

AP US History

Chapter 11 - Cotton, Slavery, and The Old South

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Key Concepts

What are this chapter's key concepts?

- **4.1.II.B** - A culture formed blending national American and European elements with regional sections
- **4.1.II.C** - Romantic and liberal social beliefs influenced literature, art, philosophy, and architecture
- **4.1.II.D** - Enslaved/free Afr. Americans → communities to protect dignity, joining pol. efforts to change status
- **4.1.III.A** - Americans created organizations to improve society thru. reform
- **4.1.III.C** - Women's rights movement developed for gender equality, culminating in Seneca Falls Convention
- **4.3.II.B** - North saw ↑ antislavery while South (despite few owning slaves) saw ↑ slavery as natural way of life

The Romantic Impulse

How did a unique culture develop in American society?

Painting reflected nationalistic ideals through the power of wild natural environments, Northern literature reflecting ideals of independence, liberty, and democracy, Southern literature based either around the wealthy aristocrats or those inhabiting the fringes of society as rural peasants, and the Transcendentalists, focusing on an appreciation of the surrounding world from a personal standpoint, came together to form a unique American literary style.

How did American painting reflect nationalism and romanticism?

- Sydney Smith, English wit, expressed that no one outside of America enjoyed American art; but U.S. enjoyed significantly
- Most popular aimed to show landscapes: not mere countryside, but instead wildest places (w/ "sublime": awe/fear of nature)
 - Frederic Church, Thomas Cole, Thomas Doughty, Asher Durand, all of NY, known as Hudson River School, painted rugged Hudson Valley
 - * Felt nature greatest source of wisdom; stre
 - Many began to travel westward to witness spectacular world of Yosemite Valley, Yellowstone, Rocky Mountains
 - * Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt traveled throughout country

American painting, despite not having reached an international audience, appealed greatly to Americans themselves. It generally focused on the idea of "wild nature" and the sublime, initially centered around the Hudson Valley in NY but extending westward.

How did American writers generally emphasize ideas of liberty?

- GB's Sir Walter Scott most popular in early nineteenth century; most common American novels were "sentimental novels" of women
- James Fenimore Cooper stressed ideals of wilderness, adventure, growing up on frontier NY ("Leatherstocking Tales")
 - Represented ideal for true American literature, also depicting central social concerns like fear of disorder, ideal of independence
- Walt Whitman, "poet of American democracy," born in 1819 w/ start as newspaper apprentice
 - Founded and led NY newspaper *Long Islander*
 - Printed first volume of work *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, celebrating democracy/individualism; reflected homosexuality in intolerant society
- Herman Melville sailed world before rooting back in U.S. and publishing *Moby Dick*, portraying Ahab, captain of whaling vessel, seeking violent whale Moby Dick for fulfillment
 - Spirit ultimately -> annihilation
- Edgar Allen Poe, one of few southern writers, created sad stories, with books and famous poem "The Raven," seeking to transcend from intellect, explore emotion; had great effect on other poets

Although British writer Walter Scott was popular, American writers like Cooper, describing the independence of the wilderness, Whitman, stressing individualism and democracy through his poems reflecting his troubled state as a homosexual man in an intolerant society, Melville, whose *Moby Dick* revealed the potential destructive nature of the human spirit, and Poe's sad poems exploring true emotion beyond intellect gradually grew in popularity.

What were the critical ideals of literature in the South?

Antebellum Southern literature was based around defining the American nation, but often contradicted the true state of society.

- Novelists created romances/eulogies describing upper South plantation system
 - Early (1830s) from Richmond, including Beverly Tucker, William Alexander Caruthers, John Pendleton Kennedy
 - Literary capital moved to Charleston in 1840s w/ William Gilmore Simms expressing nationalism initially hoping to transcend regional diffs. but soon defended slavery
- Writers on fringes of plantation society depicted backwoods societies
 - Included Augustus B. Longstreet, Joseph G. Baldwin, Johnson J. Hooper
 - Centered around ordinary, poor people with unique humor; Mark Twain most powerful of group

Southern literature aimed to define the American nation: novelists generally focused on the cavaliers, initially mostly from Richmond but shifting to Charleston. Another group of fringe writers described the impoverished instead of the aristocratic class.

Who were the Transcendentalists?

- Transcendentalists focused on individualism by distinguishing "reason" (innate ability of all to understand beauty/truth with full expression of emotions) and "understanding" (intellect applied to narrow confines of society)
- Leader was Emerson, lecturer devoted to sharing beliefs, speaking with intellectuals daily
 - Produced some poetry but known for essays/lectures like "Nature" and "Self-Reliance"
 - Nationalist: believed in cultural independence - lecture "American Scholar" argued that European cultural heritage be ignored and instinctive genius be harnessed
- Henry David Thoreau significant, too, arguing repression of society → desperation w/ no one conforming to social pressures
 - Went to Walden Pond in Concord Woods and lived in cabin to live deliberately and simply
 - Resisted slave-allowing govt. by not paying poll tax -> jailed briefly in 1846
 - * Argued in "Resistance to Civil Government" that morality > legal codes

The Transcendentalists argued for individualism through an innate personal understanding of the world over absorption of mere knowledge and its application to narrow fields. Led by Emerson, a lecturer producing powerful essays like "Nature and Self-Reliance" and a nationalist believing in cultural independence and also supported by Henry David Thoreau, who isolated himself in nature and resisted the government's allowance of slavery, the Transcendentalists produced a powerful repertoire of literature.