and moral self-protection. But the conflict between the industrial North and slavery South became sharper which led to the Civil War. And Longfellow couldn't help paying some contribution to that movement. That tribute was in a form of a book "Poems of Slavery" (1842). No social protest can be marked in these poems but they are full of sympathy for the oppressed. They were popular. The best of them are: "The Slave in the Dismal Swamp" and "The Quadroon Girl". Longfellow joined the circle "Brahmins" when he wrote the poems devoted to abolishment movement.

At that time young American bourgeoisie strove to have their own literature and philosophy and Longfellow like other outstanding men of letters in America took part in certain work the aim of which was to find "sources of the American literature to make it original". Longfellow wrote a number of ballads on medieval themes and besides he set himself a task of creating the national epic song of America. So he created his masterpiece "The Song of Hiawatha" (1855). The poem has for its setting North America in the 15th century and the narration of the poem continues up to that time of the European step on American soil. That was done purposely. He wanted to show hereditary between the culture of old Indians and European settlers. He wanted to assure his readers that the Pagan Indians acquired Christianity and European civilization so peacefully and even seemed to be glad and joyful to it. So it was influenced by bourgeois morality. All the same it is a masterpiece. In the first place the American public could acquaint with Indian

folklore. The Indians in the poem are portrayed to appear to be a proud, freedom-loving, hardworking people. He created a number of other poems. For example: “The Bridge”, “The Old Clock on the Stairs”, “Evangeline” (1847) – this poem is full of humanism, it condemns war and colonial order and shows a tragic fate of a poor man; he glorifies nobility and courage of “small people” and defends their right to be happy. “The Courtship of Miles Standish” (1859) is a humorous poem in which Longfellow shows his mastery in depicting an American scenery.

The last works of his last years are marked with mysticism and decline. Among his later works are some plays in verse, he also distinguished himself as a translator. He made a number of translations of best writers (Dante)

He began to be translated into Russian at the end of 60-ties of the 19th century.

Summary

Theme 3: It presents the definition of abolitionism and the movement against slavery in the South. The brief outline of Harriet Beecher-Stowe’s and Henry Longfellow’s life and work is also given.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 3

Abolitionism

Claim

Sworn enemy

Clergyman

Ecclesiastical

Campaign of slander

Authentic documents

Reconciliation

Decline

Questions

1. What is abolitionism and where has it started?
2. What was the result of that movement?
3. What do you know about Harriet Beecher-Stowe and her work?
4. What was H. Longfellow’s contribution to the movement of abolitionism?
5. Why “The Song of Hiawatha” is so important even for a contemporary reader?

Theme 4: REALISM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE OF THE 19th CENTURY

Plan:

1. The results of the Civil War.
2. The development of American literature after the war.
3. Walt Whitman.
4. Mark Twain.
5. O. Henry.
6. Frank Norris.
7. Jack London.

The Civil War brought the abolition of slavery. After the war various branches of industry began to develop by leaps and bounds. The incessant flow of emigrants is typical of that time, the extensive building of railroads and abolition of slavery. All these factors combined led to the rapid growth of the USA, American capitalism. At the end of the 18th century the USA became a highly developed industrial country. Negroes were granted the right to vote but all the same they were under certain oppression and deprived of many rights. The slave-owners continued to persecute Negroes in every possible way. In 1866, the organization of Ku-Klux-Klan was established to terrorize Negro population. But not only Negroes found themselves in a hard state. The rapid development of industry, the progress of technique led to a still more terrible exploitation of all the workers. At the end of the 19th century the American capitalism entered upon a stage of imperialism. Big monopolies and trusts were formed, which played a great role in the economy of the country. In the international arena America behaved as a militarist country. New territories were annexed and some smaller peoples were subjugated. Such policy led to the discontent of the toiling people class struggle. In 1866, on the 1st of May in Chicago there was a general strike.

The literature of that period reflects both the class struggle and the sharp ideological struggle within American society. That period and ideas of the American democracy found the reflection in the poetry of the greatest American poet Walt Whitman. His poetry is imbued with profound optimism and belief in better future. At the same time some new trends of literature appeared in the country. The purpose of one literary trend was to amuse readers. The writers did their best to paint in bright colors the social life. They tried to create an illusion in the minds of people that every man in America stood his fair chance. It was so-called "apologetic" literature. Its motto was "Every shoeblick may become the President of the USA".

There was another trend in American literature called "red-blood" literature. It justified the militarist expansion. They named the whites the superior race. Another

group of writers called themselves “tender realists”. They did not reflect the sharp political issues and gave a softened picture of reality. Finally, there existed in literature the group of “Muckrackers”. They attacked various institutions representing publicist literature, not fiction. Most of them were journalists, and they exposed the ulcers of capitalism.

All those trends were opposed by the American critical realists such as Mark Twain, Frank Norris, O. Henry, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser.

WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)

Walt Whitman is considered to be a classic of American literature. He was born in a small village in Brooklyn in a family of a carpenter. His childhood he spent in the country, and this explains his love for nature. All his life he was proud that he was one of the common people. His parents had so scanty means that they could not give their son regular schooling. After grammar school he had to sustain himself. He started working. Whitman lived a restless life, moving from one place to another. First he worked as a messenger, then a compositor at a print shop, then a school-teacher. From 1841, he began to contribute to newspapers and took part in political life. For a certain period of time he was an editor of a Brooklyn newspaper. The same time he began to write verses (1846), which were later combined into a collection of poems (1855), “The Leaves of Grass”, was published. The final collection completely combined was published in 1881-1882. Very soon he had to resign from his position of an editor because he openly expressed his disapproval of the government foreign policy and started working as a carpenter. In 1861, when the Civil War broke, he became a male nurse. At the same time he wrote a number of nurses. After the war, Whitman worked as a clerk as his literary work did not provide his living. The reactionary publishers refused to publish his poems. In 1873, he had to retire from his position and had to exist on charity.

“The Leaves of Grass”, “The Song of Myself”, “The Song of the Broad Axe”, “Poems of Joys” are the best of his poems. In these poems he shows that joys come to men only through labor and struggle. He glorified farmers and, in some poems we see his sympathy with Negroes (“Drum Taps”). He wrote some poems devoted to Abraham Lincoln. All his poems show that he was against all forms of slavery, oppression, tyranny. The bourgeois critics did not approve his poems. He was ridiculed for his bold subjects. Whitman refused to follow usual poetical methods. He discarded rhythm and stanzas. He wrote in free verse, which then became the recognized form in poetry. There was a certain limitation in his outlook. He believed in bourgeois democracy. The spirit of his poetry is optimistic. He strove to put into his poems the aspiration of democratic views. Only at the end of his life

he wrote an essay entitled “Democratic Vistas”, in which he criticized the bases of bourgeois democracy.

MARK TWAIN (1835-1910)

Mark Twain is a remarkable writer of the critical realism. He is a master of short stories. He is known as a master of exposal of the bourgeois society of his days. He called his own country “The United States of Lynchdom”. He condemned the colonial policy of his country and other ugly sides of American life. In his best books he describes the sufferings, hopes and aspirations of broad masses of people. His literary career was complicated and contradictory. He remained indifferent to the ideas of socialism.

Mark Twain is a pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens.

He was born in a small village Florida, state Missouri (in the South). His father was a small town-lawyer. There were many children in the family. Soon the family moved to a small town Hannibal near the riverside to the farm of his uncle. On this farm he got acquainted with Negro Dam. When he was 12 his father died and he had to look for a job. And he became an apprentice in a printing house. Wandering from town to town he worked in many printing houses. Soon he became a pilot. It was at that time that he made a maiden attempt at writing. Here he adopted his pen name. He began to write short humorous stories which he sent to newspapers in California. The navigation of the river became slack and he had to find another job. In the war between the North and the South he struggled on the Southern side because he lived in the Southern states. Then he worked in the silver mines to enrich himself. He was taken by the spirit of the western frontier. He walked on foot to the city of Virginia. He established the newspaper there “The Enterprise”. He was a regular contributor to the newspaper. His humorous stories, his humor were based on the Western folklore. His stories are written in the first person. It was a tradition. “The Gilded Age” – the first satirical story.

“The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” (1877) brought wide popularity to the writer. All the characters are portrayed with great mastery. He didn’t intend to write it pure for children, though the book contains much of his childhood.

The stagnant atmosphere of the provincial town in the South is depicted in the novel. In 1867 he received an offer from the newspaper to visit Europe. He was in the Crimea. It resulted in that he wrote “A Tramp Abroad”, “Our Innocents Abroad”, (1880). He was still optimistic. He glorified the American mode of life. He married when he came back from Europe a daughter of a rich coalminer. By the end of his life he was very lonely but his spirit was unbroken.

In 1884 he published “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”. E. Hemingway wrote “All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called “Huckleberry Finn”. Elements of social criticism grew stronger in his writings. He wrote articles, pamphlets. “We are Americanizing Europe”, “The United States of Lynchdom”, “Municipal corruption”.

In 1905 revolution broke in Russia and M. Twain hailed the revolution. He exposes the aggressive policy of the American Government. In many of his stories and pamphlets he is a just and severe critic of capitalist America. He shows the power of gold that rules the country, the hypocrisy and ignorance of the ruling classes and exposes the social injustice of American “democracy”.

He also wrote two historical stories “The Prince and the Pauper” (1881) and “A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court” (1889). These two satires are the critic of the feudal forms of life and his own country.

Many years have passed since M. Twain’s death but even now the American imperialists fear his biting satire. The American critics try to represent merely as a humorist and no more, while he was also a realist – the author of bitterly critical pages, revealing a good deal of the truth about American “democracy”.

O. HENRY (1862-1910)

It is a pseudonym of William Sydney Porter. He is a popular American short-story writer. He was born in a family of an impoverished physician in North Carolina. He went to school only for a brief period of time and then he had to work in a store as a clerk but he was tired of the routine of the town and went to Texas in 1882 and led a life full of adventures. He was a cowboy, a druggist, a copyist.

Finally, he became a small clerk in a small provincial bank. While he was working in the bank a misfortune happened to him, he was accused of theft but he was not guilty. He fled to Central America. There he got news that his wife was dying and he came back home. His wife died and he was imprisoned where he spent three years. In prison he made his attempts of writing. After he was released he settled himself in New York and began to contribute to various magazines.

All his short stories appeared first in magazines and then in collections. The period of his literary career was rather brief but he wrote 3 hundred stories and became famous as a brilliant short-story writer. His first novel “Cabbages and Kings” appeared in 1904, which was followed by his collections of stories:

“The Four Million” (1906)

“The Trimmed Lamp” (1907)

“Heart of the West” (1907)

“The Voice of the City” (1908)

“The Last Leaf” is considered one of his best stories.

All his stories are enticing, entertaining and have unexpected ends. It made them famous and popular. He had very strong bourgeois limitations. His stories very seldom deal with the social important problems of the time contemporary to him. The subject matter of his stories is constituted by accidents of everyday life in large cities, in the ranches (some kind of a farm) of America. Sometimes his stories contradict reality – vice is punished, virtue awarded. The event which seem develops tragically ends happily. Only in a few stories he touches the miserable side of life.

O. Henry sympathizes especially with the small, unimportant people of large cities. His stories about clerks, shop girls, small actresses, poor painters and such like are often very touching and at the same time humorous. He knows the hard struggle against poverty and unemployment, the small acts of heroism that fill their seemingly so very insignificant lives. O. Henry is certainly sorry for the victims of this lust of gain but he does not look very deeply into its reasons. He does not criticize the capitalist system as a whole. He does not point the way out of the situation but very awful occasional people turned out to be the guilty party. The whole spirit of his writings is bourgeois. Though he wrote with an eye, quick to catch the significant details that make a realistic picture, his realism was merged with romance. This made it possible for him to see interest in the commonplace and to weave at times a web of fantasy about it. Some of his stories are the result of the pressure under which he worked – there was a period of two and a half years when he was under a contract to turn out a story every week. But his broad humanity, his ability to hold a reader’s interest, made him a popular writer, read and beloved.

His life was fraught with unpleasant adventures and hardships. However, O. Henry’s stories are in most cases devoid of strain and depression. Under the pen of O. Henry the stern reality is very often substituted by a false though witty “happy end”.

O. Henry especially strikes the reader by the unexpectedness of the denouement. In this he is unsurpassed. O. Henry has an ironical eye for everything in life, but his vision is not embittered and his humor is pathetically humane.

The richness of his language, the entertaining plots, the unexpected endings, the writer’s wit – all this has won him great popularity with the reader.

FRANK NORRIS
(1870-1902)

Frank Norris is the last representative of the writers of the American literature of the 19th century. He was born in Chicago in the family of a rich jeweler. In 1884 his parents moved to California. His father became a rich dealer in San Francisco. In 1887 his family went to Europe and the future writer lived for a year in Paris dealing with art and literature. After returning to America Norris entered the California University in 1890. While studying he began to write his first novel "Mac Teague" (1899). In 1894 he moved to Harvard University and there he completed his first novel. In 1898 he finished his second novel "Vandover and the Brute", which was published only in 1914. By this time his living conditions became worse because in 1894 his father left them and refused to support his son. He lived a poor life and had to become a newspaper reporter.

As a reporter he visited Africa. In 1898 he settled in New York and worked at "Double Day" publishing house. He was sent to Cuba as a reporter, after returning continued his work at a publishing house. On the 25th of October, 1902 Norris died after the operation.

During his life he wrote a lot of critical articles, which after his death in 1903 were collected into one book "The Responsibilities of the Novelist".

Among his novels the most outstanding is "The Octopus" (1901), the novel about the American monopolies. It is a social novel. The second novel of this trilogy "The Pit" (1903) is rather weak. And the third book he could not manage to write.

But still his whole literary work makes him a real representative of critical realism.

JACK LONDON
(1876-1916)

The famous American novelist Jack London (pen-name of John Griffith) came of an extremely poor family. Even during his school years he had to support himself by selling newspapers and doing other small jobs. Then he tried to work at a factory but it was too hard for a fourteen-year old boy. So he ran away from home and dreamed of becoming a pirate. At the age of seventeen he became a sailor, left his ship for a factory once more, and the factory for an electric station. When he found himself out of work he joined a group of unemployed that was traveling east. For several years Jack London led the life of a tramp in the United States and Canada and saw all there was to see of the dark side of American life. Some of the difficulties he met during the first years of his literary work are described in "Martin Eden".

He read a great many books on socialism and this helped him to understand that which he saw, although he never became a real Marxist. Jack London was a member of the American Socialist Party and came into close contact with the working class movement. In his novel "The Iron Heel" he gives a picture of the working class struggle.

During the sixteen years of his literary career, London published about fifty books, short stories, novels and other works.

In some of his books J. London has given very vivid pictures of the rough, hard life in the North, away from the great centers of civilization: "The Son of the Wolf", "The Children of the Frost", etc. His tales of animal life in Canada are very much liked by boys and girls all over the world ("White Fang", "Jerry of the Islands", "Michael Brother Jerry" and others). His best works reflect the social contradictions of capitalist society. Among these is "Martin Eden", which was published in 1909.

Summary

Theme 4: This part outlines the results of the Civil War in America and development of realism in American literature of the 19th century. There is a brief presentation of life and work of the first American realists – Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, O. Henry, Frank Norris, Jack London.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 4

By leaps and bounds

Incessant flow

Annex

Subjugate

Sustain

Aspiration

Hypocrisy

Pseudonym

Enticing

Questions

1. What were the results of the Civil War and its impact on the development of American literature?
2. What trends in American literature of that period do you know?
3. What is the most important collection of poems published by Walt Whitman?
4. What is specific with Mark Twain's humor and satire?
5. What are the most popular topics raised by O. Henry in his stories?
6. Who is the author of the "Octopus"?

7. What are the problems raised by Jack London in his stories about sever North?

Theme 5: AMERICAN LITERATURE OF THE 20th CENTURY (1st half)

Plan:

1. Theodore Dreiser.
2. John Silas Reed.
3. Upton Sinclair.
4. Sinclair Lewis.
5. William Faulkner.

THEODORE DREISER (1871-1945)

He was born in a family of a bankrupt small businessman in the state of Indiana. His father was a strict Catholic, narrow-minded and despotic. He made Theodore hate religion to the end of his days. Many years later when Dreiser was already a well-known writer, he described that atmosphere of moral oppression in his famous novel "An American Tragedy", 1925. Dreiser's parents were not rich; and at the age of sixteen Theodore left home to earn his living. He went to Chicago, which at that time was quickly growing into a big industrial city. All seemed wonderful to the country lad; but even then he was struck with the difference between the rich and the poor districts of the city. After some time he managed to get a job, but it paid only five dollars a week, besides it was not what he wanted. He was eager to study. At last he was admitted to the Indiana University. Yet after about a year he had to leave it because of money difficulties.

Back in Chicago he started working again. It was in those days that he began to think of writing for newspapers. By that time he had seen much; he knew different parts of Chicago and had watched the life of that big city; he had met all kinds of people. The world of injustice and suffering lay open before him; and he longed to describe it all. But it was not so easy to become a newspaper man. He had to appeal to newspaper offices many times before he got some work. That was the beginning of new hardships. In those days light sentimental fiction sold best; Dreiser's sketches, realistic and true to life, seemed rough and bitter in comparison. Therefore the editors of newspapers and magazines often refused to publish them.

Still Dreiser continued writing and working. When his first novel "Sister Carrie" appeared in 1900, it was immediately withdrawn. It was a merciless exposition of

bourgeois society, and so was pronounced “immoral”. It was a story of a tragic fate of a woman. She had to pass through many disillusionments. She lost everything even respect in herself, her success was very bitter. The novel was fiercely attacked by critics and even the editor drew it from print. Yet this did not check Dreiser. He moved to New York and continued writing. His way of life and work was now clear. His second book saw publication eleven years later. It was “Jennie Gerhardt”, 1911. Almost the same met his second novel. The publishers boycotted the book and the critics baited it, and the author was persecuted by law. But Dreiser was not scared.

Many books followed: “The Financier”, 1912, “The Titan”, 1914, “The Stoic” (published after his death, in 1947). The three novels formed a trilogy entitled by him “The Trilogy of Desire”. The books gave a complete life story of an American capitalist and reveal corruption, brutality, selfishness and injustice in the society of that time. Though Dreiser exposes the way the hero achieves his aim, we see that he admires him, his energy. He describes him as a man of a strong race, a superman. Only in the last novel of the trilogy he shows his defeat. Yet, however dark the world appeared before him, Dreiser never lost faith in the “greatness and dignity of man”. This belief made him a humanist and constant fighter for man’s freedom and happiness.

His novel “The Genius”, written in 1915 is devoted to the theme of degradation of art in the bourgeois society, to the death of a talent under the influence of a dollar.

Theodore Dreiser visited the former Soviet Union in 1927 and after that he described his impressions in his book “Dreiser Looks at Russia”, 1928. In two volumes of essays “Gallery of Women” published in 1929 he described the life of common American people. At that time he was known throughout the world. Getting older in years he was as young at heart as he had been when he had written his first sketches for the Chicago newspaper. He was always ready to fight for the cause of democracy.

Theodore Dreiser was one of the first to raise his voice against fascism. His passionate words helped the Spaniards to defend the Spanish democracy against the fascists of Spain, Germany and Italy. And when the former Soviet Union was attacked he was among those who condemned the fascist Germany. In 1945 his letter was published in most American papers in which he wrote “I have believed that the common people – and first of all the workers of the USA, and the world are the creators of their own future... Belief in the greatness and dignity of man has been the guiding principle of my life and work...”

JOHN SAILES REED
(1887-1920)

The prominent publicist, beloved son of American people, Reed became a prototype of a freedom-loving man. For his short life John Reed wrote 10 books, 3 plays, 59 poems, 41 stories, 192 essays and articles. He had a variable talent, he was a poet, a dramatist, novelist, essayist and talented journalist.

After the beginning of WWI Reed, realizing the real purpose of that war, called it "the war of the tradesmen". In 1914-1915 being a military correspondent he visited France, England, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Russia. In his articles he exposed the real sense of the war. In September 1917 he came to Russia as a correspondent of the magazine "Masses". Reed was in the center of the political life of Petrograd and he was the witness of the October Revolution. His book "Ten Days That Shook the World" is the first truthful book of a foreign journalist about that Revolution, the events of those days. He showed both the activities of the temporary bourgeois government and the struggle of the proletariat.

In August 1919 the left wing of the Socialist Party of America after Charles Ruthenburg and John Reed proposal organized the Communist Party of the USA. Then he illegally came to Russia and began his work in Comintern. He went all over Russia, visited a lot of plants, towns and villages. In October 1920 he fell ill, it was typhus, of which he died. He was buried in the Kremlin wall.

UPTON SINCLAIR
(1878-1968)

Literature is a strong weapon in the hands of those who fight for the rights of mankind. A writer may fight a battle with his pen as well as a soldier with his gun. "A fighter with his pen", a critic once called Upton Sinclair, one of the best-known American authors. He had a good reason to call Sinclair so, for few authors had fought the American capitalist system with such persistence.

Upton Sinclair became famous suddenly, after the publication of his book "The Jungle" (1906). Before that he had worked for some magazines to earn his living, and had written a novel about the Civil War in America, which Jack London called the best historical novel of the day. After "The Jungle" he published one book after another, and each of them was a blow to American capitalism. He exposed the wickedness, the cruelty, the bloodiness of the capitalist system, the power of the "lords of industry" and their terrible exploitation of the workers. He was the first to describe the American worker in his struggle against oppression ("King Coal", "Oil", "Jimmy Higgins"). All these novels continue the theme Upton Sinclair began in "The Jungle". The history of this book is very interesting. There was a strike of the workers of the Beef Trust in Chicago – a trust which had

concentrated in its hands the meat industry of America. Upton Sinclair addressed the strikers with an article in which he told them the truth about the conditions under which American workers lived and worked. A socialist newspaper offered him to write a book about the workers of the Beef Trust. So he went to Chicago and lived for seven weeks among the workers, and then returning home he wrote "The Jungle".

It is a tragic story of a young Lithuanian worker named Jurgis. Together with his family he came to America, thinking it to be the land of democracy where everyone was really free and happy. But then he became a worker of the Chicago Beef Trust and his work opened his eyes to the terrible facts which very soon shattered all his illusions. Leading his hero from one workshop of the plant to another, from catastrophe to catastrophe, along an endless path of suffering Upton Sinclair drew a striking picture of the workers living and working conditions in the American meat industry. The novel was a sharp attack and nobody agreed to publish it, so Sinclair did it himself. The book swept the country. A great commotion followed. The heads of the Beef Trust, fighting for their profits, brought all their batteries into action. The newspapers and magazines attacked the young writer, calling him mad and hysterical and other insulting names. He wrote to them in protest, giving real facts for illustration, but nobody published his articles.

The public was excited. Sinclair addressed the President. Some agents were sent to Chicago to see if the facts described in the book were true; but the Trust secretly paid the agents and upon their return they denied everything. Although a few newspapers told the public of some reforms, practically nothing was done to help the workers of the meat industry and the things went on as before. However the importance of the book was very great. It proved to the workers that the only way to make things better was a joint struggle for their rights.

In 1937 Upton Sinclair published a book in defense of the Spanish Republic – "No Pasaran!" From 1940 up to 1953 a large series (11 novels) about Lanny Bedda was published. The first novels of this work depicted the real sides of ideological and political life of many countries, beginning with the WWII. For "Dragon Teeth" 1942 where he becomes a fighter against fascism and a follower of the democratic policy of President Franklin Roosevelt Sinclair was honored, but the last books are full of bourgeois ideals.

In 1962 he published "The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair", where he even forgot to mention his work "No Pasaran!" But still Sinclair made the contribution to the development of the modern American literature. Most of his novels condemned the American way of life. His quick reaction on many important events, his emotional depiction of the life made him popular at home and abroad. He was the creator of the genre of documentary novel, all his works were based on facts. His best works give psychological explanation to the behavior of his heroes.

Showing the life of people, the life of working masses he belongs to the writers who paved the way to a contemporary documentary novel, he is one of the beginners of the realism in the literature of the 20th century.

SINCLAIR LEWIS (1885-1951)

Sinclair Lewis, the son of a provincial doctor, was born in Minnesota on February 7, 1885. On graduating from Yale University in 1907, he took up journalism, working first as a reporter, later on in the editorial staff of various publishers, magazines and newspapers, including the influential bourgeois "Saturday Evening Post".

Lewis's early novels "Our Mr. Wrenn" 1914, "The Job" 1917 and "Free Air" 1919 attracted little attention. Lewis's early novels are far too shallow, muddled and aimless to be taken seriously. It was the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 that opened Lewis's eyes to the crisis of imperialism. Faced with the bankruptcy of the capitalist system, Lewis instinctively turned to socialist ideals which marked the beginning of a new stage in his evolution as a writer. Although he was too scared of violence he took up a sharply critical attitude to capitalist America. He talked with the representatives of trade unions and collected material for a novel on the labor movement. But for all his radical views Lewis was afraid to commit himself to any definite political doctrine, and his labor novel was never completed.

In 1918 he began to work on "Main Street", the first of the great novels which may be described as chronicles of the "American way of life". The book published in 1920 brought him world fame. In the United States it became the object of a sensational controversy which led to Lewis's rupture with the "Saturday Evening Post". Carol, the central figure of the novel, marries a country doctor, Will Kennicott, and goes to live with him in Gopher Prairie, a small provincial town of the Middle West. Horrified by the vulgar, sordid life of the settlement, she struggles to awaken it to a sense of refinement and art. But she is unable to break down the barriers of hostility, indifference and complacency which fence her in. For a few years she takes refuge to Washington. When she finally returns to her husband it is only to acknowledge her utter defeat.

The searching analysis began in "Main Street" is extended to cover wider ground in Lewis's following novels. "Babbitt" (1922) deals with the large cities and the successful middleman, "Arrowsmith" (1925) tells the story of a medical student who sincerely wishes to devote his life to the service of humanity but discovers that education, science and even the health service are organized not for the benefit of people, but for the profit of corrupt and big business. "Elmer Gantry" (1927), in many respects the most bitter and relentless of them all, is a devastating exposure of the church and religious hypocrisy which was greeted with a nation wide storm

of denial and abuse. “The Man Who Knew Coolidge” (1928) returns to the vein opened in “Babbitt” with a brilliant caricature in a monologue form. This was a period of Lewis’s most characteristic work. But Lewis remained a typical bourgeois intellectual, interested in but far from the life of common people.

Lewis was the first American writer who got the Nobel Prize in 1930.

The description of sharp class struggle we find in his next novel “Ann Vickers” (1933). When fascism was established in Europe Lewis wrote his novel “It can’t happen here” (У нас это невозможно) (1935). A new advance in his progress as a writer opens with WWII and is marked by a reaffirmation of the progressive and democratic tendencies in his works. In 1943 his “Gideon Planish” appeared, where satirically he shows the life of “babbitts” of higher ranks.

“Kingsblood Royal” (1947) turns to the burning question of racial discrimination. Its hero is a respectable bank clerk who lives a quiet, sheltered life in the little town of Grand Republic. One Christmas eve his father tells him of an old family legend to the effect that his name, Kingsblood, is a token of royal descent. On making inquiries he discovers to his horror that one of his forefathers was a full-blooded African chieftain and by the established code he himself is a Negro. He now sees the Negroes in a new light and becomes friendly with many of them. In the teeth of the desperate opposition of his family he publicly declares his Negro origin. “Kingsblood Royal” may be regarded as Lewis crowning achievement and effectively rounds off his picture of American life.

His concluding novels “The God Seeker” 1949, (Богоискатель) and “World So Wide” 1950, (Мир так широк) are affected by the propaganda of the cold war and Lewis will be remembered not by these, but by the fearless criticism of his earlier works. The last three years of his life were spent in Italy, and his death in Rome on January 10, 1951, closed his literary career that had lasted over thirty-five years and established beyond all questions his right to take his place among the foremost representatives of American critical realism.

Lewis is a disconcertingly unequal writer. Many if not most of his 20 novels, barely rise above the level of popular hack-work and nothing can save them from oblivion. But his best work stands - and will stand – unsurpassed as a criticism of American bourgeois society. Nearly all his novels, as their titles suggest, are built up round a single character who typifies a certain aspect of American life. This central figure dominates the work to such an extent that it becomes a kind of a personal diary. As a result Lewis’s novels have little more of a plot than any biography. They proceed almost aimlessly; they end inconclusively. Nor is there anything outstanding or heroic about Lewis’s heroes. For the most part they are depressingly commonplace in their tastes and habits. The story of their lives is made up of the most prosaic, even banal incidents. Indeed such novels as “Babbitt” can hardly be called “works of fiction”, for there is next to nothing

fictitious about them. They are studies of everyday social life, built up from start to finish on first-hand observation. In spite of all his humor, the final impression left by his novels is one of frustration and despair. M. Gorky draws attention to this fact when he writes: "The general tone of modern literature is becoming steadily gloomier and drearier, steadily sharper in its condemnation of the life and habits of the bourgeoisie... Twenty year ago such books as "Elmer Gantry" and "Arrowsmith" by Sinclair Lewis would have been impossible".

WILLIAM FAULKNER (1897-1962)

William Faulkner was born in New Albany in the family of impoverished aristocrats. He grew up in Oxford, Mississippi. After education he joined the Royal Canadian Flying Corps and was sent to France, where he was wounded in an air crash during a training flight. In 1918 he returned home. After a short stay in Oxford he went to New Orleans where Faulkner published his first book – a book of poems "The Marble Faun" 1924 and his war novels "Soldier's Pay" 1926 (Солдатская награда) and "Mosquitoes" 1927. By the end of the 1920's Faulkner went back to Mississippi and spent the rest of his life in Oxford which became the background for most of his books under the name of Jefferson.

The war topic is the central factor of Faulkner's interest in the 1920's but for a short period of time. Very soon he passes on to the description of his native South and issues a series of books dealing with the history of the city of Jefferson. These books reflect his hatred of contemporary life and a kind of certain sympathy for the patriarchal way of life in the South. But for all his attachment to the past he concentrated upon the decadence of the families representing the old southern nobility. In "Sartoris" 1929, the first of the novels of this series Faulkner shows the decay of a family of old southern aristocrats, while in the novel "The Sound and the Fury" (Шум и ярость), published in the same year, he mercilessly exposes the moral and mental degradation of another southern family.

The subsequent list of Faulkner's works comprises "As I Lay Dying" 1930, (На смертном одре), "Sanctuary" 1931, (Святылище), "Light in August" 1932, "Absalom, Absalom!" 1936. The end of the 1930's witnesses the beginning of a change in the outlook of Faulkner. His opposition to monopolistic capital becomes more pronounced and his main concern now is the policy of money-grubbing that dominates the life of American society.

Faulkner's books of the later period rank him among the great realists of modern America. In 1940 he writes "The Hamlet" (Деревушка), which opens a trilogy, subsequent parts of which are "The Town" 1957 and "The Mansion" 1959. These books deal with the life of the family of the Snopeses, former poor whites whom cunning, corruption and unscrupulousness elevated to a ruling financial oligarchy.

In “Go Down, Moses” 1942, (Сойди, Моисей), a book of stories, in the novel “Intruder in the Dust” 1948, (Осквернитель праха), Faulkner denounced racialism in the South. These books were followed by two volumes of short stories. In 1954 he published “A Fable”, a novel dedicated to WWI, where he voiced his protest against all kinds of military activities.

In 1950 William Faulkner got the Nobel Prize for literature.

Summary

Theme 5: The theme is devoted to the life and creative work of the best American realists – Theodore Dreiser, John Reed, Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, William Faulkner – who wrote their best novels in the first half of the 20th century.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 5

Narrow-minded

Withdraw

Condemn

Dignity

Persistence

Wickedness

Shatter

Commotion

Emotional depiction

Controversy

Relentless

Devastating exposure

Hack-work

Frustration

Subsequent

Questions

1. What are the novels in which Dreiser spoke about American women?
2. What do you know about Reed’s best publicist work?
3. Which novel brought popularity to Upton Sinclair?
4. Which novel written by Sinclair Lewis raises the problem of racial discrimination?
5. Why was Faulkner concerned about the mode of life in the South and which novels reflected those problems?

Theme 6: LITERATURE OF THE “LOST GENERATIO”**Plan:**

1. Sherwood Anderson.
2. Francis Scott Fitzgerald
3. Ernest Hemingway

**SHERWOOD ANDERSON
(1876-1941)**

On September 13, 1876 Sherwood Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio. He was the third child in the family. Then the family settled permanently in Clyde, Ohio in 1884. The income was rarely adequate without the added help of the children's income. Due to the difficulties, Anderson's father began drinking heavily and his mother died in 1895. Sherwood was eager to take on odd jobs and earned the name "Jobby". However, his interests caused him to miss school often. He finally left high school before graduating. In 1896, Anderson left Clyde for Chicago where his brother Karl was living.

In September of 1900, Anderson attended the Wittenberg Academy. Earning his food and lodging as a "chore boy" at the artists' boardinghouse, Anderson encountered a highly cultured environment. Ironically, the influence of the artists was most important to Anderson for his advance in the business world. The Crowell advertising manager secured him a job in Chicago as a copywriter. He was highly successful in this position. In 1904, he married Cornelia Lane, the daughter of a wealthy Ohio wholesaler. He left Chicago for Northern Ohio in 1906 and over the next six years, he managed a mail-order business in Cleveland and then two paint manufacturing firms. Yet, Anderson increasingly spent his free time writing. On November 27, 1912 he disappeared from his office and was found four days later in Cleveland, disheveled and disoriented, having suffered a mental breakdown. In later writings, Anderson often referred to this episode as a conscious break from his materialistic existence and many younger writers picked up on this, praising his heroic spirit.

In 1914, he divorced Cornelia and married Tennessee Mitchell. That same year his first novel was published, entitled *Windy McPherson's Son*. Along with his second, *Marching Men*, of 1917, he later commented that his first novels were raw and immature. He is best known for his classic collection of tales, *Winesburg, Ohio*. He began writing it in 1915 and generally wrote in the order the stories appear in the text. The book was published in 1919 and received much acclaim, establishing him as a talented modern American author. He espoused themes similar to the later works of T.S. Eliot and other modernists.

Regardless of the success of his short stories and his desire to find a "looser form", Anderson felt pressured to write novels and *Poor White* was published in 1920. It was seen as a success and he was judged to be at the top of his form. The other publications which he published at the height of his repute included the story collections *The Triumph of the Egg* in 1921, and *Horses and Men* of 1923, and the autobiographical *A Story Teller's Story*, published in 1924. He made unsuccessful attempts at poetry, the first being a free verse collection entitled *Mid-American Chants* in 1918. He saw himself as part of the literary tradition of Whitman, Twain, and Dreiser, men who had appreciated the common American. His influence affected many of the upcoming writers, such as Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Fitzgerald, Wolfe, and Saroyan. He personally helped Hemingway and Faulkner publish their first books. He was given the first Dial award for distinguished service to American Letters in 1922 but soon was derided by the same publication when his popularity waned.

In 1922, Anderson separated from Mitchell before marrying Elizabeth Prall two years later. The faulty novel *Many Marriages* was published in 1923 and *Dark Laughter* in 1925. He traveled to Virginia and took such a liking to the countryside that he bought land there. In 1927, he also bought Virginia's Marion Publishing Company and became the editor of two newspapers. After another failed marriage, Anderson married Eleanor Copenhaver, with whom he finally appeared happy. They traveled a great deal and studied social conditions. Among his publications concerning this matter in the 1930s were *Death in the Woods and Other Stories* of 1933; *Puzzled America*, a book of essays; and *Kit Brandon*, a novel that he finished in 1936. Though his influence was dying out during this period, very significant American passages of prose exist in his writing through the very end. Many of these passages have been overlooked because of their place within a larger faulty work. In years since, Anderson has been rediscovered and appreciated as idealizing the modes of thought and societal themes he had been criticized for after his peak. Anderson died of peritonitis in March of 1941 on his way to visit Panama.

FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD (1896-1940)

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's life resembles a fairy tale. During World War I, Fitzgerald enlisted in the U.S. Army and fell in love with a rich and beautiful girl, Zelda Sayre, who lived near Montgomery, Alabama, where he was stationed. Zelda broke off their engagement because he was relatively poor. After he was discharged at war's end, he went to seek his literary fortune in New York City in order to marry her.

His first novel, "This Side of Paradise" (1920), became a best-seller, and at 24 they married. Neither of them was able to withstand the stresses of success and fame,

and they squandered their money. They moved to France to economize in 1924 and returned seven years later. Zelda became mentally unstable and had to be institutionalized; Fitzgerald himself became an alcoholic and died young as a movie screenwriter.

Fitzgerald's secure place in American literature rests primarily on his novel "The Great Gatsby" (1925), a brilliantly written, economically structured story about the American dream of the self-made man. The protagonist, the mysterious Jay Gatsby, discovers the devastating cost of success in terms of personal fulfillment and love. Other fine works include "Tender is the Night" (1934), about a young psychiatrist whose life is doomed by his marriage to an unstable woman, and some stories in the collection "Flappers and Philosophers" (1920), "Tales of the Jazz Age" (1922), and "All the Sad Young Men" (1926). More than any other writer, Fitzgerald captured the glittering, desperate life of the 1920s; "This Side of Paradise" was heralded as the voice of modern American youth, known as the "lost generation". His second novel, "The Beautiful and the Damned" (1922), continued his exploration of the self-destructive extravagance of his time.

Fitzgerald's special qualities include a dazzling style perfectly suited to his theme of seductive glamour. A famous section from "The Great Gatsby" masterfully summarizes a long passage of time: "There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue garden men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars".

ERNEST HEMINGWAY (1899-1961)

"There is nothing more difficult than to write a simple honest story about a man," Hemingway said. "First, you must know what you are writing about, and then you must learn to express it in writing. It takes a whole life-time to do these two things."

Hemingway studied people and life all over our planet. He always looked for events in which all the beauty or everything bad in a man can be seen. Hemingway had his own way of writing. His stories seem very simple in composition, often there are very few events. But we feel that there is very much behind the event that he describes; that the whole life of the character leads to this event.

The world that Hemingway lived in was not happy or peaceful. He lived in a world where a man is alone and unhappy. That is why so many of his novels and stories are full of sadness, why his heroes – real people who want happiness for themselves and others – often die.

Hemingway's stories have great truth in them; truth about people and the world around them. His works were born in the mind and in the heart of an honest and

good man. He was strong and courageous; he was a brave soldier, skillful hunter, a fearless boxer and an enthusiastic fisherman. He fought in Italy during World War I, he hunted the big animals of Africa and caught the big fish in the sea near Cuba. He saw the tragedy of Spain in 1936. His life was full of danger. Twice newspapers published news of his death. More than anything else Hemingway hated war and fascism. It was because he hated them that he took part in almost all the wars of the first half of the twentieth century, as a soldier or as a correspondent. He made friends with fighters – with matadors, hunters, fishermen, workers, sailors – because he was a fighter himself. His works are full of reminiscences of war which never left the writer.

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born in July 1899 at Oak Park, a highly respectable suburb of Chicago, where his father was a doctor. He was the second of six children. The family spent holidays in a lakeside hunting lodge in Michigan near Indian settlements. Although energetic and successful in all school activities, Ernest twice ran away from home before joining the Kansas City “Star” as a cub reporter in 1917. Next year he volunteered as an ambulance driver on the Italian front and was badly wounded, but survived for the last few weeks of the war in the Italian infantry. Returning to America he began to write features for “Toronto Star Weekly” in 1919 and was married in 1921. That year he came to Europe as a correspondent and covered several large conferences. In France he came into contact with Gertrude Stein. He covered the Greco-Turkish war in 1922. “Three stories and Ten Poems” was given a limited publication in Paris 1923.

His personal exploits were reflected in those of his heroes, who struggle against tough odds to achieve their individuality. Yet for all their harshness, his works are characterized too by romantic compassion and heroic pathos. His life and writings combined to make him that rare phenomenon, a legend in his own lifetime.

The first big novel “The Sun Also Rises” was published in 1926. The heroes are people of the “lost generation”. They had nothing in the past and nothing will have in the future. They hate speaking about their feelings, stories of their sufferings conceal their real inner world under the mask of indifference, they drink to forget the emptiness that is in and around them. When the heroes speak you feel something hidden beyond the outspoken words, and all these peculiarities of Hemingway’s dialogues are aimed at concealing the thoughts of the heroes.

The theme of “lost generation” is also found in his next novel “A Farewell to Arms” 1929. This novel is about birth and death of a great human feeling. Two themes are intermingled in this novel: the theme of love, which dies, and the theme of war, which shows sufferings. The second theme is rather serious. Hemingway not only shows the results of war but condemns it. Here we feel the growing protest against the war. In the novel the characters are masterly shown as well as in his “The Sun Also Rises”, but with a new force. It is but this novel which paved the new path in the life of the acknowledged writer.

In his next two essays “Death in the Afternoon” 1932, and “Green Hills of Africa” 1935 we feel crisis in his work. But the following works written in 1936 “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” and “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” he sharply criticized the representatives of the American high class, the role of money in the behavior of the heroes. In the thirties his democratic humanism brought him into the camp of antifascist writers. His short stories and essays about Spanish war are real examples of his literary talent. Among them “The American Soldier” 1937 and “On Americans dead in Spain” 1939; in these works we find his international tendencies grown under the impression of the struggle for independence of the Spanish people. Being in Spain he wrote his famous play “The Fifth Column” 1938 and the novel “For Whom the Bell Tolls” 1940. There he also completed his novel “To Have and Have Not” 1937. These works reflected the rise of critical realism which is typical for the whole literature of the USA in thirties. American realistic novel of thirties is the great event in the world literature. Hemingway’s literary work is an important contribution to this event.

In his “To Have and Have Not” the author divides the whole world into two parts – the world of the rich and the world of the poor, and brilliantly shows the conflict between them. At the end of the novel the dying hero concludes: “The man can’t be alone. It is impossible now to be alone”. So here the writer’s humanism calls the poor to unite for the sake of future.

In “The Fifth Column” Hemingway shows the struggle for Madrid. The novel “For Whom the Bell Tolls” describes the struggle of Spanish guerillas in the fascist rare. From one side the novel reflects the growing literary talent of the author, but from the other side the contradictions of the writer which had already begun in thirties. The novel was finished after the defeat of the Spanish revolution. So the main character Robert Jordan dies without belief in the struggle for which he died. The deep contradictions of the novel are openly accepted by the author himself. The crisis which is felt in this novel lasted for a long time. He could not return to great themes in his writing. During the WWII he wrote “Men at War” 1942. And only in 1950 he published “Across the River and into the Trees”. But nothing new is found in this novel. Even some episodes remind “A Farewell to Arms”.

His real triumph is in his next work “The Old Man and the Sea” 1952. It is the story full of humanism, the story about courageous people. The main idea of the work is that “A man can be killed but not defeated”. It is his last published work. This work will always be the expression of his love to the common people. He was awarded the Noble Prize for Literature in 1954 for his “mastery of the art of modern narration”.

The books of the Big Man as he is called in Cuba, of a courageous fighter, traveler, life-lover will be ever remembered by people.

Summary

Theme 6: This part is devoted to the writers, who participated in the First World War and reflected in their works the spirit and mode of life of the “lost generation”, a generation which was a witness and a participant of that war. It gives a brief outline of life and work of Sherwood Anderson, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 6

Enlist

Withstand

Squander

Devastating

Herald

Dazzling

Seductive glamour

Reminisces

Questions

1. What is the phenomenon “lost generation”?
2. What is peculiar of Sherwood Anderson’s short stories?
3. Which novel by Fitzgerald reflects the problems of the “lost generation”?
4. What are the basic themes in Hemingway’s novels and stories?
5. What is the main idea of “The Old Man and the Sea”?

Theme 7: LANGSTON HUGHES, JOHN STEINBECK, ERSKINE CALDWELL

Plan:

1. Langston Hughes.
2. John Steinbeck.
3. Erskine Caldwell

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

Langston Hughes is an outstanding Negro poet. He was born in Missouri, in the family of a storekeeper. After school he went to Columbia University for a year, and in 1929 graduated Bachelor of Arts from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

Langston Hughes lived in many American cities, in Mexico, traveled far and wide in Europe and Africa, finding everywhere various employments and jobs.

In 1925, in Washington, he met the popular poet of that time, V. Lindsay, who helped him publish his first book of verse “The Weary Blues” 1926 (Грустные блюзы), which was followed in 1927 by the volume “Fine Clothes to the Jew”. Since then Langston Hughes became a professional writer earning his living from literary work and from lecturing.

Hughes’ writing deals with the grief and affliction of his race, as well as with his people’s consoling joys. Endowed with a sharp ear for folk speech and songs he made ample and highly literate use of the popular ballads and the Blues. His best known collections of verse are – “The Dream Keeper” 1932, “Shakespeare in Harlem” 1942, “One-way Ticket” 1949.

Hughes is also the author of several novels in which he describes the painful lot of Negroes in the USA. In 1932 Langston Hughes visited the former Soviet Union. His admiration for the achievements of the people in the country found expression in the book “A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia” 1934, and two volumes of verse “Good Morning, Revolution” 1933 and “A New Song” 1938.

During WWII Hughes wrote poems and essays pervaded with hatred of German fascism. In post-war years, along with other representatives of Negro intellectuals, L. Hughes dedicated his creative work to the struggle for peace and democracy. He ranks among the most progressive public figures and writers in the USA.

Laughs

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Dream singers,
Story-tellers,
Dancers,
Loud laughs in the hand of Fate –
My people.
Dish-washers,
Elevator-boys,
Ladies’ maids,
Crap-shooters,
Cooks,
Waiters,</p> | <p>2. Jazzers,
Nurses of babies,
Loaders of ships,
Rounders,
Number writers,
Comedians in vaudeville
And band-men in circuses –
Dream singers all -
My people.
Story-tellers all -
My people.</p> |
| <p>3. Dancers! -
God! What dancers!
Singers! –
God! What singers!
Singers and dancers,</p> | |

Dancers and laughers.
Laughers?
Yes, laughers... laughers... laughers... -
Loud-mouthed laughers in the hands of Fate.

JOHN STEINBECK
(1902-1969)

John Steinbeck was born in California. His mother, an Irish woman by birth, was a school teacher. It was his mother who taught him to love literature. He lived a hard life. Entering the University he had to leave it to earn his living. The first period of his literary work (1929-1935) is marked by writing three novels "Cup of Gold" 1929, "Pastures of Heaven" 1932, "To a God Unknown" 1933. Steinbeck's humanism here is covered by mystic conception of the world and a man who is a toy in the hands of Nature.

His next work "Tortilla Flat" 1935 is a story about the inhabitants of slums. This work showed one of the most characteristic features of his manner of writing, his talent of a humanist. Then comes "In Dubious Battle" 1936, revealing social injustice in the world.

The first novel was accepted by broad masses not only in America but abroad, it was "Of Mice and Men" 1937. The novel in realistic details shows the true picture of life of the American poor. It is his serious step to the creation of the social novel. In 1937 he was awarded "O. Henry" prize for his story "The Promise". The same year he published "The Red Pony", an autobiographical work. Actually, it is worth mentioning that the most popular are his stories. In 1938 he published his collection "The Long Valley". In describing the inner world of his heroes, emotional atmosphere he is close to Chekhov and Mopassant.

"The Grapes of Wrath" 1939 is Steinbeck's best novel. It is the top of his literary career, one of the most important events in the history of world literature of the 20th century. In the center of the novel is the conflict of national importance, the problem of American farmers who became bankrupt under the terrible pressure of banks, trusts and monopolies. "The Grapes of Wrath" is the novel describing the process of awakening and becoming collectivism among small farmers.

In the 40-ties deep contradictions are found in his views. In "Sea of Cortez" 1941 there are new tendencies. Here he wants to separate a man from the society. Though there are naturalistic tendencies in his works there are two best stories of this period. "The Moon is Down" 1942, devoted to the WWII and "The Pearl" 1948. In 1945 he published his second novel "Cannery Row". The novel shows serious changes in the method and style of the writer. In 1947 his largest novel

“The Wayward Bus” was published. Here we find Steinbeck’s attitude to post-war America. The bus is an embodiment of the whole country.

The activity of 50-ties and 60-ties is marked with his different way of writing. In 1952 “East of Eden” and in 1954 “Sweet Thursday” were published. At the end of 50-ties he condemned the American government for the war in Korea.

His most talented work published in 1961 is “The Winter of Our Discontent”. The question related to the right of the man on crime – moral problem is answered in this novel. In comparison with his works of 40-50-ties this novel is full of his belief in a man. In 1963 he got the Nobel Prize for it. The same year he published “Travels with Charley in search of America” where he admires the American civilization. In 1967 the author published his letter in Newsday justifying the war in Viet-Nam which shocked the world progressive people. Later he realized his mistake but nevertheless he will be remembered for his best works in which he demonstrates the vulnerability of poor farmers, who can be uprooted by droughts and are the first to suffer in periods of political unrest and economic depression.

ERSKINE CALDWELL (1903-1991)

E. Caldwell is a well-known American novelist and short-story writer. In his youth he went through the grim school of life; he had to change a lot of professions: farm-hand and worker in a cotton-seed oil mill and lumber mill in Georgia; newspaper reporter, etc. The work at a newspaper was a serious school for his future literary work.

E. Caldwell was born in a family of a clergyman in 1903 in Georgia, USA. Not waiting to complete his education he embarked on the career of a newspaper writer in the “Journal Atlanta” at the age of 22. Having successfully been cotton picker, stage hand, professional football player, book reviewer, lecturer and editor, Erskine Caldwell was able to accumulate a vast amount of material through personal experience for the numerous novels and stories on American life that he wrote. His first stories “The Bastard” and “Poor Fool” appeared in 1929. His first collection of stories under the title “The American Land” saw its publication in 1931. In his stories he ironically exposed stubbornness, greediness. His first novel “Tobacco Road”, 1932, describes the history of degradation of a farmer’s family. It is devoted to the hard lot of farmers in the South. These works brought him into the light and made him a prominent author.

Caldwell’s second novel “God’s Little Acre” was one of the bestsellers of the 20th century. For some years he worked in Hollywood as a screen writer (1933-34; 1942-43) only to give repeated preference to the life of a news correspondent abroad – in Mexico, Spain and Czechoslovakia in 1938-39 and in China and

Mongolia in 1940. He was also a war correspondent in the Soviet Union in 1941 and endeavored to portray the struggle of the Soviet people against fascism in his novel “All Night Long”, 1942 (Всю ночь напролет) and in his essay “All Out on the Road to Smolensk” (Все брошено на Смоленск) and others.

E. Caldwell’s most prominent collections of stories are: “We are the Living”, 1933 (Мы – живые), “Southways, 1938 (Нравы Юга), “Georgia Boy”, 1943 (Мальчик из Джорджии), “The Gulf Coast Stories”, 1956, (Рассказы Мексиканского залива), “Around about America”, 1964, (Вдоль и поперек Америки). The humor of the story “A Small Day” is typical; of Caldwell’s manner of writing. It is not mild and light but bordering on satire. Although the situation described in the story is humorous the reader may keenly feel the miserable plight of poor people in the USA of that time.

Summary

Theme 7: It shows the life and work of writers that created their stories and novels in the time of Great Depression in America, fascism and the Second World War – Langston Hughes, John Steinbeck and Erskine Caldwell.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 7

Affliction

Consoling joys

Sharp ear

Pervade

Slums

Embodiment

Discontent

Vulnerability

Droughts

Endeavor

Questions

1. What are the most popular poems of a prominent black poet in America?
2. What is the main theme in L. Hughes’ poems?
3. What novel by J. Steinbeck presents hard lot of American farmers?
4. Was J. Steinbeck awarded a Nobel Prize and when?
5. What is Erskine Caldwell famous for?

Theme 8: AMERICAN LITERATURE AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Plan:

1. The results of the Second World War.
2. New American writers that appeared after the war.
3. Literature of 1950s and 1960s.
4. Literature of the end of the 20th century.

Events since World War II have produced a sense of history as discontinuous: Each act, emotion, and moment is seen unique. Style and form now seem provisional, makeshift, reflexive of the process of composition and the writer's self-awareness. Familiar categories of expression are suspect; originality is becoming a new tradition.

It is not hard to find historical causes for this disassociated sensibility in the United States. World War II itself, the rise of anonymity and consumerism in a mass urban society, the protest movements of the 1960s, the decade-long Vietnam conflict, the Cold War, environmental threats – the catalog of shocks to American culture is long and varied. The change that has most transformed American society, however, has been the rise of the mass media and mass culture. First radio, then movies, and now an all-powerful, ubiquitous television presence have changed American life at its roots. From a private, literate, elite culture based on the book, the eye, and reading, the United States has become a media culture attuned to the voice on the radio, the music of compact discs and cassettes, film, and the images on the television screen.

As in the first half of the 20th century, fiction in the second half reflects the character of each decade. The late 1940s saw the aftermath of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. World War II offered prime material: Norman Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*, 1948) and James Jones (*From Here to Eternity*, 1951) were two writers who used it best. Both of them employed realism verging on grim naturalism; both took pains not to glorify combat. The same was true for Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* (1948). Later Joseph Heller cast World War II in satirical and absurdist terms (*Catch 22*, 1961), arguing that war is laced with insanity. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. became one of the shining lights of the counterculture during the early 1970s following publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five*; or, *The Children's Crusade* (1969), his antiwar novel about the firebombing of Dresden, Germany by Allied forces during World War II (which he witnessed on the ground as a prisoner of war).

The 1940s saw the flourishing of a new contingent of writers, including poet-novelist-essayist Robert Penn Warren, dramatists Arthur Miller and Tennessee

Williams, and short story writers Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty. All but Miller were from the South. All explored the fate of the individual within the family or community and focused on the balance between personal growth and responsibility to the group.

The 1950s saw the delayed impact of modernization and technology in everyday life, left over from the 1920s – before the Great Depression. World War II brought the United States out of the Depression, and the 1950s provided most Americans with time to enjoy long-awaited material prosperity. Business, especially in the corporate world, seemed to offer the good life (usually in the suburbs), with its real and symbolic marks of success – house, car, television, and home appliances. The 1950s actually was a decade of subtle and pervasive stress. Novels by John O’Hara, John Cheever and John Updike explore the stress lurking in the shadows of seeming satisfaction. Some of the best works portray men who fail in the struggle to succeed, as in Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* and Saul Bellow’s novella *Seize the Day* (1956). Some writers went further by following those who dropped out, as did J.D. Salinger in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man* (1952), and Jack Kerouac in *On the Road* (1957).

The alienation and stress underlying the 1950s found outward expression in the 1960s in the United States in the Civil Rights Movement, feminism, antiwar protests, minority activism, and arrival of a counterculture whose effects are still being worked through American society. Notable political and social works of the era include the speeches of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Norman Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night* (1968), about a 1967 antiwar march.

The 1960s was marked by a blurring of the line between fiction and fact, novels and reportage that has carried through the present day. Novelists Truman Capote – who had dazzled readers as an enfant terrible of the late 1940s and 1950s in such works as *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1958) – stunned audiences with *In Cold Blood* (1966), a riveting analysis of a brutal mass murder in the American heartland that read like a work of detective fiction.

By the mid-1970s, an era of consolidation began. The Vietnam conflict was over, followed soon afterward by U.S. recognition of the People’s Republic of China and America’s Bicentennial celebration. Soon the 1980s – the “Me Decade” – ensued, in which individuals tended to focus more on personal concerns than on larger social issues.

In literature old trends remained, but the force behind pure experimentation dwindled. New novelists like John Gardner, John Irving (*The World According to Garp*, 1978), Paul Theroux (*The Mosquito Coast*, 1982), William Kennedy (*Ironweed*, 1983) and Alice Walker (*The Color Purple*, 1982) surfaced with stylistically brilliant novels to portray moving human dramas. Concern with setting, character, and themes associated with realism returned. Realism,

abandoned by experimental writers in the 1960s, also crept back, often mingled with bold original elements – a daring structure like a novel within a novel, as in John Gardner’s *October Light* (1976) or black American dialect as in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*. Minority literature began to flourish. Drama shifted from realism to more cinematic, kinetic techniques. At the same time, however, the “Me Decade” was reflected in such brash new talents as Jay McInerney (*Bright Lights, Big City*, 1984), Bret Easton Ellis (*Less Than Zero*, 1985), and Tama Janowitz (*Slaves of New York*, 1986).

American literature has traversed an extended, winding path from pre-colonial days to contemporary times. Society, history, technology - all have had telling impact on it. Ultimately, though, there is a constant – humanity, with all its radiance and its malevolence, its tradition and its promise.

Summary

Theme 8: This part gives review of the post-war American life and literature. The literature of 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s is analyzed. New generation of post-war American writers, witnesses and participants of the war, is presented. The impact of high-tech on human behavior is also shown.

Key Words and Expressions to Theme 8

Makeshift

Consumerism

Ubiquitous

Attuned

Aftermath

Verging

Laced with insanity

Home appliances

Riveting analysis

Dwindle

Traverse

Questions

1. What was America after the Second World War?
2. What new writers appeared after the war?
3. What do you know about the literature of 1950s?
4. What problems are raised in the literature of 1960s?
5. What are specific features of the literature of 1970s and 1980s?

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