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# The Literature of the United States

During its early history, America was a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present-day United States. Therefore, its literary tradition begins as linked to the broader tradition of English literature. However, unique American characteristics and the breadth of its production usually now cause it to be considered a separate path and tradition.

## Colonial literature

Some of the earliest American literature were pamphlets and writings extolling the benefits of the colonies to both a European and colonist audience. John Smith of Jamestown could be considered the first American author with his works: A True Relation of ... Virginia ... (1608) and The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles (1624). Other writers of this manner included Daniel Denton, Thomas Ashe, William Penn, George Percy, William Strachey, John Hammond, Daniel Coxe, Gabriel Thomas, and John Lawson.

The religious disputes that prompted settlement in America were also topics of early writing. A journal written by John Winthrop discussed the religious foundations of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Edward Winslow also recorded a diary of the first years after the Mayflower's arrival. Other religiously influenced writers included Increase Mather and William Bradford, author of the journal published as a History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–47. Others like Roger Williams and Nathaniel Ward more fiercely argued state and church separation.

Some poetry also existed. Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor are especially noted. Michael Wigglesworth wrote a best-selling poem, The Day of Doom, describing the time of judgement. Nicholas Noyes was also known for his doggerel verse.

Other early writings described conflicts and interaction with the Indians, as seen in writings by Daniel Gookin, Alexander Whitaker, John Mason, Benjamin Church, and Mary Rowlandson. John Eliot translated the Bible into the Algonquin language.

Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather represented the Great Awakening, a religious revival in the early 18th century that asserted strict Calvinism. Other Puritan and religious writers include Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, Uriah Oakes, John Wise, and Samuel Willard. Less strict and serious writers included Samuel Sewall, Sarah Kemble Knight, and William Byrd.

The revolutionary period also contained political writings, including those by colonists Samuel Adams, Josiah Quincy, John Dickinson, and Joseph Galloway, a loyalist to the crown. Two key figures were Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine. Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac and The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin are esteemed works with their wit and influence toward the formation of a budding American identity. Paine's pamphlet Common Sense and The American Crisis writings are seen as playing a key role in influencing the political tone of the period.

During the revolution itself, poems and songs such as "Yankee Doodle" and "Nathan Hale" were popular. Major satirists included John Trumbull and Francis Hopkinson. Philip Morin Freneau also wrote important poems about the war's course.

## Early U.S. literature

The first American novel is sometimes considered to be William Hill Brown's The Power of Sympathy (1789). Much of the early literature of the new nation struggled to find a uniquely American voice. European forms and styles were often transferred to new locales and critics often saw them as inferior. For example, Wieland and other novels by Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) are often seen as imitations of the Gothic novels then being written in England.

**Unique American style**

With the War of 1812 and an increasing desire to produce uniquely American work, a number of key new literary figures appeared, perhaps most prominently Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe. Irving, often considered the first writer to develop a unique American style (although this is debated) wrote humorous works in Salmagundi and the well-known satire A History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker (1809). Bryant wrote early romantic and nature-inspired poetry, which evolved away from their European origins. In 1835, Poe began writing short stories -- including The Masque of the Red Death, The Pit and the Pendulum, The Fall of the House of Usher, and The Murders in the Rue Morgue -- that explore previously hidden levels of human psychology and push the boundaries of fiction toward mystery and fantasy. Cooper's Leatherstocking tales about Natty Bumppo were popular both in the new country and abroad.

Humorous writers were also popular and included Seba Smith and Benjamin P. Shillaber in New England and Davy Crockett, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Johnson J. Hooper, Thomas Bangs Thorpe, Joseph G. Baldwin, and George Washington Harris writing about the American frontier.

The New England Brahmins were a group of writers connected to Harvard University and its seat in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The core included James Russell Lowell, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

In 1836, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), an ex-minister, published a startling nonfiction work called Nature, in which he claimed it was possible to dispense with organized religion and reach a lofty spiritual state by studying and responding to the natural world. His work influenced not only the writers who gathered around him, forming a movement known as Transcendentalism, but also the public, who heard him lecture.

Emerson's most gifted fellow-thinker was perhaps Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), a resolute nonconformist. After living mostly by himself for two years in a cabin by a wooded pond, Thoreau wrote Walden, a book-length memoir that urges resistance to the meddlesome dictates of organized society. His radical writings express a deep-rooted tendency toward individualism in the American character. Other writers influenced by Transcendentalism were Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, Orestes Brownson, and Jones Very.

The political conflict surrounding Abolitionism inspired the writings of William Lloyd Garrison and his paper The Liberator, along with poet John Greenleaf Whittier and Harriet Beecher Stowe in her world-famous Uncle Tom's Cabin.

In 1837, the young Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) collected some of his stories as Twice-Told Tales, a volume rich in symbolism and occult incidents. Hawthorne went on to write full-length "romances," quasi-allegorical novels that explore such themes as guilt, pride, and emotional repression in his native New England. His masterpiece, The Scarlet Letter, is the stark drama of a woman cast out of her community for committing adultery. History of modern literature

Hawthorne's fiction had a profound impact on his friend Herman Melville (1819-1891), who first made a name for himself by turning material from his seafaring days into exotic novels. Inspired by Hawthorne's example, Melville went on to write novels rich in philosophical speculation. In Moby Dick, an adventurous whaling voyage becomes the vehicle for examining such themes as obsession, the nature of evil, and human struggle against the elements. In another fine work, the short novel Billy Budd, Melville dramatizes the conflicting claims of duty and compassion on board a ship in time of war. His more profound books sold poorly, and he had been long forgotten by the time of his death. He was rediscovered in the early decades of the 20th century.

Anti-transcendental works from Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe all comprise the Dark Romanticism subgenre of literature popular during this time.

**American lyric**

America's two greatest 19th-century poets could hardly have been more different in temperament and style. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) was a working man, a traveler, a self-appointed nurse during the American Civil War (1861-1865), and a poetic innovator. His magnum opus was Leaves of Grass, in which he uses a free-flowing verse and lines of irregular length to depict the all-inclusiveness of American democracy. Taking that motif one step further, the poet equates the vast range of American experience with himself without being egotistical. For example, in Song of Myself, the long, central poem in Leaves of Grass, Whitman writes: "These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me...."

Whitman was also a poet of the body -- "the body electric," as he called it. In Studies in Classic American Literature, the English novelist D.H. Lawrence wrote that Whitman "was the first to smash the old moral conception that the soul of man is something `superior' and `above' the flesh."

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), on the other hand, lived the sheltered life of a genteel unmarried woman in small-town Amherst, Massachusetts. Within its formal structure, her poetry is ingenious, witty, exquisitely wrought, and psychologically penetrating. Her work was unconventional for its day, and little of it was published during her lifetime.

Many of her poems dwell on death, often with a mischievous twist. "Because I could not stop for Death," one begins, "He kindly stopped for me." The opening of another Dickinson poem toys with her position as a woman in a male-dominated society and an unrecognized poet: "I'm nobody! Who are you? / Are you nobody too?"

**Realism, Twain, and James**

Mark Twain (the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835-1910) was the first major American writer to be born away from the East Coast - in the border state of Missouri. His regional masterpieces were the memoir Life on the Mississippi and the novel Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Twain's style - influenced by journalism, wedded to the vernacular, direct and unadorned but also highly evocative and irreverently funny - changed the way Americans write their language. His characters speak like real people and sound distinctively American, using local dialects, newly invented words, and regional accents. Other writers interested in regional differences and dialect were George W. Cable, Thomas Nelson Page, Joel Chandler Harris, Mary Noailles Murfree (Charles Egbert Craddock), Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Henry Cuyler Bunner, and William Sydney Porter (O. Henry).

William Dean Howells also represented the realist tradition through his novels, including The Rise of Silas Lapham and his work as editor of the Atlantic Monthly.

Henry James (1843-1916) confronted the Old World-New World dilemma by writing directly about it. Although born in New York City, he spent most of his adult years in England. Many of his novels center on Americans who live in or travel to Europe. With its intricate, highly qualified sentences and dissection of emotional and psychological nuance, James's fiction can be daunting. Among his more accessible works are the novellas Daisy Miller, about an enchanting American girl in Europe, and The Turn of the Screw, an enigmatic ghost story.

## Turn of the century

Ernest Hemingway in World War I uniform.

At the beginning of the 20th century, American novelists were expanding fiction's social spectrum to encompass both high and low life and sometimes connected to the naturalist school of realism. In her stories and novels, Edith Wharton (1862-1937) scrutinized the upper-class, Eastern-seaboard society in which she had grown up. One of her finest books, The Age of Innocence, centers on a man who chooses to marry a conventional, socially acceptable woman rather than a fascinating outsider. At about the same time, Stephen Crane (1871-1900), best known for his Civil War novel The Red Badge of Courage, depicted the life of New York City prostitutes in Maggie: A Girl of the Streets. And in Sister Carrie, Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) portrayed a country girl who moves to Chicago and becomes a kept woman. Hamlin Garland and Frank Norris wrote about the problems of American farmers and other social issues from a naturalist perspective.

More directly political writings discussed social issues and power of corporations. Some like Edward Bellamy in Looking Backward outlined other possible political and social frameworks. Upton Sinclair, most famous for his meat-packing novel The Jungle, advocated socialism. Other political writers of the period included Edwin Markham, William Vaughn Moody. Journalistic critics, including Ida M. Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens were labelled the The Muckrakers. Henry Adams' literate autobiography, The Education of Henry Adams also depicted a stinging description of the education system and modern life.

Experimentation in style and form soon joined the new freedom in subject matter. In 1909, Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), by then an expatriate in Paris, published Three Lives, an innovative work of fiction influenced by her familiarity with cubism, jazz, and other movements in contemporary art and music. Stein labelled a group of American literary notables who lived in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s as the "Lost Generation".

The poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972) was born in Idaho but spent much of his adult life in Europe. His work is complex, sometimes obscure, with multiple references to other art forms and to a vast range of literature, both Western and Eastern. He influenced many other poets, notably T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), another expatriate. Eliot wrote spare, cerebral poetry, carried by a dense structure of symbols. In "The Waste Land" he embodied a jaundiced vision of post-World War I society in fragmented, haunted images. Like Pound's, Eliot's poetry could be highly allusive, and some editions of The Waste Land come with footnotes supplied by the poet. In 1948, Eliot won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

American writers also expressed the disillusionment following upon the war. The stories and novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) capture the restless, pleasure-hungry, defiant mood of the 1920s. Fitzgerald's characteristic theme, expressed poignantly in The Great Gatsby, is the tendency of youth's golden dreams to dissolve in failure and disappointment. Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson also wrote novels with critical depictions of American life. John Dos Passos wrote about the war and also the U.S.A. trilogy which extended into the Depression. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) saw violence and death first-hand as an ambulance driver in World War I, and the carnage persuaded him that abstract language was mostly empty and misleading. He cut out unnecessary words from his writing, simplified the sentence structure, and concentrated on concrete objects and actions. He adhered to a moral code that emphasized grace under pressure, and his protagonists were strong, silent men who often dealt awkwardly with women. The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms are generally considered his best novels; in 1954, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Five years before Hemingway, another American novelist had won the Nobel Prize: William Faulkner (1897-1962). Faulkner managed to encompass an enormous range of humanity in Yoknapatawpha County, a Mississippian region of his own invention. He recorded his characters' seemingly unedited ramblings in order to represent their inner states, a technique called "stream of consciousness." (In fact, these passages are carefully crafted, and their seemingly chaotic structure conceals multiple layers of meaning.) He also jumbled time sequences to show how the past -- especially the slave-holding era of the Deep South -- endures in the present. Among his great works are The Sound and the Fury, Absalom, Absalom!, Go Down, Moses, and The Unvanquished.

Depression era literature was blunt and direct in its social criticism. John Steinbeck (1902-1968) was born in Salinas, California, where he set many of his stories. His style was simple and evocative, winning him the favor of the readers but not of the critics. Steinbeck often wrote about poor, working-class people and their struggle to lead a decent and honest life; he was probably the most socially aware writer of his period. The Grapes of Wrath, considered his masterpiece, is a strong, socially-oriented novel that tells the story of the Joads, a poor family from Oklahoma and their journey to California in search of a better life. Other popular novels include Tortilla Flat, Of Mice and Men, Cannery Row, and East of Eden. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962. Other writers sometimes considered part of the proletarian school include Nathanael West, Fielding Burke, Jack Conroy, Tom Kromer, Robert Cantwell, Albert Halper, and Edward Anderson.

## Theater

In addition to fiction, the 1920s and 1930s were a rich period for drama. There had not been an important American dramatist until Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) began to write his plays. The 1936 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, O'Neill drew upon classical mythology, the Bible, and the new science of psychology to explore inner life. He wrote frankly about sex and family quarrels, but his preoccupation was with the individual's search for identity. One of his greatest works is Long Day's Journey Into Night, a harrowing drama, small in scale but large in theme, based largely on his own family.

Another strikingly original American playwright was Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), who expressed his southern heritage in poetic yet sensational plays, usually about a sensitive woman trapped in a brutish environment. Several of his plays have been made into films, including A Streetcar Named Desire and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Other playwrights of the period were Maxwell Anderson, Marc Connelly, Elmer Rice, Lillian Hellman, Clifford Odets, Thornton Wilder, and William Saroyan.

## Post-World War II

There were a number of major American war novels written in the wake of World War II. Some of the most well known included Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead (1948), novels by Irwin Shaw and James Jones, and later Joseph Heller (Catch-22) and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Slaughterhouse-Five).

In the 1950s the West Coast spawned a literary movement, the poetry and fiction of the "Beat Generation," a name that referred simultaneously to the rhythm of jazz music, to a sense that post-war society was worn out, and to an interest in new forms of experience through drugs, alcohol, and Eastern mysticism. Poet Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997) set the tone of social protest and visionary ecstasy in Howl, a Whitmanesque work that begins: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness....". Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) celebrated the Beats' rollicking, spontaneous, and vagrant life-style in his masterful and vibrant novel On the Road.

Other writers of the period like J.D. Salinger and Sylvia Plath were starkly individual and cannot be easily classified.

## Postmodernism

From the early 1960s through the late 1980s, an important literary movement was postmodernism. Important writers, here, are Thomas Pynchon, author of V. and Gravity's Rainbow, among other things, and Don Delillo, who wrote White Noise. Postmodern writers dealt directly with the way that popular culture and mass media influence the average American's perception and experience of the world. They would set scenes in fast food restaurants, on subways, or in shopping malls; they wrote about drugs, plastic surgery, and television commercials. Sometimes, these depictions look almost like celebrations. But simultaneously, writers in this school take a knowing, self-conscious, sarcastic, and (some critics would say) condescending attitude towards their subjects.

## Modern humorist literature

From Irving and Hawthorne to the present day, the short story has been a favorite American form. One of its 20th-century masters was John Cheever (1912-1982), who brought yet another facet of American life into the realm of literature: the affluent suburbs that have grown up around most major cities. Cheever was long associated with The New Yorker, a magazine noted for its wit and sophistication. John Updike also continued Cheever's tradition and is best known for his Rabbit series which began with Rabbit Run.

## Southern literature

Faulkner was part of a southern literary renaissance that also included such figures as Truman Capote (1924-1984) and Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964). Although Capote wrote short stories and novels, fiction and nonfiction, his masterpiece was In Cold Blood, a factual account of a multiple murder and its aftermath, which fused dogged reporting with a novelist's penetrating psychology and crystalline prose. Another practitioner of the "nonfiction novel," Tom Wolfe (1931- ) was one of the founders of "New Journalism," who honed his art in such essays as The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby and Radical Chic before he moved on to book-length efforts, such as his history of the American manned space program The Right Stuff and probably his best-known novel Bonfire of the Vanities. Other writers steeped in the Southern tradition include John Kennedy Toole (1937–1969) and Tom Robbins (1936- ).

Flannery O'Connor was a Catholic, and thus an outsider in the heavily Protestant South in which she grew up. Her characters are Protestant fundamentalists obsessed with both God and Satan. She is best known for her tragicomic short stories.

## African American literature

African American literature is literature written by, about, and sometimes specifically for African-Americans. The genre began during the 18th and 19th centuries with writers such as poet Phillis Wheatley and orator Frederick Douglass. Among the themes and issues explored in African American literature are the role of African Americans within the larger American society, African American culture, racism, slavery, and equality.

Before the American Civil War, African American literature primarily focused on the issue of slavery, as indicated by the popular subgenre of slave narratives. At the turn of the 20th century, books by authors such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington debated whether to confront or appease racist attitudes in the United States.

African American literature saw a surge during the 1920s with the rise of an artistic Black community in the New York City neighborhood of Harlem. The period called the Harlem Renaissance produced such gifted poets as Langston Hughes (1902-1967), Countee Cullen (1903-1946), and Claude McKay (1889-1948). The novelist Zora Neale Hurston (1903-1960) combined a gift for storytelling with the study of anthropology to write vivid stories from the African-American oral tradition. Through such books as the novel Their Eyes Were Watching God — about the life and marriages of a light-skinned African-American woman — Hurston influenced a later generation of black women novelists.

After World War II, a new receptivity to diverse voices brought black writers into the mainstream of American literature. James Baldwin (1924-1987) expressed his disdain for racism and his celebration of sexuality in Giovanni's Room. In Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison (1914-1994) linked the plight of African Americans, whose race can render them all but invisible to the majority white culture, with the larger theme of the human search for identity in the modern world.

Today, African American literature has become accepted as an integral part of American literature, with books in the genre, such as Roots: The Saga of an American Family by Alex Haley and The Color Purple by Alice Walker, achieving both best-selling and award-winning status. In addition, African American authors such as Nobel Prize winning Toni Morrison are ranked among the top writers in the world.

## Jewish American literature

The United States has had a community and tradition of writing by Jewish immigrants and their descendants for a long time, although many writers have objected to being reduced to "Jewish" writers alone. Key modern writers with Jewish origins are Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Grace Paley, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Chaim Potok, Isaac Asimov, Wendy Wasserstein, and Woody Allen, among others. The New Yorker has been especially instrumental in exposing many Jewish-American writers to a wider reading public.

## Other ethnic, minority, and immigrant literatures

Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko (1948- ) uses colloquial language and traditional stories to fashion haunting, lyrical poems such as In Cold Storm Light. Amy Tan (1952- ), of Chinese descent, has described her parents' early struggles in California in The Joy Luck Club. Oscar Hijuelos (1951- ), a writer with roots in Cuba, won the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for his novel The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love. In a series of novels beginning with A Boy's Own Story, Edmund White (1940- ) has captured the anguish and comedy of growing up gay in America.

**Other genres**

Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler pioneered gritty detective fiction that has had great influence on other genres and in other countries.

Stephen King has been especially successful internationally with his horror fiction.

The United States has also played a key role in the development of science fiction with authors like Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Harlan Ellison, Robert A. Heinlein, Philip K. Dick, and many others.

## J.D. Salinger

Jerome David Salinger (born January 1, 1919) is an American author best known for The Catcher in the Rye, a classic novel that has enjoyed enduring popularity since its publication in 1951. A major theme in Salinger's work is the strong yet delicate mind of "disturbed" adolescents, and the redemptive capacity of children in the lives of such young men. Salinger is also known for his reclusive nature; he has not given an interview since 1980, and has not made a public appearance, nor published any new work (at least under his own name), since 1965.

In the mid 1990s, there was a flurry of excitement when a small publisher announced a deal with Salinger to bring out the first book version of his final published story, "Hapworth 16, 1924," but amid the ensuing publicity, Salinger quickly withdrew from the arrangement.

### Biography

Jerome David Salinger was born in Manhattan, New York, to Sol Salinger, a Jewish father of Polish origin who worked for a meat importer, and Marie Jillich, a half-Scottish, half-Irish mother. When they married, Salinger's mother changed her name to Miriam and passed as Jewish; J. D. did not find out that his mother was not Jewish until just after his bar mitzvah. Jerome David was the couple's second child; his only sibling, Doris, was born in 1911.

The young Salinger attended public schools on the West Side, the private McBurney School in ninth and tenth grades, and then was happy to get away from the over-protectiveness of his mother by entering the Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania. He started his freshman year at New York University (NYU), but dropped out the next spring to work on a cruise ship. The next fall, he was prevailed upon to learn the meat-importing business and was sent to work at the company in Vienna, where he could also perfect his French and German skills. He left Austria only a month or so before the country fell to Hitler, on March 12, 1938. That fall, he attended Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, but for only one semester. Salinger attended Columbia University evening writing class in 1939. The teacher was Whit Burnett, longtime editor of Story Magazine. During the second semester of the class, Burnett saw some degree of talent in the young author. In the March-April 1940 issue of Story, Burnett published Salinger's debut short story, a vignette of several aimless youths, entitled "The Young Folks."

**World War II**

In 1941, Salinger started dating Oona O'Neill, daughter of Eugene O'Neill, writing long daily letters to her. This ended when Oona began a relationship with Charlie Chaplin. Salinger was drafted into the Army in 1942, where he saw combat with the U.S. 12th Infantry Regiment in some of the fiercest fighting of World War II, including action on Utah Beach on D-Day and in the Battle of the Bulge. During the campaign from Normandy into Germany, he met and corresponded with Ernest Hemingway, then a war correspondent, in Paris. After reading Salinger's writing, Hemingway remarked, "Jesus, he has a helluva talent."

Salinger was assigned to Counter-Intelligence, in which he interrogated prisoners of war, putting his foreign language skills to use. He was among the first soldiers to enter a liberated concentration camp. He told his daughter later, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose entirely, no matter how long you live." His experiences, perhaps, affected him emotionally (he was hospitalized for a few weeks for combat stress reaction after Germany was defeated), and it is likely that he drew upon his wartime experiences in several stories, such as "For Esmé with Love and Squalor," which is narrated by a traumatized soldier. He continued to publish stories in magazines, such as Collier's and the Saturday Evening Post, during and after his war experience.

After the defeat of Germany, he signed up for a six-month period of "de-Nazification" duty in Germany. Among those Nazis he arrested was a low-level official, Sylvia, whom he married in 1945 and brought back to the States. The marriage fell apart after a few months and Sylvia returned to Germany. The marriage was not finalized until 1956. (In 1972, his daughter Margaret was with her father when he received a letter from Sylvia. He looked at the envelope, tore it up, and discarded it, unread. He said that that was the first time he had heard from her since she left, but "when he was finished with a person, he was through with them.")

**From The New Yorker to novels**

By 1948, with the publication of a critically acclaimed short story entitled "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," Salinger began to publish almost exclusively in The New Yorker. "Bananafish" was one of the most popular stories ever published in the magazine, and he quickly became one of the publication's best-known authors. It was not his first experience with the magazine; in 1942, Salinger had received his first acceptance from The New Yorker for a story entitled "Slight Rebellion off Madison," which featured a semi-autobiographical character named Holden Caulfield. The story was held from publication until 1946 because of the war. "Slight Rebellion" was related to several other stories featuring the Caulfield family, but perspective shifted from older brother Vince to Holden.

Salinger had confided to several people that he felt Holden deserved a novel, and The Catcher in the Rye was published in 1951. It was an immediate success, although early critical reactions were mixed. While never confirmed by Salinger himself, it is believed that several of the events in the novel are semi-autobiographical. A novel driven by the nuanced, intricate character of Holden, the plot is quite simple. The book became famous for Salinger's extensive and exceptional eye for subtle complexity, detail, description, ironic humor, and the depressing and desperate atmosphere of New York City. The novel was banned in some countries, and some U.S. schools, because of its bold and (to some) offensive use of language; "goddam" appears 255 times, and a handful of "fuck"s (which the would-be censors seldom notice he was trying to erase from a museum bathroom stall.), plus a few seamy incidents such as the encounter with a prostitute (even though it was a chaste encounter). The book is still widely read, particularly in the United States, where it is considered an especially skillful depiction of teenage angst. It is not unusual to see The Catcher in the Rye on a "required reading" list for American high school students. As of 2004, the novel sells about 250,000 copies per year, "with total worldwide sales over - probably way over - 10 million."

In July 1951, his friend and New Yorker editor William Maxwell in Book of the Month Club News asked Salinger about his literary influences. Salinger said, “A writer, when he's asked to discuss his craft, ought to get up and call out in a loud voice just the names of the writers he loves. I love Kafka, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, Proust, O'Casey, Rilke, Lorca, Keats, Rimbaud, Burns, E. Brontë, Jane Austen, Henry James, Blake, Coleridge. I won't name any living writers. I don't think it's right."

In 1953, Salinger published a collection of seven short stories in The New Yorker ("Bananafish" among them), as well as two that they had rejected. The collection was published as Nine Stories in the United States, and For Esmé with Love and Squalor in the UK (after one of the most beloved stories). It was also very successful, although Salinger had already begun to tightly regulate publicity. He would not allow publishers to illustrate the dust jacket, so that his readers would have no preconceived notion of how the characters looked.

**Withdrawal from public life**

After the notoriety of The Catcher in the Rye, Salinger gradually withdrew into himself. In 1953, he moved from New York to Cornish, New Hampshire. Early in his time in Cornish he was relatively sociable, particularly with the high school students who treated him as one of their own. However, after one interview for the high school newspaper ended up in the city paper, Salinger felt betrayed. Salinger withdrew from the high schoolers entirely and was seen less frequently around the town, only seeing one close friend regularly, jurist Learned Hand.

In June 1955, when he was 36, he married Claire Douglas, a Radcliffe student. Their daughter Margaret was born that December, and their son, Matt, was born in 1960. Salinger insisted that Claire drop out of school, only four months shy of graduation, and live with him, which she did. Certain elements of the story "Franny", published in January, 1955, are based on Claire, including the fact that Claire had the book The Way of the Pilgrim. Due to their isolated location and Salinger's proclivities, they hardly saw other people for long stretches of time. Margaret reports that her mother Claire admits living with Salinger was not easy, due to the isolation and his controlling nature; as well as the jealousy of Margaret replacing her (Claire) in Salinger's affection.

The infant Margaret was sick much of the time, but Salinger refused to take her to a doctor as he had embraced Christian Science. In later years, Claire confessed to Margaret that she (Claire) went "over the edge;" she had made plans to murder the thirteen-month-old Margaret and then commit suicide. It was to happen during a trip to New York with her husband. "It would be she, Claire, not the fictional Seymour, who'd go bananas and leave guts spattered across the hotel room for the horrified spouse to witness." Instead, Claire, when in the hotel, acted on a sudden impulse to take the child and run away, but after a few months was persuaded by Salinger to return to Cornish, NH.

Salinger published Franny and Zooey in 1961, and Raise High the Roof-Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction in 1963. Each contained a pair of related short stories or novellas which had been published in The New Yorker in the fifties.

Despite the fact that, in 1961, Time magazine reported that the Glass family series "is nowhere near completion....Salinger intends to write a Glass trilogy," Salinger has, to date, only published one story since. His last published work was "Hapworth 16, 1924," an epistolary novella in the form of a long letter from seven-year-old Seymour Glass from summer camp, that took up most of the June 19, 1965 issue of The New Yorker. Around this time, Salinger's isolation of Claire, making her, Margaret Salinger later wrote, "a virtual prisoner" from friends and relatives, led Claire to separate from him in September 1966. Their divorce was finalized in October 1967.

In 1972, when Salinger was 53, he had a year-long relationship with 18-year old writer Joyce Maynard, already an experienced writer for Seventeen magazine. The New York Times had asked Maynard to write an article for them which, when published as "An Eighteen Year Old Looks Back On Life" on April 23, 1972, made her a celebrity-of-the-moment. Salinger wrote a letter to her warning her about living with fame. After exchanging 25 letters, Maynard moved in with Salinger the summer after her freshman year at Yale University. Maynard did not return to Yale that fall, and spent ten months as a guest in Salinger's Cornish home; the relationship ended, he told his teenaged daughter Margaret at a family outing, because Maynard wanted children, and he felt he could not stand the reality of children again (as opposed to the fantasy children in his writings.)

Salinger continued to write in a disciplined fashion, a few hours every morning; in a rare 1974 interview with The New York Times, he explained, "There is a marvelous peace in not publishing....I like to write. I love to write. But I write just for myself and my own pleasure." It is said that, on several occasions in the 1970s, he was on the verge of publishing another work but decided against it at the last minute. In 1978, Newsweek reported that Salinger, while attending a banquet in an army friend's honor, said he had recently finished "a long, romantic book set in World War II," but no further details are known about that book. In her memoir, Margaret Salinger described the detailed filing system her father had for his unpublished manuscripts: "A red mark meant, if I die before I finish my work, publish this 'as is,' blue meant publish but edit first, and so on."

**Later years and instances of exposure**

Salinger tried to escape public exposure and attention as much as possible ("A writer's feelings of anonymity-obscurity are the second most valuable property on loan to him," he wrote.) However, he continued to struggle with the unwanted attention he received as a popular-culture figure. Dozens of students and readers would drive to Cornish to get a glimpse of Salinger. Some writers would leave manuscripts. In the 1970s and 1980s, the reclusive writer Franz Douskey, who lived near Salinger on Dingleton Hill, would misdirect tourists down a series of dirt roads that led them away from Salinger's house into nearby towns.

Upon learning in the early eighties of the intent of British writer Ian Hamilton to publish In Search of J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life (1935-65), a biography including letters Salinger had written to other authors and friends, Salinger sued to stop the book's publication. The book was finally published with the letters' contents paraphrased. The court ruled that, though a person may own a letter physically, the language within it belongs to the author. An unintended consequence of the lawsuit was that many details of Salinger's private life, including that he had written two novels and many stories but left them unpublished, became public in the form of court transcripts.

For "a few years all the way through the middle eighties," Salinger was romantically involved with television actress Elaine Joyce. The relationship ended when he met Colleen O'Neill (b. June 11, 1959), a nurse and quiltmaker, who he married around 1988. O'Neill, who is forty years the author's junior, told Margaret Salinger that she and Salinger were trying to have a child.

In a surprising move, in 1997 Salinger gave a small publisher, Orchises Press, permission to publish "Hapworth 16, 1924," the previously uncollected novella; it was to be published that year, and listings for it appeared on Amazon.com and other book-sellers. However, the publication date was pushed back several times, the last time to 2002. It was not published and no new date has been set. In 1999, twenty-five years after the end of their relationship, Joyce Maynard put up for auction a series of letters Salinger had written to her. The sale helped to publicize a memoir of Maynard's, At Home in the World : A Memoir, published the same year. Among other indiscretions, the book described how Maynard's mother had consulted with her on how to appeal to the aging author, and described Maynard's relationship with the author at length. In the ensuing controversy over both the memoir and the letters, Maynard claimed that she was forced to auction the letters for financial reasons; she would have preferred to donate them to Beinecke Library. Software developer Peter Norton bought the letters for $156,000 and announced his intention to return them to Salinger.

A year later, Salinger's daughter Margaret Salinger, by his second wife, Claire Douglas, published Dream Catcher: A Memoir. In her "tell-all" book, Ms. Salinger dispelled many of the Salinger myths established by Ian Hamilton's book. One of Hamilton's arguments was that Salinger's experience with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder left him psychologically scarred, and that he was unable to deal with the traumatic nature of his war service. Ms. Salinger, however painted a picture of J. D. as a man immensely proud of his service record, maintaining his military haircut, service jacket, and moving about his compound (and town) in an old Jeep. Ms. Salinger offered many insights into other Salinger myths, including her father's supposed long-time interest in macrobiotics and involvement with what is today known as "alternative medicine" and Eastern philosophies.

**Religious and philosophical beliefs**

In the late forties, Salinger was an avid follower of Zen Buddhism, to the point that he "gave reading lists on the subject to his dates" and met Buddhist scholar D. T. Suzuki. Then, as described in Som P. Ranchan's book, An Adventure in Vedanta: J. D. Salinger's the Glass Family, the writer became a life-long student of Advaita Vedanta Hinduism. Sri Ramakrishna and his student Vivekananda were important contemporary figures he studied. In this tradition, celibacy and detachment from human responsibilities such as family are emphasized for those seeking enlightenment. Margaret Salinger says that she might have never been born if her father had not read Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda who brought the possibility of enlightenment to those following the path of the "householder" (i.e., married person with children).

J. D. and Claire were initiated into this path of Kriya yoga in a small store-front Hindu temple in a lower-middle class neighborhood of Washington, DC. They received a mantra and breathing exercises that they were to practice for ten minutes twice a day. Salinger had sudden jumps of enthusiasm for different belief-systems that he then insisted Claire also follow. Salinger tried Dianetics (later called Scientology), even meeting L. Ron Hubbard himself, according to Claire.

This was followed by a number of spiritual/medical/nutritional belief systems including Christian Science, teachings of Edgar Cayce, homeopathy, acupuncture, macrobiotics, fasting, megadoses of Vitamin C, vomiting to remove impurities, solar reflectors for tanning, drinking one's own urine (this is part of the folk-medicine of several cultures around the world; see urine therapy), "speaking in tongues" (glossolalia) which he learned at a Charismatic church, and sitting in a Reichian "orgone box" to accumulate "orgone energy."

**Relationship with Hollywood**

In a 1942 letter to Whit Burnett, Salinger wrote with fervor, "I wanted to sell some stuff to the movies, through the mags. Gotta make a killing, so I can go away to work after the war." After being disappointed, according to Ian Hamilton, when "rumblings from Hollywood" over his 1943 short story "The Varioni Brothers" came to nothing, Salinger was unhesitant when independent film producer Samuel Goldwyn offered to buy the film rights to his 1948 short story, "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut." Though Salinger sold his story with the hope, in the words of his agent Dorothy Olding, that "they would make a good movie," the film version of "Wiggly" was critically lambasted upon its 1949 release. Renamed My Foolish Heart and starring Dana Andrews and Susan Hayward, the melodramatic film departed to such an extent from Salinger's short story that Goldwyn biographer A. Scott Berg referred to it as a “bastardization.”

Salinger would never relinquish control of his work to Hollywood filmmakers after that, even though, when The Catcher in the Rye was released in 1951, numerous offers were made to adapt it for the screen (Samuel Goldwyn among them.) Since its publication, there has been sustained interest in the novel among filmmakers, with Billy Wilder, Harvey Weinstein, and Steven Spielberg among those seeking to secure the rights. Actors ranging from Jack Nicholson to Tobey Maguire have made bids to play Holden Caulfield, and Salinger has said that "Jerry Lewis tried for years to get his hands on the part of Holden." The author has repeatedly demurred, though, and in 1999, the writer Joyce Maynard definitively concluded, "The only person who might ever have played Holden Caulfield would have been J. D. Salinger."

In 1995, Iranian director Dariush Mehrjui made Pari, an unauthorized "loose" film adaptation of Salinger's Franny and Zooey. Though the film could be distributed legally in Iran since the country has no official copyright relations with the United States, Salinger had his lawyers block a planned screening of the film at Lincoln Center in 1998. Mehrjui called Salinger's action "bewildering," explaining that he saw his film as "a kind of cultural exchange."

Despite his issues with film versions of his work, Salinger has been described as a devoted film buff, his favorite films including Gigi, The Lady Vanishes, and The Lost Weekend, along with the films of the Marx Brothers. Predating VCRs, Salinger had an extensive collection of classic movies from the 1940s in 16 mm prints. Maynard wrote that "he loves movies, not films," and his daughter went so far as to write that her father's "worldview is, essentially, a product of the movies of his day. To my father, all Spanish speakers are Puerto Rican washerwomen, or the toothless, grinning gypsy types in a Marx Brothers movie."

# The Poetry of the United States

The poetry of the United States naturally arose first during its beginnings as the Constitutionally-unified thirteen colonies (although prior to this, a strong oral tradition resemblant of poetry existed among Native American societies). Unsurprisingly, most of the early colonists' work relied on contemporary British models of poetic form, diction, and theme. However, in the 19th century, a distinctive American idiom began to emerge. By the later part of that century, when Walt Whitman was winning an enthusiastic audience abroad, poets from the United States had begun to take their place at the forefront of the English-language avant-garde.

This position was sustained into the 20th century to the extent that Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot were perhaps the most influential English-language poets in the period during World War I.[citation needed] By the 1960s, the young poets of the British Poetry Revival looked to their American contemporaries and predecessors as models for the kind of poetry they wanted to write. Toward the end of the millennium, consideration of American poetry had diversified, as scholars placed an increased emphasis on poetry by women, African Americans, Hispanics, Chicanos and other subcultural groupings. Poetry, and creative writing in general, also tended to become more professionalized with the growth of creative writing programs in the English studies departments of campuses across the country.

## Poetry in the colonies

One of the first recorded poets of the British colonies was Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672), who remains one of the earliest known women poets in English. Her poems are untypically tender evocations of home and family life and of her love for her husband. In marked contrast, Edward Taylor (1645–1729) wrote poems expounding Puritan virtues in a highly wrought metaphysical style that can be seen as typical of the early colonial period. This narrow focus on the Puritan ethic was, understandably, the dominant note of most of the poetry written in the colonies during the 17th and early 18th centuries.

Another distinctly American lyric voice of the colonial period was Phillis Wheatley, a slave whose book Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, was published in 1773. She was one of the best-known poets of her day, at least in the colonies, and her poems were typical of New England culture at the time, meditating on religious and classical ideas.

The 18th century saw an increasing emphasis on America as fit subject matter for its poets. This trend is most evident in the works of Philip Freneau (1752–1832), who is also notable for the unusually sympathetic attitude to Native Americans shown in his writings. However, as might be expected from what was essentially provincial writing, this late colonial poetry is generally technically somewhat old-fashioned, deploying the means and methods of Pope and Gray in the era of Blake and Burns.

On the whole, the development of poetry in the American colonies mirrors the development of the colonies themselves. The early poetry is dominated by the need to preserve the integrity of the Puritan ideals that created the settlement in the first place. As the colonists grew in confidence, the poetry they wrote increasingly reflected their drive towards independence. This shift in subject matter was not reflected in the mode of writing which tended to be conservative, to say the least. This can be seen as a product of the physical remove at which American poets operated from the center of English-language poetic developments in London.

## Postcolonial poetry

The first significant poet of the independent United States was William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), whose great contribution was to write rhapsodic poems on the grandeur of prairies and forests. Other notable poets to emerge in the early and middle 19th century include Ralph Waldo Emerson , (1803–1882), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), and Sidney Lanier (1842–1881). As might be expected, the works of these writers are united by a common search for a distinctive American voice to distinguish them from their British counterparts. To this end, they explored the landscape and traditions of their native country as materials for their poetry.

The most significant example of this tendency may be The Song of Hiawatha by Longfellow. This poem uses Native American tales collected by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who was superintendent of Indian affairs for Michigan from 1836 to 1841. Longfellow also imitated the meter of the Finnish epic poem Kalevala, possibly to avoid British models. The resulting poem, while a popular success, did not provide a model for future U.S. poets.

Another factor that distinguished these poets from their British contemporaries was the influence of the transcendentalism of the poet/philosophers Emerson and Thoreau. Transcendentalism was the distinctly American strain of the English Romanticism that began with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Emerson, as much as anyone the founder of transcendentalism, had visited England as a young man to meet these two English poets, as well as Thomas Carlyle. While Romanticism mellowed into Victorianism in post-reform England, it grew more energetic in America from the 1830s through to the Civil War.

Edgar Allan Poe was probably the most recognized American poet outside of America during this period. Diverse authors in France, Sweden and Russia were heavily influenced by his works, and his poem "The Raven" swept across Europe, translated into many languages. In the twentieth century the American poet William Carlos Williams said of Poe that he is the only solid ground on which American poetry is anchored.

## Whitman and Dickinson

The final emergence of a truly indigenous English-language poetry in the United States was the work of two poets, Walt Whitman (1819–1892) and Emily Dickinson (1830–1886). On the surface, these two poets could not have been less alike. Whitman's long lines, derived from the metric of the King James Version of the Bible, and his democratic inclusiveness stand in stark contrast with Dickinson's concentrated phrases and short lines and stanzas, derived from Protestant hymnals. What links them is their common connection to Emerson (a blurb from whom Whitman printed on the first edition of Leaves of Grass), and a daring quality in regard to the originality of their visions. These two poets can be said to represent the birth of two major American poetic idioms—the free metric and direct emotional expression of Whitman, and the gnomic obscurity and irony of Dickinson—both of which would profoundly stamp the American poetry of the 20th century.

The development of these idioms can be traced through the works of poets such as Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869–1935), Stephen Crane (1871–1900), Robert Frost (1874–1963) and Carl Sandburg (1878–1967). As a result, by the beginning of the 20th century the outlines of a distinctly new poetic tradition were clear to see.

**Modernism and after**

This new idiom, combined with a study of 19th-century French poetry, formed the basis of the United States input into 20th-century English-language poetic modernism. Ezra Pound (1885–1972) and T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) were the leading figures at the time, but numerous other poets made important contributions. These included Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), Wallace Stevens (1879–1955), William Carlos Williams (1883–1963), Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) (1886–1961), Adelaide Crapsey (1878-1914), Marianne Moore (1887–1972), E. E. Cummings (1894–1962), and Hart Crane (1899–1932). Williams was to become exemplary for many later poets because he, more than any of his peers, contrived to marry spoken American English with free verse rhythms.

While these poets were unambiguously aligned with High modernism, other poets active in the United States in the first third of the 20th century were not. Among the most important of the latter were those who were associated with what came to be known as the New Criticism. These included John Crowe Ransom (1888–1974), Allen Tate (1899–1979), and Robert Penn Warren (1905–1989). Other poets of the era, such as Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982), experimented with modernist techniques but were also drawn towards more traditional modes of writing. The modernist torch was carried in the 1930s mainly by the group of poets known as the Objectivists. These included Louis Zukofsky (1904–1978), Charles Reznikoff (1894–1976), George Oppen (1908–1984), Carl Rakosi (1903–2004) and, later, Lorine Niedecker (1903–1970). Kenneth Rexroth, who was published in the Objectivist Anthology, was, along with Madeline Gleason (1909–1973), a forerunner of the San Francisco Renaissance. Many of the Objectivists came from urban communities of new immigrants, and this new vein of experience and language enriched the growing American idiom. Another source of enrichment was the emergence into the American poetic mainstream of African American poets such as Langston Hughes (1902–1967) and Countee Cullen (1903–1946).

**World War II and after**

World War II saw the emergence of a new generation of poets, many of whom were influenced by Wallace Stevens. Richard Eberhart (1904–2005), Karl Shapiro (1913–2000) and Randall Jarrell (1914–1965) all wrote poetry that sprang from experience of active service. Together with Elizabeth Bishop (1911–1979), Theodore Roethke (1908–1963) and Delmore Schwartz (1913–1966), they formed a generation of poets that in contrast to the preceding generation often wrote in traditional verse forms.

After the war, a number of new poets and poetic movements emerged. John Berryman (1914–1972) and Robert Lowell (1917–1977) were the leading lights in what was to become known as the confessional movement, which was to have a strong influence on later poets like Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) and Anne Sexton (1928–1974). Both Berryman and Lowell were closely acquainted with modernism, but were mainly interested in exploring their own experiences as subject matter and a style that Lowell referred to as "cooked", that is consciously and carefully crafted.

In contrast, the Beat poets, who included such figures as Jack Kerouac (1922–1969), Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997), Gregory Corso (1930–2001), Joanne Kyger (born 1934), Gary Snyder (born 1930), Diane Di Prima (born 1934), Denise Levertov (1923–1997), Amiri Baraka (born 1934) and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (born 1919), were distinctly raw. Reflecting, sometimes in an extreme form, the more open, relaxed and searching society of the 1950s and 1960s, the Beats pushed the boundaries of the American idiom in the direction of demotic speech perhaps further than any other group.

Around the same time, the Black Mountain poets, under the leadership of Charles Olson (1910–1970), were working at Black Mountain College. Somewhere between raw and cooked, these poets were exploring the possibilities of open form but in a much more programmatic way than the Beats. The main poets involved were Robert Creeley (1926–2005), Robert Duncan (1919–1988), Ed Dorn (1929–1999), Paul Blackburn (1926–1971), Hilda Morley (1916–1998), John Wieners (1934–2002), and Larry Eigner (1927–1996). They based their approach to poetry on Olson's 1950 essay Projective Verse, in which he called for a form based on the line, a line based on human breath and a mode of writing based on perceptions juxtaposed so that one perception leads directly to another. Cid Corman (1924–2004) and Theodore Enslin (born 1925) are often associated with this group but are perhaps more correctly viewed as direct descendants of the Objectivists.

The Beats and some of the Black Mountain poets are often considered to have been responsible for the San Francisco Renaissance. However, as previously noted, San Francisco had become a hub of experimental activity from the 1930s thanks to Rexroth and Gleason. Other poets involved in this scene included Charles Bukowski (1920–1994) and Jack Spicer (1925–1965). These poets sought to combine a contemporary spoken idiom with inventive formal experiment. Jerome Rothenberg (born 1931) is well-known for his work in ethnopoetics, but he was also the coiner of the term "deep image". Deep image poetry is inspired by the symbolist theory of correspondences. Other poets who worked with deep image include Robert Kelly (born 1935), Diane Wakoski (born 1937) and Clayton Eshleman (born 1935).

The Small Press poets (sometimes called the mimeograph movement) are another influential and eclectic group of poets who also surfaced in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1950s and are still active today. Fiercely independent editors, who were also poets, edited and published low-budget periodicals and chapbooks of emerging poets who might otherwise have gone unnoticed. This work ranged from formal to experimental. Gene Fowler, A.D. Winans, Hugh Fox, Paul Foreman, John Bennett, Stephen Morse, Judy L. Brekke, and F. A. Nettelbeck are among the many poets who are still actively continuing the Small Press Poets tradition. Many have turned to the new medium of the Web for its distribution capabilities.

Just as the West Coast had the San Francisco Renaissance and the Small Press Movement, the East Coast produced the New York School. This group aimed to write poetry that spoke directly of everyday experience in everyday language and produced a poetry of urbane wit and elegance that contrasts strongly with the work of their Beat contemporaries. Leading members of the group include John Ashbery (born 1927), Frank O'Hara (1926–1966), Kenneth Koch (1925–2002), James Schuyler (1923–1991), Richard Howard (born 1929), Ted Berrigan (1934–1983), Anne Waldman (born 1945) and Bernadette Mayer (born 1945).

John Cage (1912–1992), one-time Black Mountain College resident and composer, and Jackson Mac Low (1922–2004) both wrote poetry based on chance or aleatory techniques. Inspired by Zen, Dada and scientific theories of indeterminacy, they were to prove to be important influences on the 1970s U.S avant-garde.

James Merrill (1926–1995), off to the side of all these groups and very much sui generis, was a poet of great formal virtuosity and the author of the epic poem The Changing Light at Sandover (1982).

Tomas O'Leary published Fool at the Funeral in 1975 and The Devil Take a Crooked House in 1990. These two critically acclaimed books established O'Leary as a reknowned poet in the New England States.

## American poetry now

The last thirty years in United States poetry has seen the emergence of a number of groups and trends. It is probably too soon to judge the long-term importance of these, and what follows is merely a brief outline sketch.

The 1970s saw a revival of interest in surrealism, with the most prominent poets working in this field being Andrei Codrescu (born 1946), Russell Edson (born 1935) and Maxine Chernoff (born 1952). Performance poetry also emerged from the Beat and hippie happenings, and the talk-poems of David Antin (born 1932) and ritual events performed by Rothenberg, to become a serious poetic stance which embraces multiculturalism and a range of poets from a multiplicity of cultures. This mirrored a general growth of interest in poetry by African Americans including Gwendolyn Brooks (born 1917), Maya Angelou (born 1928), Ishmael Reed (born 1938) and Nikki Giovanni (born 1943).

The most controversial avant-garde grouping during this period has been the Language poets (or L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, after the magazine that bears that name). Language-centered writing is extremely theoretical, discounting speech as the basis for verse, and dedicated to questioning the referentiality of language and the dominance of the sentence as the basic unit of syntax. The idea appears to be that language when stripped of its normal associative and denotative meanings becomes closer to the source of language and may actually provide insights that might not otherwise be possible. Those critical of the Language movement point out that taken to its logical conclusion this abandonment of sense and context creates a poetry that could be just as well be written by the proverbial infinite sized room full of monkeys with an infinite number of word processors.

The Language poets movement includes a very high proportion of women, which mirrors another general trend; the rediscovery and promotion of poetry written both by earlier and contemporary women poets. In addition to Language poets, a number of the most prominent African American poets to emerge are women, and other prominent women writers include Adrienne Rich (born 1929) and Amy Gerstler (born 1956).

The Language group also contains an unusually high proportion of academics. Poetry has tended to move more and more into the campus, with a growth in creative writing and poetics programs providing an equal growth in the number of teaching posts available to practicing poets. This increased professionalization and abundance of academic presses combined with a lack of any coherent process for critical evaluation is one of the clearest developments and one which seems likely to have unpredictable consequences for the future of poetry in the United States.

The 1980s also saw the emergence of a group of poets who became known as the New Formalists. These poets, who included Molly Peacock, Brad Leithauser, Dana Gioia and Marilyn Hacker, write in traditional forms and have declared that this return to rhyme and more fixed meters is the new avant-garde. Critics of the New Formalists have compared their traditionalism with the conservative politics of the Reagan era. It is intended as an insult.

Many poets (A growing group of poets loosely called Outlaw Poets or Small Press Poets) ignore what they see as the extremes and academic elitism of the self-proclaimed avant-garde of both poetic groups, choosing to use both traditional and experimental approaches to their work.

Concurrently, a Chicago construction worker named Marc Smith was growing bored with increasingly esoteric academic poetry readings. In 1984, at the Get Me High Lounge, Smith devised the format that has come to be known as slam poetry. A competitive poetry performance, poetry slam opened the door for a new generation of writers, spoken word performers, and audiences by emphasizing a style of writing that is edgy,topical, and easily understood.

Poetry slam has produced noted poets like Alix Olson, Taylor Mali, and Saul Williams, as well as inspired hundreds of open mics.

## Academy of American Poets

The Academy of American Poets is the preeminent organization in the United States dedicated to the art of poetry. The academy was created in 1934 in New York City by Mrs. Marie Bullock with a mission to "support American poets at all stages of their careers and to foster the appreciation of contemporary poetry." In 1936, the academy was officially incorporated as a non-profit organization. Ms. Bullock was the president of the academy for the next half a century, running the academy out of her apartment for thirty of those years. She started the academy after her return from her studies at the Sorbonne in Paris. Returning to America, Ms. Bullock was dismayed at the lack of support for poetry in her home country. Taking advice from friends such as Edwin Arlington Robinson and Joseph Auslander, Ms. Bullock raised plans and funds to create the academy and help support and nature the American poet.

Now celebrating over 70 years of existence, the academy fulfills its goals in two ways. The first, to "support American poets", is accomplished by the myriad of awards handed out by the academy. There are seven major awards handed out by the academy and over 200 college awards handed out at schools across the country. To "foster the appreciation of contemporary poetry," the academy runs numerous programs, including Poets.org, the most popular site about poetry on the web; National Poetry Month (April), the largest literary celebration in the world; an array of Awards & Prizes for poets at every stage of their careers; American Poet, a biannual literary journal; and the Poetry Audio Archive, hundreds of audio recordings of poetry readings dating back to the early 1960s.

## Awards given by the academy

Wallace Stevens Award — a lifetime achievement award of $100,000 to recognize outstanding and proven mastery in the art of poetry

Fellowship of the Academy of American Poets — a $25,000 award given in memory of James Ingram Merrill, for distinguished poetic achievement at mid-career

Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize — $25,000 for the best book of poetry published in the previous year

James Laughlin Award — $5,000 to recognize and support a poet's second book

Walt Whitman Award — first-book publication, $5,000, and a one-month artist's residency

Raiziss/de Palchi Translation Awards — $5,000 book prize and $20,000 fellowship (in alternating years) to recognize outstanding translations into English of modern Italian poetry

Harold Morton Landon Translation Award — $1,000 for a published translation of poetry from any language into English

College & University Prizes — $100 individual prizes at more than 200 colleges and universities nationwide

## Chicano poetry

Chicano poetry is a branch of American literature written by and primarily about Mexican-Americans and the Mexican-American experience. The term "Chicano" is a politico-cultural term of identity specifically identifying people of Mexican descent who were born in the United States. In the same way that American poetry is comprised of the writing of the offspring of English and other European colonists to North America, so is Chicano poetry and literature comprised of the writing of the off-spring of Latinos who either emigrated to the US or were involuntarily included in the United States due to the Mexican-American War of 1848.

### Pioneers and forerunners

Well known Chicano poets who were instrumental in creating a niche both in American and Latin American literature and developed an impetus were early writers such as Abelardo "Lalo" Delgado, Trinidad "Trino" Sanchez, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. Delgado wrote "Stupid America", Sanchez wrote "Why Am I So Brown?" and Gonzales authored the epic "Yo Soy Joaquin." Another early pioneer writer is the Poet/Painter and gypsy vagabond of the national community, Nephtalí De León, author of "Hey, Mr.President, Man!", "Coca Cola Dream," and "Chicano Popcorn."

**Unifying concepts**

These poems primarily deal with how Chicanos deal with existence in the United States and how Chicanos cope with marginalization, racism and vanquished dreams. Many Chicano writers allude to the past glory of the Mesoamerican civilizations and how the indigenous people of those civilizations continue to live through the Chicano people who are largely "mestizos", people of mixed Native American, European and African ancestry.

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# Theater in the United States

Theater of the United States is based in the Western tradition, mostly borrowed from the performance styles prevalent in Europe. Today, it is heavily interlaced with American literature, film, television, and music, and it is not uncommon for a single story to appear in all forms. Regions with significant music scenes often have strong theater and comedy traditions as well. Musical theater may be the most popular form: it is certainly the most colorful, and choreographed motions pioneered on stage have found their way onto movie and television screens. Broadway in New York City is generally considered the pinnacle of commercial U.S. theater, though this art form appears all across the country. Another city of particular note is Chicago, which boasts the most diverse and dynamic theater scene in the country. Regional or resident theatres in the United States are professional theatre companies outside of New York City that produce their own seasons. There is also community theatre and showcase theatre. Even tiny rural communities sometimes awe audiences with extravagant productions.

## History

The birth of professional theater in America is usually thought to have begun with the Lewis Hallam troupe which arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1752. However it is certain that theater existed in North America before that. A theater was built in Williamsburg in 1715, and in January 1736, the original Dock Street Theatre was opened in Charles Town, SC. Thomas Kean played the part of Richard III in New York City in 1750, and probably performed in Williamsburg shortly before the Hallams. (Amateur theater is recorded to have existed as early as 1665, when performers of a play were prosecuted in Accomack County, Virginia on charges of public wickedness.) In any case The Hallams were the first to organize a complete company of actors in Europe (London in this case) and bring them to the colonies. They brought a repertoire of the most popular plays from London, including Hamlet, The Recruiting Officer, and Richard III. The Merchant of Venice was their first performance, shown initially on September 15, 1752. Encountering opposition from religious organisations, Hallam and his company left for Jamaica in 1754 or 1755. Soon after, Lewis Hallam's son, Lewis Hallam, Jr., founded the American Company which opened a theater in New York and presented the first professionally-mounted American play, The Prince of Parthia by Thomas Godfrey, in 1767.

Throughout the 18th century there was widespread opposition to theatrical performances. In the puritanical climate of the time, especially in the North, the theater was considered a "highway to hell". Laws forbidding the performance of plays were passed in Massachusetts in 1750, in Pennsylvania in 1759, and in Rhode Island in 1761, and it was banned in most states during the American Revolutionary War at the urging of the Continental Congress. In 1794 President Timothy Dwight IV of Yale College in his "Essay on the Stage" declared that "to indulge a taste for playgoing means nothing more or less than the loss of that most valuable treasure: the immortal soul.". However it is likely that these ordinances were not strictly enforced, for we have records of performances in many cities during this time.

The 19th century

In the early 19th century, theater became more common in the United States, and many celebrity actors from Europe toured the United States. There were even a few famous American actors, such as Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman. Many theater owners, such as William Dunlap and Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, similarly became well known throughout the young nation.

The Walnut Street Theatre (or simply The Walnut) is the oldest continuously-operating theater in America, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at 825 Walnut Street. The Walnut was built by The Circus of Pepin and Breschard, in 1809.

Most cities only had a single theater. Productions were much more rudimentary then, and sometimes plays would be staged in barns or dining rooms when no theater was available. Provincial theaters frequently lacked heat and even minimal props and scenery. As the Westward Expansion of the country progressed, some entrepreneurs staged floating theaters on boats which would travel from town to town. Eventually, towns grew to the size that they could afford "long runs" of a production, and in 1841, a single play was shown in New York City for an unprecedented three weeks.

Shakespeare was the most commonly performed playwright, along with other European authors. American playwrights of the period existed, but are mostly forgotten now. American plays of the period are mostly melodramas, often weaving in local themes or characters such as the heroic but ill-fated Indian. The most enduring melodrama of this period is Uncle Tom's Cabin, adapted by H. J. Conway from the novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

A popular form of theater during this time was the minstrel show, arguably the first uniquely American style of performance. These shows featured white actors dressed in blackface and playing up racial stereotypes. These shows became the most watched theatrical form of the era.

Throughout the 19th century, many preachers continued to warn against attending plays as being sinful. Theater was associated with hedonism and even violence, and actors especially female actors, were looked upon as little better than prostitutes. A serious rivalry between William Charles Macready and Edwin Forrest mirrored the sports rivalries of later years. The Astor Place Riot of 1849 in New York was sparked by this rivalry, and brought about the deaths of 22 people. Then, at the end of the United States Civil War, Abraham Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theater while watching a play.

Burlesque became a popular form of entertainment in the middle of the 19th century. Originally a form of farce in which females in male roles mocked the politics and culture of the day, burlesque was condemned by opinion makers for its sexuality and outspokenness. The form was hounded off the "legitimate stage" and found itself relegated to saloons and barrooms. The female producers were replaced by their male counterparts, who toned down the politics and played up the sexuality, until the shows eventually became little more than pretty girls in skimpy clothing singing songs, while male comedians told raunchy jokes.

The Civil War ended much of the prosperity of the South, and with it, its independent theaters. Only New Orleans was able to recover its theatrical tradition in the 19th century, if only partially. In the North, theater flourished as a post-war boom allowed longer and more frequest productions. The advent of railroads allowed actors to travel much more easily between towns, making theaters in small towns more feasible. By the late 19th century, there were thousands of cities and towns with at least a rudimentary theater for live productions. This trend also allowed larger and more elaborate sets to travel with players from city to city. The advent of electric lighting led to changes in styles, as more details could be seen by the audience.

By the 1880s theaters on Broadway in New York City, and along 42nd Street, took on a flavor of their own, giving rise to new stage forms such as the Broadway musical (strongly influenced by the feelings of immigrants coming to New York with great hope and ambition, many of whom went into the theater). New York became the organizing center for theater throughout the U.S.

In 1896, Charles Frohman, Al Hayman, Abe Erlanger, Mark Klaw, Samuel F. Nixon, and Fred Zimmerman formed the Theatrical Syndicate. Their organization established systemized booking networks throughout the United States and created a monopoly that controlled every aspect of contracts and bookings until the late 1910s when the Shubert brothers broke their stranglehold on the industry.

Minstrel show performers Rollin Howard (in female costume) and George Griffin, c. 1855.

### The 20th century

humorist literature postcolonial poetry

Vaudeville was common in the late 19th and early 20th century, and is notable for heavily influencing early film, radio, and television productions in the country. (This was born from an earlier American practice of having singers and novelty acts perform between acts in a standard play.) George Burns was a very long-lived American comedian who started out in the vaudeville community, but went on to enjoy a career running until the 1990s.

Some vaudeville theaters built between about 1900 and 1920 managed to survive as well, though many went through periods of alternate use, most often as movie theaters until the second half of the century saw many urban populations decline and multiplexes built in the suburbs. Since that time, a number have been restored to original or nearly-original condition and attract new audiences nearly one hundred years later.

By the beginning of the 20th century, legitimate (non-vaudville) theater had become decidedly more sophisticated in the United States, as it had in Europe. The stars of this era, such as Ethel Barrymore and John Drew, were often seen as even more important than the show itself. The advance of motion pictures also led to many changes in theater. The popularity of musicals may have been due in part to the fact the early films had no sound, and could thus not compete. More complex and sophisticated dramas bloomed in this time period, and acting styles became more subdued. Even by 1915, actors were being lured away from theater and to the silver screen, and vaudeville was beginning to face stiff competition.

While revues consisting of mostly unconnected songs, sketches, comedy routines, and scantily-glad dancing girls dominated for the first 20 years of the 20th century, musical theater would eventually develop beyond this. One of the first major steps was Show Boat, with music by Jerome Kern and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein. It featured songs and non-musical scenes which were integrated to develop the show's plot. The next great step forward was Oklahoma!, with lyrics by Hammerstein and music by Richard Rodgers. Its "dream ballets" used dance to carry forward the plot and develop the characters.

Amateur performing groups have always had a place along side professional acting companies. The Winneshiek Players, an amateur theater group in Freeport, IL, first organized in 1916. After a few years of sporadic performances at various venues, the group reorganized in 1926. The group has been in continuous operation since that time, making them the oldest continuously operatinging theater group in the United States. Detailed history of the Winneshiek Players can be found in the 1970 edition of History of Stephenson County. Records of all productions are maintained in the archives of the Winneshiek Players.

The massive social change that went on during the Great Depression also had an effect on theater in the United States. Plays took on social roles, identifying with immigrants and the unemployed. The Federal Theatre Project, a New Deal program set up by Franklin D. Roosevelt, helped to promote theater and provide jobs for actors. The program staged many elaborate and controversial plays such as It Can't Happen Here by Sinclair Lewis and The Cradle Will Rock by Marc Blitzstein.

After World War II, American theater came into its own. Several American playwrights, such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, became world-renowned. In the Sixties, experimentation in the Arts spread into theater as well, with plays such as Hair including nudity and drug culture references. Musicals remained popular as well, and musicals such as West Side Story and A Chorus Line broke previous records.

### American theater today

Earlier styles of theater such as minstrel shows and Vaudeville acts have disappeared from the landscape, but theater remains a popular American art form. Broadway productions still entertain millions of theatergoers as productions have become more elaborate and expensive. Notable contemporary American playwrights include Edward Albee, August Wilson, Tony Kushner, David Henry Hwang, and Wendy Wasserstein. Smaller urban theaters have stayed a source of innovation, and regional theaters remain an important part of theater life. Drama is also taught in high schools and colleges, which was not done in previous eras, and many become interested in theater through this.

# American comic book

An American comic book is a small magazine originating in the United States containing a narrative in the comics form. The standard dimensions are 6 ⅝" × 10 ¼".

Since the invention of the comic book format in the 1930s, the United States has been the leading producer with only the British comic books (during the inter-war period and up until the 1970s) and the Japanese manga as close competitors in terms of quantity.

Comic book sales declined with the spread of television and mass market paperback books after World War II, but regained popularity in the late 1950s and the 1960s as comic books' audience expanded to include college students who favored the naturalistic, "superheroes in the real world" trend initiated by Stan Lee at Marvel Comics. As well, the 1960s saw the advent of the underground comics. Later, the influence of Japanese manga and the recognition of the comic medium among academics, literary critics and art museums helped solidify comics as a serious artform with established traditions, stylistic conventions, and artistic evolution.

### Proto-comic books

The creation of the modern American comic book came in stages. Comic strips had been collected in hardcover book form as early as 1930 in Europe, when the Belgian comic strip Tintin was first collected in an "album" titled "Tintin in the Land of the Soviets". A year earlier, however, Dell Publishing, founded by George T. Delacorte Jr. in 1921, published The Funnies, described by the Library of Congress as "a short-lived newspaper tabloid insert". (This is not to be confused with Dell's later same-name comic book, which began publication in 1936.) Historian Ron Goulart describes the 16-page, four-color periodical "more a Sunday comic section without the rest of the newspaper than a true comic book. But it did offer all original material and was sold on newsstands". It ran 36 issues, published Saturdays through Oct. 16, 1930.

In 1933, salesperson Maxwell Gaines and sales manager Harry I. Wildenberg, and owner George Janosik of the Waterbury, Connecticut company Eastern Color Printing — which among other thing printed Sunday-paper comic strip sections — produced Funnies on Parade. Like The Funnies but only eight pages this was a newsprint magazine. Rather than using original material, however, it reprinted in color several comic strips licenced from the McNaught and McClure Syndicate. These included such highly popular strips as cartoonist Al Smith's Mutt and Jeff, Ham Fisher's Joe Palooka, and Percy Crosby's Skippy. This periodical, however, was neither sold nor available on newsstands, but rather sent free as a promotional item to consumers who mailed in coupons clipped from Proctor & Gamble soap and toiletries products. Ten-thousand copies were made. The promotion proved a success, and Eastern Color that year produced similar periodicals for Canada Dry soft drinks, Kinney Shoes, Wheatena cereal and others, with print runs of from 100,000 to 250,000.

### Famous Funnies and New Fun Comics

That same year, however, Gaines and Wildenberg collaborated with Dell to publish the 36-page Famous Funnies: A Carnival of Comics, considered by historians the first true American comic book; Goulart, for example, calls it "the cornerstone for one of the most lucrative branches of magazine publishng". It was distributed through the Woolworth's department store chain, though it is unclear whether it was sold or given away; the cover (see above) displays no price, but Goulart refers, either metaphorically or literally, to "sticking a ten-cent pricetag [sic] on the comic books".

When Delacorte declined to continue with Famous Funnies: A Carnival of Comics, Eastern Color on its own published Famous Funnies #1 (cover-dated July 1934), a 68-page giant selling for 10¢. Distributed to newsstands by the mammoth American News Company, it proved a hit with readers during the cash-strapped Great Depression, selling 90 percent of its 200,000 print though ironically running Eastern Color more than $4,000 in the red. That quickly changed, with the book turning a $30,000 profit each issue starting with #12. Famous Funnies would eventually run 218 issues, inspire imitators, and largely launch a new mass medium.

When the supply of available existing comic strips began to dwindle, early comic books began to include a small amount of new, original material in comic-strip format. Inevitably, a comic book of all-original material, with no comic-strip reprints, debuted. Fledgling publisher Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's founded National Allied Publications — which would evolve into DC Comics — to release Fun: The Big Comic Magazine #1 (Feb. 1935). Colloquially called New Fun (the name it would adopt with issue #2; the first has "New" on the cover only as a bannered blurb), this was a tabloid-sized, 10-inch by 15-inch, 36-page magazine with a card-stock, non-glossy cover. An anthology, it mixed humor features such as the funny animal comic "Pelion and Ossa" and the college-set "Jigger and Ginger" with such dramatic fare as the Western strip "Jack Woods" and the "yellow peril" adventure "Barry O'Neill", featuring a Fu Manchu-styled villain, Fang Gow. Issue #6 (Oct. 1935) brought the comic-book debut of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the future creators of Superman, who began their careers with the musketeer swashbuckler "Henri Duval" (doing the first two installments before turning it over to others) and, under the pseudonyms "Leger and Reuths", the supernatural-crimefighter adventure "Dr. Occult"

### Superman and superheroes

In 1938, after Wheeler-Nicholson had been ousted by partner Harry Donenfeld, National Allied editor Vin Sullivan pulled a Siegel & Shuster creation from the slush pile and used it as the cover feature of Action Comics #1 (June 1938). The duo's alien hero, Superman, dressed in colorful tights and a cape, evoking costumed circus daredevil performers, became the archetype of the "superheroes" that would follow. Action Comics would become the American comic book with the second-largest number of issues, next to Dell Comics' Four Color, with over 850 issues published as of 2006.

Siegel & Shuster's creation, influenced by the pulp fiction stories and by the legend of the Golem of Prague, Superman had superhuman strength, speed and other abilities, and lived day-to-day in his secret identity as a mild-mannered reporter, Clark Kent. Within two years, most comic-book companies were publishing large lines of superhero titles, and Superman has gone on to become one of the world's most recognizable characters.

The period from 1930 through roughly the end of the 1940s is known as the Golden Age of comic books. It is characterized by extremely large print runs (comic books being very popular as cheap entertainment during World War II); erratic quality of stories, art and print quality; and by being a rare industry that provided jobs to an ethnic cross-section of Americans, albeit often at low wages and in sweatshop working conditions. However, since comic books were primarily aimed at children, many adults remember the era fondly and uncritically, a hallmark of a golden age.

Following the war, new genres were added and old ones expanded upon. Teen humor (epitomized by Archie Comics), funny animal comics (such as those published featuring Walt Disney's characters), science fiction, western, romance, and satiric humor comics all found comfortable niches. Except for three enduring originals, Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, superheroes were all but wiped out by 1952.

### The Comics Code

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, horror and true crime comics flourished, with EC Comics the most successful, artistically creative, and infamous publisher of such comics, many containing violence and gore. Targeting these and other comics, politicians and moral crusaders (without any basis of evidence) blamed comic books as a cause of crime, juvenile delinquency, drug use, and poor grades. The psychiatrist Fredric Wertham's book Seduction of the Innocent, concerned with what he perceived to be sadistic and homosexual undertones in horror and in superhero comics, respectively, raised anxieties about comics. This led the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency to take an interest in comic books. As a result of these concerns, schools and parent groups held public comic-book burnings, and some cities banned comic books. Industry circulation declined drastically.

In the wake of these events, many comics publishers, most notably National and Archie, founded the Comics Code Authority in 1954 and drafted the Comics Code, intended as "the most stringent code in existence for any communications media." A Comic Code Seal of Approval soon appeared on virtually every comic book carried on newsstands. EC, after experimenting with less controversial comic books, dropped its comics line to focus on the satiric Mad — a comic book it changed to magazine format in order to circumvent the Code.

### Silver Age of Comic Books

In the mid-1950s, following the popularity of TV series The Adventures of Superman, publishers experimented with the superhero once more. Showcase #4 (National, 1956) introduced the rebooted hero The Flash, which began a second wave of superhero popularity known as the Silver Age of comic books. National expanded its line of superheroes over the next six years, introducing new versions of Green Lantern, The Atom, Hawkman and others.

In 1961 writer/editor Stan Lee and artist/co-plotter Jack Kirby created the Fantastic Four for Marvel Comics. In a landmark that changed the industry, The Fantastic Four #1 initiated a naturalistic style of superheroes with human failings, fears, and inner demons, who squabbled and worried about the likes of rent money. In contrast to the super heroic do-gooder archetypes of established superheroes at the time, this ushered a revolution. With dynamic artwork by Kirby, Steve Ditko, Don Heck and others complementing Lee's colorful, catchy prose, the new style found an audience among children (who loved the superheroes) and college students (who were entertained by the deeper themes). Marvel was initially restricted in the number of titles it could produce in that its books were distributed by rival National, a situation not alleviated until the late 1960s. This inhibited the introduction of a Lee/Ditko character, first to surpass Superman in sales since writer Bill Parker and artist Clarence "C.C." Beck's original Captain Marvel, Spider-Man.

National (colloquially called DC Comics by this time), Marvel, and Archie were the major players in the 1960s. Other notable companies included the American Comics Group (ACG), the low-budget Charlton, where many professionals such as Dick Giordano got their start; Dell; Gold Key; Harvey Comics, home of the Harvey cartoon characters (Casper the Friendly Ghost) and non-animated others (Richie Rich); and Tower, best-known for T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents.

### Underground comics

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a surge of underground comics occurred. These comics were published independently of the established comic book publishers and most reflected the youth counterculture and drug culture of the time. Many were notable for their uninhibited, irreverent style, which hadn't been seen in comics before. The movement is often considered[citation needed] to have been started by R. Crumb's publication of Zap Comix #1 in 1968, though there were antecedents such as pornographic "Tijuana bibles", dating to the 1920s, and Frank Stack's The Adventures of Jesus, published in 1962.

Although many of the underground artists continued to produce work, the underground comix movement is considered by most historians to have ended by 1980, to be replaced by a rise in independent, non-Comics Code compliant publishing companies in the 1980s and the resulting increase in acceptance of adult-oriented comic books.

### Bronze Age of Comic Books

Historians and fans use the term Bronze Age to describe the period of American mainstream comics history that begins with a period of concentrated changes to comic books circa 1970. Unlike the Golden/Silver Age transition, the Silver/Bronze transition involved many continually published books, making the transition less sharp; not every book can be said to have entered the Bronze Age at the same time.

Changes commonly considered to mark the transition between Silver and Bronze ages include:

* A reshuffling of popular creators, including the retirement of Mort Weisinger, editor of the Superman books, and the movement of Jack Kirby to DC.
* A boom in non-superhero and borderline superhero comics such as Conan the Barbarian, Tomb of Dracula, Kamandi, Swamp Thing, Ghost Rider, and the revived Doctor Strange.
* "Relevant" comics which attempted to address serious social issues, such as the Spider-Man drug abuse issues and the Green Lantern/Green Arrow series.
* The Comics Code Authority's first update, in 1971.
* Revamping of several popular characters, including a "darker" Batman closer to the original 1930s conception, several changes to Superman such as the disappearance of Kryptonite, and a temporary non-powered era for Wonder Woman.
* The death of major characters such as Spider-Man's girlfriend Gwen Stacy, the Doom Patrol, and several members of the Legion of Super-Heroes.

### The Modern Age

The development of a non-returnable "direct market" distribution system in the 1970s coincided with the appearance of comic book specialty stores across North America. These specialty stores were a haven for more distinct voices and stories, but they also marginalized comics in the public eye. Serialized comic stories became longer and more complex, requiring readers to buy more issues to finish a story. Between 1970 and 1990, comic book prices rose sharply because of a combination of factors: a nationwide paper shortage, increasing production values, and the minimal profit incentive for stores to stock comic books (due to the small unit price of an individual comic book relative to a magazine). These factors are often pointed to when considering the decline in comic book popularity in America.

In the mid-to-late 1980s, two comic book series published by DC Comics (Batman: The Dark Knight Returns and Watchmen) had a profound impact upon the American comic book industry. The phenomenal popularity of these series led both of the major publishers (DC and Marvel) to change the content of their titles to a more realistic, "darker" tone, often derisively termed "grim-and-gritty". This change was underscored by the growing popularity of anti-heroes such as the Punisher, and Wolverine, as well as the darker tone of some independent publishers such as First Comics and Dark Horse Comics. For a period of several years the pages of mainstream comics were filled with brooding mutants and "dark avengers". This tendency towards darkness and nihilism was also manifested in DC's production of heavily promoted comic book stories such as "A Death in the Family" in the Batman series (in which Batman's sidekick Robin was brutally murdered by The Joker), while at Marvel, the continuing popularity of the various X-Men books led to storylines such as "Mutant Massacre" and "Acts of Vengeance."

Though a speculator boom in the early 1990s temporarily increased specialty store sales—collectors "invested" in multiple copies of a single comic to sell at a profit later—these booms ended in a collectibles glut, and comic sales declined sharply in the mid-1990s, leading to the demise of many hundreds of stores. (See comic book collecting for a more detailed look at the speculator boom.) Today fewer comics sell in North America than at any time in their publishing history. Though the large superhero-oriented publishers like Marvel and DC are still often referred to as the "mainstream" of comics, they are no longer a mass medium in the same sense as in previous decades. In recent years, several movies based of Marvel and DC characters have been released and publishing of several cross over events in the DC and Marvel Universe, such as Identity Crisis and Civil War, and the death of Captain America, which receive widespread media coverage, comic books have receive more mainstream interest and attention.

**Prestige format**

Prestige format comic books are typically longer than standard comic books, typically being of between 48 and 72 pages, and printed on glossy paper with a spine and card stock cover. The format was first used by DC on Frank Miller's Batman: The Dark Knight Returns. The success of this work led to the establishment of the format, and it is now used generally to showcase works by big name creators or to spotlight significant storylines.

These storylines can be serialised over a limited number of issues, or can be standalone. Standalone works published in the form, such as Batman: The Killing Joke, are sometimes referred to either as graphic novels or novellas.

### Independent and alternative comics

Comic specialty stores did help encourage several waves of independent-produced comics, beginning in the late 1970s. The first of these was generally referred to as "independent" or "alternative comics"; some of these continued somewhat in the tradition of underground comics, while others resembled the output of mainstream publishers in format and genre but were published by smaller artist-owned ventures or by a single artist, and a few (notably RAW) were experimental attempts to bring comics closer to the world of fine art.

The "small press" scene continued to grow and diversify, with a number of small publishers in the 1990s changing the format and distribution of their books to more closely resemble non-comics publishing. The "minicomics" form, an extremely informal version of self-publishing, arose in the 1980s and became increasingly popular among artists in the 1990s, despite reaching an even more limited audience than the small press. "Art comics" has sometimes been used as a general term for alternative, small-press, or minicomic artists working outside of mainstream traditions. Publishers and artists working in all of these forms stated a desire to refine comics further as an art form.

**Artist recognition**

Some comic books have gained recognition and earned their creators awards from outside the genre, such as Art Spiegelman's Maus (which won the Pulitzer Prize) and Neil Gaiman's The Sandman (an issue of which won the World Fantasy Award for "Best Short Story"). Though not a comic book itself, Michael Chabon's comic-book themed The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Popular interest in superheroes increased with the success of feature films such as X-Men (2000) and Spider-Man (2002). To capitalize on this interest, comics publishers launched concerted promotional efforts such as Free Comic Book Day (first held on May 5, 2002). In addition, the filmed adaptation of non-superhero comic books like Ghost World, Road to Perdition, and American Splendor raised hopes that the medium's image can be changed for the better.

### Production

Comic books are a collaborative medium. Generally, some kind of writer/scripter/plotter will outline the whole story and is a core of the story telling process. The penciller is the first step in rendering the story in visual form and may require several steps of feedback with the writer. These artists are concerned with layout (positions and vantages on scenes) to showcase steps in the plot. In earlier generations it was more common for artists to use a loose pencilling approach, in which the penciller does not take much care to reduce the vagaries of the pencil art, leaving it to the inker to interpret the penciller's intent and render the art in a more finished state. Today many pencillers prefer to create very meticulously detailed pages, where every nuance that they expect to see in the inked art is indicated in pencil. This is known as tight pencilling. Because the inking and the pencilling are so closely aligned there are strong cross influences - inked lines emphasize aspects of the scene, but is this particular emphasis the intention of the penciller or is the penciller's preference off-base compared to the point of the story? Then the colorist comes into the picture and is responsible for adding color to the black and white (possibly shaded) line art. Almost all comic books are rendered in color and have been for much of the history of comic books. Sometimes color is not added for specific effect or when production resources don't allow for a colorist. A colorist also can add to or shift the emphasis of a page of comic art - the penciller laid out the basic scene - the inker emphasizes the depth and drama of the edges of things and their weight on the page, and the colorist can futher emphasize what draws the eye and adds or subtracts to the realism of the scene. Finally the letterer renders what needs to be said on a page of art for the story - which could be dialogue or the content of signs or print if shown. This may seem like an easy job, but the right use of fonts, letter size, and layout of the words inside the balloon all contribute to the impact of the art. A good letterer is a good calligrapher, and a great letterer has as much to do with the quality of the comic as the writer, penciler, inker, or colorist.

Aside from differences in regional styles of comics books the disciplines of writer, penciler, inker, colorist and letterer are under pressures of production efficiencies as well - and computers are mixing things up too. Different parts of the creative process are generally being done by fewer people but which mixing of responsabilies happens varies. But there are few that do all the steps in comic production.

### The superhero

Superhero dramatic-adventure and science-fiction stories have dominated American comic books for most of the medium's history. Before the 1960s, comics were published in many genres, including humor, Westerns, romance, horror, military fiction, crime fiction, biography, and adaptations of classic literature. Non-superhero comics have continued to exist as niche publishing, with humor titles, such as those from Archie Comics and Bongo Comics, the most visible alternatives.

**Pricing**

Typical prices of a new, standard size, mainstream (DC/Marvel) comic book: Timing varies slightly by publisher as not all publishers changed prices at the same time (data samples taken from X-Men, Action Comics and Avengers cover price listings in ComicBase 10 Archive Edition)

* Prior to 1962 $ .10
* 1962 - 1969 $ .12
* 1969 - 1971 $ .15
* 1971 - 1974 $ .20
* 1974 - 1976 $ .25
* 1976 - 1977 $ .30
* 1977 - 1979 $ .35
* 1979 - 1980 $ .40
* 1980 - 1981 $ .50
* 1982 - 1985 $ .60
* 1985 - 1986 $ .65
* 1986 - 1988 $ .75
* 1988 - 1991 $ 1.00
* 1992 - 1995 $ 1.25
* 1995 - 1996 $ 1.50
* 1996 - 1997 $ 1.95
* 1997 - 2000 $ 1.99
* 2000 - 2005 $ 2.25
* 2005 - 2006 $ 2.50
* 2006 - Present $ 2.99

# The List of Literature & Web-sites

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature_of_the_United_States>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy\_of\_American\_Poets

<http://www.poets.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicano\_poetry

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Chicano_poets>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theater\_in\_the\_United\_States

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_comic_book>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J.D.\_Salinger

<http://www.salinger.org/index.php?title=Main_Page>