

S. Mochi • J. Cameron • F. Galuzzi • F. Evans

# Firewords

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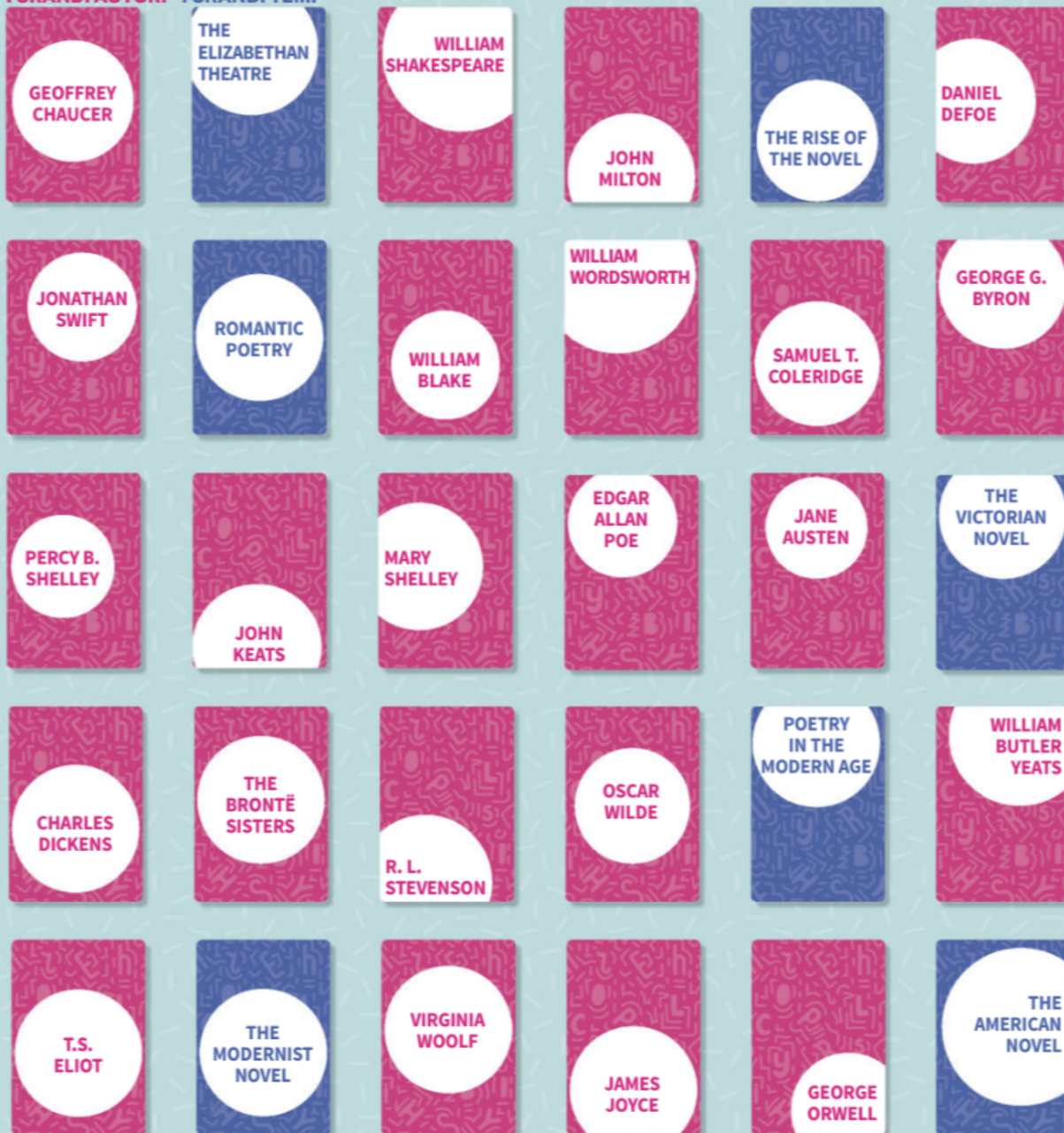
## Concise

From the Origins  
to Contemporary Times

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# 30 argomenti fondamentali di LETTERATURA INGLESE

I GRANDI AUTORI • I GRANDI TEMI



I percorsi interattivi sono segnalati all'interno del volume.

## DEAFLIX

sempre con te!

I contenuti sono **facilmente accessibili da tutti i dispositivi** e sono fruibili\*:

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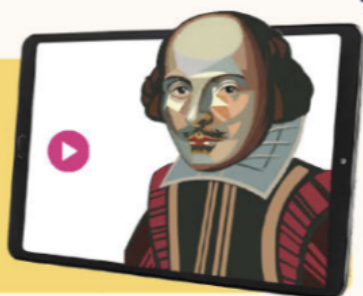




I video di **apertura**, volti alla scoperta delle parole e dei concetti chiave di ogni sezione, sono ideali per lo studio in modalità **asincrona**. I video sui **grandi autori** e i **grandi temi** sono concepiti per una fruizione in modalità **sincrona**.



La risorsa DeA Scuola, dedicata a studenti e docenti: un nuovo modo di apprendere gli autori e le tematiche fondamentali di letteratura inglese grazie a 30 percorsi digitali interattivi.



## 1

### The Origins and the Middle Ages 5<sup>th</sup> century-1485

**Towards Thinking Routine** • See, think, wonder

#### History

History Milestones

#### Culture

The Anglo-Saxons

**History** • The Anglo-Saxon world comes alive: Sutton Hoo

**CITIZENSHIP** • *Social gathering places* + Global Goal 3

#### Literature and texts

Literary Overview

Old English poetry

**Cultures** • An Anglo-Saxon storyteller: the scop

*Beowulf*

**Movies** • *Beowulf*

**T01** *Beowulf's funeral*

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#### Literature and texts

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Miracle, mystery and morality plays

Medieval romance

**T05** *The sword in the stone*

**Movies** • *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*

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#### GEOFFREY CHAUCER

*The Canterbury Tales*

**Cultures** • The pilgrimage to Canterbury

**T04** *The General Prologue*

**T05** *The Pardoner*

**Cultures** • Chaucer and Boccaccio

**CHANGING PERSPECTIVES** • The hero then and now

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Literary text • *The Seafarer*



Literary text • *Lord Randal*



**Movies** • Robin Hood: one hero, many movies



Literary text • *Everyman*



**Movies** • King Arthur Movies



DDI

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Literary text  
-The Prioress and the Wife of Bath  
-The Merchant



**Cultures** • The importance of medieval relics



**Cultures** • Pardoners in the Middle Ages



Revision lessons

## 2 The Renaissance 1485-1625

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### Culture

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The Elizabethan Golden Age

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**108** *The balcony scene*

*The Merchant of Venice*

**109** *If you prick us, do we not bleed?*

**B2 First** - Speaking

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**111** *To be or not to be*

*The Tempest*

**112** *Prospero and Caliban*

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**124** *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun*

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**Thinking Routine** - Circle of viewpoints

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**DEAFLEX**

**DEAFLEX**

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**Literary text** - *Romeo and Juliet*, The lark

**Literary text** - *The Merchant of Venice* - The contract

- The Lawyer Portia

**Literary text** - *Hamlet*, Polonius and Hamlet

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**Revision lessons**

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The Restoration

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*Paradise Lost*

**119** *Better to reign in hell, than serve in heav'n*

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**115** *The forbidden fruit*

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History Milestones

### Culture

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*Robinson Crusoe*

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**DEAFLEX**

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**Revision lessons**

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**DEAFLEX**

**DEAFLEX**

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- Robinson and the natives

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**DEAFLIX**

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**DEAFLIX**

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**DEAFLIX**

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**DOE** Interactive timeline

**DOE** History • F.D. Roosevelt, The Forgotten man

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**Cultures** • The Harlem Renaissance

**Literary text** • Tender is the Night, The French riviera

**DOE** Revision lessons



## 9 Between two millennia 1950-today

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#### History Milestones

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**113** Derek Walcott, *Blues*

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**115** Seamus Heaney, *Digging*

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**DOE** Literary text

• Roger McGough, *Let me die a youngman's death*

**DOE** Literary text

• Angela Carter, *The Werewolf*

**DOE** Literary text

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**DOE** Literary text

• Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*  
• Dave Eggers, *The Circle*  
• Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*

**DOE** Revision lessons

# 8

## American voices

1900-1950



**IN CLASS** Thinking Routine

**AT HOME** Activity 1

**IN CLASS** Activity 2



American inventor and industrialist Henry Ford (1863-1947) and his son, automobile executive Edsel Ford (1893-1943), sit in 'The Fifteenth Millionth Ford', 1928.

**B**

*You are all a lost generation.*

*Ernest Hemingway,  
The Sun Also Rises*

**C**

*The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.*

*Franklin D. Roosevelt's  
First Inaugural Address*

**D**

*The mass production of distraction is now as much a part of the American way of life as the mass production of automobiles.*

*C. Wright Mills*

### TOWARDS THINKING ROUTINE

#### See, think, wonder

Look at the photograph of American industrialist Henry Ford and his son Edsel.

#### See

- 1 What achievement is recorded?
- 2 What shows that this is a carefully arranged photograph?

#### Think

- 3 What kind of car do you think this is?

A luxury car for the rich? A relatively inexpensive model for the middle class? What makes you think that?

#### Wonder

- 4 When the Ford Motor Company was founded in 1903, the car was an expensive rarity. Ford transformed it into a product that millions could afford. How do you think he was able to do it?

**FIREWORDS** Complete the text with the FIREWORDS. Then watch the video and check.

assembly line • Ernest Hemingway • Great Depression • mass production • moral uncertainty • neutrality • New Deal • nuclear superpower • popular culture • World War I • World War II

By 1900, the United States was already the world's leader in agricultural and industrial production. In 1913, the first **assembly line** was introduced at the Ford Motor Company, inaugurating the era of **1** of motor cars and other consumer goods like telephones, radios and refrigerators.

In foreign affairs, the country was abandoning its traditional **2** and assuming the role of a world power. Its industrial and military contribution was a decisive factor for the victory of the Allied in **3**.

The 1920s were a period of economic expansion. Cinema and radio created new forms of **4**. Many young Americans enjoyed new freedoms but they also felt a sense of **5** because the moral values of their parents seemed no longer valid. These young people were described as a 'lost generation' in the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald and **6**.

The stock market crash of 1929 started an economic crisis known as the **7**. In 1932, the new President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, launched his **8**, a program of government intervention aimed at alleviating poverty and boosting the economy. The depression lasted until 1939, when **9** broke out. By the time the conflict ended in 1945, the United States had become the world's largest economy and the first **10**.

- 2 Link the picture and the quotes to the largest possible number of FIREWORDS. Then explain the reasons for your choices.

### DIGITAL RESOURCES

- ▶ Video overview
- ▶ Audio
- ▶ Interactive timeline
- ▶ Digtixts
- ▶ Revision lessons

DEAFLIX

THEME — THE AMERICAN NOVEL



DDI

# History Milestones

## INTERACTIVE TIMELINE

### 1900-1914 A wave of immigration from Europe

During the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, **immigration to the United States increased** from 3.5 million in the 1890s to 9 million. The majority of these immigrants were from southern or eastern Europe, especially Italy, Poland and Russia. Immigration provided the United States with a source of cheap labour, which was needed during these years of industrialisation, while more skilled workers brought innovations to both factory and farm work.



### 1901-1909 The Theodore Roosevelt presidency

Republican president, **Theodore Roosevelt**, awarded the Nobel Prize in 1906, was known for his antitrust and restricted policies. He restricted the power of corporations, protected labour and consumers and regulated the railroads. He was also responsible for beginning the construction of the Panama canal.

### 1909 The formation of the NAACP

The **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** was founded in New York, partly as a response to mob violence against African Americans. Committed to equal rights and the elimination of racial prejudice, one of the NAACP's goals was **ending segregation** and achieving equality in education. In the American South, African Americans were not allowed to attend the same schools and universities as white people and people were separated according to the colour of their skin, through a system of forced segregation.

### 1917 World War I; new immigration laws

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1917, the **United States joined the war**, giving the Allies a decisive advantage. Approximately 4 million American soldiers were sent to western Europe, with more than 300,000 victims.

In the same year, the **Immigration Act of 1917** was passed. The law banned immigration from a large part of Asia and introduced a literacy test as a requirement for anyone wishing to immigrate to the USA. Support for the law came from those who believed that northern European people were superior and wanted to preserve their dominance. It was also a result of the decreased need for unskilled labour in industry and farming.

### 1918 The influenza pandemic

A severe, **worldwide influenza pandemic** (also known as 'Spanish flu') began, with the first reported case in Kansas. News of the pandemic was suppressed in most countries participating in World War I to not undermine the morale of the troops. By the end of the pandemic, several million people had died and 500 million had been infected.



### 1919-1920 Prohibition becomes law; Women gain the vote

In 1919, **Prohibition became law**, going into effect in 1920. The sale and production of alcohol became illegal in the USA. The Prohibitionists were mainly from religious groups and believed that banning alcohol would lead to improved health, a reduction in family violence and the end of alcoholism. However, over the next few years, criminal gangs produced and distributed alcohol illegally, leading to a sharp rise in crime. Prohibition lasted until December of 1933. In 1920, after decades of political protest, **American women were given the right to vote** with the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States constitution.

### 1929 The Wall Street crash and the Great Depression

After a decade of prosperity, the economy started to slow. Stockbrokers panicked and sold their shares, resulting in a **major crash** on 29<sup>th</sup> October. Thousands of Americans lost their savings overnight. Over the next few years, businesses closed, poverty became widespread and the unemployment rate reached 20%. The American economy did not fully recover until the end of the 1930s.



### 1933-1945 The Franklin Delano Roosevelt presidency

Democrat President **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** introduced the **New Deal**, a series of programmes and laws aimed at **alleviating poverty and stimulating the economy**. His policies expanded the role of government: regulating banks, providing help for children and the disabled, creating pensions for retired workers and providing unemployment insurance for those who lost their jobs. He later guided the nation through World War II. Roosevelt was the only president to serve more than two terms. He died in office in 1945 and was succeeded by Henry Truman (1945-1953).



**HISTORY**  
F.D. Roosevelt, The forgotten man

### 1941-1945 World War II

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1941, **Japanese forces attacked the United States** naval base at **Pearl Harbour**, Hawaii. In less than a week, the United States **declared war** on Japan, and later on Germany and Italy. American forces were instrumental in the **invasion of Italy in 1943** and the invasion of German-occupied France by sea in **June of 1944** in Normandy, an operation that led to the liberation of western Europe. On the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of **August 1945**, United States forces detonated **two nuclear bombs** over the Japanese cities of **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki**, killing approximately 300,000 people, most of them civilians. Japan surrendered on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, effectively ending World War II.

After the war, America's **Marshall Plan** provided over 15 billion dollars to help Europe recover from damage suffered during the war.



### 1945-1950s After the war

Soon the **Soviet Union** and other states began developing their own nuclear weapons and the arms race began. **America's Cold War with the USSR continued until 1991**. During and following World War II, America moved away from isolationism, with the foundation of the **United Nations in 1945** and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or **NATO, in 1949**. NATO was founded with the aim of containing threats presented by the USSR. During the 1950s, the Cold War led to paranoia as **Senator Joseph McCarthy** held investigations searching for secret communists in the US government, the media and Hollywood. This drove many people with leftist sympathies out of their jobs and caused them to turn on each other.

## Comprehension

1 Decide if the following statements are true or false and correct the false ones.

- At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, immigration to the USA increased. (T) (F)
- Theodore Roosevelt was a Republican president known for limiting the power of big business. (T) (F)
- With the Immigration Act of 1917, only immigrants from Asia had to take an English literacy test. (T) (F)
- After the crash of 1929, the American economy took at least a decade to fully recover. (T) (F)
- The New Deal aimed at helping Europe after the war. (T) (F)
- The United Nations was founded just after the end of World War II. (T) (F)

# American culture 1900-1950

## FOCUS ON

In 1913, in Michigan, **Henry Ford** radically changed American manufacturing with his moving assembly lines to make automobiles. Over the next 14 years, 15 million **Model T Ford cars** were produced in Ford's factories. The Model T was an affordable automobile aimed at the middle class. Its success transformed America's roads and cities. Other American manufacturers adopted Ford's ideas, leading to an economy of mass production that later became the most successful in the world.

In 1900, the population of the United States was about 70 million. Electricity was just being introduced in the cities, approximately 4,000 automobiles were manufactured and most Americans looked to Europe as their cultural leader. In 1915, the population had more than doubled, there were over 40 million automobiles on the roads, planes regularly crossed the skies and American popular culture was being exported around the world. **The American dream, the belief that anyone had a chance of success in the USA**, brought millions of immigrants to the country. Until the end of the 1920s, the possibilities for progress and economic development seemed endless.

## The Progressive Era

However, **social problems** persisted, especially in the early years of the century. Cities became overcrowded, crime rose and there was racism and hostility towards recent immigrants. In the South, restrictive laws limited the freedom and economic prospects of African Americans. Beginning from about 1916, many of them moved north to factory jobs in cities. The neighbourhood of Harlem in New York became a centre of African American culture. In the cities, industrialisation and **unregulated business** led to brutal living and working conditions, especially for recent immigrants. From 1890 to 1920, new reforms were put in place to combat social problems and political corruption. During these years, called 'the **Progressive Era**', journalism emerged as a major force for change. **'Muckraking' journalists** [> page 436] worked to **expose government corruption** and social problems. Often their exposés led to public awareness and inspired new regulations.

## From the Roaring Twenties to the Great Depression

After World War I, it was clear that nothing would ever be the same: the institutions of the past had led millions of young people to their deaths and could no longer be trusted. Artists and writers reflected the chaos of this new world in their work.

Some responded by losing faith in society and **pursuing pleasure and hedonism**, in a period known as 'the **Roaring Twenties**'. During the 1920s, American writers gathered in Paris and produced some of the most memorable literature of the century. In New York, the **Harlem Renaissance** brought a resurgence of African-American music, literature, and art. Jazz, a free-style genre of music that began in African-American communities, became hugely popular during the 1920s, leading the writer Francis Scott Fitzgerald to call this decade 'the **Jazz Age**'. Jazz continued to influence popular music around the world for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Across the USA, **fashionable young women** called '**flappers**' cut their hair short and broke with the restrictive social rules of the past. The first commercial **radio station**, KDKA in Pittsburgh, began broadcasting in November of 1920. Radio united the country and brought modern popular music to people outside of the cities, as well as news, sports, comedy programmes and adventure serials.

By 1920, cinema had become a big business and American silent film actors were international stars. Hollywood grew from a quiet suburb of Los Angeles to the centre of the film industry. In the late 1920s, the movies became 'the **talkies**' with the introduction of spoken dialogue.

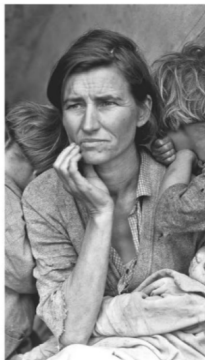
Flapper girl, around 1925.



The **Wall Street crash of 1929** marked the **beginning of the Great Depression**. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt used the new medium of radio to address the country in a series of 'fireside chats' in which he explained his policies (**New Deal**) and calmed the nation's fears. **Photographers** were engaged to document the poverty of rural America, resulting in arresting images by Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans and others.

## World War II and its aftermath

**World War II** brought destruction on an unprecedented scale. American soldiers were some of the first outsiders to see the horrors of the concentration camps at the end of the war. The United States also led the race to develop **atomic weapons**. In August of 1945, US forces dropped nuclear bombs on two Japanese cities, instantly killing thousands. The atomic age had begun; for the first time in history, humanity had the power to destroy itself. In America, the fears of this age co-existed with a new era of **consumerism and prosperity**.



Dorothea Lange, *Migrant mother*, 1936.

## QUICK CHECK

Answer the questions.

- 1 What are four ways in which the United States changed between 1900 and 1950?
- 2 When was the Progressive Era and why was it called this?
- 3 What was the general mood of the 1920s?
- 4 What was the most popular genre of music in the 1920s?
- 5 How did radio help the nation during the Depression?
- 6 How did the atom bomb influence people's view of the world?

## Summing up

Read the text and complete the map with the words given.

American • atomic • consumerism • corruption • Crash • crisis • development • Harlem Renaissance • increase • Progressive • prosperity • reforms • success • Twenties • unemployment • World War I

1. _____ era (1890-1920)	2. _____ dream: • economic 3. _____ • population 4. _____ • industrial boom • chances of 5. _____	Contradictions: • overcrowded cities • racial problems • bad working conditions in industry	• journalism denouncing 6. _____ • social 7. _____
Roaring 8. _____	• after 9. _____ → loss of faith in society • new cultural scene	• 10. _____ → new African-American music, art and literature	
Great Depression (Thirties)	• Wall Street 11. _____ • deep economic 12. _____ • hunger and 13. _____	New Deal with social and economic reforms	
World War II and its aftermath	use of the 14. _____ bomb	• after the war new age of 15. _____ and 16. _____	

## CITIZENSHIP

## Henry Ford and the beginning of mass production



Before the Industrial Revolution most objects were made by artisans, who started from raw materials and went through all production stages until they had the finished product. Such workers usually spent years learning their trade as apprentices and practised it all their lives. With the advent of the factory system in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the concentration of workers in one place and the use of machines made the **division of labour** possible. Workers could specialise in performing only some parts of the manufacturing process. Many of these tasks did not require the complex abilities of traditional artisans and could be carried out by **less skilled workers**. This, together with the introduction of machines, increased production and lowered costs. Technological advances also permitted the **standardisation of parts**: many identical components could be manufactured separately and later assembled.

The introduction of the **assembly line** in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the real beginning of the **mass production** of goods. The system was first applied on a large scale at the Ford Motor Company in 1913. Until then, cars were built by workers who moved around the chassis<sup>1</sup> and installed the various parts until the car was complete. With the assembly line system, the empty chassis was carried from station to station by a conveyor belt<sup>2</sup>. At each station, workers installed the parts in a sequential order. Production increased dramatically: cars rolled out of the production line at the rate of one every three minutes. This allowed Henry Ford to **cut the price** of his Ford Model T [> page 432], making it the first car that was really affordable for a vast public. He also increased the wages of his employees, believing that a large number of well-paid workers would be a potential market for his automobiles.

The mass-production techniques pioneered by Ford were soon perfected and extended to many other fields, making an enormous quantity and variety of goods available to the consumers in

industrialised countries. Factory work became less physically demanding and working hours were reduced. On the other hand, assembly line work was often limited to **simple, repetitive tasks**, and any connection between the worker and the final product of his/her labour was lost. The pride and satisfaction artisans felt for the products of their craft were replaced by the **boredom and alienation of modern workers**. Charlie Chaplin's 1936 film *Modern Times* comically illustrates the dehumanising effect of mechanisation. In the film's most famous scene, Chaplin's character, working frantically on an assembly line, is swallowed by a giant machine.

Other consequences of mass production were the impoverishment of natural resources and pollution of the environment. This became more evident as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed. Mass production soon generated **overproduction**, so that manufacturers had to develop **marketing techniques** to convince people to buy their products. America was the first country to become a **consumer society**, a society in which everyone was encouraged to buy nonessential goods that previously were reserved to the wealthy. After World War II, this consumerist attitude expanded to Western Europe and Japan, and more recently to many other countries, most notably China. With billions of people in all continents now aspiring to own more material goods, the problems of resource conservation and waste disposal have become predominant. In Henry Ford's days, the challenge was to find ways to produce more quickly and economically. Today, there is a growing awareness that economic growth must be **sustainable**, it must not exhaust natural resources or damage the environment. While technology has greatly reduced the direct costs of production, its social and environmental costs have become extremely problematic.

- 1 **chassis**: telaio.
- 2 **conveyor belt**: nastro trasportatore.

## Comprehension

## 1 Answer the questions.

1. What does 'division of labour' mean in the context of factory work?
2. Who revolutionised the organisation of work in the automobile industry?
3. Why was the Ford Model T an innovative car model?
4. What benefits did mass production bring to consumers? And to factory workers?
5. What are the psychological consequences of repetitive assembly line work?
6. When is economic development said to be sustainable?

## Debate

- Form pairs. Half the pairs in the class prepare to support the statement, the other half prepare to argue against the statement.
- Each 'For' pair joins an 'Against' pair to form a group of four.
- In each group, the students present their arguments for and against the statement.

All goods should be produced in a sustainable way, even when this makes them more expensive.

## FOR:

- The environmental crises, and especially the climate emergency, are so serious that we must all cut down our consumption in order to save the planet.
- (Add your own):

## AGAINST:

- This would mean that a part of the world population wouldn't be able to afford essential goods (food, clothes). Essential needs take precedence over sustainability.
- (Add your own):



## Literary Overview



# American literature 1900-1920



Jack London.

## Trends in American fiction

**Realism and Naturalism** During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American fiction moved away from the puritanical outlook of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and embraced **Realism** and **Naturalism**. Rapid industrialisation had created social problems and corruption, and a new generation of writers wanted to expose the truth by writing honestly about the struggles of the poor. Several of them, such as **Theodore Dreiser** (1871-1945), **Upton Sinclair** (1878-1968) and **Jack London** (1876-1916) were committed socialists. Jack London's main interest was the fight against cruelty to animals. His popular novels featuring animal protagonists, *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906), were widely read by both children and adults. He also wrote what is probably the first dystopian novel, a pro-socialist story of revolution, *The Iron Heel*, in 1908.

**Muckraking** Upton Sinclair and others wrote novels that were considered part of the 'muckraking' genre of fiction and journalism. This was writing that attacked a **particular social problem** or issue in order to make the public aware of it. *Muckraking* was a term intended as an insult by President Theodore Roosevelt in a 1906 speech about journalists who focused on the negative aspects of society. It came to be applied to any writer whose work exposed a specific social problem.



Willa Cather.

**Regionalism** Writers focused their attention on their own regions of the country and told stories of their region's history or people. For example, **Willa Cather** (1873-1947) wrote novels about the pioneers of the Nebraska prairies, while other writers such as **Booth Tarkington** (1869-1946) dealt with the Midwest middle class, often in a light and humorous way. The short story writer **O. Henry** (1862-1910), best known for his famous story *The Gift of the Magi* (1905), wrote about the ordinary working people of New York. Other writers brought greater awareness of injustice by telling the stories of their own communities.

**Novel of manners** **Edith Wharton** (1862-1937) wrote about the people that most of America aspired to be, the rich upper classes of New York. Wharton was the author of over forty books, including novels and several collections of short stories. For many decades she was

the most successful novelist in America. Wharton used wit, satire and psychological insight in her portrayals of the upper classes, further developing the **novel of manners**.

## American poetry

In poetry, two expatriate Americans, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot (> page 370), had a decisive influence on Modernism. Pound was also instrumental in launching the Imagist movement of the early century, which included the American poets Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961), Amy Lowell (1874-1925) and William Carlos Williams (1883-1963).

**Carl Sandburg** (1878-1967) was a popular poet and folklorist influenced by Walt Whitman, who wrote movingly about his home city of Chicago. Sandburg was once considered one of the greatest poets in America and won two Pulitzer Prizes. After his death, his reputation declined, partly because his work depended on his distinctive delivery for its full impact – at times Sandburg would sing his poetry. He is best known for his 1914 collection *Chicago Poems*.

Another major poet of the era was **Edgar Lee Masters** (1868-1950), who is famous for the 1915 collection *The Spoon River Anthology*.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, America's favourite poet was **Robert Frost** (1874-1963) (> page 438). Frost won the Pulitzer Prize four times, more times than any other poet. He was championed by the Imagists and shared some of their principles, but followed his own path and wasn't part of any movement. He mainly wrote about the people and the landscape of New England, although his work transcended regionalism and had a universal appeal. Frost's poetry appeals to readers partly because it seems easy to understand, but there is usually another, deeper meaning behind the more obvious interpretation.



## CULTURES Spoon River

**The Spoon River Anthology** is a collection of over 200 poems by the American writer **Edgar Lee Masters**, published in 1915. Set in the churchyard of a fictional small town in Illinois, each member of the community delivers a **dramatic monologue in free verse** which therefore becomes a personal epitaph. The title of each text is the name of the dead citizen who is speaking to a silent listener.

The first Italian edition was published only in 1943 with a translation by Fernanda Pivano: it was a huge success and it inspired many other Italian artists. In 1971, Fabrizio De André released a concept album inspired by the anthology: *Non al denaro non all'amore né al cielo*.

In the following poem you will read the words of a woman addressing her lover, Maurice, who is still alive. She has an important message for her husband too, which she asks Maurice to pass on.

### Sarah Brown

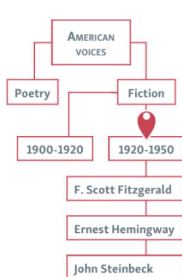
- Maurice, weep not<sup>1</sup>, I am not here under this pine tree.  
The balmy<sup>2</sup> air of spring whispers through the sweet grass,  
The stars sparkle<sup>3</sup>, the whippoorwill<sup>4</sup> calls,  
But thou grievest<sup>5</sup>, while my soul lies rapturous<sup>6</sup>  
In the blest Nirvana<sup>7</sup> of eternal Light!  
Go to the good heart that was my husband,  
Who broods upon<sup>8</sup> what he calls our guilty love: –  
Tell him that my love for you, no less than my love for him  
Wrought out<sup>9</sup> my destiny – that through the flesh<sup>10</sup>  
I won spirit, and through spirit, peace.  
There is no marriage in heaven,  
But there is love.
- 1 weep not: non piangere. 5 thou grievest: (forma arcaica) sei afflitto. L'uso della forma arcaica suggerisce che la donna si trovi adesso in una dimensione atemporale, lontana dalle passioni e dal dolore.  
2 balmy: mite.  
3 sparkle: brillante.  
4 whippoorwill: un uccello notturno che vive in America.  
6 rapturous: estasiata.  
7 Nirvana: nel Buddhismo, il Nirvana è lo stato in cui si viene liberati dalla sofferenza.  
8 broods upon: rimuginava su.  
9 Wrought out: (qui) forgiato, influenzato.  
10 Flesh: carne.

### Creative competence

- With the help of a dictionary, translate Sarah Brown in Italian. Then, find Fernanda Pivano's translation online and compare the two versions.

# American literature 1920-1950

DDI



DEAFLEX

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THE AMERICAN NOVEL

- DISCOVER THE THEME Video introduction
- EXPLORE THE THEME Digital path
- REVIEW Interactive test

## The lost generation

In the 1920s, writers and artists from all over Europe and America came to Paris. Many of these young people were part of the 'lost generation'. This was the generation who had come of age during World War I and experienced a sense of aimlessness after the war was over.

**Francis Scott Fitzgerald** (1896-1940)

[> page 444] lived in Paris in the 1920s and exemplified the spirit of the lost generation in both his fiction and his life. Fitzgerald's characters were often rich, pleasure-seeking Americans confronting the failure of their youthful dreams. Fitzgerald wrote about the excess and disillusionment of the 1920s in prose that was sophisticated, poetic and humorous. He was deeply affected by his troubled relationship with his charismatic wife Zelda, who suffered from mental illness. Fitzgerald's major novels include *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender is the Night* (1934).

**Ernest Hemingway** (1899-1961)

[> page 450] was Fitzgerald's friend and a leading figure of the literary scene in Paris. Hemingway was a journalist and applied the same principles to writing fiction as he did to writing news stories. His sentences tended to

be short and simple, his descriptions were minimal and all unnecessary words were cut. Rather than interpreting his characters' words and actions, he simply reported them and left the reader to judge their significance. Hemingway's revolutionary style has been widely imitated. In public, he adopted a persona that was similar to many of his characters: a tough, hard-drinking man of action who prized bravery and honour. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954.

## The Harlem Renaissance

In New York, the **Harlem Renaissance** began in 1918 and continued into the 1930s. This was a resurgence of African-American music, literature and art, based in the neighbourhood of Harlem in New York. Harlem became a centre of music, dance, theatre, painting, fiction and poetry, as African Americans celebrated their culture and identity. Some of the key figures included the artist Aaron Douglas (1899-1979), the poet **Langston Hughes** (1902-1967) and the novelist and film-maker **Zora Neale Hurston** (1891-1960). In the 1940s, **Richard Wright** (1908-1960) gained international attention with his powerful novel *Native Son* (1940) and his memoir *Black Boy* (1945).



## The Southern Renaissance

The American South also experienced a literary renaissance in the 1920s and 30s, as a **new generation of southern writers** confronted the region's troubled past of slavery and civil war and its present, marked by racism and segregation. The South was a distinct region, and was rural and traditional while the North was industrial and progressive. Some of its most notable writers were the playwright **Tennessee Williams** (1911-1983) and the novelist **William Faulkner** (1897-1962), who is considered the region's greatest 20<sup>th</sup>-century writer. Faulkner's style was varied and complex, combining stream of consciousness with traditional prose and making use of multiple, distinctive narrators. His major novels include *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930). Faulkner won the Nobel Prize in 1954.



Raymond Chandler.

## Steinbeck and the 1930s

In the 1930s, American writers documented the extreme poverty around them with gritty honesty and anger. The novels of **John Steinbeck** (1902-1968) [> page 458] attacked social problems, specifically the economic hardships of the rural poor. Steinbeck had worked as a rural labourer himself and later wrote a series of articles, *The Harvest Gypsies*, about migrant farmers displaced by the dust storms of the mid-1930s. His fiction used realism, detail and accurate dialogue to bring his settings and characters to life. Steinbeck's work provoked powerful emotional responses in his readers. His most famous novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), caused a sensation: it was widely praised, but also banned from schools and publicly burned. The book was accused of being anti-capitalist because of its anger and obscene because of its authentic dialogue, complete with cursing and allusions to sex. John Steinbeck won the Nobel Prize in 1962.

## New directions

In popular fiction, 'hard-boiled' crime writing became a trend in the 1930s. In contrast to more polite British mysteries, hard-boiled crime featured tough, violent detectives and dialogue full of contemporary slang. The genre reflected the world of American crime that had

resulted from Prohibition and the Depression: gang warfare, the underworld of the slums and the promise of easy money from illegal activities. Some writers of the 'hard-boiled' school include former detective **Dashiell Hammett** (1894-1961), **Raymond Chandler** (1888-1959) and **James McCain** (1892-1977). Many of their novels were adapted as noir film classics of the 1940s.

## J.D. Salinger and the younger generation

The 1940s were dominated by World War II and its aftermath. Although the decade ended with extraordinary prosperity in America, those who had experienced the war's destruction in Europe could not forget it. **Jerome David Salinger** (1919-2010) began writing short stories in the early 1940s, but did not find his mature style until he returned from the war. Salinger's protagonists are often sensitive and intelligent young adults who have experienced loss. His first novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), introduced the world to one of American literature's most memorable young characters, an angry, cynical, and heartbroken sixteen-year-old named Holden Caulfield. Salinger only produced a few works of fiction, but he was enormously influential, especially with young people.

## QUICK CHECK

### Answer the questions.

- Who were two American writers associated with Paris?
- What was distinctive about Ernest Hemingway's style?
- What is the Harlem Renaissance?
- Who was the most important southern American writer of the century?
- What aspect of America did John Steinbeck write about?
- What is 'hard-boiled' crime fiction?
- What kind of people did J.D. Salinger write about?

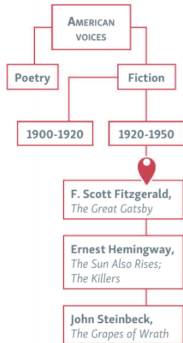


CULTURES

The Harlem Renaissance

King Oliver and Band, 1923.

# Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)



Francis Scott Fitzgerald was born in St Paul, Minnesota. He enrolled in Princeton University, but left without taking a degree. In 1917, he joined the army and spent the war stationed in America. During this time, he met Zelda Sayre, the love of his life. His first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, was published in 1920, and he married Zelda in April of the same year. Scott and Zelda became one of the most glamorous couples of the 1920s. They divided their time between America and France, where they lived in Paris and the Riviera, mixing with the leading writers and artists of the era, including Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso and Ernest Hemingway. In 1921, their daughter Frances was born.

Scott's masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*, was published in 1925. In 1930, Zelda suffered a breakdown and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. For years Scott wrote short stories for magazines to pay for Zelda's treatment in mental hospitals and made little progress on his next novel, *Tender is the Night*. The novel, which is partly an autobiographical portrait of the Fitzgeralds' troubled marriage, was finally published in 1934. Like *Gatsby*, it is now considered a classic, but at first sales and

reviews were poor. In 1937, Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood to become a screenwriter and began work on a novel, *The Last Tycoon*. However, he couldn't make a career out of screenwriting and his novel was still unfinished at the time of his death in 1940.

## The Great Gatsby (1925)

**Plot** The novel is narrated in retrospect by **Nick Caraway**, a young Midwesterner who rents a small house in the fictional village of West Egg on Long Island. West Egg is the home of new millionaires who like to spend money and have loud, lavish **parties**. In contrast, East Egg, on the island beside it, is the home of upper-class Americans who have been rich for generations. Nick's cousin **Daisy Buchanan** lives on East Egg with her husband **Tom**. Tom has a secret relationship with a married woman, **Myrtle**, who lives in a grey, ruined area between New York City and the suburbs.

Nick becomes friends with his rich neighbour, **Jay Gatsby**, who hosts huge, glamorous parties every weekend. There is a strong suggestion that he is involved with organised crime. Gatsby has been in love with Daisy since their war-time romance and wants to win her back. With Nick's help, Gatsby meets Daisy again and they resume their affair. When Daisy accidentally kills Myrtle by running into her while driving Gatsby's car, Gatsby prepares to take the blame. The next day, Myrtle's husband, believing Gatsby to be her killer, murders Gatsby and kills himself. Meanwhile, Daisy and Tom secretly leave together to escape the consequences of her actions. No one attends Gatsby's funeral except Nick, Gatsby's father and one confused former party guest.

**Style and themes** The style of *The Great Gatsby* is **poetic, descriptive and witty**, with beautiful and often surprising similes and metaphors. The story is told retrospectively in the first person by Nick, whose narration is sometimes unreliable and influenced by his emotions. The novel's structure subverts chronological time, presenting chapters set in the past in the middle of the main story. This

echoes a major theme of the book, the strong **hold of the past on the present**. Time is important to the story. The final image of the novel is of Americans racing towards a dream of the future while being pulled back into the past. The past keeps a strong hold on the characters, especially Gatsby, who is determined to re-live his past romance with Daisy. However, he has reinvented himself so thoroughly that he loses his connection to the man he used to be.

Fitzgerald also makes frequent use of **symbolism**. Gatsby's yellow car is dazzling and impressive, like Gatsby himself. However, this is also the 'death car' that kills Myrtle and allows Gatsby's murderer to find him. Gatsby's beautiful house symbolises the emptiness of his life and of the 1920s. It is crowded with people during parties, but on most days he wanders its empty rooms alone. At night he often watches the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, a symbol of hope and an ideal future that never arrives.

Jay Gatsby is really James Gatz, a man who has reinvented himself in his pursuit of the American dream. He loves Daisy, but also wants what she symbolises for him: **life among the upper classes**, wealth and success. Daisy is witty and charming, but she is also weak and disloyal. She abandons Gatsby and stays in her unhappy marriage to Tom; their shared background of 'old money' is a stronger bond than her romantic love for

Gatsby. In contrast, Nick Caraway matures during the novel, changing from a rather shallow young man to Gatsby's only loyal friend.

The **American dream** is one of the novel's major themes. This is the idea that anyone can be a success in America with hard work and good luck. However, no amount of work, luck or self-invention can bring Gatsby what he truly wants. His pursuit of the American dream leads to crime and corruption, and he ends his life with hundreds of party guests but only one true friend.

Another theme is **class**. Tom and Daisy were born into wealth, as they come from families who made their fortunes generations before. Gatsby represents people who have recently become rich and don't know how to act in 'polite' society. Gatsby's insecurity leads him to constantly talk about Oxford and affect British slang, but he can't hide the fact that he doesn't belong, and the 'old money' families of East Egg refuse to accept him.

**Romantic love** is another important theme. Gatsby's commitment to Daisy is stronger than any attachment that the more superficial characters of the novel have for each other. However, it's possible that **he has idealised her** and only loves a dream. He is unable to imagine a realistic future for them as a couple and is shocked to meet Daisy's daughter; the child is proof of the reality of her marriage to Tom.

## QUICK CHECK

Answer the questions.

- 1 What were some major disappointments that F. Scott Fitzgerald suffered in the 1920s and 30s?
- 2 How old was he when he died?
- 3 What kind of people live on 'East Egg' and 'West Egg'?
- 4 How is past important to the novel?
- 5 What is Jay Gatsby's goal in life?
- 6 How is Gatsby's American dream a failure?

A scene from the movie *The Great Gatsby* by Baz Luhrmann, 2013.



**LITERARY TEXT**  
*Tender is the Night*,  
The French Riviera

## T65 The party

From *The Great Gatsby* by Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Chapter 3

In the following text, Nick describes the preparations for Gatsby's lavish parties and the beginning of one of them.



- 1 **moths**: falene.  
 2 **high tide**: alta marea.  
 3 **raft**: zattera.  
 4 **slit**: fendevano.  
 5 **Sound**: (qui) le acque tra Fisola e la terraferma.  
 6 **cataracts of foam**: strisce di acqua schiumante.  
 7 **parties**: gruppetti di gente.  
 8 **scampered**: scorrizzava.  
 9 **brisk**: vivace, scattante.  
 10 **toiled**: sgobbavano.  
 11 **scrubbing-brushes**: spazzolini.  
 12 **garden-shears**: cesoie.  
 13 **ravages**: danni.  
 14 **pulpless**: private della polpa.  
 15 **butler**: maggiordomo.  
 16 **fortnight**: due settimane.  
 17 **caterers**: addetti al catering.  
 18 **canvas**: tela.  
 19 **garish**: guarniti.  
 20 **glistening**: spendenti.  
 21 **hors-d'oeuvre**: antipasti.  
 22 **harlequin designs**: fantasie colorate.  
 23 **bewitched**: stregati.  
 24 **brass**: ottone.  
 25 **affair**: (qui) coetta.  
 26 **a whole pitfall**: (qui) un'orchestra tanto grande da riempire un grande palcoscenico.  
 27 **gaudy**: sgargianti.  
 28 **shorn**: acconciati.

**BEFORE YOU READ** What is your dream party? How is it organised, where does it take place and how many people are invited? Explain in detail.

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths<sup>1</sup> among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide<sup>2</sup> in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft<sup>3</sup>, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats lifted<sup>4</sup> the waters of the Sound<sup>5</sup>, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam<sup>6</sup>. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties<sup>7</sup> to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampere<sup>8</sup>d like a brisk<sup>9</sup> yellow bug to meet all trains.

And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled<sup>10</sup> all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes<sup>11</sup> and hammers and garden-shears<sup>12</sup>, repairing the ravages<sup>13</sup> of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York – every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless<sup>14</sup> halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's<sup>15</sup> thumb.

At least once a fortnight<sup>16</sup> a corps of caterers<sup>17</sup> came down with several hundred feet of canvas<sup>18</sup> and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished<sup>19</sup> with glistening<sup>20</sup> hors-d'oeuvre<sup>21</sup>, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs<sup>22</sup> and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched<sup>23</sup> to a dark gold.

In the main hall a bar with a real brass<sup>24</sup> rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair<sup>25</sup>, but a whole pitfall<sup>26</sup> of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy<sup>27</sup> with primary colours, and hair shorn<sup>28</sup> in strange new ways, and shawls<sup>29</sup> beyond the dreams of Castile<sup>30</sup>. The bar is in full swing<sup>31</sup>, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo<sup>32</sup> and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches<sup>33</sup> away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher<sup>34</sup>. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out<sup>35</sup> at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and

- 29 **shawls**: scialli.  
 30 **Castile**: Castiglia.  
 31 **full swing**: in piena attività.  
 32 **innuendo**: insinuazione.  
 33 **lurches**: ondeggia.  
 34 **the opera... higher**: le voci sono sempre più acute ed eccitate.  
 35 **tipped out**: servite.  
 36 **weave**: (qui) si muovono  
 37 **stouter**: più robuste.  
 38 **glide**: scivolano.



TEC

- 39 **sea-change**: cambiamento radicale.  
 40 **.dumps it down**: lo butta giù.  
 41 **Frisco**: Joe Frisco, un ballerino di jazz famoso negli anni Venti.  
 42 **obligingly**: cortesemente.  
 43 **Gilda Gray**: una famosa ballerina degli anni Venti.  
 44 **understudy**: attore sostituto.  
 45 **Follies**: *The Ziegfeld Follies*, una serie di spettacoli di Broadway negli anni Dieci e Venti.

form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave<sup>39</sup> them and there among the stouter<sup>40</sup> and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide<sup>41</sup> on through the sea-change<sup>42</sup> of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of these gypsies, in trembling alight, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down<sup>43</sup> for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco<sup>44</sup>, dances out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly<sup>45</sup> for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray's<sup>45</sup> understudy<sup>44</sup> from the Follies<sup>45</sup>. The party has begun.

## Comprehension

1 Read the extract and put the stages of a typical party at Gatsby's place in the correct order.

- a.  The orchestra arrives and the guests begin to arrive.  
 b.  The bar is set up.  
 c.  There is swimming on the beach.  
 d.  The dancing begins with one woman dancing by herself.  
 e.  The bar becomes busy and the talking becomes more lively.  
 f.  Eight servants work all day to clean up the mess.

2 The text begins with the past tense, and Nick seems to be observing from outside. In lines 3-4 he says 'I watched his guests diving...'. Partway through there is a change and another tense is used. Answer the questions.

1. Where in the text does this change happen?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Is Nick at the party at this point or is he still observing it from outside? Justify your answer.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Analysis

3 Read the text again and find elements or objects that are these colours or are described as having these colours.

yellow • dark gold • orange • blue

4 Answer the questions.

1. What kind of mood do you think Fitzgerald wanted to create by using these colours?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Do you think they have any symbolic meaning?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. What do you think is the effect of the contrast of blue with gold, yellow and orange?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5 Focus on the following sentence from lines 37-38: 'Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word.' Underline the words that suggest that laughter is like a liquid. What kind of a liquid do you think Fitzgerald was thinking of?

## Summing up

6 Complete the paragraph with the words given.

butler's thumb • cocktails • colours • hair shorn • lurches • shawls

Gatsby's party is dazzling, but there is a sense of absence and artificiality about it. In line 16 the '1. \_\_\_\_\_' is mentioned, but not the butler. In lines 29-30 the bright 2. \_\_\_\_\_ of clothes are mentioned, and '3. \_\_\_\_\_ in strange new ways', as well as lady 4. \_\_\_\_\_, but not the women themselves. In line 31, the 5. \_\_\_\_\_ are described as 'floating' when in fact they are carried by waiters. In line 35 the earth 6. \_\_\_\_\_ away from the sun, suggesting a drunken person. There is a suggestion that beautiful surfaces are more important than people or nature, and that something, or perhaps someone, is missing.

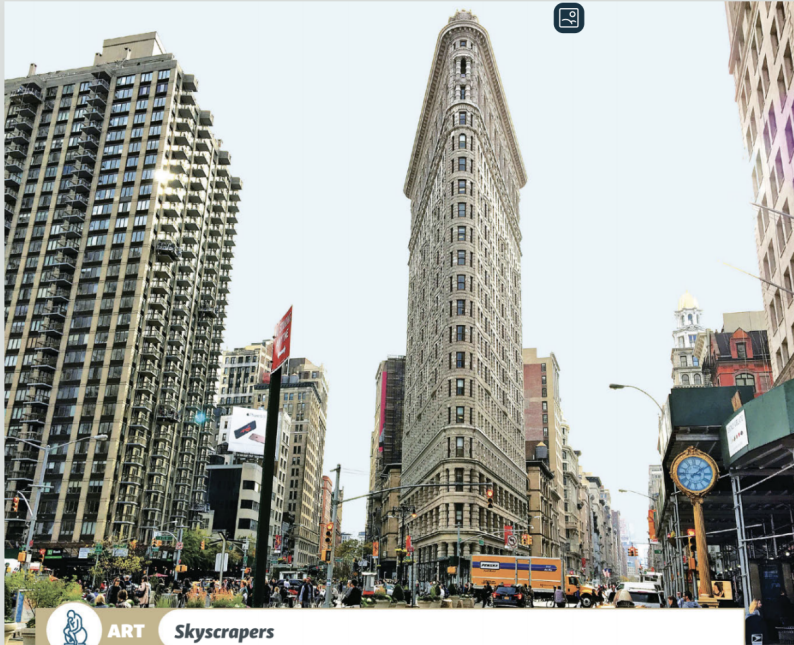
7 In his description of the party, Fitzgerald makes frequent use of lists of words connected with 'and'. Find examples of this throughout the text. How would the effect be different if he connected the words with commas instead? Why do you think that he made this choice?

## Interpretation

- 8 What kind of people come to Gatsby's parties? Justify your answer.  
 9 Would Daisy's social circle of 'old money' approve of this party? Why or why not?  
 10 What is the narrator's attitude towards the party? Why do you think so?  
 11 In lines 9-11, the narrator describes the amount of work that goes into cleaning up after one of these parties. What do you think the guests did to require the servants to use hammers, scrubbing-brushes, and garden-shears?

## Critical competence

12 One of Fitzgerald's proposed titles for this novel was *Trimalchio*. Look up the story of Trimalchio online if you don't know it. Why do you think he was considering this as a title?



## ART Skyscrapers

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, American cities became closer to the urban landscapes that we know today. This was largely due to the introduction of **skyscrapers**, buildings so tall that it seemed as if they touched the top of the sky.

Improvements in steel production made it possible to construct these buildings, which were innovative in that they used a steel skeleton to support their weight instead of exterior walls. The first modern skyscraper was built in Chicago in 1885, and was only ten stories high.

### The Chicago School

Chicago was the first city to have skyscrapers, but it was quickly followed by New York in 1901. The style of these early skyscrapers came to be known as the **Chicago school**. The buildings of the Chicago school had several features in common:

they were constructed around a **steel framework**, featured **large windows** and were often finished with **terra-cotta exteriors**. Chicago school architecture followed neo-classical principles. The buildings tended to be planned along the lines of a Greek column, with a slightly larger base and top balancing the main floors in the middle.

One of the most recognisable and popular Chicago school skyscrapers is the **Flatiron building in New York**. The Flatiron was built in 1902, on a triangular plot of land made by the intersection of Broadway and Fifth Avenue. The architect, Daniel Burnham, decided to work with this awkwardly shaped site rather than against it and designed a triangular building 21 stories high. The front of the building has been said to resemble the prow of a ship moving through the traffic of two busy New York streets.



## Art Deco

Another popular movement in architecture, art, and design was **Art Deco**. This movement began as a trend in the 1910s but found its name and its true popularity in the 1920s and 1930s. Art Deco was a style that favoured **clean lines, bold shapes, and minimal decoration**. It celebrated machines, progress, and the future. Geometric designs were often employed, especially sunburst patterns, chevrons and triangles, as well as motifs from ancient Egypt and depictions of idealised female forms.

The economic boom of the 1920s led to multiple skyscrapers being constructed in New York and other cities, many of them designed according to Art Deco principles. The **Chrysler building**, designed by William Van Alen, was the tallest building in the world at the time of its construction in 1930 – a record broken in less than a year by another Art Deco masterpiece, the **Empire State building**. The Chrysler building became a symbol of the modern age. The interior lobby is decorated in marble, wood and metal in characteristic Art Deco style. The exterior has a geometric design which comes to its full expression in the crown of the building: layers of arching crescents in a sunburst pattern, inset with triangular windows and topped by a shining steel spire. Stylised eagle heads are set like spokes on a wheel at the base of the crown.

**Left:** Flatiron building, New York.  
**Right:** Chrysler building, New York.

## VISUAL COMPETENCE

### 1 Work with a partner and discuss these questions.

- Look at the picture of the Flatiron building and find more online. What principles of the Chicago school of architecture can you identify?
- Do you agree that the Flatiron seems to be in motion? What elements might suggest this?
- The Flatiron was completed in 1902. Does it seem to belong to the 19<sup>th</sup> or the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Justify your choice.
- What adjectives would you use to describe the Flatiron? Justify your choice.  
neo-classical • ornate • old-fashioned • harmonious • strange • ugly • elegant • functional • funny

- Look at the picture of the Chrysler building and find more online. What principles of Art Deco architecture can you identify?

- What adjectives would you use to describe the Chrysler building?

old-fashioned • futuristic • optimistic • strange • silly-looking • aggressive • sleek • impressive • functional

- Compare the two buildings. How can you tell that the Chrysler building is more recent than the Flatiron? How are the two buildings different? Which do you prefer and why?



Left: Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.



Right: Edward Hopper, *Gas*, 1940, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



## ART Edward Hopper's America

Edward Hopper was one of the most iconic artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hopper painted **isolated figures in enigmatic situations**, often glimpsed through windows and cut off from the viewer by panes of glass. He used **light** to expose and separate his figures, who seem lost in empty, **geometric spaces** that echo the open space and loneliness of America. Hopper had a talent for presenting **ordinary settings** – an empty cinema, a rural gas station, a diner at night – in a way that made them seem **strange and alienating**. His paintings are full of unanswered questions that compel the viewer to look more closely.

### Life and career

Edward Hopper was born in 1882, in a small community just outside of New York City. When he was thirty-one, he moved into an apartment in Greenwich Village in New York and lived and worked there for the rest of his life. New York, along with rural New England, where he spent many of his summers, became the setting for most of his paintings. For several years, Hopper supported himself by providing **art for advertisements and film posters**. By the 1930s, he was established as a painter, with museums competing to buy his work. In 1924, he married Josephine Nivison, an artist who became the model for most of his female figures. Hopper continued to paint until his death in 1967 at the age of eighty-four.

### Hopper and film

Hopper influenced many other 20<sup>th</sup>-century artists, notably those of

the **Pop Art movement** of the 1960s. His **influence on film** was even more pronounced. Film noir, the dark, cynical, often melancholy crime genre of the 1940s and 50s, owed a great deal to Hopper's lonely vision of urban America. Many other film makers, including Alfred Hitchcock, David Lynch and Wim Wenders, have been fascinated by Hopper's work. As Wenders said, 'All the paintings of Edward Hopper could be taken from one long movie about America, each one the beginning of a new scene'.

### Nighthawks (1942)

Two men and a woman gather at an all-night diner served by a lone worker behind the counter. The light from the diner window throws patterns against the deserted street outside. The long window is a curve which intersects the dark wall of storefronts opposite. The figures are exposed by the light and the window glass, as if they are in an aquarium. They are also separated from the viewer by this glass, and it is difficult to imagine walking into this diner to join them as there is no door visible. There are only a few objects present and many identifying details are missing: the diner has a legible advertisement above the window but the restaurant itself has no name. The couple's hands are close, but not touching, and the characters are looking just past each other without making eye contact – there is a sense of missed connections. Many writers have attempted to answer the questions posed by this painting in short stories and poetry, notably Joyce Carol Oates' series of poems that provide interior monologues for each figure.

### Gas (1940)

In contrast to the urban isolation of *Nighthawks*, *Gas* presents the loneliness of a country road. The only human figure, a station attendant, seems insignificant beside the gas pumps. The trees form a dark wall beside him and the highway appears to vanish into the woods. The painting captures the moment when

day changes to night in a scene that is caught between human civilisation and nature. The emblem of the station is Mobil's Pegasus logo, a flat, trapped version of the flying horse of mythology. *Gas* was based on a composite of different stations Hopper had sketched.

## Comprehension

### 1 Answer the questions.

1. What kind of emotions do Hopper's paintings often convey?
2. What places were important to Hopper as settings for his paintings?
3. What movement in art did Hopper influence?
4. What film genre and directors did he influence?

### 3. What's the couple's mood?

### 5 Focus on Gas. What is the overall mood of the painting? Write down the first three adjectives that come to you.

### 6 What is the effect of the light coming from the station? Choose an answer that you agree with or think of your own. Justify your choice.

- The electric light reminds us that it will be dark soon.
- The light is friendly and comforting, like a beacon.
- The light is too bright and turns the eye toward the dark road.

## VISUAL COMPETENCE

### 2 Focus on Nighthawks. What is the overall mood of the painting? Choose those that you find convincing; add more if you wish.

sad • tense • lonely • calm • comforting • quiet • strange • romantic

### 3 What geometric shapes are important to the design of the painting?

### 4 Look at the painting closely and answer the questions.

1. Where are the figures looking?
2. What do you think the woman is holding?

## Creative competence

### 7 What is the couple's story in Nighthawks? They are sitting close together but are not touching and neither of them wears a wedding ring. Perhaps they met a few minutes before in the diner or perhaps they arrived together. Write a paragraph about them. Give them names and explain their relationship, why they are in the diner and what they were talking about just before the scene in the painting began. Write 120-180 words.

## Changing Perspectives • THE SELF-MADE MAN

### Then...

The phrase 'self-made man' was first used in the United States in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to refer to an individual of humble origins who becomes rich and successful without any outside help. The figure of the self-made man is closely linked to the concept of the **American Dream**. This is the belief that in the United States anyone who is willing to work hard can achieve financial success and rise in society, irrespective of the person's background. This is also one of the themes in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* [- page 444].

Even before independence, America was often presented as 'the land of opportunity' where immigrants from Europe could find prosperity. The ideals of freedom, democracy and equality, on which the United States was founded, seemed to guarantee

**upward social mobility**, in contrast with the rigid class divisions of European countries which prevented poor citizens from rising in society.

**Benjamin Franklin** (1706-1790) is the earliest and most typical example of the American self-made man. The youngest son of a poor Boston artisan, he had to leave school at ten and go to work as a printer's apprentice. He educated himself and became first a successful newspaper publisher,

John D. Rockefeller.

then an inventor and later a politician. He was involved in writing the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Constitution of the United States (1789). In his *Autobiography*, published after his death, he explains how he progressed from his humble origins to being an important statesman, and he gives advice on how to develop the virtues that lead to success. The book was an immediate bestseller and Franklin became the personification of American thrift<sup>1</sup>, discipline, and ingeniousness.

The expectations of quick financial success were also based on the still unexploited natural resources of the American continent. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 attracted about 300,000 people from the rest of the United States and abroad. Although few of the miners actually made a lot of money, the **California Gold Rush** reinforced the idea that becoming rich was a real possibility for everyone in America.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the self-made man was mostly identified with the successful businessman. The outstanding example was **John D. Rockefeller**, who started his career as a bookkeeper<sup>3</sup> at sixteen and then went into business in the growing sector of oil refining<sup>4</sup>. After the first discovery of oil in 1859, oil extraction had become an extremely profitable industry and the United States was the leading world producer. In 1870, Rockefeller founded the Standard Oil Company, which in little more than a decade acquired control of almost all the oil business in the country. Rockefeller became America's first billionaire. Similarly, **Andrew Carnegie**, who emigrated to the United States from Scotland with his family at the age of twelve, became a magnate of the steel industry and one of the richest Americans in history.

After accumulating their enormous wealth, both Rockefeller and Carnegie became **great philanthropists** and devoted a considerable part of their time and wealth to **charity**. They created foundations – still active today – to support educational, religious and scientific causes. In his writings, Andrew Carnegie stresses that the rich have a duty to contribute to society with their money. Many saw a contrast between the importance that Rockefeller and Carnegie attributed to charity and morality, and the ruthless<sup>5</sup> business methods that they used to build their industrial empires.

### ...and now

In the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most self-made men emerged in the field of **finance** and the **new technologies**. Unlike their predecessors, they did not have to go to work as children. On the contrary, often they were able to attend the best universities – even though some of them dropped out before getting a degree – but it is still notable that they managed to achieve world-wide fame and immense wealth starting from an ordinary middle-class background. **Warren Buffett**, the investment magnate, **Bill Gates**, co-founder of Microsoft, and **Steve Jobs**, co-founder of Apple, are some of the best-known examples. Like their 19<sup>th</sup>-century predecessors, Buffett and Gates are known for their commitment to philanthropic causes. And just like John Rockefeller, Bill Gates has been accused of using unfair business tactics to ensure Microsoft's monopoly of the personal computer software market. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most famous self-made men have made their fortunes in the fields of social media (**Mark Zuckerberg**), e-commerce (**Jeff Bezos**) and technology and space exploration (**Elon Musk**).

In their struggle for emancipation, African Americans have also identified with the image of the self-made man. **Barack Obama**

has publicly acknowledged the unusual character of his rise to the presidency of the United States. He said, [...] my father was born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding<sup>6</sup> goats [...]. His father – my grandfather – was a cook, a domestic servant to the British<sup>7</sup>.

Another example of an African-American success story is **Oprah Winfrey**, the TV personality, who was born in a poor family in rural Mississippi and then became one of the wealthiest and most influential women in the country. In the United States and abroad, the number of self-made women is on the rise. In 2021, the magazine *Forbes* included 108 **self-made women** in its list of the world's billionaires.

Although the term 'self-made' is no longer exclusively associated with white male entrepreneurs, its use remains ambiguous. On the one hand, it refers to the positive drive that has led many talented people to achieve success in spite of their disadvantaged background. On the other hand, the **myth** of the self-made man has been used to support the claim that society gives everyone the same opportunities, irrespective of their background. This myth presents the success stories of a few exceptional individuals as if they were the rule, ignoring the reality of poverty, injustice and discrimination, and the fact that the great profits of billionaires wouldn't be possible without the work of countless ordinary men and women.

- 1 **irrespective of**: prescindere da. 4 **oil refining**: raffinazione del petrolio.  
2 **thrift**: parsimonia. 5 **ruthless**: spietati, senza scrupoli.  
3 **bookkeeper**: contabile. 6 **herding**: pascolando.



Barack Obama.



John D. Rockefeller.

### Comprehension

- 1 Read the text 'Then...' and answer the questions.

1. What is the American Dream?
2. In what way was American society attractive for ambitious Europeans of humble origins?
3. What virtues did Benjamin Franklin personify in popular imagination?
4. Why did a lot of people suddenly move to California?
5. In what sectors did Rockefeller and Carnegie make their fortunes?
6. What was the aim of the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations?

- 2 Read the text '...and now', decide if the following statements are true or false and correct the false ones.

1. Contemporary self-made men are usually self-educated.  T  F
2. Warren Buffett and Bill Gates have given great sums of money to charities.  T  F
3. Barack Obama's paternal grandfather was African.  T  F
4. There are fewer and fewer self-made female billionaires.  T  F
5. The myth of the self-made man is based on presenting a personal success story as the norm.  T  F
6. Self-made billionaires should only thank themselves for their fortunes.  T  F

### Debate

- Form pairs. Half the pairs in the class prepare to support the statement, the other half prepare to argue against the statement.
- Each 'For' pair joins an 'Against' pair to form a group of four.
- In each group, the students present their arguments for and against the statement.

The idea of 'self-made men/women' is typically American, it cannot be applied to Italy.

#### FOR:

- In Italy, to rise in society you need first of all good family connections and influential friends. Merit is only secondary.
- (Add your own):

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\_\_\_\_\_

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#### AGAINST:

- Many Italians from humble backgrounds have become wealthy thanks to their talent, hard work and perseverance. Their examples show that merit is important for success.
- (Add your own):

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