



LECTURE 3.

American Literature during the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods. The Making of American Literature 1800–1865: Making a Nation

“America is a poem in our eyes: its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres.” (R.W. Emerson)



Plan

- 1. Overview of American History: the Pilgrims and Puritans.
- 2. Writing of the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods.
- 3. Literature of the Revolution Period.
- 4. The Making of American Myths.
- 5. The Making of American Selves.

Objective and tasks:

Objective: to generate students' knowledge of the development of US literature between 1620 and 1865.

Tasks:

- to develop an understanding of the literary process in the United States from 1620 to 1865;
- to promote the formation of basic literary concepts and aesthetic categories;
- to develop critical thinking skills, memory and the ability to process information.

Pilgrims' route



The Pilgrims

- Pilgrim Fathers (the Old Comers, the Forefathers)
- Plymouth Colony, 1620
- 35 members of the English Separatist church (a radical faction of Puritanism)



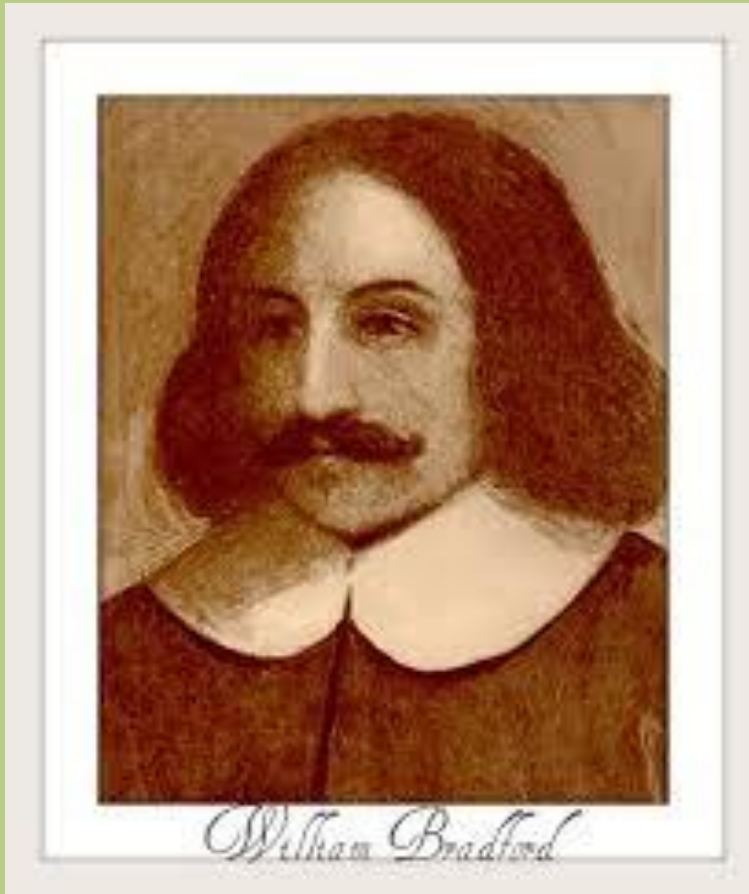
The Puritans



- ❑ The puritans have no intention of breaking with the Anglican church.
- ❑ Nonconformists.
- ❑ The Puritans considered religion a very complex, subtle and highly intellectual affair.
- ❑ Emphasis on scholarship fostered class distinction, but encouraged education.
- ❑ Seek to bring the Church to a state of purity.

2. Puritan narratives

William Bradford (1590-1657)



- Governor of Plymouth colony (1621-1657)
- *Of Plymouth Plantation:* «special work of God's providence»
- America was no blessed garden originally, but the civilizing mission of himself and his colony was to make it one

2. Puritan narrative

John Winthrop (1588–1649)



- Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony
- *A Modell of Christian Charity* – a lay sermon, a series of questions, answers, and objections
- Sense of providence, special mission, divine purpose

Challenges to the Puritan oligarchy

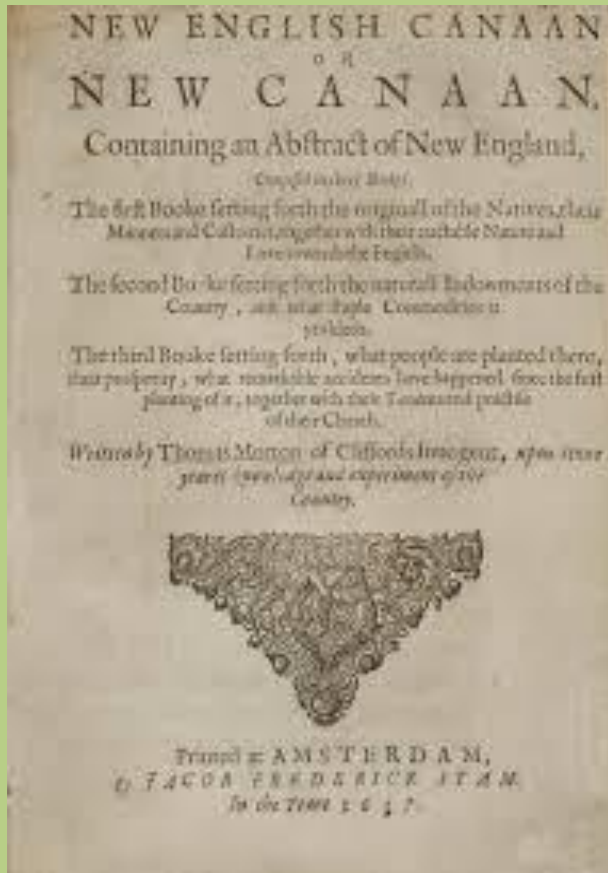
Anne Hutchinson (1591–1643)



- Good works were no sign of God's blessing.
- The mediating role of the church between God is questioned

Challenges to the Puritan oligarchy

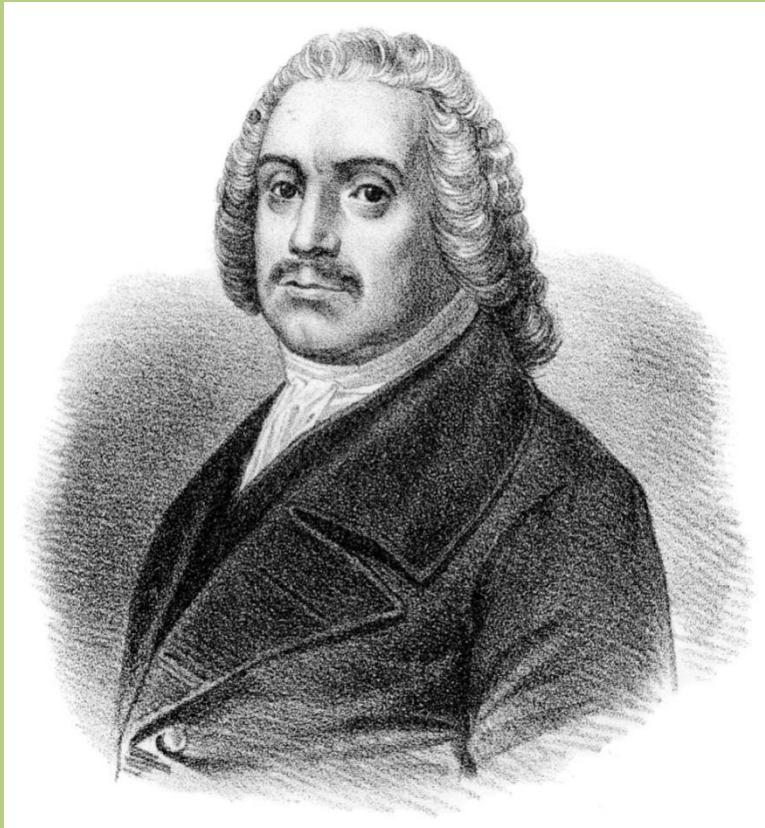
Thomas Morton (1579?–1642?)



- *New English Canaan (1637)* – a satirical attack on religious fanaticism of the Puritans and the Separatists
- New England is a Canaan or Promised Land, a naturally abundant world inhabited by friendly and even noble savages – Native Americans

Challenges to the Puritan oligarchy

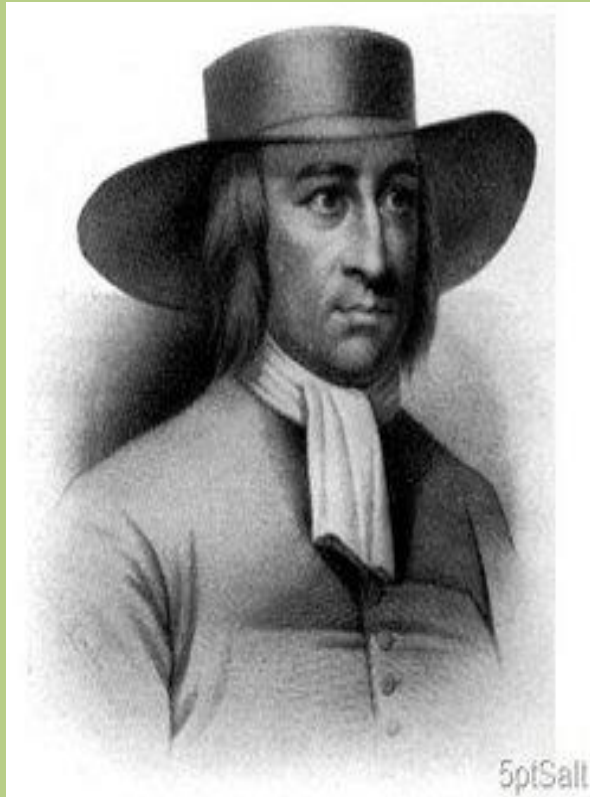
Roger Williams (1603?–1683)



- ▣ *The Bloody Tenant of Persecution (1644)* – liberty of conscience as a natural right
- ▣ *A Key into the Language of America (1643)* - “I present you with a key, this key, respects the Native Language of it, and happily may unlock some Rarities concerning the Natives themselves, not yet discovered.”

Colonial poetry

Michael Wigglesworth (1631–1705)



▣ *The Day of Doom* -
the biggest selling
poem in colonial
America, presents the
principal Puritan
beliefs, mostly
through a debate
between sinners and
Christ



Colonial poetry

Collaborative works:

- *The Bay Psalm*

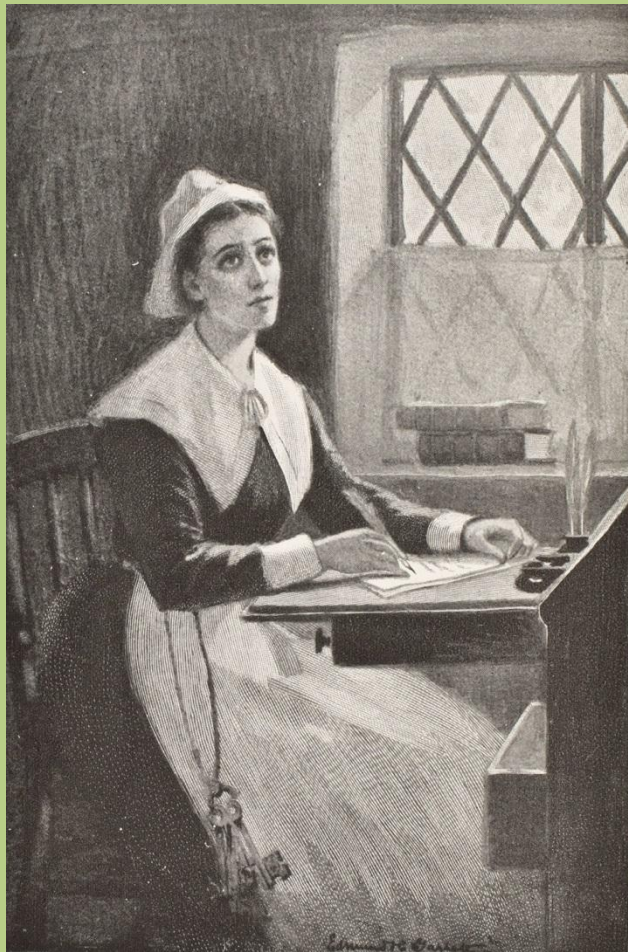
Book: the psalms of David translated into idiomatic English and adapted to the basic hymn stanza form, produced by 12 New English divines

- *The New England*

Primer: to give every child “and apprentice” the chance to read the catechism and digest improving moral precepts

Colonial poetry

Anne Bradstreet (1612?–1672)




□ *The Tenth Muse
Lately Sprung Up,
The Author to her
Book, Several Poems
Compiled with Great
Variety of Wit and
Learning*

Colonial poetry

Edward Taylor (1642?–1729)



- The experience of faith
- tradition of meditative writing
- tradition of New England writing
- *Preparatory Meditations, My Approach to the Lords Supper.*



3. Literature of the Revolution Period

- The American Revolution: an ideological and political revolution (1775-1783)
- Outcome: Independence of the United States of America from the British Empire, end of British colonial rule in the Thirteen Colonies, created oldest permanent constitution in current effect
- Created oldest federal republic in existence

The American Revolution



The American Revolution: Every Other Day

US and Allies
States
Occupied
Gains

Great Britain
States
Occupied
Gains

Estimated Deaths in Battle:

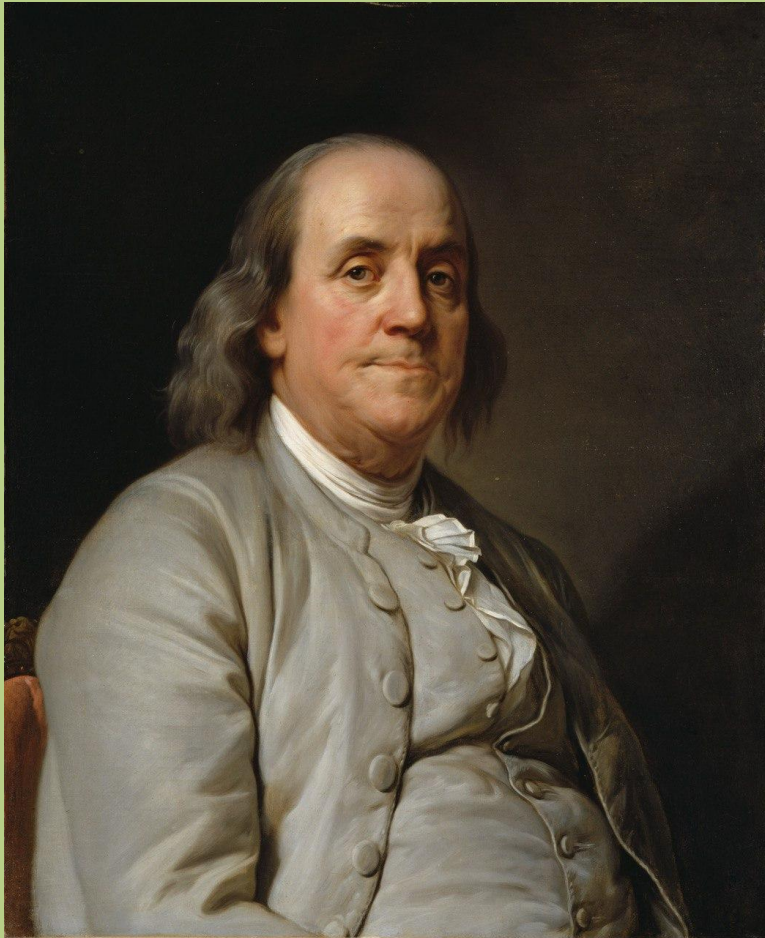
United States:	3,388
France:	1,176
Spain:	10
Great Britain:	3,796



09 Jul 1779

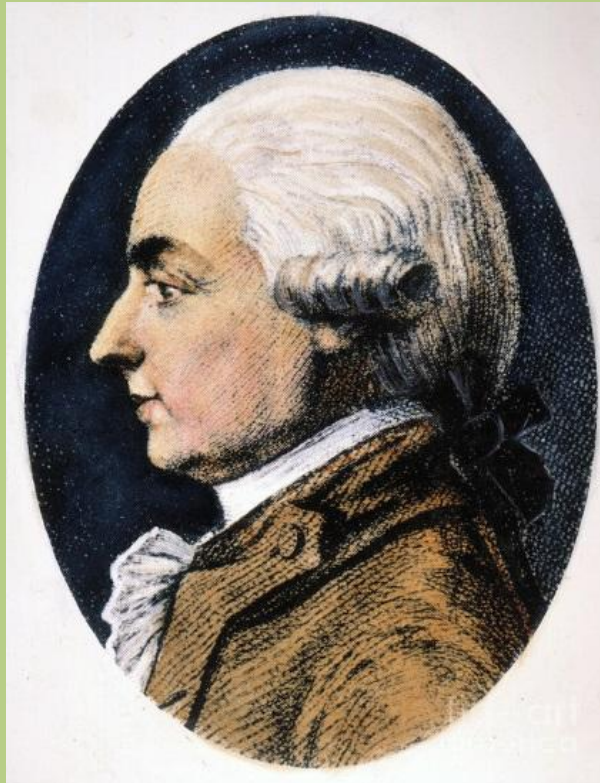
3. Literature of the Revolution Period.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)



- Embodied the new spirit of America
- *Pennsylvania Gazette, Poor Richard's Almanac*
- *Autobiographic* - stands against slavery, extermination of Indians.

J. Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur (1735–1813)



□ “the American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions.”

□ *Letters*

Thomas Paine (1737–1809)



- ▣ *Common Sense*
(American independence and the formation of a republican government)
- ▣ *The Crisis papers*
- ▣ *The Rights of Man*
- ▣ *The Age of Reason*
(irrationality of religion)

Thomas Jefferson (1724-1826)



- *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*
- **The Declaration of Independence (1776)**



4. The Making of American Myths

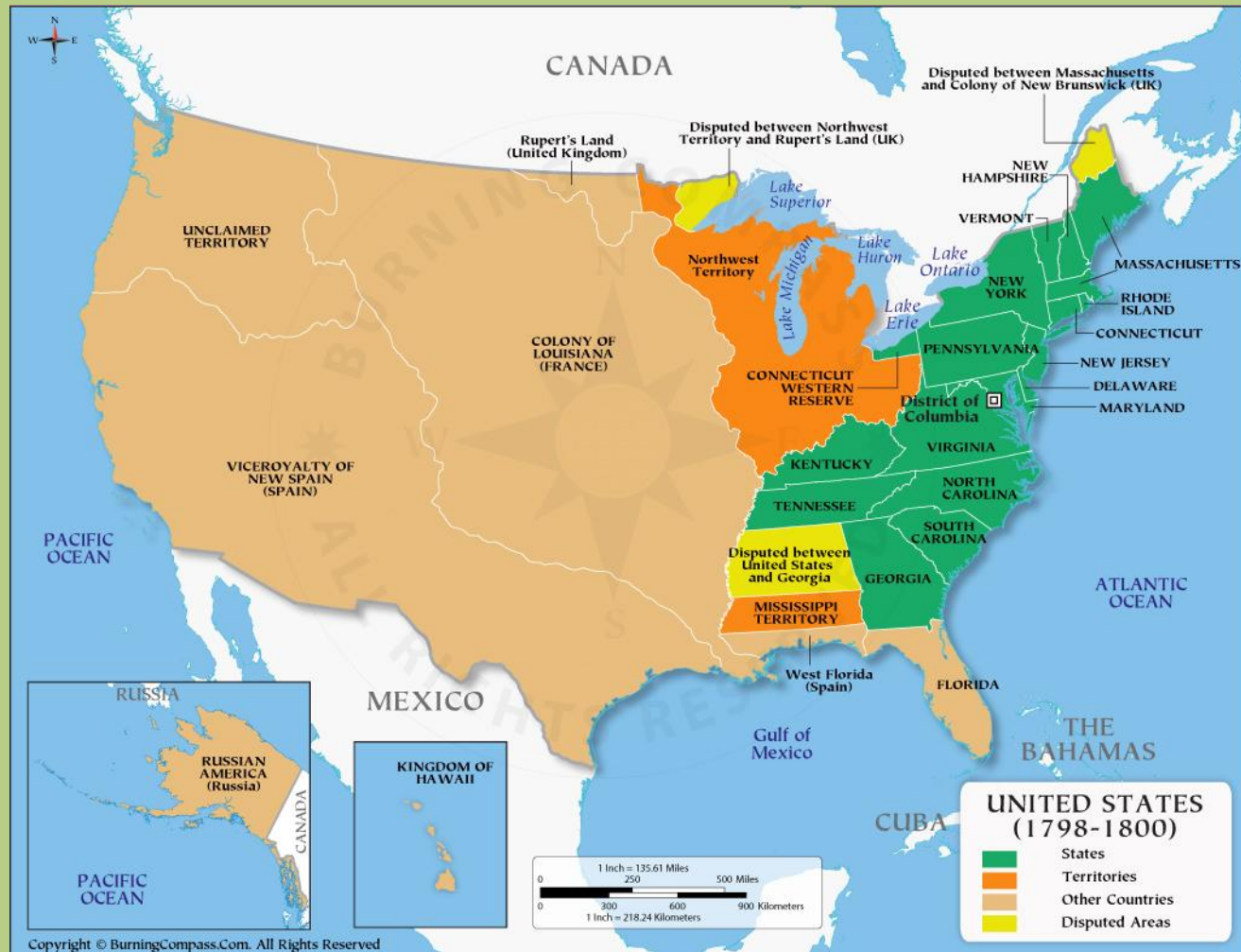
4.1. Myths of an emerging nation: Washington Irving


4.2. The making of Western myth: James Fenimore Cooper, Francis Parkman, Catharine Marie Sedgwick.

4.3. The making of Southern myth: Edgar Allan Poe

4.4. Legends of the Old Southwest: Davy Crockett, Mike Fink, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Washington Harris

The USA in 1800





1800-1865 in the history of the USA:

- Transformation from an infant republic into a large, self-confident nation
- Population: 9 million → 31 million, shift from country to town
- Newspapers and magazines proliferated
- Great opportunities for publications

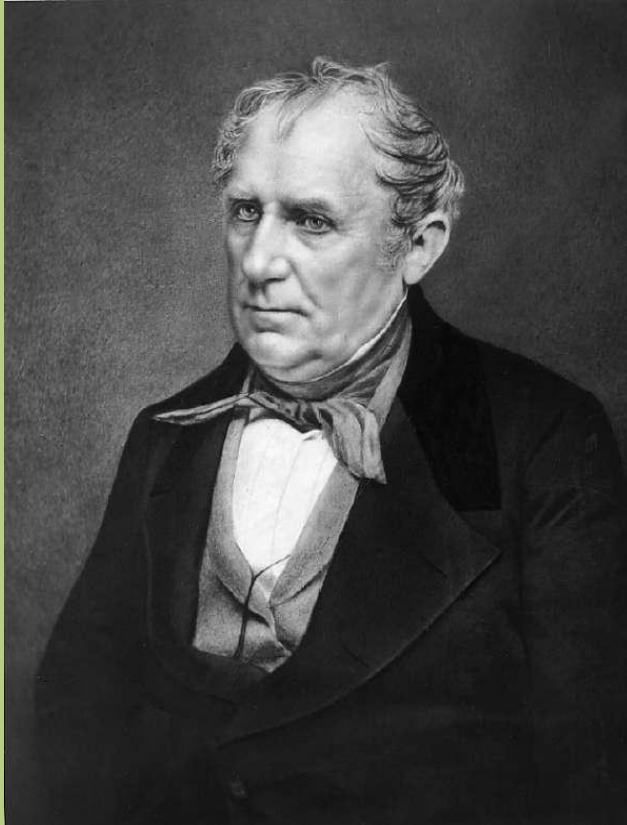
Myth of an emerging nation.

Washington Irving (1783–1859)



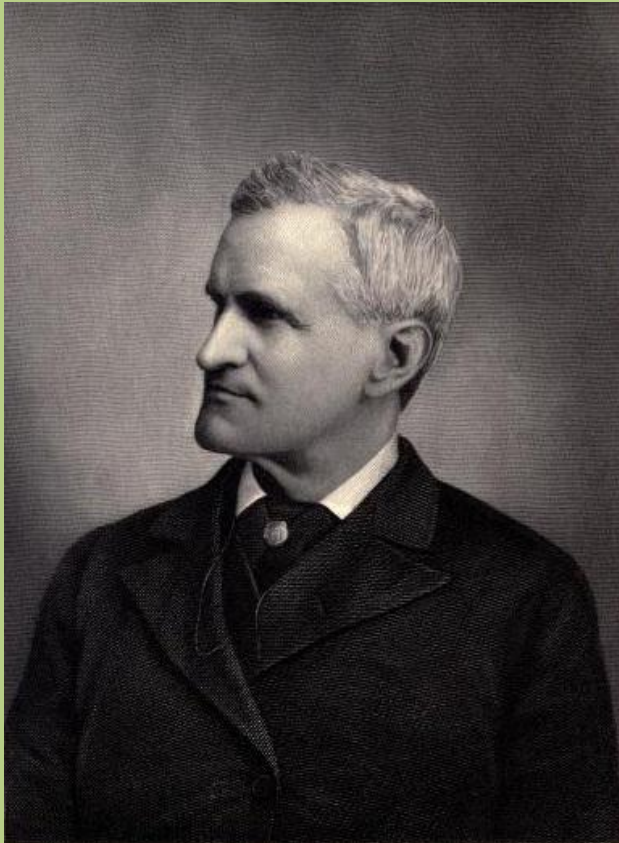
- Pen name Diedrich Knickerbocker: *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* – first American comic literature
- “Knickerbocker School”: for authors who wrote about “little old New York” before Civil War.
- *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.: Rip Van Winkle, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

The making of Western myth: James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851)



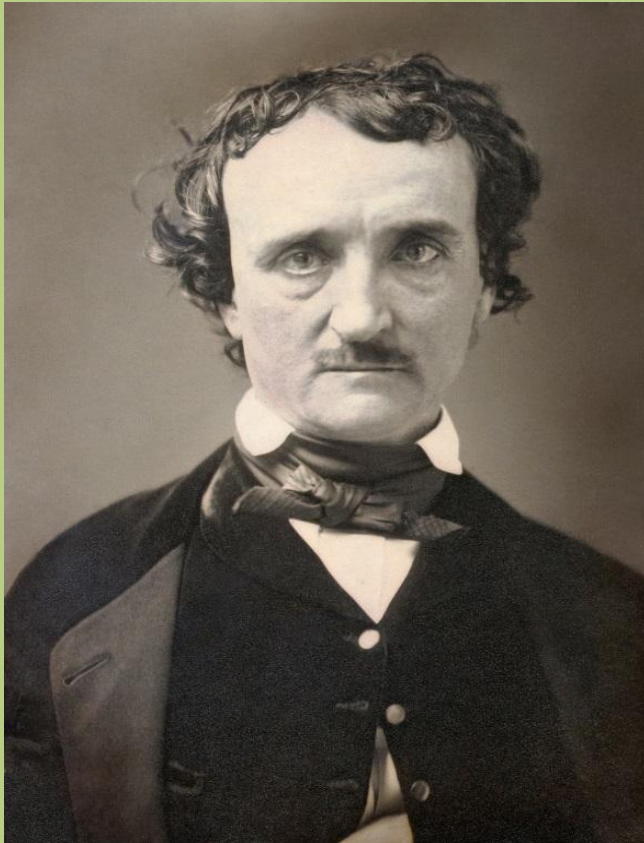
- The creator of the myth of the American West: Natty Bumppo – American Adam.
- The founding father of the American historical novel
- Novels: *Precaution*, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, *Leatherstocking Tales: The Pioneers*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Prairie*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Deerslayer*

The making of Western myth: Francis Parkman (1823–1893)



- Representative of a generation of American historians
- *The Oregon Trail*

The making of Southern myth: Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)



- The founding father of Southern myth.
- *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1827), *Poems by E. A. Poe* (1831), *The Raven and Other Poems* (1845).
- Seminal essays “*The Philosophy of Composition*” (1846), “*The Poetic Principle*”.
- Collection of stories, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1845).
- “*The Fall of the House of Usher*”

American Myths:

- **Myths of an emerging nation:**
exploration of the social and cultural transformations occurring in America and feelings of nervousness and nostalgia
- **Western myth:** a belief in mobility, a concern with the future; whatever problems it may have, America is still a land of possibility
- **Southern myth:** guilt and burden of the past, human beings are radically limited

1.4. Legends of the Old Southwest

Davy Crockett (1786–1836)



□ *Congressman*

□ *A Narrative of the
Life of David
Crockett, of the
State of Tennessee
(1834)*

Mike Fink (1770?–1823?)



Mike Fink

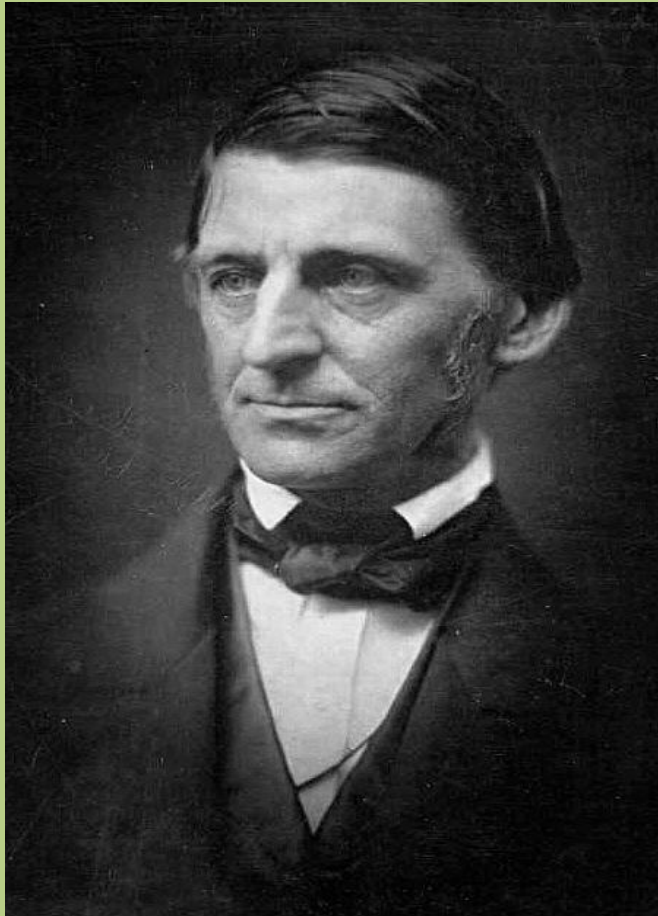
From "Davy Crockett's Almanac" 1830s

- An actual historical figure, an Indian scout, trapper
- *The Last of the Boatmen* (Morgan Neville)

5. The Making of American Selves

5.1. The Transcendentalists

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)



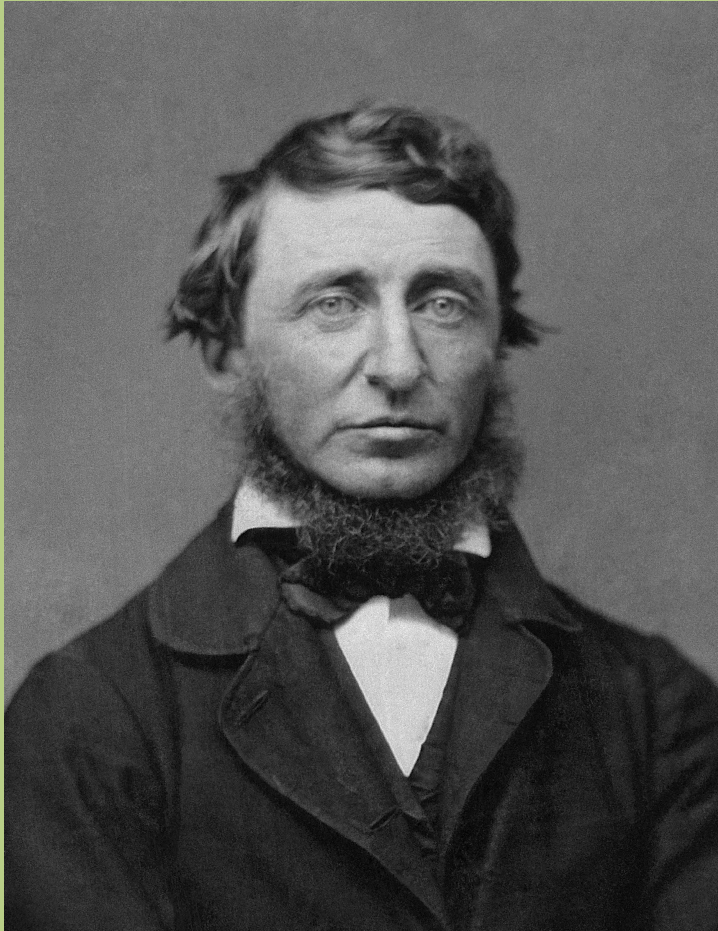
- An original relation to the universe, one founded on self-reliance and self-respect,
- “God incarnates himself in man.”
- “Every real man must be a nonconformist”
- **Transcendentalism**
- *The Dial* - transcendentalist quarterly magazine

Margaret Fuller (1810–1850)



□ *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) - the idea of self-development to “the woman question”

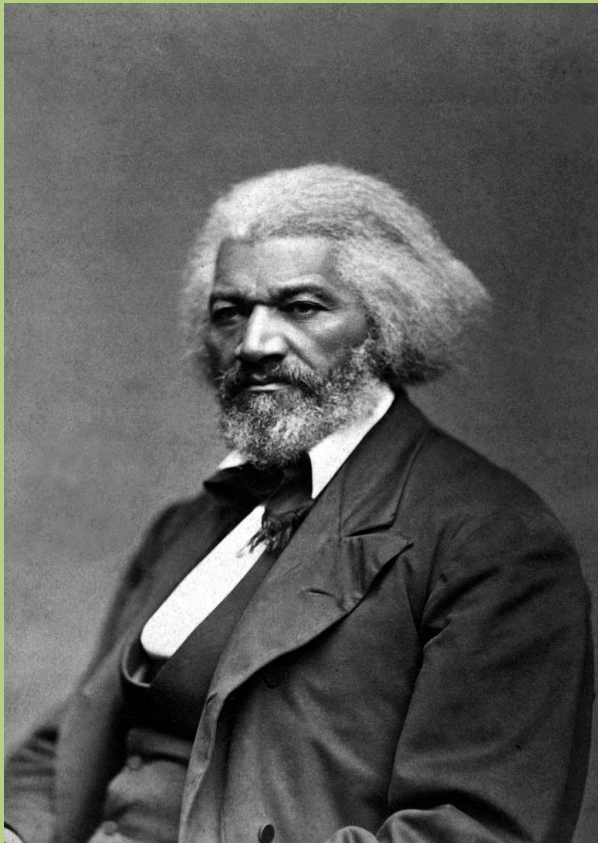
Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)



- *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854)
- *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849)
- *Excursions* (1863), *The Maine Woods* (1864), *Cape Cod* (1865), *A Yankee in Canada* (1866)

2.2. African American writing

Frederick Douglass (1817–1895)



- A leader and lecturer dedicated to the “great work” of black liberation.
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845)
- antislavery journals: **The North Star** (1847), *Douglass’ Monthly* (1858)

Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897)



□ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861).