

Timeline of American History & Literature

1609-1776 Puritan/Colonial Period in New England

1607-9

Jamestown founded, Hudson explores Hudson River

1611

King James Bible

1620

Arrival of the *Mayflower* at Plymouth, Mayflower Compact

1622

first regular newspaper

1580-1631

Captain John Smith saved by Pocahontas and writes *The General History of Virginia*

1630

John Winthrop leads the Puritan migration to Massachusetts Bay. Prints his journal, *A History of New England*

1633

Harvard College founded
William Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*

1640

First book published in America, the *Bay Psalm Book*

1647

George Fox begins to preach

1662

Wigglesworth poem, *Day of Doom*

1667-78

To My dear and Loving Husband, Anne Bradstreet
George Fox (1624-1692) preaching

1682

Mary Rowlandson's *Captivity and Restoration*

1692

Salem witch trials

1700

Population of English colonies reaches 250,000

1702-1714

First American newspaper
Cotton Mather, Puritan essays to reconcile religion & science; a clergyman, theologian, writer (Puritan literary ideal). *Ecclesiastical History of New England*

1729-1734

Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (famous sermon)
Wesley brothers visit America
Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac*

1754-63

French-Indian War

Birth of the novel

Rousseau¹ (1712-1778), French philosopher²

1758

Jonathan Edwards becomes president of College of N.J.(later called, Princeton), dies of an inoculation
Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)
French **Voltaire**³, *Candide*⁴, brutal mockery of Job⁵

1754-63

French and Indian War
*Tristram Shandy*⁶, Laurence Sterne

1772

On the Rising Glory of America, Philip Freneau
(Princeton commencement poem)

1773

Boston tea party
Phillis Wheatley, *On being ... Africa to America*

1775

Battle at Concord's North Bridge

1776-1820 Democratic Origins & Revolutionary Writers, Romanticism, Pantheism

¹ "I am commencing [said Rousseau] an undertaking, hitherto without precedent, and which will never find an imitator. I desire to set before my fellow-men the likeness of a man in all the truth of nature, and that man is myself. Myself alone! I know the feelings of my heart, and I know men. I am not made like any of those I have seen; I venture to believe that I am not made like any of those who are in existence."

² He applied *primitivism* to his political agenda, the idea that civilization has spoiled the noble savage.

³ "What a light has burst over Europe within the last few years! It first illuminated all the princes of the north; it has even come into the universities. It is the light of common sense!" Rousseau

⁴ Written in three days.

⁵ Opinion of Frederick the Great, a patron of Voltaire

⁶ A spontaneous, chaotic account of several years in the character's life. Denounced and highly acclaimed.

Cult of nature, stop thinking, start feeling
1776
Declaration of Independence/War of Independence⁷

1787-94
The Constitution ratified by the states. Alexander Hamilton and James Madison write 85 essays defending constitution, the *Federalist Papers*.

George Washington elected first president of the United States

1791
The Bill of Rights ratified by the states

1800
Biology becomes a recognized area of study⁸
Thomas Jefferson elected president

1803-6
Lewis & Clark expedition
Dictionary, Noah Webster

1807-8
James Madison elected president

1820-1865 American Romantic Renaissance Movement Victorian/Realism/Naturalism

Romantic/Neoclassic, emerging Romanticism

1811-1828
Emerson lives with grandparents in Concord in the Old Manse during War of 1812 at age eleven
Sense and Sensibility, *Emma*, Jane Austen
Rip Van Winkle, Washington Irving
Last of the Mohicans, James Fenimore Cooper
Thanatopsis, Wm Cullen Bryant, links American literature to English Romanticism
Henry David Thoreau bn. in Concord in 1817 (d.1862)
Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, insists America has her own language

1831-1836
Darwin sails on the *Beagle* to the Galapagos Islands
Siege of the Alamo; Texas declares its independence
Nature by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), spokesman for Transcendentalism, pub. anonymously

1837
Birds of America, John James Audubon (1785-1851)
Twice-Told Tales by Nathaniel Hawthorne
The American Scholar, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Phi Beta Kappa Harvard address

⁷ The bloody French Revolution and the American War for Independence are linked with the age of Romanticism.

⁸ Absolute truth will be displaced by relative, pragmatic truths that science will proclaim

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1840
Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). Invented detective story.
The Alcotts move to Concord, collaborate with Emerson to publish transcendental journal, the *Dial*

1841
Essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson
Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64) rents the Old Manse, former home of Emerson's grandfather, for three years
Thoreau's brother and Emerson's son die
Alcott's begin a one year experiment in communal living on 90-acre farm near Harvard, MA

1844
Samuel Morse invents the telegraph⁹
The Raven, Edgar Allan Poe
Emerson purchases "a wood lot by Walden Pond"

1845
United States annexes Texas
*Hard Times*¹⁰, Charles Dickens
Narrative of the Life of an American Slave, by Frederick Douglass
Alcott's buy a place .5 miles from Emerson with grant from Emerson, name it Hillside
Emerson begins 2-year experiment in cabin on Emerson's land by Walden Pond. Anti-slavery society meets on his doorstep¹¹

1830-47
Mormon trek westward
Evangeline, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Wuthering Heights, Charlotte Bronte.

1848
Gold discovered in California

1850
The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne, American romanticism with Puritan roots
Charles G Finney (1792-1875) preaching

1851
Moby-Dick by Herman Melville (1819-1891)

1852
Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe
Idylls of the King, Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)
Hawthornes return to Concord and purchase the Alcott's home, renaming it the Wayside

⁹ What faith had been to the Middle Ages, science would be to the coming 19th century.

¹⁰ Dickens' harshest indictment of English social problems during his time.

¹¹ "An immoral law makes it a man's duty to break it"

1854-1859

Walden, or Life in the Woods by Henry David Thoreau¹² (self reliance, contemplate nature)
*Origin of Species*¹³, Darwin

1855

Leaves of Grass, ded. to Thoreau, by Walt Whitman

1857-1859

The Dred Scott decision

Origin of the Species, Charles Darwin¹⁴

1860

Abraham Lincoln elected president

1861

Outbreak of the Civil War; first battle of Bull Run
Thoreau dies in 1862 of TB, buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery

1863

Emancipation Proclamation

Battles of Vicksburg & Gettysburg

1865

Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox Court House
end of the Civil War
Assassination of President Lincoln

Post-Civil War- 1914

Rise of realism to naturalism

1867

Around the World in 80 Days, Jules Verne
The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County by Mark Twain/Samuel Clemens (1835-1910) leads away from romanticism towards realism
United States purchases Alaska
C H Spurgeon (1834-1892) preaching

1868

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott¹⁵

¹² A Transcendentalist.

¹³ The theory of evolution was defended by intellectuals and scientists against theological objections, and was taken as confirmation that progress was the natural direction of life. The controversy helped define popular ideas of the dedicated scientist and ever-expanding human knowledge of and control over the world.

¹⁴ "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection" suggest that strength and force win over right, and moral absolutes become relative.

¹⁵ Science brought confidence to mankind. It was felt that the heart and feelings were the key to understanding and meaning, Transcendentalism.

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Edward M Bounds (1835-1913) preaching

1869

completion of the first transcontinental railroad
John D. Rockefeller forms the Standard Oil Company

1872

Emerson's home burns, the Alcott sisters rescue some manuscripts, he leaves abroad

1873

Emerson, now 70, returns home to find his home and library restored by friends and neighbors

1876

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain
telephone invented by Alexander Graham Bell

1877

phonograph invented by Thomas Edison
incandescent bulb invented by Edison
Alcott's purchase the Thoreau house

1880

population exceeds 50 million

1881-1884

Emily Dickinson (1830-86), various poetry¹⁶
The Joyful Knowledge, Nietzsche¹⁷, God is dead!
The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James (1843-1916)
gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona
*Huckleberry Finn*¹⁸, Mark Twain (first modern American novel)
Walt Whitman (1819-1892) visits Emerson and walks the Walden woods

1882

Emerson dies, buried on Author's Ridge in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery

1886-1893

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets by Stephen Crane
Bronson Alcott dies, Louisa May dies two days later, buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery
Chicago World's Fair

1895

The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane
Time Machine, H G Wells (1866-1945)
invention of motion picture

1898

Spanish-American War

¹⁶ She was greatly influenced by Jonathan Edwards and Emerson.

¹⁷ Like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche was an existentialist.

¹⁸ Example of social comment, the **Noble Savage**.

1903

The Call of the Wild, Jack London¹⁹
the Wright brothers' first flight

1904

The Golden Bowl by Henry James

1909

first Model T Ford produced

1911

Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton

1913

O Pioneers! by Willa Cather
The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost (1874-1963)

1914-1965 Modern/Agnostic²⁰

disillusionment with ideals and civilization, American
drama flourishes

North of Boston by Robert Frost
outbreak of World War I
completion of the Panama Canal

1915

German submarine sinks *Lusitania*
Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity

1917

United States enters into World War I

1919-1922

Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
Prohibition enacted
population exceeds 100 million
*Ulysses*²¹, James Joyce (1882-1941)

1925-1926

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, helped create
roaring twenties image
Scopes Trial
My Mortal Enemy by Willa Cather
*Lady Chatterley's Lover*²², D H Lawrence
Charles Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic

1929

The Sound and the Fury by Wm. Faulkner (1897-***
A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway (1898-***

*A Room of One's Own*²³, Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)
Stock Market Crash

1930

E E Cummings (1894-1962) experimental poetry
television broadcasting begins

1937

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck (1902-68)
outbreak of World War II in Asia

1938

Orson Welles' radio broadcast "*War of the Worlds*"
Our Town, Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)

1939-1942

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
Collected Poems, A E Housman (1859-1936)
outbreak of World War II in Europe
Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor
United States enters World War II

1945

atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Post WWII

1944

The Glass Menagerie, Tennessee Williams

1949

Dr Faustus, Thomas Mann (1875-1955)
Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller, realism
1984, George Orwell

1951

The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger
Complete Poems, Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

1952

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
East of Eden, John Steinbeck

1953

end of Korean War
Literary Essays of Ezra Pound (1885-1972)
On Poets and Poetry, T S Eliot (1888-1965)

1961

Catch-22 by Joseph Heller

1963

assassination of President John F. Kennedy

¹⁹ Greatly influenced by Marx, Darwin, and Nietzsche.

²⁰ One who believes that there can be no proof of the existence of God but does not deny the possibility that God exists.

²¹ Banned, burned, then devoured. One day in a man's life.

²² His writing and painting was proclaimed obscene.

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²³ A classic of feminist movement, interior monologue.

1965- **Post-Modern/Atheistic**
Nihilistic, anti-Christian, fully
subjective

1968

Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated

Robert Kennedy assassinated

Jabberwocky, Lewis Carroll

1969

Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut

Neil Armstrong becomes first man on the moon

Woodstock, the event and the poem by Joni Mitchell

1973

Vietnam Peace Agreement

1974

resignation of President Nixon over Watergate scandal

1989

end of the Cold War