

| PERIODS | Genre/Style | Effect/ Aspects | Historical Context | Examples |
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| PURITAN/COLONIAL 1650-1750 | Sermons, diaries, personal narratives Written in plain style | Instructive Reinforces authority of the Bible and church | A person's fate is determined by God All people are corrupt and must be saved by Christ | Bradford's <i>Of Plymouth Plantation</i> Rowlandson's "A Narrative of the Captivity" Edward's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" Though not written during Puritan times, <i>The Crucible</i> & <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> depict life during the time when Puritan theocracy prevailed. |
| REVOLUTIONARY/AGE OF REASON 1750-1800 | Political pamphlets Travel writing Highly ornate style Persuasive writing | Patriotism grows Instills pride Creates common agreement about issues National mission and the American character | Tells readers how to interpret what they are reading to encourage Revolutionary War support Instructive in values | Writings of Jefferson, Paine, Henry Franklin's <i>Poor Richard's Almanac</i> Franklin's "The Autobiography" |
| ROMANTICISM 1800-1860 | Character sketches Slave narratives Poetry Short stories | Value feeling and intuition over reasoning Journey away from corruption of civilization and limits of rational thought toward the integrity of nature and freedom of the imagination Helped instill proper gender behavior for men and women Allowed people to re-imagine the American past | Expansion of magazines, newspapers, and book publishing Slavery debates Industrial revolution brings ideas that the "old ways" of doing things are now irrelevant | Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis" Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" Poems of Emily Dickinson Poems of Walt Whitman |
| AMERICAN RENAISSANCE/ TRANSCENDENTALISM | Poetry Short Stories Novels . . . | Transcendentalists: *True reality is spiritual *Comes from 18 th century philosopher | Today in literature we still see portrayals of alluring antagonists whose evil characteristics appeal to one's sense of awe | Poems and essays of Emerson & Thoreau Thoreau's <i>Walden</i> Aphorisms of Emerson and |

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| <p>1840-1860</p> <p>(Note overlap in time period with Romanticism -- some consider the anti-transcendentalists to be the "dark" romantics or gothic)</p> | <p>Transcendentalists</p> <p>*Hold readers' attention through dread of a series of terrible possibilities</p> <p>*Feature landscapes of dark forests, extreme vegetation, concealed ruins with horrific rooms, depressed characters</p> | <p>Immanuel Kant</p> <p>* Idealists</p> <p>* Self-reliance & individualism</p> <p>* Emerson & Thoreau</p> <p>Anti-Transcendentalists:</p> <p>* Used symbolism to great effect</p> <p>*Sin, pain, & evil exist</p> <p>* Poe, Hawthorne, & Melville</p> | <p>Today in literature we still see stories of the persecuted young girl forced apart from her true love</p> <p>Today in literature we still read of people seeking the true beauty in life and in nature ... a belief in true love and contentment</p> | <p>Thoreau</p> <p>Nathaniel Hawthorne's <i>The Scarlet Letter</i></p> <p>Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" and "The Black Cat"</p> |
| <p>REALISM</p> <p>1855-1900</p> <p>(Period of Civil War and Postwar period)</p> | <p>Novels and short stories</p> <p>Objective narrator</p> <p>Does not tell reader how to interpret story</p> <p>Dialogue includes voices from around the country</p> | <p>Social realism: aims to change a specific social problem</p> <p>Aesthetic realism: art that insists on detailing the world as one sees it</p> | <p>Civil War brings demand for a "truer" type of literature that does not idealize people or places</p> | <p>Writings of Twain, Bierce, Crane</p> <p><i>The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i></p> <p><i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> (some say 1st modern novel)</p> <p>Regional works like: <i>The Awakening</i>, <i>Ethan Frome</i>, and <i>My Antonia</i> (some say modern)</p> |
| <p>THE MODERNS</p> <p>1900-1950</p> | <p>Novels</p> <p>Plays</p> <p>Poetry (a great resurgence after deaths of Whitman & Dickinson)</p> <p>Highly experimental as writers seek a unique style</p> <p>Use of interior monologue & stream of consciousness</p> | <p>In Pursuit of the American Dream--</p> <p>*Admiration for America as land of Eden</p> <p>*Optimism</p> <p>*Importance of the Individual</p> | <p>Writers reflect the ideas of Darwin (survival of the fittest) and Karl Marx (how money and class structure control a nation)</p> <p>Overwhelming technological changes of the 20th Century</p> <p>Rise of the youth culture</p> <p>WWI and WWII</p> <p>Harlem Renaissance</p> | <p>Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i></p> <p>Poetry of Jeffers, Williams, Cummings, Frost, Eliot, Sandburg, Pound, Robinson, Stevens</p> <p>Rand's <i>Anthem</i></p> <p>Short stories and novels of Steinbeck, Hemingway, Thurber, Welty, and Faulkner</p> <p>Hansberry's <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> & Wright's <i>Native Son</i> (an outgrowth of Harlem Renaissance-- see below)</p> |

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| | | | | Miller's <i>The Death of a Salesman</i> (some consider Postmodern) |
| HARLEM RENAISSANCE (Parallel to modernism) 1920s | Allusions to African-American spirituals Uses structure of blues songs in poetry (repetition) Superficial stereotypes revealed to be complex characters | Gave birth to "gospel music" Blues and jazz transmitted across American via radio and phonographs | Mass African-American migration to Northern urban centers African-Americans have more access to media and publishing outlets after they move north | Essays & Poetry of W.E.B. DuBois Poetry of McKay, Toomer, Cullen Poetry, short stories and novels of Hurston and Hughes <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> |
| POSTMODERNISM 1950 to present Note: Many critics extend this to present and merge with Contemporary -- see below) | Mixing of fantasy with nonfiction; blurs lines of reality for reader No heroes Concern with individual in isolation Social issues as writers align with feminist & ethnic groups Usually humorless Narratives Metafiction Present tense Magic realism | Erodes distinctions between classes of people Insists that values are not permanent but only "local" or "historical" | Post-World War II prosperity Media culture interprets values | Mailer's <i>The Naked and the Dead</i> and <i>The Executioner's Song</i> Feminist & Social Issue poets: Plath, Rich, Sexton, Levertov, Baraka, Cleaver, Morrison, Walker & Giovanni Miller's <i>The Death of a Salesman</i> & <i>The Crucible</i> (some consider Modern) Lawrence & Lee's <i>Inherit the Wind</i> Capote's <i>In Cold Blood</i> Stories & novels of Vonnegut Salinger's <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> Beat Poets: Kerouac, Burroughs, & Ginsberg Kesey's <i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> |
| CONTEMPORARY 1970s-Present (Continuation of postmodernism) | Narratives: both fiction and nonfiction Anti-heroes Concern with .. | Too soon to tell | People beginning a new century and a new millennium Media culture interprets values | Poetry of Dove, Cisneros, Soto, Alexie Writings of Angelou, Baldwin, Allende, Tan, Kingsolver, Kingston, Grisham, |

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| | <p>between people</p> <p>Emotion-provoking</p> <p>Humorous irony</p> <p>Storytelling emphasized</p> <p>Autobiographical essays</p> | | | <p>Crichton, Clancy</p> <p>Walker's <i>The Color Purple</i> & Haley's <i>Roots</i></p> <p>Butler's <i>Kindred</i></p> <p>Guest's <i>Ordinary People</i></p> <p>Card's <i>Ender's Game</i></p> <p>O'Brien <i>The Things They Carried</i></p> <p>Frazier's <i>Cold Mountain</i></p> |
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