

Important Works of Literature, Art, and Culture

- John Singleton Copley** portraits, 1750s–1780s, included Revere, Hancock, and many other patriots
- Phillis Wheatley** poems, 1773, by Boston slave published in England
- Thomas Paine** *Common Sense*, 1776, pamphlet promoting independence
- John Trumbull** *The Declaration of Independence*, 1794, this and other paintings dramatize Revolutionary War
- Washington Irving** *The Sketch Book*, 1819, American short stories popular around world
- Ralph Waldo Emerson** essays, 1836–1841, transcendentalism
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** narrative poems, 1847–63, helped establish national historical myths
- Nathaniel Hawthorne** *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850, novel, Puritan morality
- Herman Melville** *Moby Dick*, 1851, novel, white whale, metaphor of good and evil
- Harriet Beecher Stowe** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852, influential novel on the evils of slavery
- Henry David Thoreau** “Essay on Civil Disobedience,” 1849; *Walden*, 1854, a year living in nature
- Walt Whitman** *Leaves of Grass*, 1855, established new American poetic style with unrhymed verse
- Winslow Homer** paintings, 1860s–1890s, help shift American art toward realism
- Matthew Brady** photos, 1861–65, battlefield photos bring home brutal reality of war
- Mark Twain** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1884, novel of life on the Mississippi River
- Emily Dickinson** *Poems*, 1890, recluse with an inventive style
- Theodore Dreiser** *Sister Carrie*, 1900; *An American Tragedy*, 1925; novels reflect American naturalism
- Upton Sinclair** *The Jungle*, 1906, novel exposes conditions of meatpacking industry; inspires government regulation
- Eugene O'Neill** plays, performed 1916–57, changed American drama to realistic form; often tragic portrayals
- Sinclair Lewis** *Main Street*, 1920; *Babbitt*, 1922; novels satirizing conformity; first American Nobel Prize winner
- Georgia O'Keefe** paintings, 1920s–60s, famous for illustrating American Southwest in abstract style
- T. S. Eliot** *The Waste Land*, 1922, epic poem of modernism
- Robert Frost** *New Hampshire*, 1923, New England poems over career receive four Pulitzer Prizes
- F. Scott Fitzgerald** *The Great Gatsby*, 1925, novel of the “lost generation,” the jazz age
- Langston Hughes** *The Weary Blues*, 1926, Harlem Renaissance poet
- Ernest Hemingway** *The Sun Also Rises*, 1926; *A Farewell to Arms*, 1929; *The Old Man and the Sea*, 1952; novelist of “the lost generation,” crisp style
- William Faulkner** *The Sound and the Fury*, 1929, Southern novelist, decline in American values
- Aaron Douglas** paintings, 1930s, Harlem Renaissance, African Americans in daily life and themes from African art
- Jackson Pollock** paintings, 1930s–1950s, abstract art influences many
- Zora Neale Hurston** *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937, Harlem Renaissance novelist and folklorist
- John Steinbeck** *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1939, novel about the Dust Bowl
- Richard Wright** *Native Son*, 1940, novel about the pain of being black in America
- Walker Evans with James Agee** *Let us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941, Depression-era photos with text
- Edward Hopper** *Nighthawks*, 1942, painting of diner which displays isolation of modern American life
- Tennessee Williams** *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 1947, sometimes called best play ever written by an American
- Norman Mailer** *The Naked and the Dead*, 1948, classic novel of war
- Arthur Miller** *Death of a Salesman*, 1948, play paints struggles of an average American
- J. D. Salinger** *The Catcher in the Rye*, 1951, novel about adolescence
- James Baldwin** *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, 1953, novel about racism and black rage
- Allen Ginsberg** *Howl*, 1956, Beat Generation poet
- Jack Kerouac** *On the Road*, 1957, autobiographical novel of the Beat movement
- Joseph Heller** *Catch-22*, 1961, antiwar novel spawns a catch-phrase
- Rachel Carson** *Silent Spring*, 1962, nonfiction investigation of chemical pollution inspires environmental movement
- Malcolm X with Alex Haley** *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 1965, explores African-American radical politics
- Andy Warhol** Campbell's Soup Can, 1965, silk-screen painting, symbol of pop art movement
- N. Scott Momaday** poems and novels, 1968–89, focus on Kiowa heritage and Native American struggles
- Kurt Vonnegut** *Slaughterhouse Five*, 1969, novel highlights firebombing of Germany in World War II
- David Mamet** plays and movie scripts, 1972–, explore hard edge of American life for lower-middle class
- Saul Bellow** *Humboldt's Gift*, 1975, novel portrays modern American experiences in a changing society
- Maya Lin** Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, single granite wall memorial lists names and honors war dead
- Toni Morrison** *Beloved*, 1988; *Jazz*, 1992; African-American Nobel-Prize winning novelist
- Tim O'Brien** *Going After Cacciato*, 1975, novel of the Vietnam War
- Alice Walker** *The Color Purple*, 1982, Pulitzer-Prize winning novel about poor black women
- Amy Tan** *The Joy Luck Club*, 1989, novel about Asian-American immigrant women and their children