

## **NATIONAL VIEW AS REFLECTED IN THE LITERATURE OF LINCOLN'S TIME**

### **The Colonial and Revolutionary Periods**

The thinkers of the Enlightenment shaped the ideas of the Founders. Their appeal to the standards of reason instead of the authority of tradition led to their favoring scientific inquiry over religious dogmatism. Most importantly, they sought to define the natural rights of man, becoming champions of democracy, freedom, and equality. The important writers of the time who laid the foundations for the self-image of Americans as independent, problem-solving, and moral individuals included founders as well as the first Americans to earn their living by their pens (though all of them tended to imitate the English Neoclassical style).

### **Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784)**



Phyllis Wheatley. Topic Sites. 18 July 2008 < <http://www.topicsites.com/phyllis-wheatley/pictures-phyllis-wheatley.htm> >.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p12.html>

(a biographical/historical link)

<http://www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/wheatley.html>

(a link to her poems)

### **Washington Irving (1783-1859)**



Washington Irving. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington\\_Irving](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Irving)

[http://www.hudsonvalley.org/education/Background/abt\\_irving/abt\\_irving.html](http://www.hudsonvalley.org/education/Background/abt_irving/abt_irving.html)

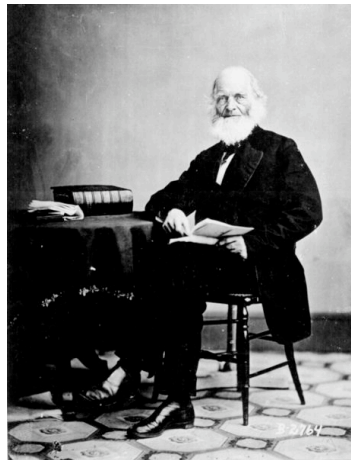
### **James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851)**



James Fenimore Cooper. Photograph by Matthew Brady. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008.

<http://external.oneonta.edu/cooper/writings.html>

### **William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878)**



William Cullen Bryant. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:William\\_bryant.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:William_bryant.jpg)>

<http://myweb.wvnet.edu/~jelkins/lp-2001/bryant.html>

William Cullen Bryant introduced Abraham Lincoln at the Cooper Union.  
He later influenced President Lincoln regarding the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

For more information on this period in American literature

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/oal/lit2.htm> (part of an outline of American literature)

### **The Transcendentalists**

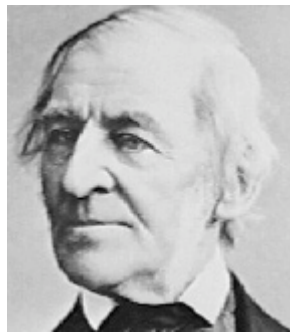
Just before Lincoln entered his teens, American letters were entering the Romantic Period. In the United States, this international literary movement arose during the reign of westward expansionism, fueled by the philosophy of Manifest Destiny. American writers looked less

intensely to Great Britain for inspiration and focused more intently on their homeland as they began to express an emerging American vision. This new image looked to the common man and championed individualism. In particular, the Transcendentalists offered an overpowering optimism. American English coined such new words as *self-expression* and *self-reliance*, reflecting the primacy of the individual. Like Lincoln's, their words have left their imprint on the American psyche.

The American Transcendentalists were also a tight-knit group who encouraged one another in their writing and thinking. In the main, they took an abolitionist stance on the great issues of the day.

The following sites offer biographical, critical, and research information and links. Some offer pedagogical information and links as well.

### **Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)**



Ralph Waldo Emerson. Poets.org. 18 July 2008. <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/201>

### **Elizabeth Peabody (1804-1894)**



Elizabeth Peabody. Virginia Commonwealth University. American Transcendentalism Web. 18 July 2008.  
<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/peabody/>

<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/peabody/>

### **Margaret Fuller (1810-1850)**



Margaret Fuller. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:FullerDaguerreotype.jpg>>

<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/>

### **Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)**



Henry David Thoreau. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008.

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/ba/Henry\\_David\\_Thoreau.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/ba/Henry_David_Thoreau.jpg)

<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/thoreau/>

### **The Poets**

The so-called “Fireside Poets” (also called the “Brahmins”) were also of an essentially anti-slavery outlook. These poets appealed to American sentimentality. Though widely popular, they reflected the values of privileged New England more than of pioneering Westerners. The Realist Period that would flow out of the Civil War fought to overcome the sentimentality of the Fireside Poets.

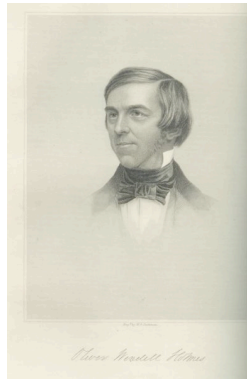
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, perhaps the first American celebrity but surely the first American celebrity poet, had a close link to the Civil War. His son Charles died while serving as a cavalry officer in 1863. James Russell Lowell, who succeeded Longfellow as professor of modern languages at Harvard, fought not only against slavery but for women’s right to vote. Oliver Wendell Holmes’ writing included poetry, essays, biographies, and even novels. Though not held in such high regard today, in Lincoln’s time these three poets dominated the American letters. Though not a member of the Brahmins’ circle, John Greenleaf Whittier, another abolitionist, also flourished at that time.

### **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1822)**



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Poets.org. 18 July 2008. <<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/143>>

### **Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)**



Oliver Wendell Holmes. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Oliver\\_Wendell\\_Holmes.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Oliver_Wendell_Holmes.jpg)>

<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/owh/owhhes.html>

### **James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)**

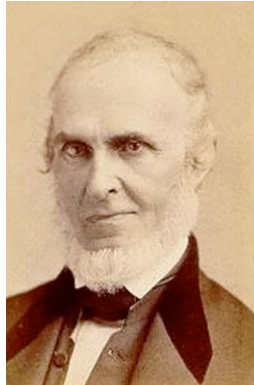


James Russell Lowell. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:James\\_Russell\\_Lowell\\_circa\\_1855.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:James_Russell_Lowell_circa_1855.jpg)>

<http://www.bartleby.com/28/16.html> (Lowell's essay on Lincoln in the Harvard Classics)

### **John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)**

<http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/authors/whittier.html>



John Greenleaf Whittier. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:John\\_Greenleaf\\_Whittier.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:John_Greenleaf_Whittier.jpg)>

For more information on this period in American literature

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/oal/lit3.htm> (part of an outline of American literature)

### **The Romantics**

Romantic novelists in England inhabited orderly, class-driven societies with centuries-old histories and long-standing traditions. In contrast, American writers lived in a land born of revolution, characterized more by wilderness than domesticity, and in a state of flux with few established traditions defining a national character. While European authors told meticulously detailed stories populated by characters at home in or seeking to rise through well-defined ranks, American story-tellers related tales of lone – frequently estranged – individuals, seeking their way in the world, creating their own and a national identity. The conflict in American stories ran deeper within the characters while their English counterparts tended to find their conflicts within the society that created them. Even the form of the novel depended more on the innovative than the established. The seminal authors of the era included a diverse group.

Nathaniel Hawthorne popularized the romance (not to be confused with the modern popular definition of the term) and gained fame as a writer. Edgar Allan Poe, born just 24 days before Abraham Lincoln, wrote such dark material that many established writers rejected him as a hack. He himself had less than praise for the tales of Hawthorne. A close friend of Hawthorne's, Herman Melville began his career with popular sea adventures, but his popularity declined as his work grew more mature and more serious. An apocryphal anecdote has it that when Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe he referred to her as "the little lady who started the big war."

The following sites offer biographical, critical, and research information and links. Some offer pedagogical information and links as well.

### **Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)**



Nathaniel Hawthorne. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Nathaniel\\_Hawthorne.jpg#filehistory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Nathaniel_Hawthorne.jpg#filehistory)>.

<http://web.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap3/hawthorne.html>

### **Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)**



Edgar Allan Poe. Poets.org. 18 July 2008 < <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/130>>

<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/130>

### **Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)**





Harriet Beecher Stowe. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Beecher-Stowe.jpg>>  
[http://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/index\\_home.shtml](http://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/index_home.shtml)

### Herman Melville (1819-1891)



*Herman Melville*

Herman Melville. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Herman\\_Melville\\_1860.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Herman_Melville_1860.jpg)>

<http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/melvillebio.html>

### Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Walt Whitman was once of the most innovative American poets of the Nineteenth Century. Love of nature, of humanity, of his country, and of President Abraham Lincoln are common themes in his work. In Lincoln, Whitman seemed to identify a symbol of an all-encompassing America, and in his death an ultimate tragedy, the cost of the reunification of the country. He once wrote of the President whom he frequently saw in Washington, "He has a face like a Hoosier Michel Angelo, so awful ugly it becomes beautiful, with its strange mouth, its deep cut, criss-cross lines, and its doughnut complexion."



Walt Whitman. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Walt\\_Whitman\\_edit\\_2.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Walt_Whitman_edit_2.jpg)>

To learn more about the Whitman-Lincoln connection, click on  
[http://www.historynow.org/12\\_2005/historian5.html](http://www.historynow.org/12_2005/historian5.html)



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**For more information on this period in American literature:**

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/oal/lit4.htm>

(part of an outline of American literature)

**The Realist Period**

With the Civil War and its aftermath came the rise of Realism. The boundless optimism of the Transcendentalists gave way to moral exhaustion. The unflagging patriotism expressed by a profound concern for the rights of all transformed into elevation of progress as a guiding principle. The rugged individualist evolved into the self-made man. America had grown from former colony to modern industrial power and looked toward becoming a force for the world to reckon with by the turn of the century. The urban was fast replacing the rural. The value placed on individuality did not, however, wane though the individuals might find themselves increasingly estranged from the world they inhabited. Though popular culture would lionize Lincoln in the years following his assassination, the Romantic hero that Lincoln embodied gave way to the alienated survivors of the greatest war Americans had yet fought.

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**For more information on this period in American literature:**

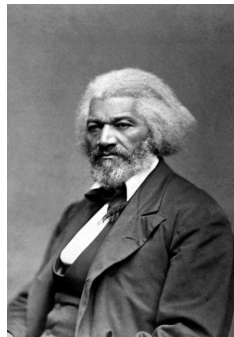
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/oal/lit5.htm>

**African-American Literature in the Nineteenth Century**

**1837** Victor Séjour writes "Le Mulâtre" ("The Mulatto"), acknowledged as the first known work of fiction by an African American. Séjour was a free black man who lived in New Orleans who emigrated at 19 to Paris where his story was published in a French abolitionist periodical. Set in Saint Domingue (Haiti), the story is an antislavery revenge tale that sets the precedent for all the elements of its genre.

**1845** Frederick Douglass publishes *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Douglass will become the focal leader of African Americans before, during, and after the American Civil War, conferring with Lincoln on the treatment of black soldiers and plans for Reconstruction which included removing African Americans from the South. He also authors *My Bondage, My Freedom* in 1855 and *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* in 1881.

<http://www.accd.edu/sac/english/bailey/douglass.htm>



Frederick Douglass. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Frederick\\_Douglass\\_portrait.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Frederick_Douglass_portrait.jpg)

**1847** William Brown writes *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself*. He goes on to write the first novel - *Clotel; or The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, the first travel book, and the first play by an African American. The son of a plantation owner in Lexington, Kentucky, Brown escaped slavery in 1834, became an important worker on the Underground Railroad,

and a recruiter of African-Americans to serve in the Union Army.

<http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap3/brown.html>

1848 Henry Bibb publishes *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave*. The son of a Kentucky state senator, he watched as his mother's six other children were sold away from the plantation. He escaped slavery twice only to be retaken and finally sold to Native Americans from whom he also escaped. He went on to become a major activist for abolition and equal rights, publishing a newspaper in Canada.

1850 Sojourner Truth publishes *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*. Having suffered greatly as a slave and after she gained her freedom, she nevertheless supported the cause of the Union, recruited black troops, worked at a refugee camp for former slaves in Virginia during the war, served the National Freeman's Bureau, and met with President Lincoln.  
<http://www.accd.edu/sac/english/bailey/struth.htm>



Sojourner Truth. Alamo Community Colleges. 18 July 2008  
<<http://www.accd.edu/sac/english/bailey/struth.htm>>

1853 Solomon Northrup writes *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup*. Born into a free African American family in New York, Northrup was tricked and sold into slavery at 33. He was freed 12 years later when the son of his father's one-time owner traveled to Louisiana at the behest of the governor of New York to restore Solomon to freedom. [http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/narratives/bio\\_northrup.htm](http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/narratives/bio_northrup.htm)

1857 Austin Steward publishes *Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*. After escaping slavery, Steward led a life filled with struggles to establish himself in the white world of New York state. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/steward/bio.html>

1859 Martin L. Delaney publishes *Blake, or the Huts of America*. His novel tells the story of an African American insurrectionist making his way through the South, attempting to foment rebellion. He becomes the first champion of American black nationalism. During the Civil War, he receives a field commission.

1859 Harriet E. Wilson writes *Our Nig, or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*, the first novel by an African American to be published in the United States. The daughter of an African American man and an Irish woman who abandoned her after Wilson's father's death, Wilson may have based her novel largely on her own experience.  
<http://www.accd.edu/sac/english/bailey/hwilson.htm>

1861 Harriet A. Jacobs writes *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself*. It was not published until 1877. After escaping a cruelly abusive master, she lived for seven years in the crawlspace of her grandmother's attic until she was able to escape to Philadelphia.



Harriet A. Jacobs. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008.  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Jacobscharriet.jpg>

### **Two Noteworthy Native American Authors**

- 1831** William Apess, a member of the Pequot tribe, penned the first published full-length autobiography by a Native American – *A Son of the Forest: The Experience of William Apes, A Native of the Forest*. (He added an additional s to his name in 1836). He used his status as the son of a Methodist preacher to champion his fellow Native Americans, offering an alternative to the history written by European Americans.
- 1833** Black Hawk, the eponymous Sauk chief associated with the only war in which Abraham Lincoln was an actual combatant, lost the war but gained fame and respect for his *Autobiography*.