

EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE

- Christopher Columbus: set out from Spain, on August 3, 1492 and landed on one of the Bahama Islands on October 12, 1492.
 - The Old Norse tale Vinland Saga narrates how the adventurous Leif Ericson and a band of wandering Norsemen settled briefly on the northeast coast of America in the first decade of the 11th century.
 - the first permanent English settlement in America was made at Jamestown in 1607
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John Smith, 1580-1631.

***Description of New
England*** (1916):

"here nature and liberty
affords us that freely,
which in England we want
or costs us dearly."

THE FIRST BOOK ON AMERICA

/1608

- *A true relation of such occurrences and accidents of note as hath happened in Virginia since the first planting of that colony, which is now resident in the South part thereof, till the last return from thence.*
 - written by Captain Smith:
 - a vivid description of arrival in Virginia,
 - the place selection and civil organization,
 - their exploration of the James River,
 - the first fearful Indian attack,
 - their return to England after a two months' stay in Virginia.
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I believe that the Indian has an understanding of the physical world and of the earth as a spiritual entity that is his, very much his own. The non-Indian can benefit a good deal by having that perception revealed to him.

Navarro Scott Momaday

- orally transmitted myths,
 - legends,
 - folktales,
 - songs of Indian cultures related to the concept that all animals have souls or spirits that give them supernatural power
 - Public recognition came to them relatively late / only in the mid-19th century
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THE SOUTHERN SOIL / VIRGINIA / DID NOT PROVE FAVORABLE TO LITERARY GROWTH

- "I thank God there are no free schools, nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience into the world, and printing has divulged them and libels against the best of governments. God keep us from both."

1671, Governor Berkeley

PILGRIMS AND PURITANS

- a person by nature was wholly sinful and could achieve good only by severe discipline.
- hard work was considered a religious duty and emphasis was laid on constant self-examination and self-discipline .
- drunkenness, gambling, and participation in theatrical performances were serious offenses.

THEY ESTABLISHED "NOT AN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, NOR A MANUFACTURING COMMUNITY, NOR A TRADING COMMUNITY; IT WAS A THINKING COMMUNITY." PROFESSOR TYLER

- In 1636, the General Court of Massachusetts voted to establish a college at Newtown;
- John Harvard, dying two years later, bequeathed his library and half his estate to the school, which was then named Harvard College in his honor.
- In 1639, the first printing-press in America was set up at Cambridge.
- The colonists had their grammar schools which prepared for college; and by 1650 public instruction was compulsory in four of the Five New England colonies.

- Colonial literature in the 18th century consisted largely of religious and practical books,
 - such as the Bible,
 - sermons and tracts,
 - almanacs,
 - medical books and scientific works .
 - Newspapers /seven daily papers/ published a fair amount of poetry, mathematical puzzles , serialized satirical pieces, and a lot of announcements.
 - Newspapers gradually became a strong literary and political force.
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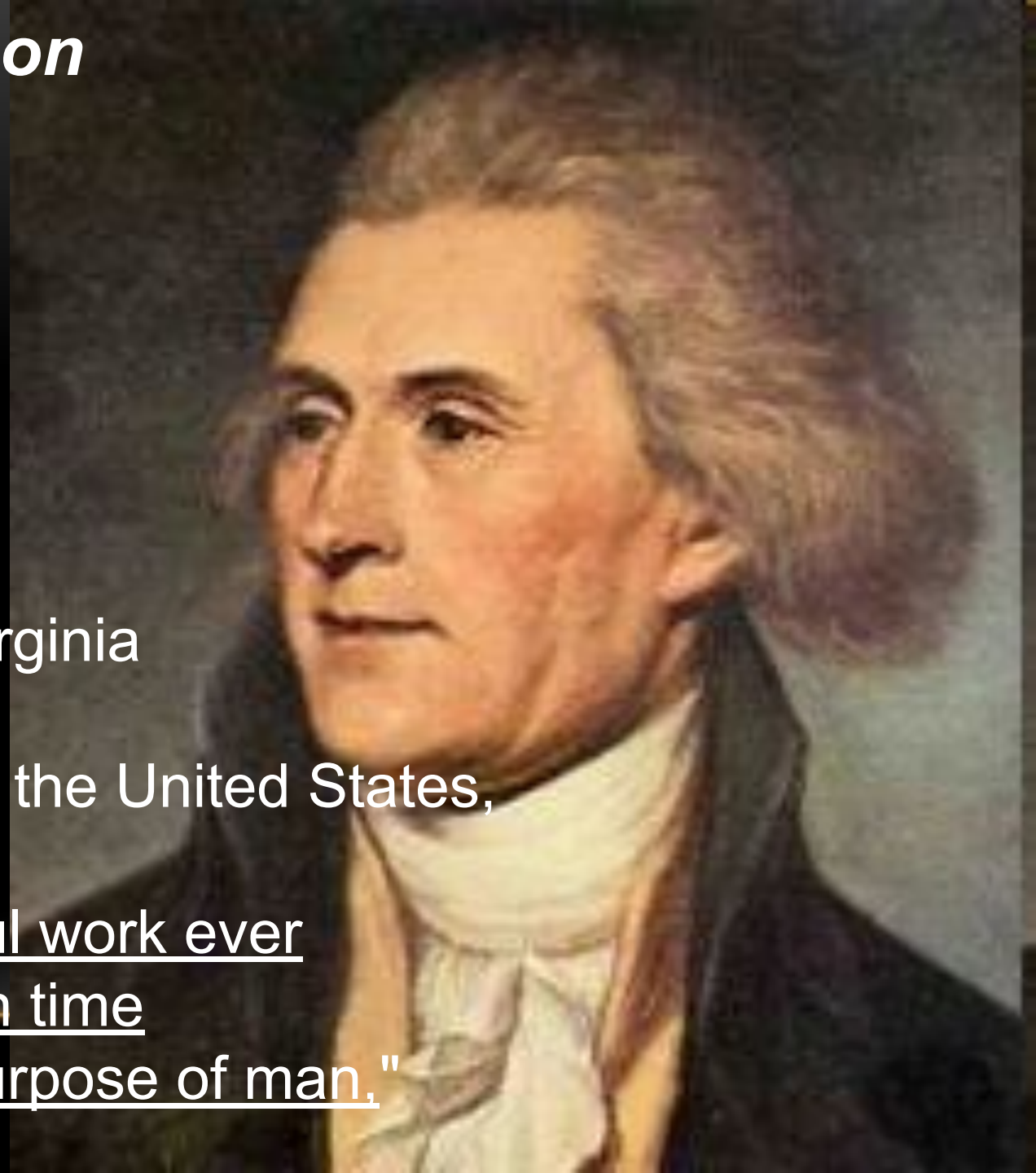
- On May 10, 1776, the Second Continental Congress called for disunion.
 - Jefferson's work, *The Declaration of Independence* announced the birth of a new nation on July 4, 1776, and set forth a road to American freedom.
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Thomas Jefferson

(1743-1826)

published
Notes on Virginia,
wrote a compact
Autobiography,
founded
the University of Virginia

The Constitution of the United States,
adopted in 1788,
"the most wonderful work ever
struck off at a given time
by the brain and purpose of man,"



- The Revolution created national heroes
 - *The Ballad of Nathan Hale* tells of a capture and hanging of an American spy, sent by George Washington to find out the British army's route.
 - *"I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."*
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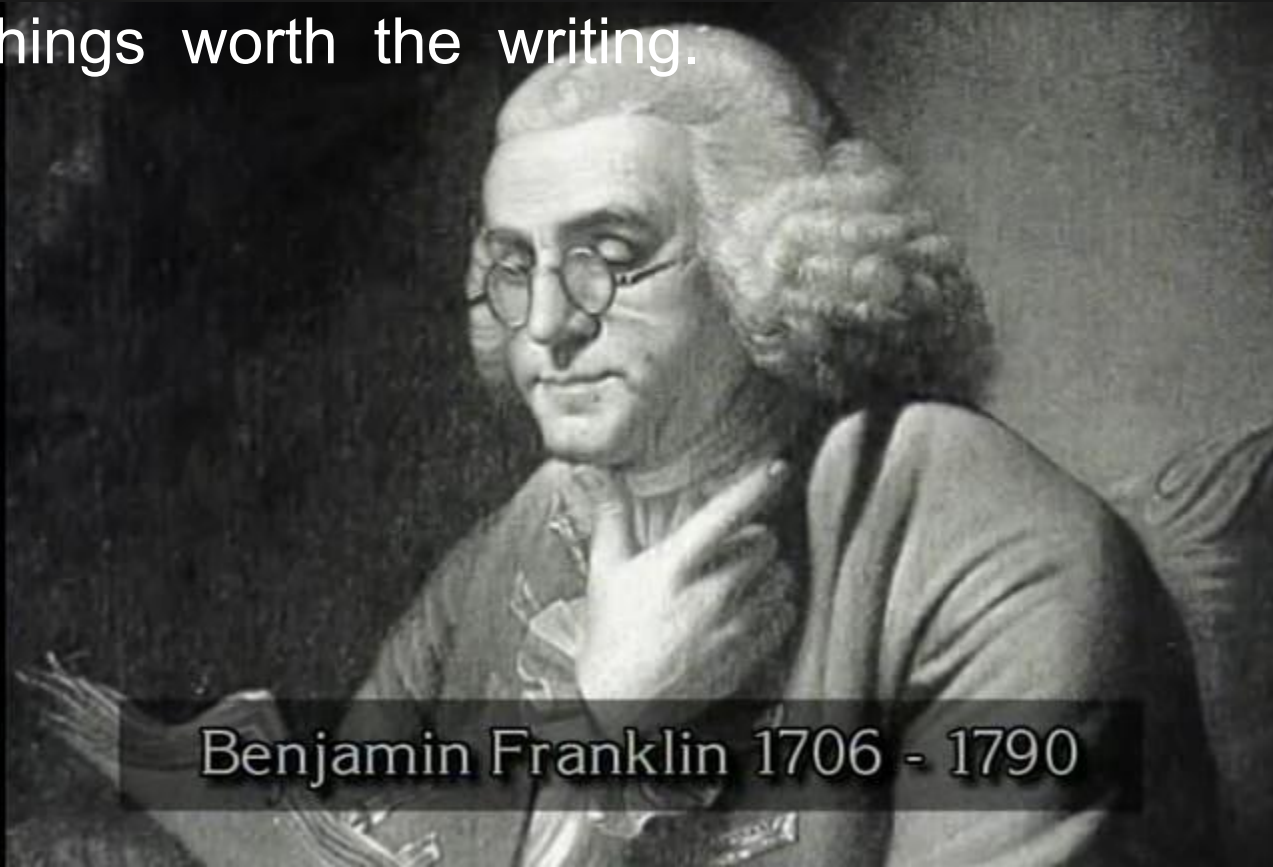
YANKEE DOODLE

Yankee Doodle came to town
Upon a little pony,
He stuck a feather in his hat
And called it macaroni.

Yankee Doodle keep it up,
Yankee Doodle dandy,
Mind the music and the step,
And with the girls be handy.

And there was Captain Washington,
Upon a slapping stallion,

If you want not be forgotten
As soon as you are dead and rotten ,
Either write things worth reading,
Or do things worth the writing.



SELF-MADE MAN

- the American giant of the 18th c.
 - born in Boston, in 1706. His father was a soap-boiler and candle-maker
 - the fifteenth in a family of seventeen children
 - worked in the shop cutting wicks for the candles, and running errands
 - was apprenticed to his brother James, who owned a printing business
 - In 1721, James Franklin began to publish a newspaper, ***The New England Courant***, one of the first in the colonies – Ben wrote the papers in a disguised hand, signed with the pen-name ***Silence Dogood***
 - when seventeen, Ben ran away to New York and then to Philadelphia
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- worked at the printing-shop
- spent eighteen months in London
- back in Philadelphia developed a profitable business and in 1729 purchased a newspaper, ***The Pennsylvania Gazette***
- wrote a series of humorous and satirical sketches, which he called ***The Busy Body papers***
- His early years consisted of establishing himself as printer, then journalist and writer. From 1732 to 1757 he wrote *Poor Richard's Almanac*, the first American periodical and source of proverbs that is still a bestseller even today.

Poor Richard, 1733.

A N

Almanack

For the Year of Christ

1733,

Being the First after LEAP YEAR:

And makes since the Creation

Years

POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC - THE MAXIMS OF THE WORLD

- *Fools make feasts and wise men eat them.*
 - *Most fools think they are only ignorant.*
 - *Honesty is the best policy.*
 - *A penny saved is a penny earned.*
 - *Fish and visitors smell in three days.*
 - *Love thy neighbor; yet don't pull down your hedge.*
-

PRIVATE LIFE

OF THE LATE

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, LL.D.

LATE MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY FROM THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA TO FRANCE, &c. &c. &c.

Originally written by Himself,

AND NOW TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

- *Autobiography* is properly regarded as Franklin's most significant literary achievement
- he began to write it in 1771, resumed in 1788, and left incomplete at his death
- The purpose of its author was to make the experiences of his own career, the conduct and habit of life which had led to success in his own case, a source of help and inspiration to others.

- political writings were the most popular - Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison
- the leading literary genres - travel and religious narratives, political tracts, poetry and essays

AMERICAN ROMANTIC
LITERATURE
1830-1870

AMERICAN ROMANTIC LITERATURE

- a time of rapid expansion and growth in the United States that fueled intuition, imagination, and individualism in literature
 - the American Romantic movement challenged the very rational thinking of the Age of Reason during the Revolutionary War. This period produced fewer instructional texts and more stories, novels, and poetry.
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FIVE CHARACTERISTICS TO IDENTIFY AMERICAN ROMANTIC LITERATURE.

- Imagination
 - Individuality
 - Nature as a source of spirituality
 - Looking to the past for wisdom
 - Seeing the common man as a hero
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IMAGINATION

- Industrial Revolution - a great time of progress - there is progress, there is also great optimism - imagine what could happen next
- a lot of people began migrating to big cities that were becoming overpopulated, dirty and disease-ridden. Many people wanted to escape that. Therefore, the American Romantic writers embrace that notion through **escapism**.
- **Escapism** is where the mind allows you to escape harsh conditions by taking you to a place that is purely beautiful.

INDIVIDUALITY

- **Immigration** begins creating what is now called the 'melting pot' in America – people are creating an identity for themselves, but the country is creating its own identity as people with different social pasts come together to create something new.
- Americans also wanted to distance themselves from Europe and become intellectually independent, they follow their intuition and their feeling, and they're going to embrace this newly found freedom and become individuals.

NATURE AS A SOURCE OF SPIRITUALITY

- Romantics wanted to embrace that spiritual root that was planted by the Puritans
- But where the Puritans saw nature as savage, with the Devil hiding behind every tree, the Romantics really are finding God in nature. They believed that they could achieve high levels of insight and information about the world around them just by going to nature.

WISDOM FROM THE PAST

- Writers used old legends to create new stories.
- Whereas the novelists and short story writers tried to distance themselves from European tradition in writing, the poets stuck to that tradition. They are truly unique in their content in that they are looking at the pure American nature and are using that for their inspiration.
- **Fireside Poets:** Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russel Lowell.

COMMON MAN AS A HERO

- Prior to this time, the European hero had been established as sophisticated and educated/Ben Franklin
- Now - characters who are flawed but whose innocence and strong morals give them good hearts/ Indiana Jones .

SUMMARY

- **Imagination and Escapism**: Characters taking a journey from the dirty city into the supernatural countryside.
 - **Individuality**: Individuals embracing freedom by following intuition and going exploring.
 - **Finding spirituality in nature**: Reflections on nature and how it can bring people closer to God.
 - **Looking to the past for wisdom**: Settings that reflect times past and plots that show how legends fit in today.
 - **Finding a hero in the common man**: Characters who are flawed but whose innocence and strong morals give them good hearts.
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EARLY AMERICAN
ROMANTICS:
WASHINGTON IRVING & JAMES
FENIMORE COOPER

THE NEW LITERATURE - NEW YORK AND THE KNICKERBOCKER GROUP

Two of the century's greatest writers - Irving and Cooper
- the Knickerbocker writers sought to promote a
genuinely American national culture and establish New
York City as its literary centre.



Washington Irving 1783 - 1859

WASHINGTON IRVING

- considered the father of American literature because it is his writing that began shaping the American identity
 - because he is writing in the early years of the 19th century, at the beginning of the American experiment, his work sheds an interesting light on the cultural anxieties of the young nation
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- was born in New York / April 3, 1783 - the year which marked the end of the long struggle for liberty and the beginning of peace
 - "Washington's work is ended, and the child shall be named after him," said Mrs. Irving.
 - grew up in Manhattan, New York and was a pretty goofy, adventurous kid

 - Made several trips to England (his writing and his education are profoundly Anglophile in character because he spent much of his life in England)
 - In 1817 - befriends Sir Walter Scott, who gives him some advice about writing. Scott tells him to begin reading the German Romantic authors and to consider folklore and legends for some inspiration
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FIRST PUBLICATIONS

- journal entitled **Salmagundi** (January, 1807, to January, 1808) - satirical pamphlets on the faults of New York society, published together with his intimate friend, James K. Paulding, and his brother, William Irving
- Its modest programme was announced in the first number. "Our intention is simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age."
- *Diedrich Knickerbocker: A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* - a political satire

THE SKETCH BOOK OF GEOFFREY CRAYON, ESQ.

- published in America in 1820
- 27 stories – most of them related Irving's impressions of England, & only 6 – dealt with American subjects
- greatly influenced by German folk tales
- included '*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*' and '*Rip Van Winkle*' - recognize as two masterpieces, & most popular classics in the field of the short story
- A sequel to *The Sketch-Book* – *Bracebridge Hall* was published in 1822
- *Tales of a Traveler*, which included the short story '*The Devil and Tom Walker*' - another piece heavily influenced by the German legends.

LATER WORKS -HISTORICAL RECORDS OF SPAIN

- *Life and Voyages of Columbus* (1828)
- *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* (1831),
- *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829)
- *Alhambra* (1832)

- In May, 1832, Irving returned to America, distinguished and admired abroad, to find himself honored and beloved by his countrymen at home.
- hearty welcome - a public banquet tendered by the city of New York to her own humorous historian, "the Dutch Herodotus, Diedrich Knickerbocker" - as he was named in a toast.
- The literary work of these ten years is comparatively unimportant
- *Life of Goldsmith* (1849),
- *Mahomet and his Successors* (1850),
- *Life of Washington* (1855-59)

IRVING'S STYLE

- the sources of Irving's material are almost entirely in the past, in history, biography, and tradition;
- the subjects which attracted his attention are romantic
- Irving's use of imagery - using words to create a picture in the reader's mind to create long descriptions of the American landscape - set his work apart from those of the European writers
- Irving introduced the idea of the modern short story to the United States (prior to this period, people were writing instructional, political documents and lots of religious-based poetry)

'THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW



- **Ichabod Crane** (the main character) - "our man of letters," "traveling gazette" - a grotesque figure, ravenous in his hunger for material success
- **Katrina Van Tassel**
- Abraham Van Brunt, known as **Brom Bones** - Ichabod's rival - strong, brash, and fearless, personifies a figure who will be known as the "b'hoy," who challenges all niceties and pieties
- **Headless Horseman** - a Hessian soldier whose head was blown off by a cannonball during the American Revolution
- Sleepy Hollow itself is presented as a sort of refuge from the bustling America, a haven where "romance" is still possible

ROMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS

- **Imagination** - Ichabod has a wild imagination
- element of the **supernatural** - ghost stories, wild chases of the headless horseman
- wisdom from the past - citizens of Sleepy Hollow are eager to hear the bewitching stories from the past, Ichabod has a habit of carrying Cotton Mather's writing *History of New England Witchcraft*

RIP VAN WINKLE



- inspired by German folklore
 - a great story: a nagging wife, dogs, guns, ghosts, liquor and of course, long, gray beards
 - the hero has fallen asleep for twenty years - slept through the American Revolution
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ROMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS

- The Romantic element of the supernatural is the basic essence of this story.
- Mystical elements: sleep for 20 years, the presence of what seems to be the Hudson clan playing nine-pins (ghosts), a sleeping potion, the tale of Hudson's return every 20 years

IMAGERY

- Irving's flowering language creates a beautiful picture of the setting in the reader's mind.
- 'Kaatskill Mountains' and the village at its foot:
'Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains...they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky.'
- the town : *'...there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weather-cocks.'*

THE DEVIL AND TOM WALKER

- the story's plot is based on a very famous German legend about a man called **Faust** , who makes a deal with the Devil in order to gain knowledge and wealth

CHARACTERS

- **Tom Walker**, the story's main character, is a **miser**.
- **Tom's wife** is as miserly as he is but with a temper, verbally abusive, and the townspeople suspect she is even physically abusive toward Tom.
- **Old Scratch** or wild huntsman or black woodsman - the Devil; described as a black man, but neither Negro nor Indian. He has a dirty, soot-covered face and carries an axe.

MORAL, ALLEGORY AND SYMBOLS

- a **moral** - greed and moral corruption leads us down the wrong path
- variety of symbols:
- the Devil is *temptation*
- Tom and his wife represent *greed*.
- Later in the story, Tom symbolizes *hypocrisy* .
- The **swamp** is described as a shortcut - an 'ill-chosen' route, because it cost him eternal damnation. So here, the swamp symbolizes the *wrong path*.
- **The Indian fort** is a representation of *hell*.
- Tom's **Bible** represents *the chance for salvation*.



JAMES
FENIMORE
COOPER

1789-1851

"THE
AMERICAN
SCOTT"

- born in New Jersey, September 15, 1789
- moved to the shore of Otsego Lake in central New York - the frontier of civilization in that day
- Yale College
- sailed on board of the merchant ship Sterling
- secured a commission as midshipman in the United States Navy
- resigned from the Navy in 1811
- James Fenimore Cooper was thirty years old when he began to write
- essential gift of a great novelist

- 1820, the novel *Precaution*
- 1821, *The Spy*, a tale of the Revolution - had some foundation in historical fact. The story appealed to the patriotism of readers and permitted comparison with Scott. Its success was immediate and unprecedented.
- **The Pioneers** (1823) - sea novel written after publication of Scott's novel **The Pirate**
- Other sea stories - The Red Rover, The Water-Witch, The Two Admirals, Wing-and-Wing

THE LEATHER STOCKING TALES

- Indian tales
- The Deerslayer, The Last of the Mohicans, The Pathfinder, The Pioneers, and The Prairie
- The character of the hero, Natty Bumppo, or Leather Stocking or La Longue Carabine (The Long Rifle) or the Scout or Hawkeye, is portrayed from youth to old age

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

- written in 1826
- takes place in 1757 during the French and Indian War, when France and England battled for control of the American and Canadian colonies.

THEMES, MOTIFS & SYMBOLS

- *The Last of the Mohicans* is a novel about race and the difficulty of overcoming racial divides
- Hawkeye is both a character and a symbol. He symbolizes the mixing of European and Indian cultures. Hawkeye also symbolizes the myth of the hero woodsman.
- description of Uncas as “the last of the Mohicans” symbolizes the death of Indian culture at the hands of the European civilization

THE DARK ROMANTICS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

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-

- The Romantic period - 1800-1860
 - 1840-1860 - an explosion of uniquely American literature known as the *American Renaissance*.
 - During the American Renaissance - two subgenres: the Dark Romantics and the Transcendentalists.
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- The Romantic writers took an optimistic approach to the mystical aspects of the universe
- sins are properly punished
- those who are truly good are rewarded.

(Washington Irving's 'The Devil and Tom Walker')

- The Dark Romantics were more serious and found the darkness and evil in those same aspects, with evil taking over the good.
-

THE DARK ROMANTICS (SOMETIMES CALLED GOTHIC) :

- Edgar Allan Poe
- Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Herman Melville

THEIR WRITING TYPICALLY HAS THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS:

1. Lots of creepy symbols
 2. Horrific themes
 3. Psychological effects of guilt and sin
-

SYMBOLS

- A **symbol** is something that represents something else (a red rose)

Authors use symbols to help readers make connections beyond the story itself. Sometimes objects in a story are symbols. Sometimes characters are symbols.

(Edgar Allan Poe's poem 'The Raven')

- *Raven* is a symbol for death and hopelessness as it sits and watches the narrator, who is slowly going mad.
- For the Dark Romantics, sin and evil were everywhere, so their symbols often represent evil entities, like devils or spirits. These symbols often reinforce one of many horrific themes found in the story.

HORRIFIC THEMES

- the Dark Romantics studied **the struggles of human nature**. More specifically, they believed that human nature was less than good, so evil was able to take hold of a person, evil and sin were not as easy to identify, so it could easily lead to self-destruction.
- the Dark Romantics also saw darkness in the external world.- **surroundings could be filled with evil** ('The Fall of the House of Usher')
- the Dark Romantics wanted to explore the **horrors of evil** that were lurking in everyone - a good deal of time looking at the character's thought processes ('The Tell-Tale Heart')
- follow the stream of consciousness deterioration of the mind - 'why' rather than 'how', so they focus on the **psychological**, or how the mind works.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF GUILT AND SIN

- Show characters who are harboring guilt for their sins, and that guilt leads to the grotesque, the fantastic
 - often stuck in the character's mind, watching as it slowly deteriorates into madness (Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter*).
-