

LECTURE TWO: American Literature Periods Objectives: Aim: At the end of this lecture, students will be able to: 1. identify the main features of each literary movement in America; 2. compare the main contributions of American writers, poets and playwrights; 3. use the themes and aspects to write poetry or prose.

1– American Literary Movements: The following timeline shows the period of each American literary movement and its duration.

Pre-colonial: Native American Literature 1620–1750: Puritan Literature 1607–1775: Colonial Literature 1775–1783: Revolutionary Age 1775–1830: Early National Literature 1830–1865: American Romanticism 1865–1914: Naturalism 1914–1940: Modernism and Experimentation 1945 – 1970: Postmodernism 1970– present: Post-Postmodernism

Period	Characteristics	Famous Authors and Works
Arrived 40,000 – Native Americans	1. Oral literature: epic narratives, creation myths, stories, poems, songs. 2. Use stories to teach moral lessons and convey practical information about the natural world. 3. Deep respect for nature and animals 4. Cyclical world view 5. Figurative language/parallelism	1600–1800 Puritanism
1. Wrote mostly diaries and histories, which William Bradford (“Of expressed the connections between God and Plymouth Plantation”), First “American” their everyday lives. Anne Bradstreet (poetry), Colonies 2. Sought to “purify” the Church of England Jonathan Edwards Established by reforming to the simpler forms of worship (“Sinners in the Hands of and church organization described in the New and Angry God”), Edward Salem Witch Trials	Testament Taylor (“Huswifery”) 3. Saw religion as a personal, inner experience. 4. Believed in original sin and “elect” who would be saved. 5. Used a plain style of writing	1750–1800 Rationalism
1. Mostly comprised of philosophers, Benjamin Franklin scientists, writing speeches and pamphlets. (Autobiography), Patrick Revolutionary War “The Age of 2. Human beings can arrive at truth (God’s Henry (“Speech to the Reason” rules) by using deductive reasoning, rather Virginia Convention”), The Constitution, than relying on the authority of the past, on Thomas Paine (“The Bill of Rights, “The Enlightenment– religious faith, or intuition. Crisis”), Phyllis Wheatley and The Declaration of Independence were created.	1800–1860 Romanticism	1. Valued feeling, intuition, idealism, and Washington Irving (“Rip inductive reasoning. Van Winkle”), Emily Industrialization 2. Placed faith in inner experience and the Dickinson (poetry), Walt power of the imagination. Whitman (Leaves of Grass of 1812 3. Shunned the artificiality of civilization and Grass), Edgar Allan Poe seek unspoiled nature as a path to spirituality. (“The Raven”), Nathaniel California Gold 4. Championed individual freedom and the Hawthorne (The Scarlet Letter) 5. Saw poetry as the highest expression of the imagination. 6. Dark Romantics: Used dark and supernatural themes/settings (Gothic style)
1840–1860 Transcendentalism	1. Everything in the world, including human beings, is a reflection of the Divine Soul (Nature, “Self-Reliance”), Abolitionist, “The American 2. People can use their intuition to behold Henry David Thoreau Utopian, and Renaissance” God’s spirit revealed in nature or in their own (Walden, Life in the Women’s Suffrage souls. Woods). Movements 3. Self-reliance and individualism must Louisa May Alcott (Little Women) 4. Conformity to tradition	1850–1900 Realism
1. Feelings of disillusionment Mark Twain (Huckleberry 2. Common subjects; slums of rapidly growing cities, factories replacing farmlands, of the Wild, “To Build a poor factory workers, corrupt politicians Fire,”) Stephen Crane Reconstruction 3. Represented the manner and environment (“The Open Boat”), of everyday life and		

ordinary people as Ambrose Bierce (“An realistically as possible (regionalism) Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”), Kate Chopin (psychologically/socially). (“Story of an Hour,” The Awakening) 1900–1950 Modernism 1. Sense of disillusionment and loss of faith in Lorraine Hansberry (A the “American Dream”: the independence, Raisin in the Sun), F. World War I self-reliant, individual will triumph. Scott Fitzgerald (The 2. Emphasis on bold experimentation in style Great Gatsby), William The Great and form over the traditional. Faulkner (“A Rose for Depression 3. Interest in the inner workings of the human Emily”). Eudora Welty (“A mind (ex. Stream of consciousness). Worn Path”), Robert Frost World War II (poetry), T.S. Eliot (The Waste Land, “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”), John Steinbeck (Of Mice and Men, Grapes of Wrath) 1920–1940 Harlem 1. Black cultural movement in Harlem, New James Weldon Johnson, Renaissance York Claude McKay, Countee “The New Negro 2. Some poetry rhythms based on spirituals, Cullen, Langston Hughes Movement” “The Jazz Age” and jazz, lyrics on the blues, and diction from (poetry), Zora Neale the street talk of the ghettos Hurston Prohibition “The Roaring 20s”” 3. Other poetry used conventional lyrical Forms 1950–1970 1. Influenced by studies of media, language, Alice Walker, Wallace and information technology Stevens, E. E. Korean War “Postmodernism” 2. Sense that little is unique; culture endlessly Cummings, Maya duplicates and copies itself Angelou, Anne Sexton, Vietnam War 3. New literary forms and techniques: works James Baldwin, Richard composed of only dialogue or combining Wright, Sandra Cisneros, fiction and nonfiction, experimenting with Amy Tan physical appearance of their work 1970 onward «Post– Postmodernism » Post–postmodernism is an inclusive set of changes as well as developments in different domains: culture, economy, politics philosophy and art, to complete and, at times, react to postmodern era. It .marks distinct features and aspects