



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume II: The Modern World in Literature and the Arts

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## **And the Beat Goes On: American Art and Literature from 1950 to Present**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.02.11  
by Matthew S. Monahan

This unit explores the work of the small group of American modernist writers collectively known as the Beat Generation. Although members of this group's writing styles varied greatly, they shared a common vision; they recognized the problems facing modern Americans and believed that the solutions were to be found in the creation of a uniquely American art and literature.

Students participating in the implementation of this unit will be able to do the following: work individually and cooperatively in defining the terms *Beat*, American Dream and other related terms and read and appreciate works by the Beat Generation's core members (Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs and Corso), as well as the works of its precursor, Thomas Wolfe, and one of its ancillary members, LeRoi Jones AKA Amiri Baraka. Additionally students will analyze both literary elements (e.g. onomatopoeia, allusion, personification, etc.) contained in and the historical significance of these works and develop theories that relate these works of prose and poetry to their own lives and to the current American sociopolitical landscape. The culminating project is a multi-genre paper (a written or multi-media presentation that incorporates a common theme across a number of genres and or styles). This student work relates most closely to that of William S. Burroughs whose "cut-ups" incorporated common themes in non-linear prose.

(Recommended for English, grades 10-12)

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