

Copyright © 1994, 1991, 1989 by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN 0-13-722448-6

10 02 01 00 99

Art credits begin on page 1205.



PRENTICE HALL
A Division of Simon & Schuster
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

STAFF CREDITS FOR PRENTICE HALL LITERATURE

Publisher: Eileen Thompson

Editorial: Ellen Bowler, Douglas McCollum, Philip Fried, Kelly Ackley, Eric Hausmann, Lauren Weidenman

Multicultural/ESL: Marina Liapunov, Barbara T. Stone

Marketing: Mollie Ledwith, Belinda Loh

National Language Arts Consultants: Ellen Lees Backstrom, Ed.D., Craig A. McGhee, Karen Massey Riley, Vennisa Travers, Gail Witt

Permissions: Doris Robinson

Design: Susan Walrath, Carmela Pereira, Leslie Osher, AnnMarie Roselli

Visual Research: Libby Forsyth, Emily Rose, Martha Conway

Production: Suse Bell, Joan McCulley, Elizabeth Torjussen, Amy E. Fleming, Lynn Contrucci, Garret Schenck, Lorraine Moffa

Publishing Technology: Andrew Black, Deborah J. Jones, Monduane Harris, Cleasta Wilburn, Greg Myers

Pre-Press Production: Laura Sanderson, Natalia Bilash, Denise Herckenrath

Print and Bind: Rhett Conklin, Gertrude Szyferblatt

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following for permission to reprint copyrighted material:

The American Scholar

Lines from the Poem "Garden of My Childhood" by Kuangchi C. Chang. Reprinted from *The American Scholar*, Volume 26, Number 3, Summer 1957. Copyright © 1957 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

Elizabeth Barnett, Literary Executor of the estate of Norma Millay Ellis

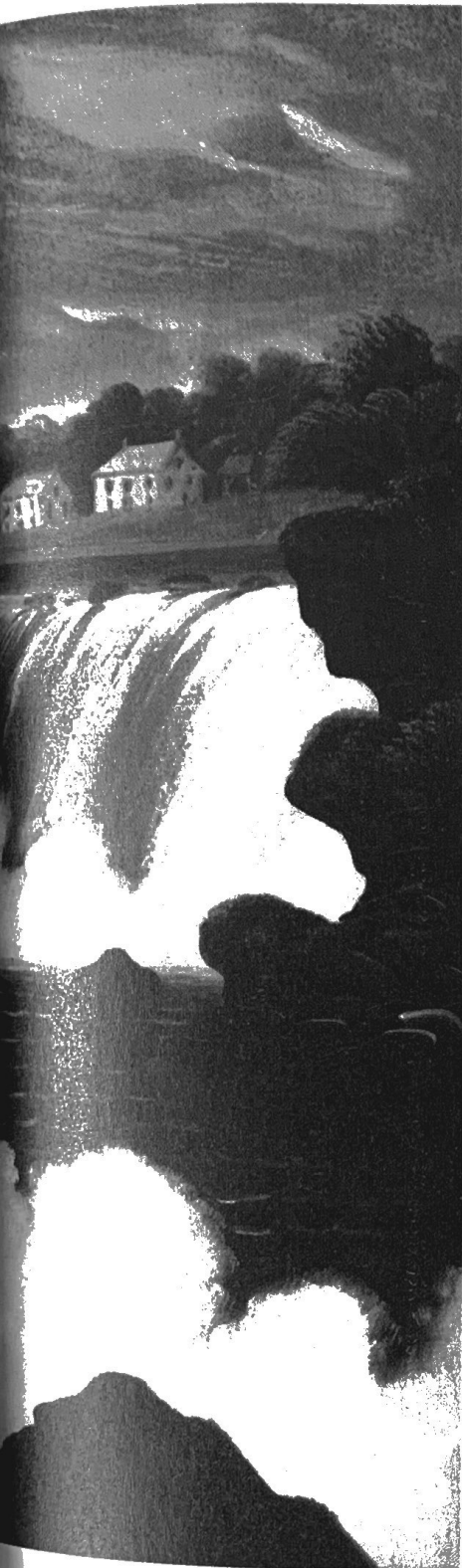
Excerpts from "I Shall Go Back Again to the Bleak Shore" and "Recuerdo" by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Copyright

1922, 1923, 1950, 1951 by Edna St. Vincent Millay and Norma Millay Ellis. "Renaissance" by Edna St. Vincent Millay. From *Collected Poems*, Harper & Row. Copyright 1912, 1940 by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Reprinted by permission.

Susan Bergholz Literary Services

"Straw Into Gold" by Sandra Cisneros. Copyright © by Sandra Cisneros 1987. First published under the title "A Writer's Voyage" in *The Texas Observer*, September 1987. Reprinted by permission of Susan Bergholz Literary Services, New York.

(Continued on page 1201.)



A GROWING NATION

1800–1840

America is a land of wonders, in which everything is in constant motion and every change seems an improvement. . . . No natural boundary seems to be set to the efforts of man; and in his eyes what is not yet done is only what he has not yet attempted to do.

Alexis de Tocqueville

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville, a young Frenchman, journeyed to the United States to report on the American penitentiary system for his government. He observed far more than prisons during his stay, however. His observations were compiled in a monumental four-volume work, *Democracy in America*, that is considered a classic of political literature. While Tocqueville was impressed by the bustle and optimism that he noted, he was not as impressed by American literature. "America has produced very few writers of distinction," he wrote, adding that the literary output of England "still darts its rays into the forests of the New World."

Tocqueville had perhaps arrived a few years too soon. At the very time he was in the United States, a number of writers of distinction were at work. Among them were Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, William Cullen Bryant, and Edgar Allan Poe, all of whom would achieve fame and acceptance far beyond "the forests of the New World."

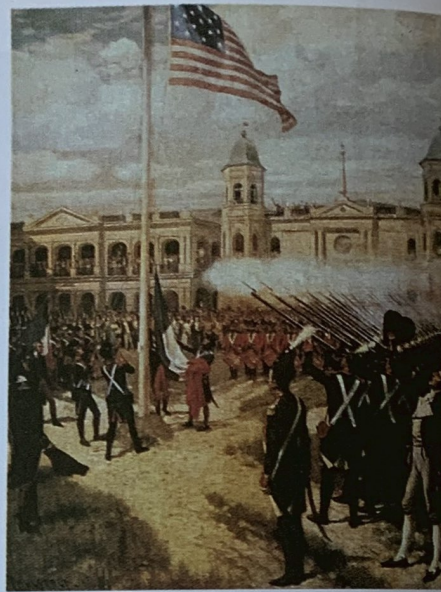
THE HISTORICAL SETTING

When Thomas Jefferson was elected President in 1800, three new states, Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee, had joined the original thirteen. Then, in 1803, at the stroke of a pen, the Louisiana Purchase doubled the nation's territory. By 1837, when Michigan became a state, more than half the present-day fifty states were in the Union.

The rapid growth of the nation brought with it an upsurge of national pride and identity. Improved transportation helped bind the old and the new states together. Canals, turnpikes, and railroads boomed during this period. Steamboats and sailing packets helped speed people and goods to their destinations. The westward expansion of the United States and its explosive growth in population had profound effects on American life and literature.

Old New York

By 1800, the country's frontier had moved far away from the East Coast. Yet there were other



LOUISIANA PURCHASE CEREMONY AT
NEW ORLEANS, 20 DECEMBER 1803
Thor de Thulstrup

kinds of national frontiers. In the early 1800's, New York, the city that Washington Irving called "Gotham," was becoming a sort of American literary frontier.

New York City had a population of 60,000 in 1800, making it the second largest city in the nation after Philadelphia. A decade later, it passed Philadelphia and was never again challenged for population leadership. By 1840, the population of New York City was 312,000, or about the size of Philadelphia and Boston combined.

The earliest Dutch settlement on Manhattan Island had been at the very southern tip. In 1820, the built-up area extended north to 14th Street and was advancing rapidly up the island. The commercial buildings of the day were low, three or four stories at most.

Despite New York's prosperity, it was not looked upon as a cultural capital. Tocqueville saw it as a center of "all our greatest vices, without any of those interests which counteract their baneful influence." In many people's eyes, Philadelphia remained "the Athens of America," but that was changing. New York, cultivated or not, was attracting America's first professional writers. All four authors represented in this section—Irving,

Cooper, Bryant, and Poe—spent important parts of their careers in New York City.

The Growth of Democracy

When Tocqueville looked at American cities such as New York, he foresaw problems. A firm believer in democratic ideals, Tocqueville was concerned about the possible excesses of democracy in urban areas. He thought that cities were too likely to put power “in the hands of a populace carrying out its own impulses.”

In fact, the people of the United States had already moved toward giving themselves more direct power over government. The election in 1828 of Andrew Jackson, “the People’s President,” ushered in the era of the common man. Property re-

quirements for voting began to be eliminated. Presidential electors were increasingly chosen by popular vote, rather than by state legislatures.

Not everyone shared in the triumph of the common man, however. Despite early stirrings of feminism, little political attention was paid to women. The majority of blacks were still slaves, and each slave counted as three fifths of a person for purposes of congressional representation. Still, this period saw the beginnings of the feminist and anti-slavery movements.

One of the tragic aspects of the Jackson era was “Indian removal,” the forcible seizure of tribal lands. In the South, many thousands of Native Americans were uprooted and moved to open lands in the West. The most publicized removal was that of the Cherokees from northwestern Georgia to the Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. This 1838 “Trail

ANDREW JACKSON ENCOURAGING HIS RIFLEMEN AT THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS, JANUARY 8, 1815
Colored Engraving, 19th Century



of Tears” took the lives of about 4,000 of the 15,000 Cherokees who began the long trek.

Despite all this, the first four decades of the 1800’s were, on the whole, hopeful ones. The young republic seemed able to weather any storm.

America on the World Stage

One of the storms to be weathered was the War of 1812. This two-and-a-half-year conflict was fought to settle a number of grievances against Great Britain, including the impressment of American seamen by the Royal Navy. Although neither side gained or lost, the war created a number of American military heroes. The bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor inspired Francis Scott Key to write “The Star-Spangled Banner.” After the war, there was a feeling of solidarity in the United States. In addition, the war convinced Europeans that the United States was on the world stage to stay.

That fact was emphasized again in 1823 with the Monroe Doctrine. President James Monroe, fearing European intervention in the newly free nations of Latin America, stated that “the American continents . . . are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.” Monroe’s statement attracted little attention at the time. As the United States gained strength and prestige, however, European nations were not eager to challenge it.

Florida and the Southwest raised special problems for the young nation. As late as 1818, Florida was still a Spanish province. Border troubles created tension, and some Americans were killed. The resulting invasion by Andrew Jackson’s Tennessee militia convinced Spain to sell Florida rather than have it seized. In 1819, the United States purchased all of Spain’s land east of the Mississippi for \$5 million.

The situation in Texas was more complicated. Originally a part of Mexico, Texas seceded from Mexico in 1835. The following year, the Mexican army made its famous assault on the Alamo, where every Texan defender was killed. President Jackson recognized the Republic of Texas in 1837. Although Texas wanted to be annexed by the United States, it was not admitted to the Union until



LAST STAND AT THE ALAMO
N. C. Wyeth

1845. The annexation brought about war between Mexico and the United States. The American victory in this war added further territory in the West and Southwest to the United States.

AMERICAN LITERATURE COMES OF AGE

In 1783, when the Peace of Paris ended the American Revolution, an eleventh child was born into the family of a wealthy merchant in New York City. The child, Washington Irving, would become the first professional author of the new nation and the first American literary figure to win an international reputation. Other notable writers appeared on the scene in the early nineteenth century. By 1840, Americans could offer convincing answers to British writer Sydney Smith’s taunt from twenty years earlier: “In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book, or goes to an American play, or looks at an American picture or statue?”

The Professionals

From early colonial times, there were journalists who wrote and edited for a living. Their works were meant for the moment and did not survive as literature. The important literary figures who do survive from those days were outstanding writers, but none made writing his profession. Thomas Jefferson, for example, was a statesman, and Benjamin Franklin was a printer, inventor, and statesman.

America's cultural independence did not come easily. For nearly 200 years, American readers had been looking to Europe, mainly Great Britain, for most of their reading material other than the Bible, almanacs, newspapers, magazines, and broadsides. Susanna Rowson, raised in Massachusetts but living in England, wrote America's first best-selling novel, *Charlotte Temple*. It was published in London in 1791 and reprinted in Philadelphia in 1794.

In the early nineteenth century, two Scottish writers, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott, were popular in the United States. So, too, were three young English poets, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. In addition, classic English works dating back hundreds of years were in print. Tocqueville observed, "There is hardly a pioneer's hut that does not contain a few odd volumes of Shakespeare."

Most American writers of the time could not compete in that company. The names of dozens of writers in the early national period, familiar in their own time, are all but forgotten today. Charles Brockden Brown, James Paulding, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Caroline Kirkland, and N. P. Willis achieved substantial reputations in the early 1800's. All lived in or near New York City, except Kirkland, who was born in New York but moved to frontier Michigan, where she wrote realistic sketches of backwoods life.

A New York Biblical scholar, Clement Clarke Moore, gained more lasting fame with a poem he wrote for his family, with no thought of publication. A relative of Moore's gave a copy of the poem to a newspaper editor in Troy, New York. The poem, popularly known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas," thus made its first appearance in 1823.

One writer who had a national reputation was William Gilmore Simms of Charleston, South Car-

olina. As a young man, Simms lived briefly in New York City and published his first novel, *Martin Faber*, there in 1833. His reputation rests mainly on the romantic novels set in South Carolina that he wrote after returning to Charleston.

The major American authors of the day have already been mentioned. Washington Irving achieved his first great success in 1809 with the satiric *History of New York*, supposedly written by Diedrich Knickerbocker. James Fenimore Cooper introduced his frontier hero Natty Bumppo in *The Pioneers*, published in 1823. William Cullen Bryant, born in Massachusetts, wrote the first draft of his famous poem "Thanatopsis" when he was 17. Edgar Allan Poe, today the most widely read of the four, was a tormented genius. Poe's life, though brief and tragic, produced poems, stories, and criticism that have had a powerful influence on the course of American literature.

Knickerbocker and Leatherstocking

The North American continent offered a vast and exciting vista for American writers, whether in the settled regions or on the advancing edge of settlement. The first who took artistic advantage of this view in any sustained way were New Yorkers, members of two informal literary and artistic groups.

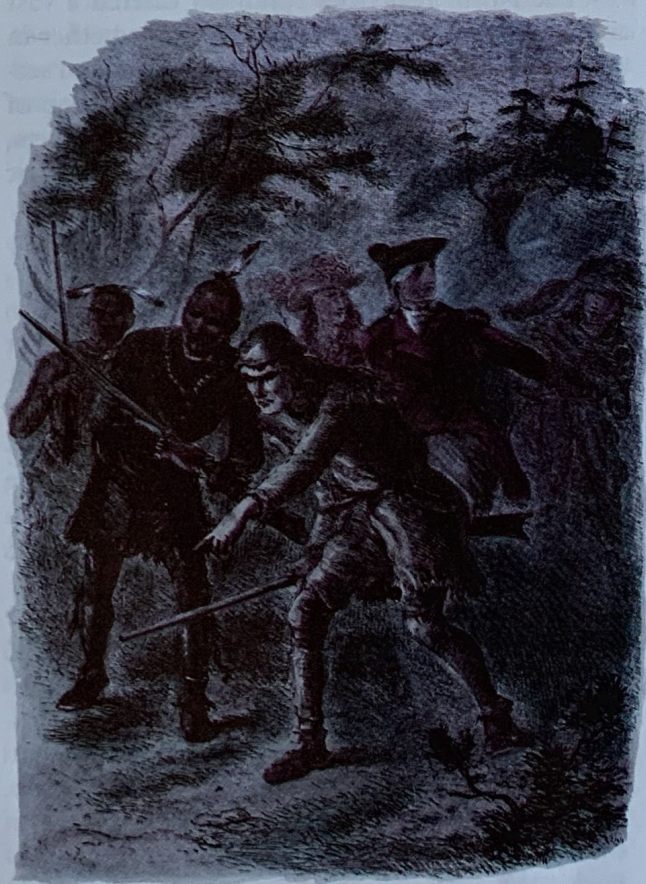
One was the Knickerbocker Group, led by Washington Irving. A notable member of this group was William Cullen Bryant, who moved to New York City in 1825. He remained a dominant literary figure in the city for the rest of his eighty-four years. Other members of stature were James Paulding and Fitz-Greene Halleck. Many Knickerbocker members were of lesser talent. Edgar Allan Poe ridiculed them in a critical review, *The Literati of New York City*, as writers with grand pretensions but limited abilities.

The second New York group, whose leader was James Fenimore Cooper, was called the Bread and Cheese Club. Basically a social club, its members' interests were not restricted to literature. Samuel F. B. Morse, renowned as both a painter and the inventor of the telegraph, was a member. So, too, was William Dunlap, an artist, the founder of the National Academy of Design, and the first professional American playwright and producer.

Not only were these groups located in New York, but the subject matter of their members' work was often local. Irving's *History of New York* and some of the stories in *The Sketch Book* (particularly "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow") make vivid use of local scenes and events. Irving, a world traveler, also used many European settings. The sketches in *The Alhambra*, for example, all involve Spain. Even so, Irving's use of regional materials sparked an interest in American locales, especially the Hudson River valley.

James Fenimore Cooper's fearless, straight-shooting frontier hero enthralled readers here and abroad. Natty Bumppo, a man of complete moral integrity, established the pattern for countless western heroes to come (although Bumppo himself was not a westerner). Four of the novels about Natty

ILLUSTRATION FROM AN 1872 EDITION OF JAMES FENIMORE COOPER'S *THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS*
Felix Octavius Carr Darley



Bumppo, which are collectively known as *The Leatherstocking Tales*, are set on the upstate New York frontier, which was already a dim memory in Cooper's time.

Cooper, like Irving, was a world traveler, and some of his novels have European settings. Yet Cooper, too, found much near at hand to write about, helping to focus attention on the varied literary wellsprings within the new nation.

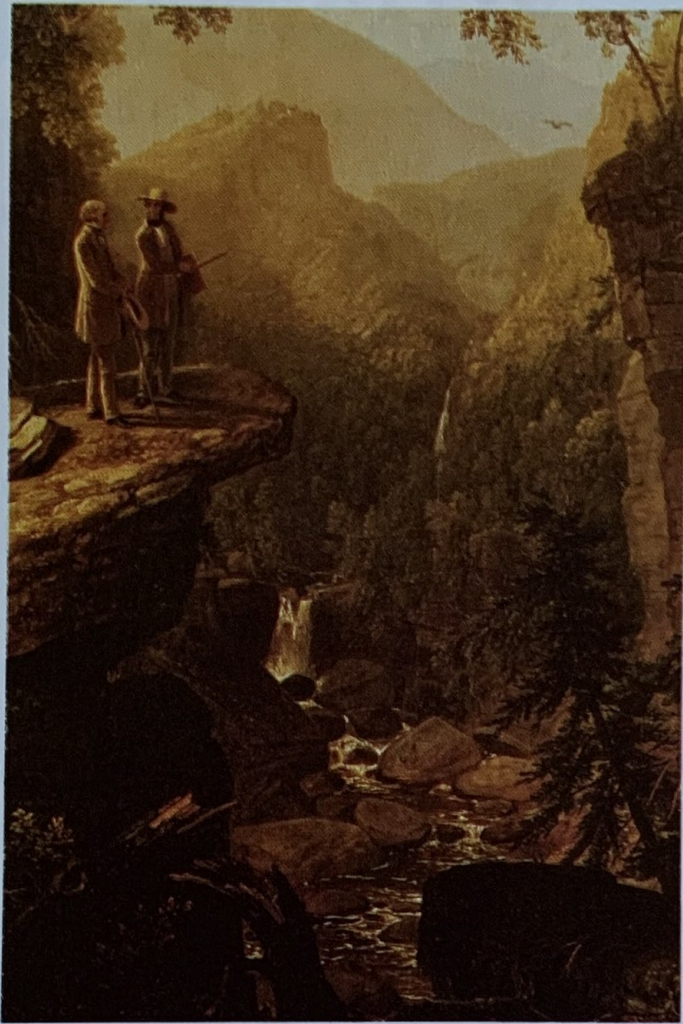
In 1831, while Irving was in London and Cooper was in Paris, Samuel Francis Smith, a Boston Baptist clergyman, wrote new words for the British song "God Save the King." Smith's words, simple and stirring, expressed the national mood in a timeless hymn: "My country, 'tis of thee, / Sweet land of liberty, / Of thee I sing."

From Reason to Romance

The Puritans were religious fundamentalists who sought salvation. The founders of the republic were political realists who pursued reason. So, then, how can the writers of the early nineteenth century—Irving, Cooper, Bryant, and Poe—be described? Despite unmistakable differences among them, they were all Romantics.

That name can be misleading, because the Romantics do not necessarily write about love. Romanticism can be viewed as an artistic movement, or a state of mind, or both. Romantic writers favor the imagination over reason, intuition over facts. Irving's *History of New York* is not a dry account of actual events; it is a rollicking history that ignores and alters facts at will. Cooper's *The Deerslayer*, the first in the *Leatherstocking* plot sequence, is not a realistic novel of life on the New York frontier. It is a mythical tale of the "natural" man and of lost innocence, of nature versus civilization.

There are other aspects of Romanticism. One is its intense interest in and reverence for nature. The poems of William Cullen Bryant are nearly perfect examples of this characteristic of Romanticism. Most of Bryant's best-known poems exalt the virtues of nature, whatever the poems' individual themes may be. Their titles show this emphasis: "The Yellow Violet," "A Forest Hymn," "Green River," "Summer Wind," and "The Prairies."



KINDRED SPIRITS
Asher B. Durand
New York Public Library

Another aspect of Romanticism is its accent on mystery—on the strange and fantastic aspects of human experience. In this realm, Edgar Allan Poe stands supreme. Poe wrote forty-eight brilliantly original lyric poems and a number of short stories whose characters, in the words of a biographer, “are either grotesques or the inhabitants of another world than this.”

Not all Romantics were writers. Romanticism pervaded all the arts in this time of America’s youth. Of special note were the landscape painters who came to be known as the Hudson River School. The most influential of this New York group was English-born Thomas Cole. His haunting and dramatic views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains have often been compared to Irving’s word images. Perhaps the most famous Hudson River School painting is Asher B. Durand’s *Kindred Spirits*, in which Thomas Cole and

William Cullen Bryant stand on a jutting rock overlooking a picturesque valley.

Seedtime in New England

Although many of the significant literary accomplishments from 1800 to 1840 occurred in New York, cultural activity was by no means limited to that city. Small groups of writers could be found in most major cities on the East Coast, notably Philadelphia, Richmond, and Charleston. After 1840, as New York writing lost its preeminence, an impressive burst of literary activity took place in and around Boston. By that date, the movement that one critic has called “the flowering of New England” had already begun. In the next fifteen years, it would produce an array of important writers and enduring literary works.



NEW ENGLAND RENAISSANCE

1840–1855

One man's justice is another's injustice; one man's beauty
another's ugliness; one man's wisdom another's folly.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

By 1840, it was clear that the American experiment in democracy had succeeded. England, rebuffed in the "Second American War for Independence," was no longer a threat to the survival of the republic. Andrew Jackson, the first "People's President," had served two tempestuous terms in office. New states were entering the Union: Arkansas had come in as the twenty-fifth state in 1836, and Michigan was soon to follow. Despite the Panic of 1837, the mood in America was buoyant; the best was yet to come. Alexis de Tocqueville, a French traveler in the 1830's, observed that Americans had "a lively faith in the perfectibility of man," and they "admit that what appears to them today to be good may be superseded by something better tomorrow."

Although the great early presidents of the Virginia and Massachusetts dynasties had passed from the scene, a bright new galaxy of statesmen could be seen in Washington, D.C.: Daniel Webster from Massachusetts, Henry Clay from Kentucky, Thomas Hart Benton from Missouri, and John C. Calhoun from South Carolina. As these men struggled with political issues that would ultimately break the nation apart, American literature blossomed suddenly and brilliantly in the New England states, particularly in Massachusetts, and specifically in Boston, Concord, Salem, Pittsfield, and Amherst. Historians have called this brief, sunlit era in American cultural history a "flowering," a "renaissance," and a "golden day." Its guiding spirit was Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Unitarian minister who in 1832 had left the pulpit of the Second Church of Boston for a broader stage. Wrote one historian, "The year 1836, when Emerson published his essay on *Nature*, may be taken as the focus of a period in American thought corresponding to 1776 in American politics."

HUB OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM

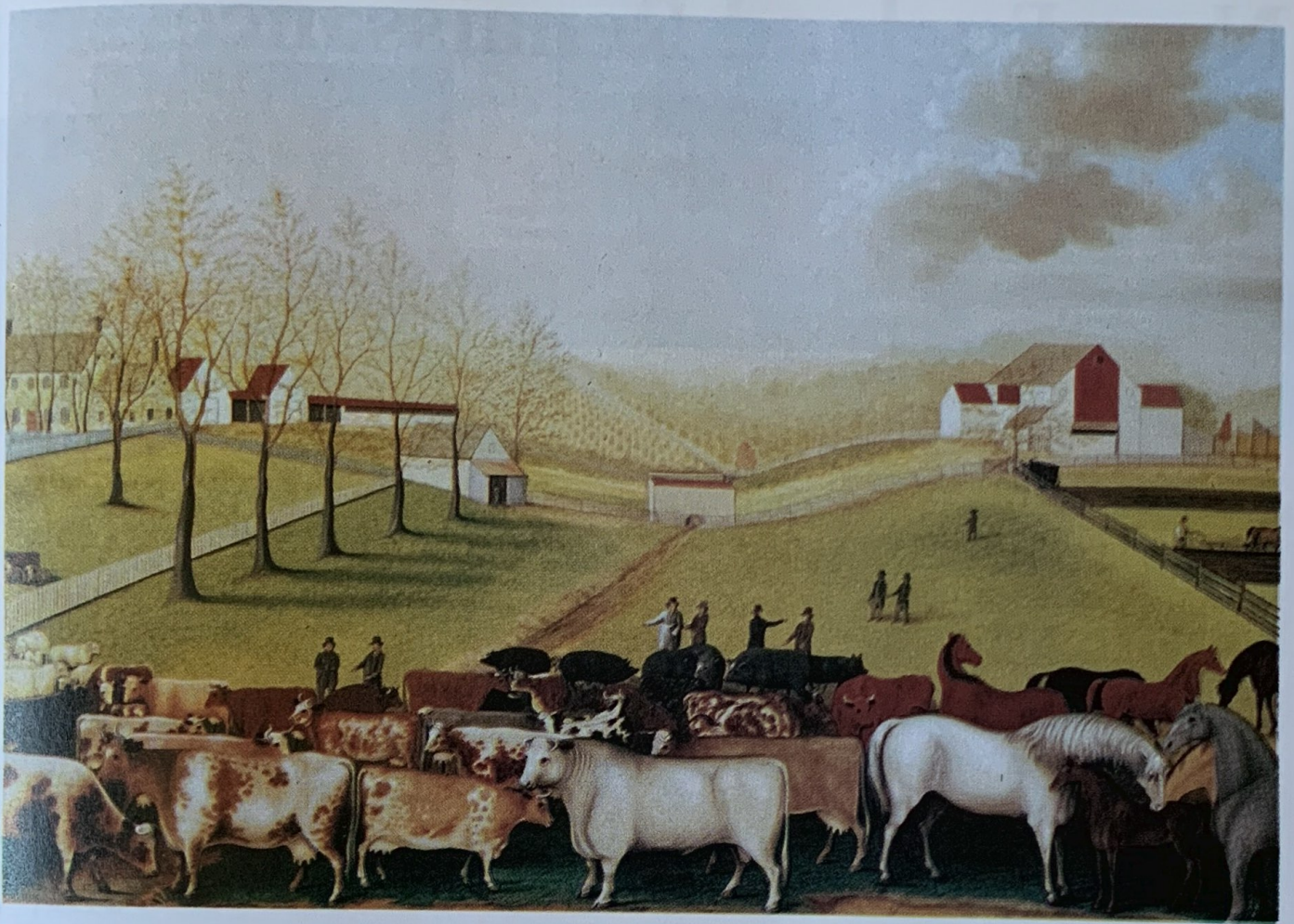
When the New England literary group burst into flower, Boston was a vibrant, expanding city of nearly 100,000 people. Then, as now, it was the metropolis of the region, a cosmopolitan city whose clipper ships were known from Liverpool

to Singapore. Oliver Wendell Holmes, a Boston physician and man of letters, said, tongue in cheek, "Boston State House is the hub of the solar system."

Certainly, Boston's four-story Tremont House, with 170 guest rooms, was at mid-century one of the finest hotels in America. In 1842, Charles Dickens, twenty-nine years old and already a world-famous author, stayed at the Tremont House. As a climax to his visit, the Young Men of Boston staged a great dinner in his honor, scarcely imagining that some of their close friends would one day have international literary reputations to rival that of Dickens.

Just as the city of Boston, a center of culture and commerce, was growing, so were a great many Massachusetts factory and mill towns. Of the 1,200 cotton factories in the United States in 1840, two thirds were located in New England. Francis C. Lowell, who developed the first American power loom, devised a plan to attract conscientious workers. He hired high-principled young women, most of them from nearby farms, to work in the textile mills of Lowell, Waltham, Lawrence, and other towns on the Merrimack River. These so-called "Lowell factory girls" lived in boarding houses under strict supervision, and worked from 5:00 A.M. to 7:30 P.M., with two half-hour breaks for meals. While the Lowell plan was far from typical, the factory system in general was an economic success. Textile companies prospered. The town of Lowell mushroomed from 200 people in 1820 to over 30,000 by 1845.

If New England was growing and changing, so was the rest of the country. The factory system, with its mass production, would eventually change the face of America, but that change was mostly in the future. America was still an agricultural nation. More often than not, the Lowell factory girls returned to their family farms after a few years, more mature, ready to marry, and by no means part of an urban American underclass. City populations were growing throughout the United States, but so was the number of American farms. The nation as a whole experienced a period of spectacular growth during these years of New England's literary prime. Cities, farms, factories—all were booming.



CORNELL FARM
Edward Hicks

The Way West

In one sense, the entire course of American history since 1607 can be seen as a pageant of continuous westward movement. The first white settlers sailed west from Europe, establishing their homes on the East Coast of the New World. All thirteen original states were on the eastern seaboard, hemmed in by mountain barriers blocking easy access to the interior. As late as 1845, the most western state in the Union was Texas. The last of the fifty states, Hawaii, lying far away to the west of the North American continent, was at that time an independent kingdom.

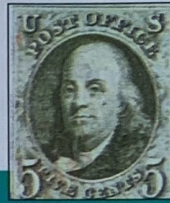
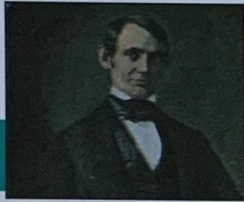
During the years in which New England literature flowered, American transportation was stead-

ily changing and improving. The Erie Canal, completed in the state of New York in 1825, set off a wave of frenzied canal building in the Northeast. Throughout the 1840's, American railroads competed not only with canals but also with plank roads. A plank road, usually constructed of hemlock boards, was strong enough to support heavy wagons and stagecoaches. Built by private turnpike companies, plank roads enjoyed a brief flurry of popularity in the 1840's. By 1855, however, it was obvious that railroads had clear-cut advantages over plank roads, and in many places railroads had already rendered canals unprofitable. As the Civil War approached, the golden age of railroading was about to begin.

New England Renaissance

(A.D. 1840 – A.D. 1855)

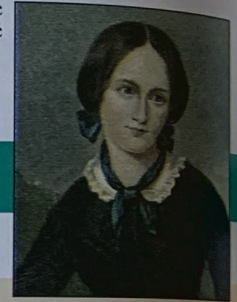
Abraham
Lincoln



First
Postage
Stamps



Charlotte
Brontë



1840

1843

1846

AMERICAN EVENTS

- The Transcendentalist magazine, *The Dial*, begins publication.
 - **Ralph Waldo Emerson** publishes *Essays*.
 - Brook Farm, the Transcendental community, established near Boston.
 - **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** publishes "The Skeleton in Armor."
- **John Greenleaf Whittier** publishes *Lays of My Home and Other Poems*.
 - First telegraph message sent.
 - **Ralph Waldo Emerson** publishes *Essays: Second Series*.
 - Texas admitted to the Union.
- Anesthesia first used for medical purposes.
- Mexican War begins
- **Oliver Wendell Holmes** publishes *Poems*.
 - **Abraham Lincoln** first elected to Congress.
 - First adhesive postage stamps issued.
 - Mexican War ends; United States expands borders.
 - California gold rush begins.
 - Women's Rights Convention held.

WORLD EVENTS

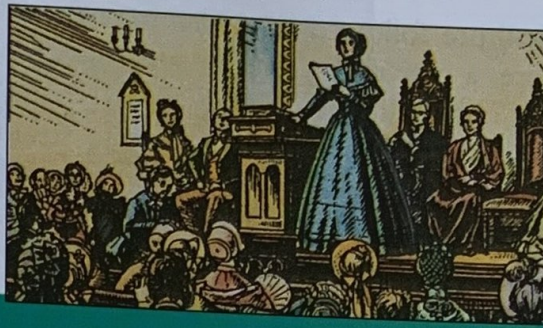
- Canada: Upper and Lower Canada united.
- Antarctica: First explored by Englishman James Ross.
- South Pacific: New Zealand becomes a British colony.
 - Asia: Hong Kong becomes a British colony.
 - England: Alfred, Lord Tennyson publishes *Poems*.
- England: Charles Dickens publishes *A Christmas Carol*.
 - Germany: Heinrich Heine publishes *Germany: A Winter's Tale*.
 - France: Alexandre Dumas publishes *The Three Musketeers*.
 - Ireland: Famine results from failure of potato crop.
- Russia: Fyodor Dostoyevsky publishes *Poor Folk*.
 - Italy: Verdi's opera *Macbeth* first performed.
 - England: Charlotte Brontë publishes *Jane Eyre*.
 - England: Emily Brontë publishes *Wuthering Heights*.
 - Belgium: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publish *The Communist Manifesto*.
 - England: Women first admitted to University of London.

California
Gold Rush



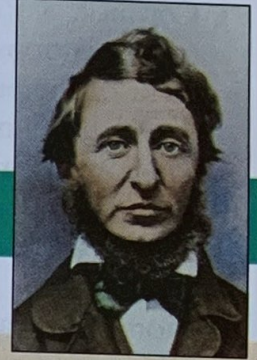
1849

Women's Rights
Convention



1852

Henry David
Thoreau



1855

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson** publishes *Representative Man*.
- **Nathaniel Hawthorne** publishes *The Scarlet Letter*.
- California admitted to the Union.
- **Herman Melville** publishes *Moby-Dick*.
- **Nathaniel Hawthorne** publishes *The House of Seven Gables*.
- *The New York Times* begins publication.
- **Harriet Beecher Stowe** publishes *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
- **Nathaniel Hawthorne** publishes *The Blithedale Romance*.
- Arizona and New Mexico purchased from Mexico.
- **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** publishes *The Song of Hiawatha*.
- **Henry David Thoreau** publishes *Walden*.
- Republican Party organized.

- France: Life insurance introduced.
- England: Elizabeth Barrett Browning publishes *Sonnets From the Portuguese*.
- England: Charles Dickens publishes *David Copperfield*.
- Germany: Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* first performed.
- China: Taiping Rebellion begins.
 - Australia: Gold discovered in New South Wales.
 - Norway: Henrik Ibsen writes *Norma*.
- Russia: Leo Tolstoy publishes *Childhood*.
- France: Louis Napoleon proclaims himself emperor.
- Europe: Crimean War begins.
- England: Robert Browning publishes *Men and Women*.
- England: Charles Dickens publishes *Hard Times*.
- Japan: Ports opened to trade.

Advances in agriculture followed advances in technology. John Deere, a native of Vermont, developed the steel plow out in Illinois. Cyrus McCormick, a Virginian, invented the reaper. These two inventions contributed immensely to the settlement of the prairies and later the Great Plains, for they helped make farming practical on the vast, sod-covered grasslands. Another invention of the time, the telegraph, had far-reaching effects, enabling people to communicate almost instantly across great distances. Inventor Samuel F. B. Morse's message from Washington to Baltimore in 1844 could serve as the motto for this era of innovation: "What hath God wrought!"

Clouds in a Summer Sky

"In this refulgent summer," wrote Emerson, "it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life. The grass grows, the buds burst, the meadow is spotted

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE, 1853
Alanson Fisher



with fire and gold in the tint of flowers. The air is full of birds, and sweet with the breath of pine, the balm-of-Gilead, and the new hay. . . . One is constrained to respect the perfection of this world in which our senses converse."

Ever the optimist, Emerson, as one critic said, "counted on things to take care of themselves. He could not be angry, he could not be sad." Yet it was evident to even the most cheerful observer that the United States, in the middle of the nineteenth century, faced growing problems as well as shining promises. The factories and mills that were building prosperity did not always offer the clean boarding houses, matronly chaperons, and pleasant camaraderie of Lowell at its best. More often the factory system brought increasingly fierce competition, which sometimes led to "those dark Satanic mills" of the English poet William Blake's grim vision, in which child labor, low wages, long hours, and unsafe working conditions combined to produce a situation that cried for reform.

In the anthracite mines of Pennsylvania, boys as young as seven or eight spent long days working as slate pickers in cavernous coal breakers. These boys, blackened by coal dust, supplemented the income of their fathers, whose own twelve to fourteen hours of labor brought in too little money to support the family. Their plight was worse than most, but in time even the Lowell factory girls lost many of their benefits, saw their wages slashed, and began to think about striking.

Most other women at mid-century were also living in less than idyllic circumstances. In many states, women could not vote, make a will, or file a lawsuit. A woman's property was under the absolute control of her husband, making her, as one woman wrote, "a ward, an appendage." The 1840's and 1850's saw an outburst of energy directed toward increasing the rights of women. One of the pivotal events in the women's movement, the Seneca Falls Convention, organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, took place in 1848. Susan B. Anthony, a superb organizer and tireless campaigner, soon joined the movement. Women were active in other reform movements as well. Dorothea Dix crusaded for better treatment of the mentally ill, while Julia Ward Howe and Harriet Beecher Stowe attacked the institution of slavery.

135,000 SETS, 270,000 VOLUMES SOLD.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN



FOR SALE HERE.

AN EDITION FOR THE MILLION, COMPLETE IN 1 VOL. PRICE 37 1/2 CENTS.
 " " IN GERMAN, IN 1 VOL. PRICE 50 CENTS.
 " " IN 2 VOLS. CLOTH. 6 PLATES. PRICE \$1.30.
 SUPERB ILLUSTRATED EDITION, IN 1 VOL. WITH 132 ENGRAVINGS.
 PRICES FROM \$2.50 TO \$5.00.

The Greatest Book of the Age.

AMERICAN BOOKSELLER'S
ANNOUNCEMENT FOR *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*, 1852

Sarah and Angelina Grimké advocated women's rights and freedom for the slaves, as did Lucy Stone and the eloquent Sojourner Truth, who had been born a slave.

Utopias and Lyceums

"What a fertility of projects for the salvation of the world!" exclaimed Emerson. With reform in the air, it is little wonder that utopias, or "perfect communities," were on many people's minds. One of the most famous of these utopias was Brook Farm, located only nine miles from Boston. Brook Farm was established in 1841 by George Ripley, an ex-Unitarian minister like Emerson, and strongly influenced by Emerson's views. The community attracted a number of prominent writers, including Nathaniel Hawthorne. It soon fell under the influence of Fourierism, a communal system promoted by New York journalist Arthur Brisbane. Since Fourierism held scant appeal for the gentle Bostonians who had established the community, Brook Farm gradually withered away. Meanwhile, three other utopias had been founded in New England: Hopedale, Fruitlands, and Northampton. All failed.

Indeed, very few utopian communities anywhere ever prospered. Among the few that did

were seven small Amana colonies, settled in 1855 near the Iowa River in east central Iowa. The woolen goods from Amana, especially blankets, became commercially popular, and today the colonies still survive, their quaint villages attracting many tourists. The 700-member Amana Church Society is virtually all that remains today of the utopian fever that swept America in the 1840's and 1850's.

Another trend of that era, also idealistic in its aims, was the movement for better public and private education. By 1850, most people in the United States seemed to agree that free public elementary and secondary schools should be provided for all children and that higher education should be available for students who were able to pay. Adult education had its advocates, too. The lyceum movement, which originated in Millbury, Massachusetts, gained great momentum during these years. A lyceum (like the chautauqua that eventually replaced it) was a popular society established for literary and scientific study. One of the most famous lyceums was Boston's Lowell Institute, founded in 1839. Lyceums offered lectures, debates, scientific demonstrations, and other entertainments. Many authors of the period, including those of the New England renaissance, appeared frequently as paid lyceum speakers.



THE NOTCH OF THE WHITE MOUNTAINS (CRAWFORD NOTCH), 1839
Thomas Cole
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

LITERATURE IN FULL FLOWER

Elaborate theories have been devised to explain why sudden outbursts of creativity occur at certain places and times. The facts are often more fascinating than the theories—and easier to comprehend. In New England between 1840 and 1855, and mostly around Boston, an array of writers, now world-famous, produced a remarkable body of work that bulks large in the American literary tradition.

Goodbye, Courtly Muses

Ralph Waldo Emerson published his first essay anonymously in 1836. The next year he delivered his famous oration, *The American Scholar*, before

the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard, a speech that attracted widespread attention. Oliver Wendell Holmes called the address “our intellectual Declaration of Independence,” which is precisely what Emerson had in mind. Emerson believed that American writers “had listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe” and should begin to interpret their own culture in new, and not borrowed, ways. Emerson named no names, but few readers could deny that Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper sometimes sounded like transplanted Englishmen. Edgar Allan Poe never did, but not all American critics, then or later, took Poe seriously—“three-fifths genius,” James Russell Lowell, a Bostonian, called him, “and two-fifths sheer fudge.”

Critics would be much kinder to the writers who arose in New England in the 1840’s and early

1850's. There was the sanguine Emerson himself, whose essays, poems, journals, and letters hold a permanent place in our literature. There was Henry David Thoreau, fourteen years younger than Emerson and something of a protégé, although a very individualistic one, who lived in the Emerson household for two years. Thoreau's classic work, *Walden*, appeared in 1854. On the darker side there was Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose powerful, sometimes enigmatic style reached its peak in *The Scarlet Letter*, published in 1850. Then there was a volatile New Yorker living in Pittsfield, the ex-sailor of the South Seas, Herman Melville, whose masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*, met with indifference at first and lavish praise later. In Amherst, living quietly and publishing almost nothing in her lifetime, was the young, brilliantly gifted poet, Emily Dickinson.

Those were the giants, or so they seem to us today. In 1850, the reading public in the United States might have pointed more quickly to four other New England writers. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a Harvard professor until 1854 and a tremendously popular poet, was a leading figure among New England intellectuals. So was Oliver Wendell Holmes, the unofficial poet laureate of the group. Two other celebrated writers of the day were John Greenleaf Whittier, who came from a hardworking Quaker farm family, and James Russell Lowell, born to wealth and position. Both Whittier and Lowell were antislavery crusaders as well as poets.

Transcendentalism

Most, if not all, of these writers of the period were influenced by the Transcendental movement then flourishing in New England. Emerson and Thoreau were the best-known Transcendentalists, but the ferment of Transcendental ideas affected many other writers, some of whom hovered on the fringes of the movement, some of whom opposed it.

Transcendentalism demands careful definition, yet it is very hard to define. It has many facets, many sources, and encompasses a range of beliefs whose specific principles depend on the individual writer or thinker. The term itself and some of the

ideas came from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, published in 1788, Kant refers to the "transcendental," which to him meant the knowledge or understanding a person gains intuitively, although it lies beyond direct physical experience. New England Transcendentalism drew on other philosophical theories besides Kant's. These included Plato's as well as those of Pascal, the French mathematician and moralist, and Swedenborg, the Swedish scientist and mystic. In addition, it drew on Buddhist thought.

The movement was not essentially religious, but there were religious overtones. Even though a hundred years had passed since Jonathan Edwards, a Calvinist minister in Northampton, Massachusetts, had preached that human beings can share directly in the divine light, Edwards's idea continued to exert influence in the mid-nineteenth century. More recently, William Ellery Channing, minister of the Federal Street Church, Boston, had broken with the Calvinism of his day to become the apostle of Unitarianism. Channing's sermons and essays, promoting more tolerant religious attitudes and various social causes, reflected his own optimism and idealism. The inscription on a statue of him in the Boston Public Garden reads, "He breathed into theology a humane spirit."

Beyond that, Channing helped to lay the groundwork for New England's Transcendentalism. His influence on American literature was substantial; Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, and Holmes all acknowledged their debt to him. To a remarkable degree, his views became their views. Seven years before Emerson's *American Scholar* address, Channing's *Remarks on American Literature* had called for American writers to cease imitating British models and to find their inspiration closer to home.

Philosophy, religion, literature—all merged in New England Transcendentalism, producing a native blend that was romantic, intuitive, mystical, and considerably easier to recognize than to explain. Emerson, believing in the divinity of human nature, embodied the spirit of Transcendentalism. Thoreau, in *Walden*, provided it with its most sustained expression. Yet Transcendentalism was, and is, hard to pin down. To some in the luminous liter-

ary group in Boston and its environs, whose members met from time to time—a group which outsiders came to call the “Transcendental Club”—the movement meant intense individualism and self-reliance. To others it meant practically the opposite and was considered a single-minded commitment to improving the lot of the poor and oppressed. The Transcendentalists could accept such differences, for theirs was a democracy of intellect. They recognized few absolutes beyond an all-encompassing belief in the unity of God and the world. Even self-contradictions might be necessary, as Emerson stated in a much-quoted sentence: “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.”

For Transcendentalists the point was that the real truths, the fundamental truths, lay outside the experience of the senses, residing instead in the “Over-Soul . . . a universal and benign omnipresence . . . a God known to men only in moments of mystic enthusiasm, whose visitations leave them altered, self-reliant, and purified of petty aims.”

If that seems a bit obscure, as it did to many people in the United States, and often to the press, so did the essays in *The Dial*, the quarterly magazine of New England Transcendentalism, which grew out of the informal and sporadic meetings of the Transcendentalists. Published from 1840 to 1844, *The Dial*'s first editor was Margaret Fuller, a dominant personality and zealous feminist, whose book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was the first serious American exploration of feminism. Margaret Fuller, astonishingly erudite, was accepted as the intellectual equal, or even superior, of the most honored members of the circle. Under her editorship, however, *The Dial*, like Transcendentalism, seemed to lack a clear focus and may have bewildered as many people as it enlightened.

Nodding Fields and Walden Pond

If the Transcendentalists, and Emerson himself, lacked a well-defined philosophy, there were certain basic areas of agreement. The Transcendentalists revered nature. Emerson titled his first major work *Nature*, and although the essay deals with many topics—beauty, discipline, idealism, spirit, and others—Nature (with a capital N) provides its

unifying theme. “The fields and woods,” wrote Emerson, “nod to me, and I to them.” This essay is considered the first full-scale expression of American Transcendentalism.

Both of Henry David Thoreau's important works, *Walden* and the earlier *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, emphasize the central importance of nature. *Walden* begins, “When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only.” The book comprises eighteen essays that deal with matters ranging from the pickerel in Walden Pond to a battle between red and black ants. Nature is the central subject, and from its development emerges Thoreau's philosophy of individualism, simplicity, and passive resistance to injustice.

Brook Farm, as a kind of back-to-nature venture, reflected the Transcendentalists' interest in putting theories into practice. Nathaniel Hawthorne, partly at the urging of Elizabeth Peabody, a Transcendentalist and a friend of Margaret Fuller, bought two shares of stock in Brook Farm and took up residence there in 1841. He hated it. “It is my opinion,” he wrote to his fiancée, “that a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dunghheap or in a furrow of the field just as well as under a pile of money.” Hawthorne, who never shared the optimism of Emerson and Thoreau, found nothing at Brook Farm to alter his view that the world is more complex and less perfectible than the Transcendentalists believed.

The Possibility of Evil

Although the Transcendentalists were widely influential, their view of life seemed far too rosy to many writers. If Emerson and Thoreau can be conveniently paired as Transcendentalists, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville can be paired as Anti-Transcendentalists. They were writers who, in Hawthorne's words, “burrowed into the depths of our common nature” and found the area not always shimmering, but often “dusky.”

Just as the younger Thoreau was an apprentice, in a sense, in Emerson's household, so Melville, fifteen years younger than Hawthorne, sought the counsel and friendship of the older and more widely acclaimed Hawthorne. It happened almost by accident. Melville, in his early thirties, had moved from New York City to Pittsfield in western Massachusetts, where, on a farm he called "Arrowhead," he wrote his monumental book *Moby-Dick*. It was published in 1851, a year after Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* appeared. Although *Moby-Dick* would be recognized as a great work only after Melville's death, *The Scarlet Letter* achieved immediate fame in both the United States and England.

Meanwhile, Hawthorne had moved to Lenox, Massachusetts, in the Berkshires, a few miles south of Pittsfield. There he was working on the manuscript of *The House of the Seven Gables*. Melville, pessimistic about *Moby-Dick*—"the product is a final hash," he wrote, "and all my books are botches"—approached Hawthorne, seeking solace. According to a biographer, the young Melville was in "a state

of exhaustion and hyper-excitability"; his "impetuous soul rushed out to embrace Hawthorne's . . . in headlong and absolute devotion." Hawthorne may have been surprised by this adulation, but he and Melville became and remained friends.

Their visions, however, while equally dark, were very different. Hawthorne's Puritan heritage, which included an ancestor who was a judge at the Salem witchcraft trials, was never far from his consciousness. *The Scarlet Letter* is a historical romance set in Puritan Boston in the middle of the seventeenth century. In it Hawthorne deals with sin and concealed guilt, with hypocrisy and humility, in a dark tale that shows his insight into the Puritan conscience. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, he delves into seventeenth-century witchcraft, insanity, and a legendary curse. These unhappy themes do not reflect the easy optimism of the Transcendentalists, and yet Hawthorne, despite a tendency toward solitude, was stable and self-possessed, absorbed by questions of evil and moral responsibility, yet a shrewd man without illusions.



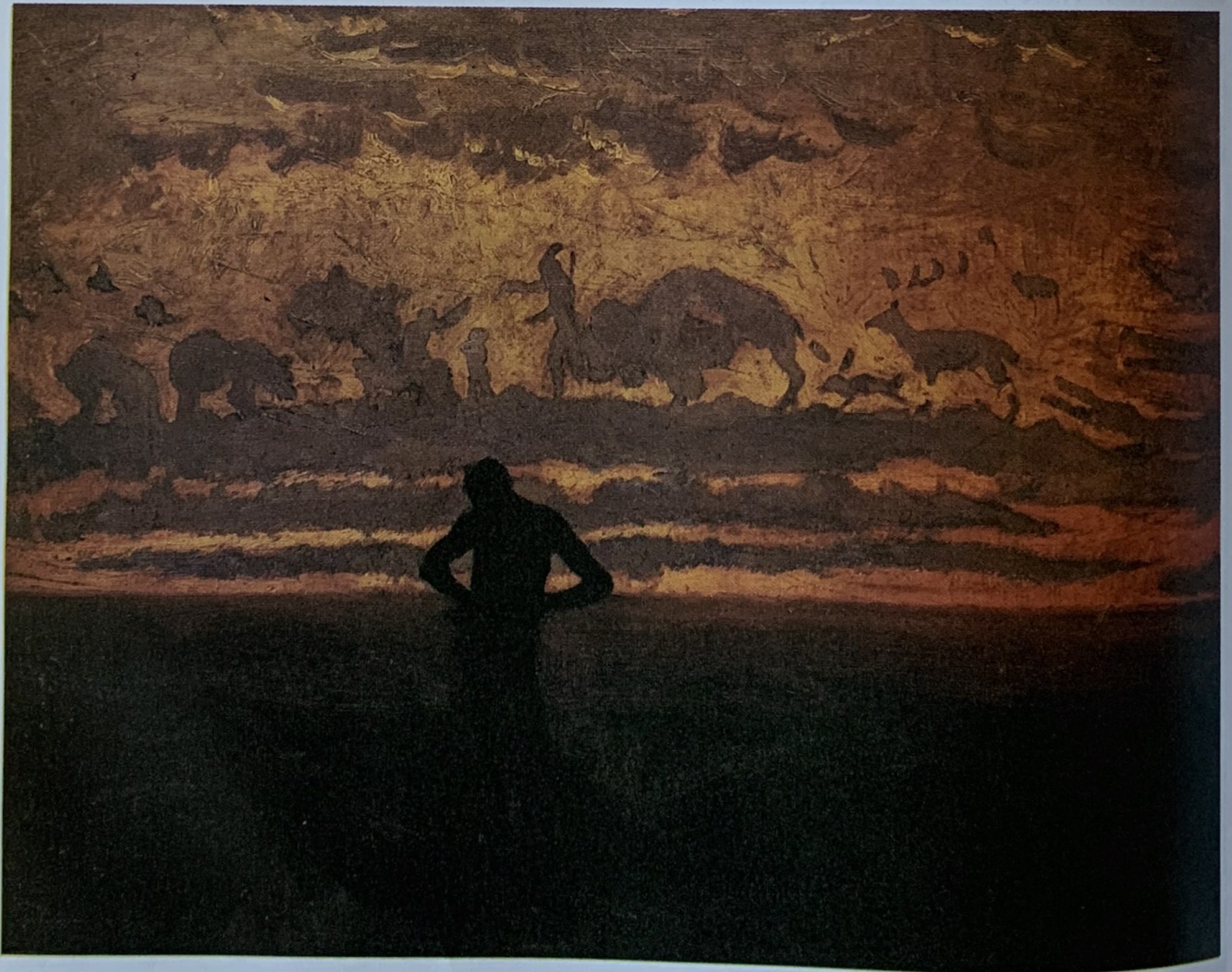
THE WHALE FISHERY—THE SPERM WHALE IN A FLURRY
Undated Lithograph by Currier and Ives

Melville, by contrast, was a maelstrom of emotions, a man at odds with the world, a tortured and cryptic personality. He was an artist raging against the fates, much like Captain Ahab was in *Moby-Dick*, when he unleashed his fury against the white whale that had torn away his leg. Melville dedicated *Moby-Dick* to Nathaniel Hawthorne "in token of my admiration for his genius." Melville was a genius, too, but an embittered one, a great writer rejected by the public. Only in his later years, with the short novel *Billy Budd*, did he affirm that the cruelties of existence might be overcome by the strength and nobility of the human spirit. Perhaps by then, after long years of obscurity as a customs

inspector in New York, he had acquired in his personal life some of the serenity of Hawthorne.

When Poetry Was in Bloom

During the flowering of New England, Americans were avid readers of poetry. Newspapers and magazines published poems, and books of poetry sold briskly. Longfellow was acclaimed as the American bard; Whittier's eightieth birthday was marked by a national celebration; Holmes's comic verse made him a celebrity here and abroad. Today, when poetry is widely written but not so widely read, it may be hard to picture a time in which the



HIAWATHA, c. 1871
Thomas Eakins
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution

names and works of poets were part of the national consciousness. "Poets," said the English poet Shelley in 1821, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." In the 1840's and 1850's, there were Americans who still believed this.

Among the Transcendentalists, Emerson wrote poetry of an exceptionally high quality. Thoreau declared, "My life has been the poem I would have writ," but in fact he produced some fine poetry on paper as well. Hawthorne concentrated on prose, but Melville in his later years wrote a number of noteworthy poems, especially during the Civil War.

The popular poets of the day, though, were a group commonly known as the Fireside Poets: Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, and a few lesser-known writers. Working separately—they had no "club" as the Transcendentalists did—the Fireside Poets created verse that the average reader could understand and appreciate. Some of their poems were on inspiring or patriotic themes; others dealt with love, nature, home, family, and children. At their best, the Fireside Poets appealed to well-educated, highly literate readers as well as to the less sophisticated. Longfellow, in particular, had a towering reputation in his own time, and is the only American with a bust in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey in London.

Later critics have tended to rank these poets below Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville in the literary pantheon. Many of their works are still read, however, and the Fireside Poets appear to have earned a permanent place in the hearts of Americans. They lived in New England and were part of its literary blossoming, but they are no longer considered to have been its finest blooms. Even so, their output of memorable poetry helped to build an American myth that still survives and enriches our culture.

At Home in Amherst

At the time Charles Dickens visited Boston and met its emerging literary figures, a young girl was growing up in the valley town of Amherst, Massachusetts. She was not yet writing poetry, at least not seriously, but when she did begin to write, her

achievements would catapult her (although not in her lifetime) into the company of the greatest poets in American literature.

Emily Dickinson cannot be easily assigned to any literary category. Her gem-like poetry is unique, just as her life was unique. A recluse for the last twenty-five years of her life, she did not write for publication, or even for her family. Only a few of her poems appeared in print during her lifetime, and those were released without her consent. Why, then, did she write? She may have done so partly to resolve the questions about death, immortality, and the soul that orthodox Calvinism raised but, to her inquiring mind, did not satisfactorily answer.

Since her poems were not published until 1890, and since a definitive edition of them did not appear until 1955, it is hard to pigeonhole Emily Dickinson, even historically. She was not a Transcendentalist. She wrote many of her poems during the Civil War, but she was wholly uninfluenced by the conflict. Since she was a New Englander, and since her remarkable poetry with its dazzling brevity and breathtaking images adds a special luster to the New England literary renaissance, her work appears in this unit rather than a later one.

Beyond the Flowering

The renaissance did not end abruptly in 1855, of course, but as the storm clouds of war gathered, the great sunburst of creativity in the Northeast did subside. Americans increasingly turned their attention to the coming struggle, and antislavery writers, such as Emerson, Melville, Whittier, and Lowell, strongly supported the northern war effort. Thoreau and Hawthorne died before the last shot was fired. Oliver Wendell Holmes, energetic and cheerful, lived on, outlasting all the rest of that renowned generation of writers, thus becoming "the last leaf upon the tree," to quote his own words. Holmes had written his well-known poem, "The Last Leaf," about Herman Melville's grandfather, "a venerable relic of the Revolution." The poem had been published sixty-three years earlier, in 1831, back when Holmes was a young man and before New England had even begun to bloom.