



# ROMANTICISM

1800-1855

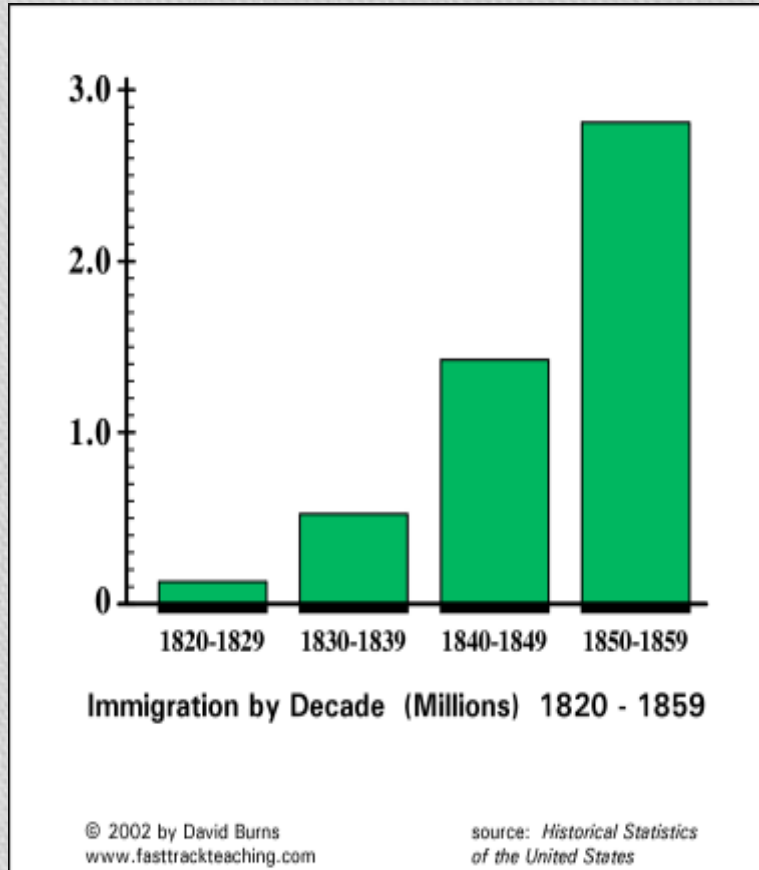
# Social Scene

- 5 million in 1800
- 25 million by 1850





# Social Scene



- Nationalism
  - Surge in national pride and identity
  - “**Manifest Destiny**”: destined by God to expand and spread democracy
- Diversity
  - “American Experience”
  - English, Irish, German, Belgian, French, Catholic, Protestant, Mormon
- Economic Stability
  - With stability comes leisure
  - With leisure comes creativity
  - New York and Boston become centers of commerce and culture

# Political Scene

- 1801-1809: Jefferson president
- Westward Expansion
  - 1803: Louisiana Purchase
  - 1804-1805: Lewis and Clark
  - 1812-1815: War
  - 1820: Missouri Compromise
  - 1830: Indian Removal Act
  - 1846-48: Mexican-American War
  - 1848: Gold!
- “It is the **manifest destiny** of the United States to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.”
  - *New York Morning News*

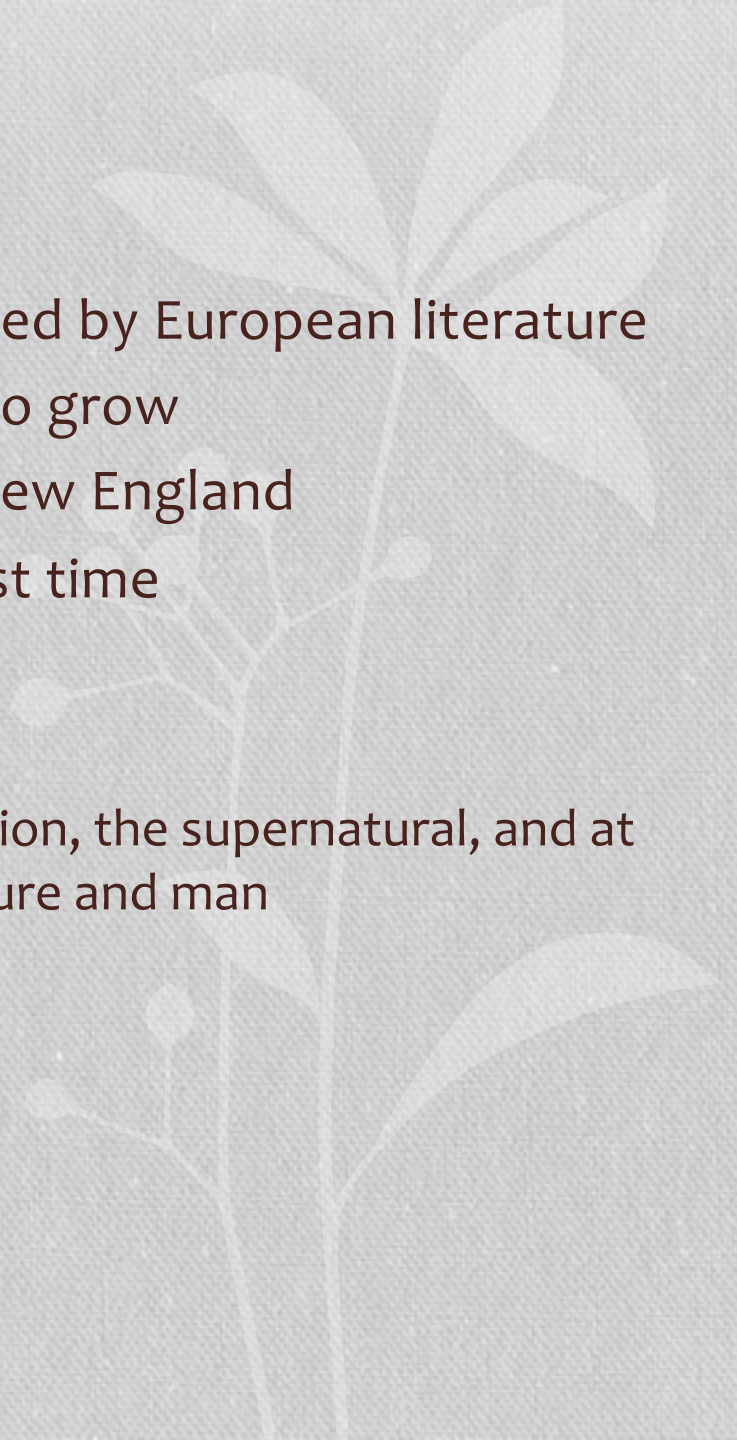


# EXPANSION OF THE UNITED STATES, 1783–1867



# Literary Scene

- For 200 years America has been dominated by European literature
- Now, American literature now has time to grow
- Writing communities spring up around New England
- Writing becomes a profession for the first time
- Romanticism is born
  - Romanticism has nothing to do with love
  - Romanticism emphasizes emotion, imagination, the supernatural, and at times the darker, melancholy aspects of nature and man





# Features of Romanticism

## 1. Imagination over Reason

*Instead of emphasizing logic, Romantics explore imagination*

## 2. Intuition over Facts

*Instead of emphasizing scientific observation, Romantics explore the beauty of mystery*

## 3. Individual above Society

*Instead of emphasizing civic duty, Romantics explore individual truth*

## 4. Nature as Wild and Chaotic—but Fascinating

*Fascinated by the relationship between nature and the inner self*

- Romanticism is a reaction *against* the Enlightenment

# Romanticism: The Short Story

- Early on, American literature is defined by the short story, many of which are re-interpretations of European folk tales
- Given the nation's youth and recent separation from England, influence from Europe cannot be helped
- These “romantic” tales are often dark and borrow heavily from the Gothic-Romantic movement in England





# Washington Irving

1783-1859

- One of the first major authors of note
- 1819: *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*
  - “Rip Van Winkle”
  - “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”
- 1824: “The Devil and Tom Walker”
  - **Morality Tale:** uses allegory to portray the struggle between good and evil
  - **Stock Character:** recognizable stereotype used for symbolic purposes
  - **Historical Fiction:** Set in the late Colonial period, the story emphasizes the conflict between the earlier spiritual ambitions of Puritans and the more secular ambitions of what would become the Enlightenment



# Edgar Allan Poe

1809-1849

- Advanced the horror genre and created detective fiction
- Typical Story Structure
  - Enclosure and Isolation
  - Journey into Imagination
  - Torture or Self-Torment
- 1839: “The Fall of the House of Usher”
  - **Style:** combined effect of various literary devices employed by an author
    - Tone, Imagery, Rhythm
  - **Symbolism:** something that stands for something else
    - House, Family, Bridge, Storm
  - **Theme:** main idea, insight, or lesson that emerges from the story
    - Death, Decay, Duality





# Romanticism: Frontier Literature

- Romantic tales of resourceful men and women living heroic lives of adventure across the American frontier—often historical fiction
- James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851)
- America's first major novelist
- One of the first to include African, African-American, and Native American characters in his work
- Often tackles tension between frontier settlers and native people
- 1823: *The Pioneers*, first of the *Leatherstocking Tales*
  - Natty Bumppo, a resourceful American woodsman living separate from but comfortable among the Delaware tribe
- 1826: *The Last of the Mohicans*
- Work has been accused of cliché and pretension
  - *Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences* (1895), by Mark Twain

# Romantic Poetry

- Poetry is widely written and widely read
- Newspapers and magazines both publish poems
- Books of poetry are popular with the public
- With inspiring themes of love, nature, family, and country they are as responsible as any other writers for building the American myth
- Major poets achieve celebrity status
  - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow given a bust in Westminster Abbey
  - John Greenleaf Whittier's 80th birthday marked by national celebration
  - Oliver Wendell Holmes, along with Emerson, co-found *Atlantic Monthly*
  - James Russell Lowell first editor of *Atlantic Monthly*



# Language of Poetry: Structure and Genre

- **Line:** unit in the structure of a poem consisting of one or more words arranged together
- **Stanza:** division of a poem made by arranging the lines into units separated by a space
- **Haiku:** Japanese poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven, and five, traditionally evoking images of the natural world
- **Sonnet:** poem fourteen lines using any number of formal rhyme schemes; in English typically having ten syllables per line
- **Narrative:** poem that tells a story
- **Lyrical:** musical verse expressing vivid thoughts and feelings

# Language of Poetry: Tone and Imagery

- **Tone** is the speaker's attitude in style or expression toward the subject (e.g., loving, ironic, bitter, pitying, fanciful, solemn, etc.)
  - The overall mood of the poem, the atmosphere
- **Imagery** refers to the images created by descriptive or figurative language, and used to evoke particular visual impressions in the mind, as well as other sensations and emotions in the reader



# Language of Poetry: Music

- Devices and techniques used to give a poem its melodious quality
- **Repetition:** use of any element of language—a sound, a word, or a phrase—more than once
- **Rhyme:** repetition of sounds at the ends of words
- **Onomatopoeia:** use of words that imitate sounds
- **Alliteration:** repetition of initial consonant sounds
- **Assonance:** repetition of vowel sounds followed by consonants
- **Meter:** the rhythmical pattern of a poem

# Language of Poetry: Symbol

- An image that stands for or represents something else, like a flag represents a country's values, or like autumn represents maturity
- **Simile:** direct comparison between two essentially unlike things, usually using “like,” “as,” or “than”
- **Metaphor:** figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally meaning one object or idea is applied to another, thereby suggesting a likeness or analogy between them
- **Extended Metaphor:** reaches beyond the usual word or phrase to extend throughout a stanza or an entire poem, usually by using multiple comparisons between the unlike objects or ideas



# Emily Dickinson

1830-1886



- Difficult to assign influence since she did not write for publication
- Over 1,500 poems
- No poems officially published until 1890
- No definitive collection until 1955
- Never married
- Recluse for the last 25 years of her life
- Died in the house in which she was born
- Style
  - Short Verse
  - Concrete Imagery
  - Figurative Language
  - Simple yet Forceful **Diction**: word choice

This is my letter to the World  
That never wrote to Me—  
The simple News that Nature told—  
With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed  
To Hands I cannot see—  
For love of Her—Sweet—countrymen—  
Judge tenderly—of Me



How happy is the little Stone  
That rambles in the Road alone.  
And doesn't care about Careers  
And Exigencies never fears  
Whose Coat of elemental Brown  
A passing Universe put on  
And independent as the Sun  
Associates or glows alone  
Fulfilling absolute Decree  
In casual simplicity

'Hope' is the thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—  
And sore must be the storm—  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.