

American Literature

Course Description: Why do we read? People do not merely read to earn good grades in English class so that they can go to a prestigious college and get a high paying job. So, why do people read in their spare time? Why do people read, years after graduating from school? Why do people gravitate towards some authors and stories, earning these stories so much praise that society decides that the novel, drama, poem, etc. is vital to our community, so vital that it becomes part of school curriculums? Similarly, what motivates writers to create? They don't write just for the paycheck – in fact, some of the iconic writers we will study didn't receive acclaim until after their demise, never enjoying the wealth and status that accompanies such success.

This American Lit course will continually examine these questions to help us gain a better understanding of American Literature, ultimately the problems and fears that Americans have been confronting for centuries. We will examine how these issues have evolved and how language and writing styles adapt to adequately reflect these social changes. After we discuss the literary movements in American Literature through a group project, we will delve into American social issues: systematic oppression, prejudice, war, and class disparity. In each social issue unit, we will analyze how writers try to expose our country's problems, ameliorate social injustices, and persuade readers to take action through their genre, diction, literary devices, etc.

Marking Period 1

Basic Literary Theory

- "Riddle" by Jericho Brown
- "my graduation speech" by Tato Laviera
- "There's a Certain Slant of Light" by Emily Dickinson
- "The Facts of Art" by Natalie Diaz
- "Obligations 2" by "Layli Long Soldier
- "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" by Henry W. Longfellow
- "Ants" by Elizabeth Acevedo

History of American Literature (New Historicism, Cultural Studies)

Literary Movements in American Lit

- Indigenous (earliest literature in region–present)
 - "Museum Indians" by Louise Erdrich
 - "Battlefield" by Mark Turcotte
 - "Home" by Ian Ross and Lovern Kindzierski
 - "Coyote and the Pebble" by Dayton Edmunds
- Colonial/ Puritan (1650-1750)
 - *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* excerpt by Jonathan Edwards
- Revolutionary/ Age of Reason (1750-1800)
 - "The Declaration of Independence" by Thomas Jefferson
 - "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano" by Olaudah Equiano
- Romanticism (1800-1860)/ Transcendentalism (1840-1860)
 - "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe
 - Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
- The Civil War Era (1850-1890)
 - "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" by Ambrose Bierce
 - "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin
 - "We Wear the Mask" by Paul Laurence Dunbar
 - "A Double Standard" by Frances Ellen Hopkins Harper

- Modern (1914-1950)
 - “The Corn Planting” by Sherwood Anderson
 - “A Worn Path” by Eudora Welty
 - “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” by Catherine Anne Porter
- Harlem Renaissance (1920s)
 - “I, Too”, “Dream Variations”, and “Refugee in America” by Langston Hughes
 - “Black Woman” and “The Heart of a Woman” by Georgia Douglas Johnson
- Post Modernism (1950s-present)
 - “Who Burns for the Perfection of Paper” by Martin Espada
 - “Hunger in New York City” by Simon J. Ortiz
 - “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan
 - “Bidwell Ghost” by Louise Erdrich

Marking Period 2

The Literary Cannon’s American Dream (Marxist Criticism, Race Theory, and Feminist Criticism)

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry

Marking Period 3

Modern American Dream

- College Portfolio
 - Resume
 - College Essay
 - Interview Practice
 - SAT Prep

Research Process

- *Owl Purdue* Resources
- Choice Text

Marking Period 4

The Evolution of Literature’s Depiction of the American Dream

- MLK Speeches
- *American Born Chinese* by Gene Yang
- *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
- *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* by Tomas Rivera