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INSIGHTS into Literature

From the Origins to the Present

Concise

- Culture, Society and Visual Arts
- Focus on English Language
- Skills Practice



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CONTENUTI
INTEGRATIVI



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Module 1

CHANGING
CODES:
from the
HERO to the
INDIVIDUAL

➔ 19

Authors and Works

Beowulf A Worthy King	22
Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400)	25
The Canterbury Tales	26
The Pardoner and His Wonder Relics	27
The Wife of Bath's Prologue	28
Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)	32
Utopia	33
Of Their Trades, and Manner of Life	34
Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)	37
Doctor Faustus	38
Faustus's Last Soliloquy	38

Crossing over...

CINEMA	
Beowulf	24
LITERATURES	
Geoffrey Chaucer and Francesco Petrarca	30
VISUALS	
Songdo, A Utopian City	34

Culture and Language

ROUTE 1	
We Still Need Utopias	42
FIRST	
Reading and Use of English	44



Mapping

Module 1 From the Hero to the Individual

41

Module 2

The AGE of
SHAKESPEARE:
Human Passions

➔ 45

Authors and Works

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)	48
Romeo and Juliet What's in a Name?	53
Hamlet To Be or Not to Be	58
Hamlet's Death	61
Macbeth Bloody Instructions	67

Crossing over...

VISUALS	
Hamlet on stage	58
ART Shakespeare's Works	64,70
LITERATURES	
Niccolò Machiavelli and William Shakespeare	69

Culture and Language

ROUTE 2	
Power and Responsibility	72
FIRST	
Reading and Use of English	74



Mapping

Module 2 Shakespeare and Human Passions

71

Module 3

The ART
of the SONNET:
Spenser and
Shakespeare

➔ 75

Authors and Works

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)	76
One Day I Wrote Her Name upon the Strand	77
Shakespeare's Sonnets	80
Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?	81
In the Old Age Black Was Not Counted Fair	83
My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing like the Sun	85

Crossing over...

LITERATURES	
Edmund Spenser and Ludovico Ariosto	78

Culture and Language

ROUTE 3	
Changing Beauty Codes	88
FIRST	
Reading and Use of English	90



Mapping

Module 3 Renaissance Sonnets

87

Study GUIDES

Comparing and contrasting

86



eBook

Section 1

VIDEO RESOURCES

History and Culture: *Context Insight*
Art: Visual Analysis, F. Hayez
Culture: *Translating Shakespeare*
World economic crisis
Mapping: *Draw your map 1, 2, 3*

EXPANSIONS

The Wars of the Roses
and the ascent of the Tudor
Dynasty
The Reformation years and
religious conflict
The origins of drama
Beowulf and the *Odyssey*
Crossing over... **Literatures**
Crossing over... **Art**

EXTRA LITERARY TEXTS

Beowulf, *Beowulf's Funeral*
G. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*
W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*,
Richard III, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*
J. Donne, *An Anatomy of the World*



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Tutte le attività a risposta chiusa sono disponibili in versione digitale interattiva e autocorrettiva, nell'eBook e sulla piattaforma InClasse.



Module 1 The AGE of REVOLUTIONS ↻ 97	Authors and Works Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) 98 Leviathan 99 The State of Nature as a State of War 100 John Milton (1608-1674) 102 Paradise Lost 103 Whatever Power Is Left 104	Crossing over... VISUALS Satan 104 ART Blake's <i>Milton</i> 107 The Iconography of <i>Paradise Lost</i> 108	Culture and Language ROUTE 1 video All Men Are Created Equal 110 FIRST Reading and Use of English 112
	Mapping Module 1 Revolutions 109		
Module 2 The AGE of the NOVEL: TRAVEL and ADVENTURE ↻ 113	Authors and Works Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) 114 Robinson Crusoe 115 Friday 116 Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) 121 Gulliver's Travels 122 The Most Pernicious Race on the Earth 123 Lawrence Sterne (1713-1768) 127 The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy 128 The Straight Line 129	Crossing over... VISUALS Robinson Crusoe: a Comic Strip 116 CINEMA Cast Away 120	Culture and Language ROUTE 2 Ethical Trading 132 FIRST Reading and Use of English 134
	Mapping Module 2 Travel and Adventure 131		
Module 3 The AGE of the NOVEL: LOVE and MARRIAGE ↻ 135	Authors and Works Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) 136 Clarissa 137 I am but a Woman 138 Jane Austen (1775-1817) 142 Pride and Prejudice 143 In Vain I Have Struggled 144	Crossing over... LITERATURES Choderlos de Laclos' <i>Les Liaisons Dangereuses</i> 140 VISUALS Houses in <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> 144 CINEMA <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> 147 ART Marriage à la mode video 148	Culture and Language ROUTE 3 Still Waiting for Democracy 150 FIRST Reading and Use of English 152
	Mapping Module 3 Love and Marriage 149		
Study GUIDES Summarising (1) 119 Summarising (2) 126			



eBook

Section 2

VIDEO RESOURCES

History and Culture: *Context Insight*
Art: Visual Analysis, *W. Hogarth*
Culture: *Athens and Democracy*
Mapping: *Draw your map 1, 2, 3*

EXPANSIONS

Irony, parody and satire
 Crossing over... **Literatures**
 Crossing over... **Art**

EXTRA LITERARY TEXTS

J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*
D. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

CONTENUTI
INTEGRATIVI

INCLASSE

LANGUAGE
PLUS
Contenuti integrativi sulla piattaforma InClasse.



Module 1	Authors and Works	Crossing over...	Culture and Language		
NATURE and IMAGINATION: two facets of ROMANTIC POETRY ↻ 159	William Blake (1757-1827) 160 Songs of Innocence and of Experience 161 The Lamb / The Tyger 162 William Wordsworth (1770-1850) 167 Lyrical Ballads 168 The Preface 169 I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud 170 The Solitary Reaper 172 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) 175 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 176 Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) 181 Ode to the West Wind 182 John Keats (1795-1821) 186 Ode to a Nightingale 188	VISUALS Tiger vs Tyger 164 ART Landscape 192	ROUTE 1 video Climate Summit 194 FIRST Reading and Use of English 196		
	Mapping Module 1 Nature and Imagination 193				
	Module 2 AMERICAN POETRY in the ROMANTIC AGE ↻ 197	Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) 198 Uncontained and Immortal Beauty 200 Walt Whitman (1819-1892) 204 Leaves of Grass 206	VISUALS Immortal Beauty 200 CINEMA Into the Wild 209 ART Landscape 210	ROUTE 2 Frontiers: <i>Ad Infinitum</i> 212 FIRST Reading and Use of English 214	
		Mapping Module 2 Transcendentalism 211			
		Module 3 ROMANTIC FICTION ↻ 215	Mary Shelley (1797-1851) 216 Frankenstein video 217 The Creation 218 Emily Brontë (1818-1848) 222 Wuthering Heights 223 Heathcliff 225 Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) 229 The Oval Portrait 231	VISUALS The Creature 218 ART Visionary painting video 221	ROUTE 3 Knowledge Is Ours 236 FIRST Reading and Use of English 238
			Mapping Module 3 Romantic Fiction 235		
			Study GUIDES Commenting 174		



eBook

Section 3

VIDEO RESOURCES

History and Culture: *Context Insight*
Art: Visual Analysis, *J. Constable, J. H. Füssli*
Culture: *The arctic and global warming*
A new generation of electricians
Mapping: *Draw your map 1, 2, 3*

EXPANSIONS

The French Revolution
 Crossing over... **Literatures**
 Crossing over... **Art**

EXTRA LITERARY TEXTS

W. Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*
W. Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads; Poems in Two Volumes*
S.T. Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
J. Keats, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*
R.W. Emerson, *Poems*
H.D. Thoreau, *Walden*
M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*
E. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
E.A. Poe, *The Tell-Tale Heart*



Module 1 FICTION in a Time of CHANGE 245	Authors and Works Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) 246 Jane Eyre Life at Lowood 248 Charles Dickens (1812-1870) 252 Oliver Twist Before the Board 253 Hard Times Coketown 258	Crossing over... CINEMA Jane Eyre 251 ART Realism video 256 VISUALS Industrial Landscape 258	Culture and Language ROUTE 1 Child Labour 262 FIRST Reading and Use of English 264	
	Mapping Module 1 Victorian Fiction 261			
	Module 2 AMERICAN Aspirations 265	Authors and Works Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) 266 The Scarlet Letter 267 The Sunshine Does Not Love You 267 Herman Melville (1819-1891) 270 Moby Dick Ahab's Last Breath 271 Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) 275 Wild Nights! Wild Nights! 276	Crossing over... VISUALS Moby Dick 272 ART American Landscape 278	Culture and Language ROUTE 2 Fears and Anxieties 280 FIRST Reading and Use of English 282
		Mapping Module 2 American Aspirations 279		
Module 3 The Age of AESTHETICISM and DECADENCE 283		Authors and Works Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) 284 The Picture of Dorian Gray 285 The Preface 286 The Studio 288 R.L. Stevenson (1850-1894) 294 The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde 296 The Duality of Man 297 The Transformation 300	Crossing over... ART The Pre-Raphaelites video 291 LITERATURES Aestheticism: Huysmans, D'Annunzio, Wilde 292 VISUALS Mr Hyde 300 CINEMA Mary Reilly 303	Culture and Language ROUTE 3 Second Life, Second Education 306 FIRST Reading and Use of English 308
		Mapping Module 3 Aestheticism 305		
	Study GUIDES Continuing a story 304			



eBook

Section 4

VIDEO RESOURCES

History and Culture: Context Insight
Art: Visual Analysis F.M. Brown, D.G. Rossetti
Culture: Decode the serial killer
Mapping: Draw your map 1, 2, 3

EXPANSIONS

From Jane Eyre to Wide Sargasso Sea
 Utilitarianism
 Crossing over... Literatures
 Crossing over... Art

EXTRA LITERARY TEXTS

E. Brontë, Jane Eyre
C. Dickens, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, Hard Times
H. James, What Maisie Knew
E. Dickinson, I Felt a Funeral in My Brain, I'm Nobody! Who are You?, Because I Could Not Stop for Death
O. Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Importance of Being Earnest
C. Rossetti, Goblin Market and Other Poems
R.L. Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde



Module 1	Authors and Works	Crossing over...	Culture and Language
MODERNISM 317	T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) 318 The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock 320	LITERATURES T.S. Eliot and Dante Alighieri 326	ROUTE 1 The City 350
	Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) 330 Mrs Dalloway 332 A Walk through the Park 334	ART Alienation and Anxiety 328	IELTS Practice Test 352
	James Joyce (1882-1941) 338 Dubliners Eveline 341 Ulysses I Said Yes I Will Yes 346	VISUALS Mrs Dalloway's Walk 334	
	Mapping	Module 1 Modernism	349
Module 2 The Impact of WARS on POETRY and FICTION 353	W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) Easter 1916 356	VISUALS 1916 Easter Rising 356	ROUTE 2 Civilians Killed and Wounded 372
	Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) 359 Dulce et Decorum Est 360	ART War 366	IELTS Practice Test 374
	Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) 362 A Farewell to Arms 363	CINEMA In Love and War 367	
	W.H. Auden (1907-1973) Refugee Blues 369		
	Mapping	Module 2 Wars and the Individual	371
Module 3 The Age of ANXIETY: 20th-Century DRAMA 375	Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) 376 Waiting for Godot 379	VISUALS Just a Country Road... 380	ROUTE 3 Building a better world 396
	John Osborne (1929-1994) 386 Look Back in Anger 387	ART Anguish 383	IELTS Practice Test 398
	Harold Pinter (1930-2008) 390 The Dumb Waiter 392	LITERATURES Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco 384	
	Mapping	Module 3 20th-Century Drama	395
Module 4 REBELLIONS 399	J.D. Salinger (1919-2010) 400 The Catcher in the Rye 402	CINEMA Mona Lisa Smile 407	ROUTE 4 Rebels against Injustice eBook
	Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) The Bell Jar 405	VISUALS On the Road 410	
	Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) On the Road 410		
Mapping	Module 4 Rebellions	415	
Study GUIDES	Giving an oral presentation	413	



eBook

Section 5

VIDEO RESOURCES

History and Culture: *Context Insight*
Art: Visual Analysis E. Munch, P. Picasso, F. Bacon
Culture: Virginia Woolf *Becoming Urban Animals*
Mapping: Draw your map 1, 2, 3, 4

EXPANSIONS

Crossing over... **Literatures**
 Crossing over... **Art**
 Route 4: *Rebels against Injustice*

EXTRA LITERARY TEXTS

T.S. Eliot, *The Journey of the Magi, The Ariel Poems*
V. Wolf, *Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse*
J. Joyce, *Dubliners, Ulysses*
E. Pound, *In a Station of the Metro*

W.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*
R. Brooke, *The Soldier, Peace*
W. Owen, *Anthem for Doomed Youth*
S. Sassoon, *They*
E. Hemingway, *To Good Guys Dead Killed Pave, June 15 - 1918*
W.H. Auden, *Roman Wall Blues, Epitaph on a Tyrant*
S. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*
J. Osborne, *Look Back in Anger*
H. Pinter, *The Dumb Waiter, God Bless America*
M. Frayn, *Copenhagen*
S. Plath, *Elm, Mirror*



Module 1 COLONIALISM and LITERATURE ↻ 421	Authors and Works Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) 422 The White Man's Burden 424 E.M. Forster (1879-1970) 426 A Passage to India 428 Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) 433 Heart of Darkness 435 Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014) 439 The Ultimate Safari 440	Crossing over... CINEMA Apocalypse Now 437 VISUALS Kruger National Park 440 ART Hybrid Art video 445	Culture and Language ROUTE 1 Globalization and Immigration 465 IELTS Practice Test 467
	Mapping Module 1 Colonialism and Literature 446		
Module 2 POSTCOLONIALISM Culture and Identity ↻ 447	Authors and Works Salman Rushdie (born 1947) 448 Midnight's Children 449 Hanif Kureishi (born 1954) 451 The Buddha of Suburbia 453 Monica Ali (born 1967) 454 Brick Lane Visiting Doctor Azad 456	Crossing over... VISUALS Banglatown 456 LITERATURES Curry di pollo 460	Culture and Language ROUTE 1 Globalization and Immigration 465 IELTS Practice Test 467
	Mapping Module 2 Postcolonial Writing 464		
Module 3 POSTMODERNISM History, Memory and Writing ↻ 469	Authors and Works John Fowles (1926-2005) 470 The French Lieutenant's Woman 472 Don DeLillo (born 1936) 475 White Noise Lost in the Supermarket 478 Michael Cunningham (born 1952) 482 The Hours The Struggle to Live 484	Crossing over... ART Contemporary Art video 477 VISUALS The Supermarket 478 LITERATURES Supermarket, Silverio Messon 481 CINEMA The Hours 487	Culture and Language ROUTE 2 The New Media Landscape video 489 IELTS Practice Test 491
	Mapping Module 3 Postmodernism 488		
Module 4 DYSTOPIAS ↻ 493	Authors and Works George Orwell (1903-1950) 494 Nineteen Eighty-four A Cold April Day 496 Kazuo Ishiguro (born 1954) 499 Never Let Me Go Told and Not Told 500 Margaret Atwood (born 1939) 503 Oryx and Crake The Paradise Programme 504	Crossing over... VISUALS Big Brother 496	Culture and Language ROUTE 3 Just Waiting for Catastrophes? eBook IELTS Practice Test eBook
	Mapping Module 4 Dystopias 507		
Study GUIDES Writing a short expository essay 438 Writing an argumentative essay 462	Literary KIT 508 Art KIT 520		



eBook

VIDEO RESOURCES

History and Culture: *Context Insight*
Art: Visual Analysis Y. Shonibare, D. Hockney
Culture: Grace Abbott
The future of writing
Mapping: Draw your map 1, 2, 3, 4

EXPANSIONS

Crossing over... Art

EXTRA LITERARY TEXTS

R. Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*
 E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*,
Saying Good-bye
 J. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
 C. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

S. Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*,
Good Advice Is Rarer than Rubies
 H. Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*
 W. Soyinka, *Voices*
 G. Swift, *Waterland*, *The Here and Now*
 I. McEwan, *Atonement*
 J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*
 D. DeLillo, *White Noise*
 P. Austen, *The New York Trilogy*
 G. Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-four*
 C. McCarthy, *The Road*

Section 3

The Romantic Age (1785-1832)

The clash between reason and emotion, the struggle between order and passion, the search for harmony with nature in an industrialised context.

1787
Constitution of the United States of America.

1792
France declares itself a Republic.

1801
Act of Union creates the United Kingdom.

1802-1815
Napoleon Bonaparte's leadership.

1806
First steam-operated mill opens in Manchester.

1807
Britain abolishes the slave trade.

1814
George Stephenson invents first locomotive.

1815
Battle of Waterloo. Napoleon is exiled to St Helena.

1825
World's first steam locomotive passenger service begins.

1829
Catholic Relief Act grants full emancipation to British and Irish Catholics.





KEYWORDS

REVOLUTION • REASON • EMOTIONS • NATURE • SUBLIME • INDUSTRY • LANDSCAPE • INNER-WORLD • SCIENCE • POETRY

History and Society

Sea power and the American Revolution

The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) is arguably the first global war in modern history. It was fought between Britain and France and their allies in America, India and Europe to achieve economic supremacy. The war established **Great Britain's naval hegemony**, but it also showed how much war could cost in terms of financial effort and subsequent social unrest. High taxation, poor harvests and heated debates about industrialisation created a state of turmoil. In search of resources, the British government had also begun to **exploit the American colonies**, which at the time were trying to gain independence from London. On their part, the thirteen colonies grew frustrated by British interference in their own affairs as they were denied parliamentary representation and thus felt the increasing taxation as unlawful. They started their resistance by putting forwards

ideas such as 'individual rights' and 'popular sovereignty'. When George III refused to meet the colonists' requests, riots broke out in many colonies and British soldiers were sent to occupy Boston. At this stage, however, the colonies were too committed to independence to avoid a revolution. An assembly known as the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in 1774 to discuss the next move. The **Declaration of Independence** was issued in **1776**. The conflict lasted until 1781, when the Americans effectively won, but British claims on the colonies were abandoned only in **1783**, with the **Treaty of Paris**.

The French Revolution

Enlightenment's emphasis on the state as an expression of collective choices and as guarantor of equal rights had a virulent outcome in the French Revolution, which indelibly wrote the destinies of Europe (📖 eBook Expansions, 'The French Revolution'). While the American Revolution created the basis for an egalitarian society, Terror in France aroused doubt about the justification of rebellion against an unjust government. As across the



The Declaration of Independence in Congress (1819) by John Trumbull.





Channel the Revolution turned into an appalling carnage, sweeping away old notions of tradition and order, European intellectuals polarised between support for and opposition to radicalism. For example, the British-American **Thomas Paine (1737-1809)** defended the principles of the French Revolution in his work *Rights of Man* (1791) calling for greater democracy in Britain, while the Irish-born thinker **Edmund Burke (1729-1797)** expressed his anti-Enlightenment positions in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Burke saw the events of 1789 as a logical follow-up of what had happened in England in 1688 with the Glorious Revolution but he was deeply suspicious of the radical attempt to start everything from anew as the French revolutionaries seemed determined to do. In general, those who believed in the potential and freedom of the individual, and discarded acceptance of social hierarchy and political repression, supported the French Revolution in its initial phases but turned away from what seemed a betrayal of its promises.

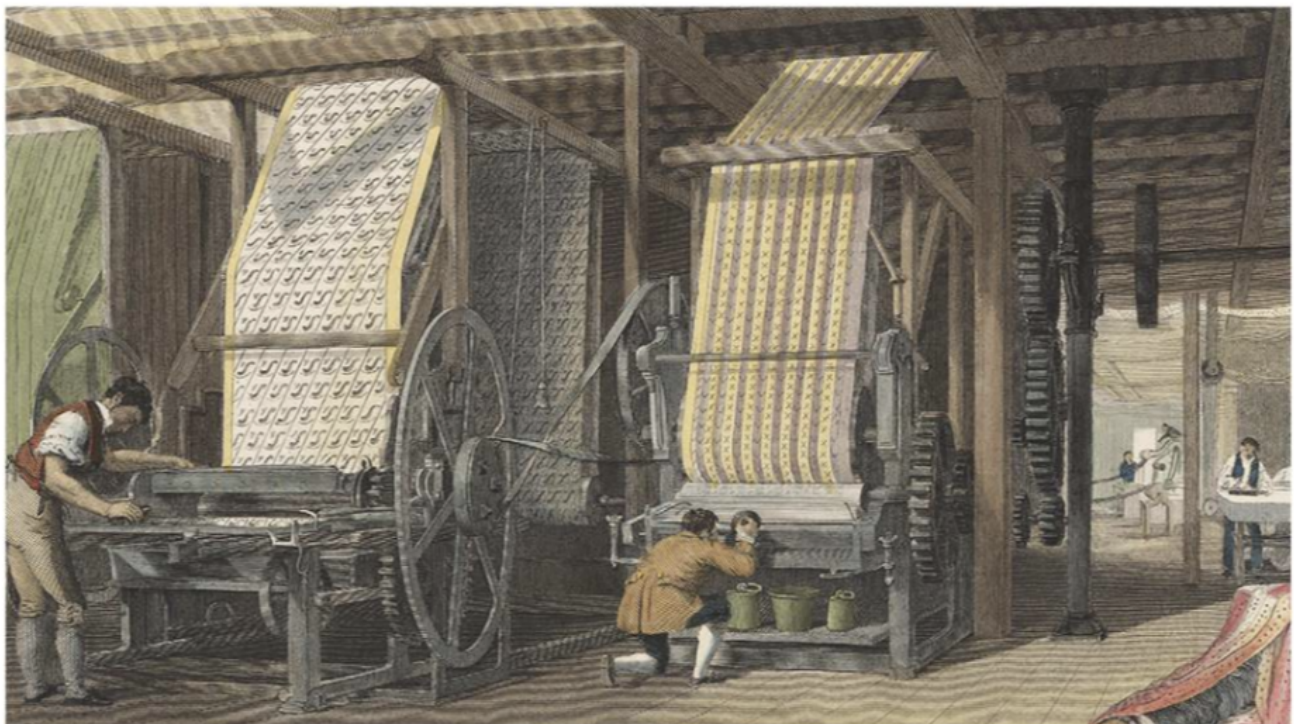
The Agrarian Revolution and the beginnings of industrialisation

The period was not only marked by social and political revolutions but also by cyclic economic depression and crucial changes in the systems of production. **Mercantilism** and the opening of **new markets** required an efficient way to exploit the land, obtain raw materials and manufacture goods. Much effort was put into feeding

a **growing population** and into developing new and more effective ways to meet new needs. Since the government had a policy of non-intervention in economic affairs, innovation was left in the hands of private decision or enterprise. From being an essentially agricultural country, Britain was transformed into an industrial one.

A new and more efficient organisation of the land, created the **exodus of labourers** from the country **to the cities**, where job opportunities could be found in the expanding manufacturing industry. Britain could also exploit its large reserve of **coal** to fuel the newly invented **steam engine** and various mechanical means of production. New improved roads were built to facilitate movement of goods while cities expanded to accommodate people moving from the country.

These changes, which go under the name of **Industrial Revolution**, had a huge impact on the lives of individuals, altering people's habits, the distribution of wealth and power as well as the British landscape. Families were amassed in poor housing accommodation where they lived in extremely unhygienic conditions while factories polluted both air and water, spewing out smoke and dumping wastes into rivers. Wealth remained concentrated in the hands of a small portion of society: manufacturers and merchants who increased their influence on political decision. The **First Reform Act**, passed by Parliament in 1832, sanctioned this social change by extending the right to vote to this new middle class.



Calico printing machines powered by belt and shafting through cog wheels from a central energy source (steam or water). Hand-coloured engraving, London, 1834.

Literature and Culture

English Romanticism

Against such a backdrop of revolutions in several fields a new sensibility developed which gave rise to Romanticism, a cultural phenomenon which involved the entire Western world. This critical moment can be inscribed within the historical **period starting in the 1790s and ending in the 1820s** and its roots can be found in the *Sturm und Drang* movement which developed between the 1760s and the 1780s in Germany as a celebration of subjectivity and feelings, against the restraints of Enlightenment rationalism. These ideas spread to the rest of the continent and overseas, where they were adapted to the different cultural backgrounds.

English Romanticism conventionally **begins in 1798**, the year of publication of the collection of poems *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, **and ends in 1832**, when the First Reform Act was enacted by Parliament. The conventional English Romanticism also comprises a phase, called 'protoromantic', in which a new sensibility began to take shape alongside classical ideals, while the development of Romantic ideas is expressed in the traditional division between a **first** and a **second generation of Romantic poets**.

Early aesthetic movements

In the mid-18th century poets had begun to write about topics such as nature, emotion and feelings. The so-called '**graveyard poetry**' blended neo-classical forms with innovative subject matter such as nature, mutability and death. Another phenomenon characterising the early Romantic movement was the growing interest in the primitive, and especially **Celtic**, cultures. This concern can be seen in the popular success of the *Works of Ossian* in the 1760s by the Scottish poet and antiquarian James Macpherson (1736-1796), who claimed his poem was a translation from an ancient Gaelic poetic cycle by the warrior and poet Oisín (Ossian in English).

The nature of poetry

The Romantics' worldview was radically different from that of Enlightenment thinkers. If the latter believed the world was a coherent whole whose parts continually grew and developed according to laws of cause and effect, the Romantics no longer conceived of it as a machine but as an entity pervaded by spirit. Reasoning was considered insufficient to embrace all that complexity, which poets wanted to penetrate through instinct and



Morning in the Riesengebirge (1810-1811) by Caspar David Friedrich.

artistic imagination. Poetry was considered as the most powerful means to get access to reality by way of intuition and its function was to 'express' rather than 'represent' the world, which placed the **emphasis on the individual** participation in the process of knowledge.

The poet as a prophet

A priest-like figure, the poet, who was endowed with greater sensibility, was seen as the mediator between common people and higher truths. As 'a man speaking to men', the poet could no longer use the elevated, Latinate style typical of Augustan poetry which was rejected in favour of a more ordinary diction that could reach everybody.

Images and symbols should no longer be used to embellish a poem but to convey the visionary perception of the poet. Romantic poets confided in the power of this 'new language' to be able to convey real sensations.

The poetry of nature

Romantic artists were deeply aware of the changes Britain was undergoing. The increasingly urbanised and industrialised landscape encouraged poets of the so-called 'first generation' to place an enormous emphasis on **nature** as a place of **spiritual truth, release, and regeneration**, where human beings were in closer contact with God and free from the corruption of society. Also children were celebrated as uncorrupted figures endowed with unspoiled imagination and great creative power.



Contact with nature was felt as a spiritual experience since wild landscapes stirred emotions and a sense of 'smallness' in the viewers.

In front of grandiose places in nature, such as gigantic mountains, volcanoes or vast night skies, one could invoke the feeling of the **sublime**, a mixture of awe, fear and a sense of wonder that could give an intuitive sense of oneself. This emphasis on the relationship between nature and the self is also to be found in Transcendentalism, the American expression of Romanticism (☉ Focus ON 'Transcendentalism' p. 199).

Developments of Romantic poetry

The so-called 'second generation' of Romantic poets further developed the achievements of the revolution in poetry mainly made by Wordsworth and Coleridge. John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Gordon Byron (Lord Byron) took their predecessors' works as models but clearly felt that something new was needed. **Keats** introduced the idea that beauty, an inescapable and timeless truth, could solve the tension between the everyday reality and eternity, while in his poems, **Shelley** added special attention to political and social questions, fashioning himself as a rebel and an atheist, which made him one of the most revolutionary figures of the second wave of Romantic poets. **Byron** assumed instead the role of the seducer and fighter for freedom. Keats, Shelley and Byron all spent a part of their lives in Italy, which they saw as an exotic place and which they loved for the beauty of its landscape and climate. They all died young in different circumstances but during their short lives they managed to write some of best known lines of English literature.

Barnard Castle
(c. 1825)
by J. M. W. Turner.



Romantic fiction

The supremacy of poetry during the Romantic period is reflected also in the scarce attention given to fiction, which was considered as an inferior genre. However, during the 19th century, novelists brought new themes and approaches to the novel.

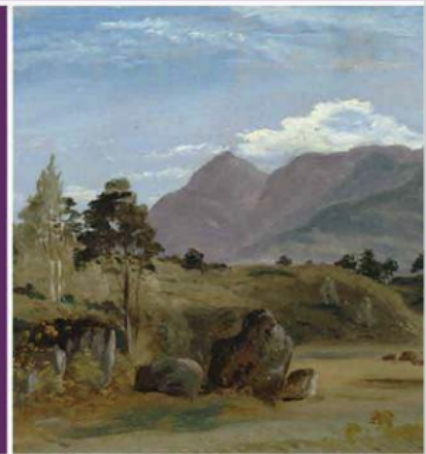
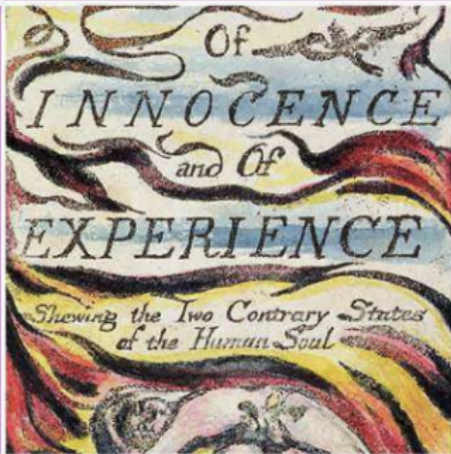
The notion of the sublime, which greatly influenced poetry, was also the source of inspiration for the Gothic novel, where terror, emotion and feelings are imaginatively exaggerated.

Graveyard poetry offered this developing literature a reservoir of images and atmospheres associated with decay and mortality, while the **fascination with the Middle Ages** spread by the Ossian poet Macpherson, offered exotic scenarios for the setting of stories. **Horace Walpole (1717-1797)** produced what is generally considered the first **Gothic novel**, *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), where labyrinths, ruined castles and supernatural events dominate. The novel was quite successful and inspired many others such as **Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein***.

The fascination with irrational passions proved an enduring one as can be seen in **Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights***, filled with strong passions and ghostly atmospheres. Besides, Gothic novels continued to be written throughout the 19th century, in the early 19th century, **Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)** introduced into the novel the themes of revolution, dissent and social change. He set his stories in the past to talk about the troubled present, starting the genre of the **historical novel**. The echoes of British and European fiction can be seen in the works of the American writer **Edgar Allan Poe** who manipulated Gothic conventions in a strikingly original way.

1

NATURE and IMAGINATION: two Facets of ROMANTIC POETRY



Authors and Works



William Blake (1757-1827)

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

eBook *Infant Joy; Infant Sorrow; The Chimney-Sweeper; Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Lyrical Ballads

eBook *What Is a Poet?, Preface to Lyrical Ballads*

eBook *Lines Written in Early Spring, Lyrical Ballads*

eBook *My Heart Leaps Up, Poems in Two Volumes*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

eBook *The Water Snakes; He Prayeth Best, Who Loveth Best, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Ode to the West Wind

John Keats (1795-1821)

Ode to a Nightingale, Poems

eBook *La Belle Dame sans Merci*

2

AMERICAN POETRY in the ROMANTIC AGE



Authors and Works



Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Nature

eBook *The Rhodora, Poems*



Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Leaves of Grass

eBook **Henry David Thoreau** (1817-1862)
*Where I Lived, and What I Lived For, Walden
or Life in the Woods*



Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

"Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Emerson came from a well-known Boston family. His father William was an important minister of the First Unitarian Church who died when Ralph Waldo was only eight years old. His death plunged the family into a state of extreme poverty, which increased Emerson's own sense of **discipline and self-reliance**.

Destined for a career in the church too, he entered Harvard College at the age of 14 studying Greek, Latin, History and Rhetoric. The insistence on subjects which relied so much on the past might have inspired his ideas on the necessity for the scholar to be educated not only by books but also by action and, above all, by **nature**.

In these years Emerson began to write his reflections on different subjects in a **journal**, which he continued doing for more than fifty years. After graduating, he got a scholarship to study theology at Harvard Divinity School, the cradle of Unitarian theology. Showing great **talent for preaching**, Emerson became a pastor in the Second Unitarian Church in 1829 and began delivering sermons on a regular basis (© Focus ON 'Transcendentalism', p. 199).

The same year he married Ellen Tucker, who died from tuberculosis after only two years, leaving him a considerable inheritance. The pain for this loss may have influenced Emerson's decision to leave the ministry, and his financial security allowed him this change of life. He **toured Europe** for a year, where he tried to recover from his lung problems and **where he had the chance of meeting** the most prominent literary figures of the time, such as the poets **Wordsworth** and **Coleridge**. Back in the USA, he remarried and settled in Concord, where he began a career of writing and lecturing which, despite his health problems, witnessed a peak of creativity between 1836 and 1842, when his son died of scarlet fever at the age of five. This loss left Emerson dejected but strongly determined to come out 'victorious' from this 'defeat', showing incredible energy and discipline. When his health deteriorated again, Emerson went on a third trip to Europe to cure his lungs. He spent his last years writing, giving lectures and organising his essays. He died in 1882 of pneumonia.

1803	He was born in Boston, the third son of a clergyman.
1811	His father died.
1812	He entered the Boston Public Latin School.
1817-1821	He studied at Harvard.
1825	He entered Harvard Divinity School.
1829	He became a junior pastor in the Second Unitarian Church.
1829-1831	He was married to his first wife, who died of tuberculosis.
1833	He toured Europe to recover from his bad health.
1835	He married his second wife.
1836	His first essay, <i>Nature</i> , was published.
1837	He gave the lecture 'The American Scholar' at the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, Massachusetts.
1841	<i>Essays: First Series</i> was published.
1842	His son died.
1844	<i>Essays: Second Series</i> was published.
1847	His first collection of poems was published.
1847-1848	He made his second trip to Europe and lectured in England.
1851-1860	He spoke in support of anti-slavery movements and candidates.
1882	He died.

Emerson's work and thought

Emerson is generally recognised as the **father of American literature**, having influenced and encouraged subsequent generations of writers and poets. He is an important exponent of **Transcendentalism** (⊕ Focus ON 'Transcendentalism', p. 199) or the 'spokesman' of nature, the champion of American cultural distinctiveness and of self-reliance.

His transcendentalist approach to literature urged him to explore ways in which American culture could express and reflect the uniqueness of the nation. In his famous speech 'The American Scholar' (1837), he indicated nature, books, and action as the three main kinds of influence in education. He constantly placed his focus on the **new** and the **original**, claiming that one should see things through the eyes of a child. He enriched the ancient precept 'know thyself' with the modern command '**study nature**', placing the self at the centre of his system of thought. The 'me' Emerson believed in was not the individual egoistic self, but rather the autonomous spirit which acts according to universal moral laws. In his 1841 essay *Self-Reliance*, he claimed that '**the best principle**

for behaviour is to trust one's own intuition'.

That is to say, since we all have a soul which is in direct contact with the divine, we should trust it. To put one's own thoughts into action means hearing and acting on the voice of God. One must search for truths in the context of nature because **while we study nature, we study the self**. Finally, all these principles are to be sought in solitude because society forces men to conform. Individuals should therefore be encouraged to **disregard exterior authorities**, relying for their judgment only on themselves.

The great poet has the important task of reminding people of the immense potential resource they have under their control. A poet should also be able to communicate the truths he discovers through his intuitions. Poetry should not simply be an art which conveys beauty but a living form able to reveal philosophical truths. Therefore poetry must be 'organic', a system in which meaning and meter are harmoniously blended. This harmonious architecture Emerson calls the 'metre-making argument'. Finally, Emerson believed that poetry should show the unity which exists in the diverse objects in nature.

Focus ON Transcendentalism

The literary and political movement of Transcendentalism, which is usually considered as the American expression of Romanticism, originated from liberal Unitarian religious principles.

Unitarians had an open-minded and individualistic approach to religion. They rejected the doctrine of the Trinity because they believed in the unity of God, and refused the idea of original sin. They also emphasised the role of reason in understanding the *Bible* and the importance of the individual in discovering spiritual and religious truths.

Centred in the churches of Boston and at Harvard College, Transcendentalism evolved in the 1830s and 1840s, thanks to the contribution of intellectuals such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau (⊕ eBook Extra literary texts, *Where I Lived, and What I Lived For, Walden or Life in the Woods*), and Margaret Fuller (1810-1850).

It was Emerson who first suggested that the mind might possess **innate powers** that provided religious understanding and spiritual experience. He therefore rejected the empiricist principle that, like any other forms of knowledge, religion should be proved by external evidence. He believed that **the mind coincides with the natural world** and possesses within itself the same energy which can be found in natural objects and processes. He explained religious sentiment as deeply rooted into the mind itself and religious life as a process of continual spiritual advancement and self-improvement based on intuition.

The encouragement never to accept passively the imperatives of others affected the transcendentalist approach to education and social as well as political problems. The transcendentalists advocated innovative methods that aimed at developing a **child's innate knowledge**, criticised the social arrangements that they thought prevented individual spiritual development and believed individuals should disobey laws if their moral intuition told them they were unjust.





Uncontained and Immortal Beauty

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Nature (1836), Chapter I

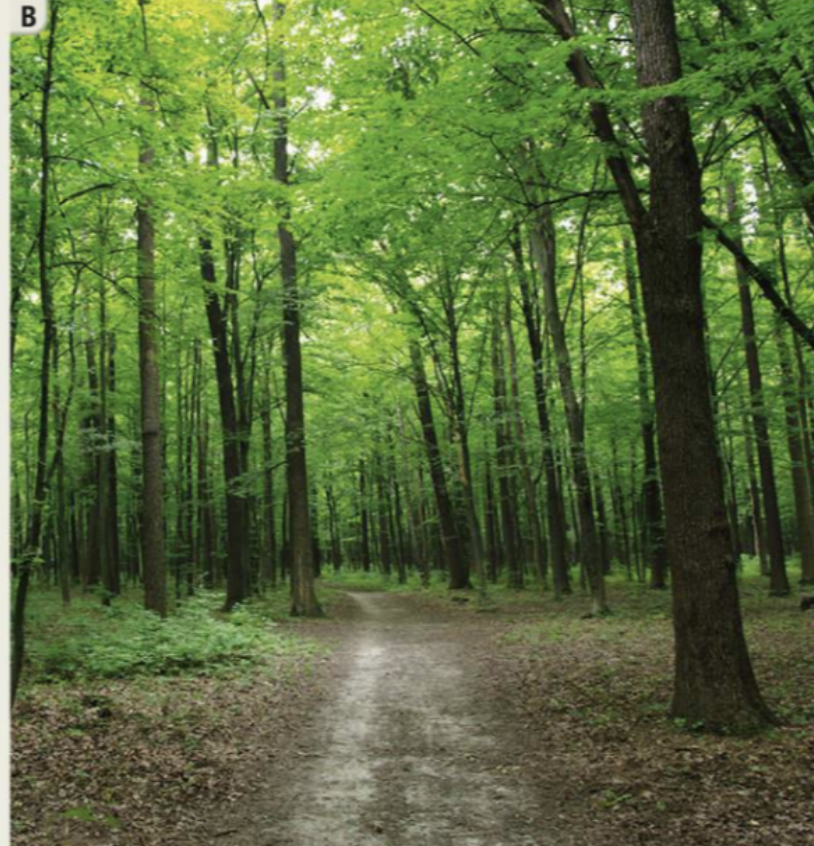
Composed of an introduction and eight chapters, *Nature* became a sort of manifesto for the Transcendentalist movement. Emerson condemned the age's tendency to look at the past as a source of inspiration for poetry and philosophy and indicated the harmony between the individual and nature as the origin of creativity. According to Emerson, the universe is divided into two parts: one, the self which represents the soul and the exterior world, which he calls nature. Between these two parts a perfect correspondence exists, which allows the individual to communicate with the outside world.

TO go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and what he touches. One might think the atmosphere was made
5 transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime. Seen in the streets of cities, how great they are! If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys¹ of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.

¹ envoys: emissaries.

» FROM TEXT TO VISUALS IMMORTAL BEAUTY

A B



10 The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred² impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the

15 wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood. When we speak of nature in this manner, we have a distinct but most poetical sense in the mind. We mean the integrity of impression made by manifold³ natural objects. It is this which distinguishes the stick of timber of the woodcutter, from the tree of the poet. The charming landscape which I saw this morning, is indubitably made up of some

20 twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds⁴ give no title. To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At

25 least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth, becomes part of his daily food. In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man,

30 in spite of real sorrows. Nature says, – he is my creature, and maugre⁵ all his impertinent

- 2 **kindred:** similar.
 3 **manifold:** multiple.
 4 **warranty-deeds:** legal contracts.
 5 **maugre:** in spite of.



LOOK AT THE IMAGES

- 1 These pictures might well represent three scenes described in the extract. Complete the captions with lines taken from the text.

SPEAKING

- 2 Look for a picture of a landscape that means something to you and show it to the class. While you describe it to the class, say what feelings you associate it with.

A

B

C



Section 3

griefs, he shall be glad with me. Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields⁶ its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, from breathless noon to grimmest midnight. Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health,
35 the air is a cordial⁷ of incredible virtue.

Crossing a bare common,⁸ in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough,⁹ and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the
40 woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, – no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair.

45 Standing on the bare ground, – my head bathed by the blithe¹⁰ air, and uplifted into infinite space, – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, – master or servant, is then a trifle¹¹ and a disturbance. I
50 am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate¹² than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult
55 relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm, is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought or a better emotion coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right.

60 Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both. It is necessary to use these pleasures with great temperance. For, nature is not always tricked¹³ in holiday attire, but the same scene which yesterday breathed perfume and glittered as for the frolic¹⁴ of the nymphs, is overspread with melancholy today. Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under
65 calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it. Then, there is a kind of contempt of the landscape felt by him who has just lost by death a dear friend. The sky is less grand as it shuts down over less worth in the population.

6 **yields**: offers.

7 **cordial**: drink.

8 **common**: open land.

9 **slough**: the dropping off of dead skin.

10 **blithe**: joyful.

11 **rifle**: unimportant thing.

12 **connate**: congenial.

13 **tricked**: dressed.

14 **frolic**: playful.

 **Focus ON the text**
COMPREHENSION

1 Read the extract and answer the following questions.

- 1 When is man really able to reach solitude?
 - a When he is reading.
 - b When he gets in contact with nature.
 - c When he prays.
- 2 When does nature lose its importance for an individual?
 - a When one grows old.
 - b When one is well-educated.
 - c Never.
- 3 What is the power of landscape?
 - a It cannot be possessed, but only enjoyed.
 - b It can make poets successful.
 - c It can make farmers rich.
- 4 Who can really see nature?
 - a A man's inner child.
 - b Intellectuals.
 - c Farmers.
- 5 What does nature give human beings?
 - a The sense of being God's most accomplished creature.
 - b The feeling of their transience.
 - c The pleasurable feeling of being part of a whole.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

2 Read the extract again and do the following activities.

- 1 Focus on lines 45-48. What do you think the image of the 'transparent eyeball' suggests?
 - a The poet can see everything.
 - b The poet loses his capacity of seeing.
 - c By seeing nature, the poet can see the self.

2 What does nature allow human beings to discover? Choose one or more from the following.

- a That nothing but their connection with nature matters.
 - b That they can leave all their preoccupations behind since God will provide.
 - c That the self is a mirror to nature.
- 3 Choose the sentence which you think best summarises the extract.
- a Through contact with nature, one is able to communicate with God and achieve union with all human beings.
 - b Through communion with nature, one is able to transcend oneself and this world and achieve union with the divine essence of the universe.
 - c Through communion with nature, one is able to transcend oneself and reach the pleasure of feeling immortal.

VOCABULARY LINK

3 **Nature** (☉ Route 2, p. 212). Look at the following idioms relating to nature and match them with their meaning.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 a breath of fresh air | a completely |
| 2 be in deep water | b be in trouble |
| 3 beat around/about the bush | c in existence |
| 4 make waves | d be subject of criticism |
| 5 under the sun | e something new |
| 6 be under a cloud | f whatever happens |
| 7 come under fire | g be happy |
| 8 root and branch | h talk without getting to the point |
| 9 walk on air | i be suspected of something |
| 10 rain or shine | j cause trouble |

INSIGHT

4 Now complete the analysis with the words given below.

revelation • adulthood • self • soul • process • whole • sense • immersing • stars

External nature is a copy of nature inside the self. Therefore, by in the landscape, the individual can realise that the natural world has its own reflection in the, which in turn is a mirror to the beauty of nature. Sight becomes the privileged but the eyes that can truly see are those of the child, as they are 'new'. When one retains this spirit of infancy also in, one can fully enjoy the pleasure given by the, the land and the woods. Nature becomes then the ground of : by studying nature, the poet can study the Therefore nature becomes not an end in itself, but a conduit in a that shows human beings they are part of a



Section 3

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

"I am the poet of the Body, I am the poet of the Soul."



Walt Whitman emerged suddenly as a poet, and quite late, at the age of 36.

Young Walter attended school in Brooklyn for only five years and was largely self-educated. He was quite erratic in his studies, and read widely in both traditional and popular culture such as the theatre, the opera and sensational newspapers.

During these years also his family relocated quite a few times within the city so that Whitman experienced movement and unpredictability from a very young age.

After quitting school, he worked as an office boy for a lawyer first, and then for a doctor. In 1831, he became a printer's apprentice for the *Long Island Patriot*, a job which gave him the chance to satisfy his **insatiable curiosity** and deepen the knowledge of his country through the accounts of daily scenes and ordinary lives as well as the excitement of putting words into print.

At the age of fourteen he was living alone first in Brooklyn and then in **New York**, experiencing independence and gaining skills. He took up the habit of observing the ever-changing **urban**

landscape, which became a **constant feature of his journalism, poetry and prose writing**.

In New York, he placed himself at the centre of the political battles of the time, on the side of **freedom and democracy**. Besides writing articles, he began to see poetry as a form of political action so that he started to gradually develop what would later become his famous **free verse**.

After two fires, which destroyed the major printing business centres of the city, Whitman joined his family in rural Long Island and **started a career as a teacher**. He employed progressive techniques trying to involve his students and encouraging them to think rather than simply repeat from memory but the experience left him dissatisfied.

In 1841, he moved back to New York and started his own newspaper, *The Long Islander*, and continued working as an itinerant teacher for a couple of years before abandoning this career altogether.

Between 1840 and 1845, while he was still working as a **freelance journalist**, he wrote his best works of short fiction, which were published

A curve on the elevated railroad, N.Y. (c. 1895)
by August Loeffler,
photographer.



in prestigious literary magazines. However, in these writings he did not reach the level of innovation displayed by his experimental verse.

In 1848, he was invited to launch a **New Orleans** paper which gave him the opportunity to travel across the country for the first time. Despite its brevity – only three months – this experience introduced him to both the splendours of the exotic South and the **horrors of slavery**.

The late 1840s were for Whitman years of 'simmering', as he was undergoing a transformation from a conventional poet to the most **experimental** American writer. When *Leaves of Grass* was first published in 1855, it was not without shock that Americans read of democratic ideas and liberal sexuality in a 'free' style never seen before. However, thanks to Emerson's appreciation of the book, Whitman enjoyed unexpected immediate fame and began to promote himself as the American bard, declaring America's literary independence. While he was working at his third revision of *Leaves of Grass*, Emerson suggested that he should not emphasise his mainly autobiographical references to homosexuality



The docks at New Orleans from *La Ilustracion Espanola y Americana* of 1881.

in case these poems should be seen as too radical by the literary establishment of the time.

The events of the **American Civil War** (1861-1865) and its aftermath made him focus more onto history and realism, so that he wrote new verse bringing his collection almost to completion.

After suffering his first stroke, he was able to work until 1882 thanks to the help of friends and relatives. That year, his personal narrative *Specimen Days*, which accompanied his final edition of *Leaves of Grass*, was published. Having suffered other strokes, Whitman became increasingly dependent upon friends until he eventually died in 1892.

1819	He was born in Long Island (New York) into a large family.
1823	Whitman's family moved to Brooklyn (New York), where his father could work as a builder.
1825-1830	He attended school.
1831-1836	After changing a few jobs, he started working in the printing business.
1833	His family moved back to Long Island but he remained in Brooklyn.
1836-1838	He joined his family on Long Island and began to teach in different schools in the area.
1841	He moved to New York City and began to work as a journalist and itinerant teacher.
1845	He returned to Brooklyn.
1848	He travelled through America.
1848-1849	He founded and edited the newspaper <i>Weekly Freeman</i> .
1855	<i>Leaves of Grass</i> was published (followed by another five editions).
1861-1865	When the American Civil War began, he sided with Lincoln and supported the abolitionist movement and visited military hospitals.
1873	He suffered a paralytic stroke.
1881	The final edition of <i>Leaves of Grass</i> was published.
1882	<i>Specimen Days</i> was published.
1888	He suffered another stroke followed by a severe illness.
1892	He died and a huge crowd gathered at his funeral.



Leaves of Grass (1855)

Leaves of Grass is celebrated as the most skilful **American epic poem** of all time. Whitman's sense of self was inextricably connected with the political identity of America. He in fact belonged to the first generation of Americans who were born in the recently formed United States. The first edition of *Leaves of Grass* included only twelve untitled poems and a preface in which Whitman celebrated the nation as the 'greatest poem' and the individual as an essential part of this greatness.

The different re-workings of the collection therefore show both the development and construction of the **different selves of the poet** and the process of affirmation of a **national sense of identity**. Whitman believed his enterprise had not only aesthetic but also political aims. The self-esteem, honesty and devotion to freedom of the American people were worth the verse.

The role of the poet

Poetry is therefore for Whitman first of all the means to explore the self, both physical and spiritual, a **universal 'I'** which is part of one 'Divine Soul'. This self is different from that of any other individual but this unique 'I' can identify with everybody else's. The second aim of his verse is to praise democracy and American democracy in particular. This form of government encourages the fusion of the individual with the community and Whitman believed the common Americans showed an enduring attachment to freedom, which is what makes American democracy so special. The role of the poet is to act as the voice of an entire community, as the bard singing the nation and the self.

Main themes

Whitman also changed the order of poems in the different editions to suit aesthetic requirements.


Because of its newness, *Leaves of Grass* was not immediately understood by everybody. Whitman exploited typically transcendentalist themes such as the relationship between self and nature and the divinity of the soul. However, he brought this study forward by introducing the **celebration of the body**, with all its functions.

While transcendentalists considered the divine soul as the symbol of the connection between human beings. Whitman made that correspondence more physical, talking about man, woman, bodies, acts, sex, as he strongly felt the body needed to be expressed. The most radical emphasis on the body matters was however toned down in the last edition of the collection, which shows a more conservative attitude.

Stylistic features

As far as **style** is concerned, Whitman's main innovation was to make the unit of meaning not simply the metrical foot but the **line**, however short or long. He abandoned blank verse to adopt **free verse** and ordinary diction, which left some of his contemporaries puzzled. His poems, made of **irregular patterns** of both stanzas and lines, reproduce the **cadence of ordinary speech**. His vocabulary includes borrowings from foreign languages, science, sensational journalism and opera, as a sign of the democratic **inclusiveness** of his new tongue.

Because of these radical stylistic choices and the extensive use of images of the body and sex, *Leaves of Grass* was criticised as undisciplined and artless. However, Whitman intentionally divested his verse of ornaments to emphasise the distance between the conventional poems of his time and the newness of his 'barbaric yawp', from which he set out to compose a more American poem. Despite criticism, *Leaves of Grass* succeeded in **defining the American national culture**, and became a model for future generations of American poets. *Song of Myself* was the first of the twelve untitled poems which followed the preface in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. It was entitled *Song of Myself* only in the final 1881 edition. In its later version, the poem was divided into 52 sections.



Body and Soul

Walt Whitman

Song of Myself, Leaves of Grass (1855), from Section 21

Song of Myself is the longest poem in *Leaves of Grass*. It is a joyous celebration of the human self in its most expanded and impulsive state.

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me,
The first I graft¹ and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
5 And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation² or pride,
We have had ducking³ and deprecating⁴ about enough,
I show that size is only development.

10 Have you outstript⁵ the rest? are you the President?
It is a trifle,⁶ they will more than arrive there every one, and still pass on.

- 1 **graft**: insert.
- 2 **dilation**: expansion.
- 3 **ducking**: avoiding.
- 4 **deprecating**: disapproval.
- 5 **outstript**: (outstripped) moved farther.
- 6 **trifle**: unimportant thing.



Focus ON the text

COMPREHENSION

1 Read the extract and say if the statements are true (T) or false (F). Correct the false ones.

- 1 The speaker is going to take advantage of both pleasures and pains.
- 2 The speaker is proud of being a man.
- 3 The speaker is jealous of mothers.
- 4 The speaker is asking for less self-denial and censure.
- 5 It is important to achieve a certain status.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

2 Focus on language and style. Go back to the extract and do the following activities.

- 1 What does the insistence on the self suggest about the role of the poet?
- 2 Focus on line 9 and explain the use of 'We'.
- 3 Focus on line 11 and say what the use of 'you' indicates.

INSIGHT

3 Now complete the analysis with the words given below.

feared • readers • spiritual • part • harmonious

In these lines, the poet celebrates himself as the merging of a physical and presence, as the experience of contraries, suggesting individuals are all of an evolving whole. Development is not so much something to be as something to be taken as natural. After seeing himself as everybody else, the poet then addresses directly as 'you', peremptorily including them in his oracular outcry.



One's-Self I Sing

Walt Whitman

Inscriptions, Leaves of Grass (1871)

The poem introduces the prototype of the American self, showing the merging of the individual with the national and universal selves. Whitman also expresses his democratic principles, asserting his own individuality as inextricably bound with the larger future society of the masses.

- 1 **utter**: pronounce.
- 2 **En-Masse**: (from the French) all together.
- 3 **physiognomy**: facial features.
- 4 **pulse**: heartbeat.

ONES'S-SELF I sing – a simple separate Person,
Yet utter¹ the word Democratic, the word *En-Masse*.²

- Of Physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy³ alone nor brain alone is worthy for
5 the muse – I say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse,⁴ and power,
Cheerful – for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

Focus ON the text

COMPREHENSION

1 Red the poem and answer the following questions.

- 1 What is the poet going to 'sing' about? Make a list.
- 2 What of a human being is worth 'singing' about?
- 3 What aspect of life is worth 'singing' about?
- 4 How does the poet feel when he 'sings' about these things? Why?

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

2 Read the poem again and do the following activities.

- 1 Focus on the first 2 lines. What do you think the poem intends to celebrate?

2 What do you think the poet is honouring?

3 What values above all does the poem express?

4 Who do you think is the 'Modern Man' (l. 9)?

3 Focus on language and style. Go back to the poem and do the following activities.

1 Explain the use of capital letters within the verse.

2 Underline examples of alliteration. Which one better emphasises the idea of the beating energy of life?

3 Point out repetitions and describe the effect.

INSIGHT

4 Now complete the analysis with the words given below.

experiencing • length • equally • democratic • power • unit

The poet identifies with the reader to make him/her understand that everybody is part of a universe. By singing of a 'One's-Self', or the of self, the poet claims to speak to and for all men and women without betraying their own distinctive individualities. He also emphasises the importance of and singing the whole body in all its primeval The stylistic features reinforce the emphatic tone of the poem while the flowing rhythm is created by the variations in the line and the use of alliterations.

Into the Wild

(USA, 2007)

Synopsis

Between 1845 and 1847 the American writer Henry David Thoreau (📖 eBook Extra literary texts, *Where I Lived, and What I Lived For*, *Walden or Life in the Woods*) lived in a hut by Walden Pond, in Massachusetts, to learn what nature could teach humans. He recorded his experience in a journal later published as *Walden* (1854).

In the movie, based on a 1996 book by Jon Krakauer (1954), a brilliant young student Christopher McCandless embarks on a similar adventure but with a tragic end.

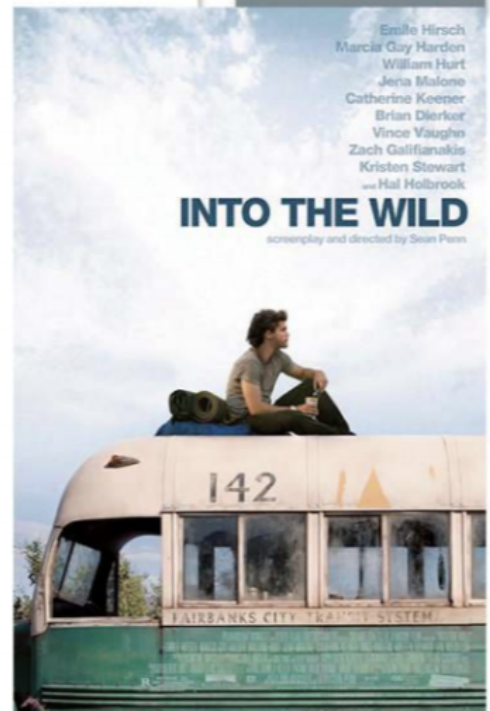
To live out his dream of freedom, he gives up his university career regardless of his middle-class family's expectations and travels to Alaska. He identifies the isolation and inhospitableness of the region, its 'wildness', as the place where he can experience direct contact with nature, since the society he has left behind is to him irremediably corrupted.

However, Christopher is not sufficiently prepared to encounter what he sees as 'real' existence. After surviving the hardships of the winter, he prepares to go back home in the spring but he soon realises that the stream he had crossed in the winter is now a huge river he will never be able to traverse. Christopher is confined to the wild, and nature turns from a place of freedom into a prison from which he cannot escape. One day Christopher eats some berries which, as he dramatically finds out later, are poisonous. Alone, in the indifference of nature, he slowly dies of starvation. In one of the final entries in the journal he has been keeping throughout his experience, the sentence 'happiness is only real when shared' testifies to Christopher's final realisation.

Director:
Sean Penn

Script:
Sean Penn

Cast:
Emile Hirsch,
Vince Vaughn,
Catherine Keener



- 1 Read the synopsis of the movie and answer the following questions.
 - 1 What similarities can you find between Thoreau's and Christopher's experiences?
 - 2 Why does Christopher leave his 'old' life behind?
 - 3 How would you explain the annotation Christopher makes in his diary before dying?
- 2 In the light of what you have read about Emerson (📖 p. 198), how do you think Christopher's experience of nature differs?
- 3 Christopher has finally reached Alaska and while he observes the landscape he thinks back to his past life. Watch the clip on your eBook and answer the questions.
 - 1 What do you think his gesture in front of the mountains represents?
 - 2 What has Christopher written on the wooden plank?
 - 3 What does the following scene set in the fast-food restaurant represent?
 - 4 What does the waitress ask him to do? What might this scene symbolise?

ROUTE 2 Frontiers: *Ad Infinitum*

Like signposts for human ambitions, frontiers have always been seen as imaginary borders to be reached or pushed forward. Once the American pioneers went west, while today they fly up into the infinite sky.

JFK Asks Congress to Support the Space Program



On May 25, 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced to Congress his goal of sending an American to the moon by the end of the decade and asked for financial support for an accelerated space program. He made the task a national priority and a mission which all Americans would participate, stating that it would not be one man going to the moon, it would be an entire nation.

On April 12, 1961, the Soviet Union had become the first country to send a man into space with the successful mission of Yuri Gagarin in the spacecraft Vostok 1. At that time, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were involved in an arms race. Not to be outdone by America's Cold War rivals, President Kennedy promised in 1961 to support an American space program that would eventually dwarf the Soviet agenda in technological achievements and investment.

In a speech before Congress on May 25, JFK linked the need for a space strategy with the political and economic battle between democracy and communism. He urged Congress to mobilize financial resources to speed up the steps of the space program's progress, insisting that America should go into space because whatever mankind must undertake, free men must fully share.

Kennedy's vision did not become reality until six years after his assassination in 1963.

Men Walk on Moon

Astronauts Land On Plain, Collect Rocks, Plant Flag

By John Noble Wilford – Special to *The New York Times* (21 July 1969)



Houston, Monday, July 21 – Men have landed and walked on the moon.

Two Americans, astronauts of Apollo 11, steered their fragile four-legged lunar module¹ safely and smoothly to the historic landing yesterday at 4:17:40 p.m., Eastern daylight time.

Neil A. Armstrong, the 38-year-old civilian commander, radioed to Earth and the mission control room here:

“Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.”

The first men to reach the moon – Mr. Armstrong and his co-pilot, Col. Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. of the Air Force – brought their ship to

rest on a level, rock-strewn² plain near the southwestern shore of the arid Sea of Tranquility.

About six and a half hours later, Mr. Armstrong opened the landing craft's hatch³, stepped slowly down the ladder and declared as he planted the first human footprint on the lunar surface:

“That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

His first step on the moon came at 10:56:20 p.m., as a television camera outside the craft transmitted his every move to an awed⁴ and excited audience of hundreds of millions of people on earth.

Adapted from Nasa

1 **module**: an independent self-contained unit of a spacecraft (here called 'The Eagle').

2 **rock-strewn**: covered in rocks.

3 **hatch**: door.

4 **awed**: filled with wonder.

NASA Announces That Humans Are Headed to Mars in the 2030s

NASA is developing the capabilities needed to send humans to Mars in the 2030s.

Mars is a rich destination for scientific discovery and robotic and human exploration as we expand our presence into the solar system. Its formation and evolution are comparable to Earth, helping us learn more about our own planet's history and future. Mars had conditions suitable for life in its past.

While robotic explorers have studied Mars for more than 40 years, NASA's path for the human exploration of Mars begins in low-Earth orbit¹ aboard the International Space Station. Astronauts on the orbiting laboratory are helping us prove many of the technologies and communications systems needed for human missions to deep space, including Mars. The space station also advances our understanding of how the body changes in space and how to protect the 'astronauts' health.

Our next step is deep space, where NASA will send a robotic mission to capture and redirect an asteroid to orbit the moon. Astronauts aboard the Orion spacecraft will explore the asteroid in the 2020s, returning to Earth with samples. This experience in human spaceflight beyond low-Earth orbit will help NASA test new systems and capabilities, which we'll need to send cargo as part of human missions to Mars. A fleet of robotic spacecraft and rovers² already are on and around Mars, dramatically increasing our knowledge of the Red Planet and paving the way for future human explorers. Engineers and scientists around the country are working hard to develop the technologies astronauts will use to one day live and work on Mars, and safely return home from the next giant leap for humanity.

1 Read the texts and answer the following questions.

- 1 Why did President Kennedy promote the first American space programme?
- 2 How did Armstrong define his first step on the moon?
- 3 Why is the study of life on Mars so vital for scientists?
- 4 What is the importance of the activity of the Orion spacecraft?

2 Focus on **speaking**. Surf the net for more information on current human spaceflight missions, choose one and prepare a short presentation about it to be shared with the class.



- 1 **low-Earth orbit:** (or LEO) is a orbit around the Earth at a distance between 4 and 1,000 miles from its surface.
- 2 **rovers:** vehicles for driving over extra-terrestrial terrain.

3

ROMANTIC FICTION



Authors and Works



Mary Shelley (1797-1851)

Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus

eBook *Farewell, Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*



Emily Brontë (1818-1848)

Wuthering Heights

eBook *Let Me In, Wuthering Heights*



Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

The Oval Portrait

eBook *The Tell-Tale Heart*

The Victorian Age (1832-1901)

The age of industrialisation and progress, faith in middle-class values, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor.

1832

Great Reform Act:
the right to vote is extended.

1837

Victoria queen of England.

1851

The **Great Exhibition** opens in London.

1852

Napoleon III Emperor of France.

1853-1856

Crimean War:
British, French and Turks against Russians.

1861-1865

American Civil War.

1861

Victor Emmanuel II king of a united Italy.

1869

Suez Canal opens.

1870

Education Act:
education available to all children.

1876

Queen Victoria is declared **empress of India.**

1901

Death of Queen Victoria.



1

FICTION in a Time of CHANGE



Authors and Works



Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)

Jane Eyre

eBook *Out There in the World, Jane Eyre*



Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Oliver Twist

eBook *Jacob's Island, Oliver Twist*



Hard Times

eBook *Square Principles, Hard Times*



eBook *Pip, Great Expectations*

2

AMERICAN Aspirations



Authors and Works

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)
The Scarlet Letter

Herman Melville (1819-1891)
Moby Dick

eBook **Henry James** (1843-1916)
You're Too Delicious, My Own Pet, What Maisie Knew

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
Wild Nights! Wild Nights!
eBook *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*
eBook *I Felt a Funeral, in My Brain*
eBook *I'm Nobody! Who Are You?*





Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

"Once in my life I met the Black Man! ... This scarlet letter is his mark!"



Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1804. His **ancestors** had been members of the original **Puritan** community. One of his ancestors, William Hawthorne, was a magistrate who had condemned a Quaker woman to be whipped in public because of her refusal to accept New England's religious orthodoxy. Another ancestor of his was one of the three judges involved in the Salem witchcraft trials of the 1690s. Hawthorne grew up with a sense of guilt for the sufferings his ancestors had inflicted on people. He studied at Bowdoin College (1821-1825) where he was "an idle student... always reading" and made friends with the poet Henry Wadsworth and Franklin Pierce, later President of the USA. He spent the following twelve years in his mother's house in Salem where he read widely and studied to become a chronicler of the antiquities of colonial New England. In 1842, he married Sophia Peabody with whom he lived for a few years in Concord. This town, where other eminent writers like Emerson and Thoreau also lived, was the centre of a stimulating intellectual life at the time. Because of economic problems, Hawthorne had to return to Salem where he worked as a surveyor in the Customs House. In 1850, he published *The Scarlet Letter*, a symbolic novel which made him famous, changing his fortune. The novel is set in Boston, in Puritan New England in the 17th century and tells the story of Hester Prynne who commits adultery and then gives birth to a baby girl, Pearl. Punished by Puritan law, she is publicly shamed and condemned to

wear a scarlet letter 'A' (for adulteress) as a sign of her guilt. Hester refuses to reveal the identity of the baby's father, Reverend Dimmesdale, and she lives a solitary life with her daughter in a country cottage. When she dies, the letter 'A' is placed as a heraldic device on her tombstone.

After *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne wrote *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), a novel about family decadence, and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). Between 1858 and 1859, he was in Italy, which was the setting for his last novel *The Marble Faun*, published in 1860. Hawthorne spent the last years of his life suffering from bad health. He died at Plymouth, New Hampshire, in 1864.

Hawthorne was one of the major American writers of the 19th century. He was deeply concerned with the **problems of good and evil, guilt and innocence**. He rejected both the Transcendentalism of his contemporaries and the belief in man's original goodness claimed by J.J. Rousseau, and considered the Puritan idea of sin a perversion.

His narratives display a **symmetrical structure** that creates unity of action and are organised around a **set of symbols**. His characters very often represent moral qualities. His **style** is **simple** and **precise**, but the **language** of his novels is quite **formal**, drawing on the established tradition of English prose. Absorbed by the enigmas of evil and of moral responsibility interwoven with man's destiny in nature and in eternity, Hawthorne was able to provide unparalleled **criticism of life** and **powerful allegories** whose interpretation is left to the reader.

1804	He was born in Salem, Massachusetts.
1821-1825	He studied at Bowdoin College.
1842	He married Sophia Peabody.
1850	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i> was published.
1851	<i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> was published.
1852	<i>The Blithedale Romance</i> was published.
1860	<i>The Marble Faun</i> was published.
1864	He died in Plymouth, New Hampshire.



The Sunshine Does Not Love You

Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Scarlet Letter (1850), Chapter 16

The novel is set in Puritan Boston in the 17th century. Hester Prynne, who is accidentally separated from her husband, commits adultery and gives birth to a baby girl who she names Pearl. Since Hester refuses to name her lover, she is punished by public exposure on the scaffold with the baby in her arms, and condemned to wear an embroidered scarlet letter 'A' for 'adulteress' on her bosom. She then lives in public shame with her daughter as an outcast. By living isolated and suffering, however, Hester gains in strength and purity.

At last, while attending a sick chamber, whither the Rev. Mr. Dimmesdale had been summoned to make a prayer, she learnt that he had gone, the day before, to visit the Apostle Eliot, among his Indian converts. He would probably return by a certain hour in the afternoon of the morrow.¹ Betimes,² therefore, the next day, Hester took little

5 Pearl – who was necessarily the companion of all her mother's expeditions, however inconvenient her presence – and set forth.

The road, after the two wayfarers³ had crossed from the Peninsula to the mainland, was no other than a foot-path. It straggled⁴ onward into the mystery of the primeval forest. This hemmed it in so narrowly, and stood so black and dense on either side, and disclosed

10 such imperfect glimpses of the sky above, that, to Hester's mind, it imaged not amiss⁵ the moral wilderness in which she had so long been wandering. The day was chill and sombre. Overhead was a gray expanse of cloud, slightly stirred, however, by a breeze; so that a gleam of flickering sunshine might now and then be seen at its solitary play along the path. This flitting cheerfulness was always at the further extremity of some long vista

15 through the forest. The sportive sunlight – feebly⁶ sportive, at best, in the predominant pensiveness of the day and scene – withdrew itself as they came nigh,⁷ and left the spots where it had danced the drearier, because they had hoped to find them bright.

'Mother,' said little Pearl, 'the sunshine does not love you. It runs away and hides itself, because it is afraid of something on your bosom. Now, see! There it is, playing a good

20 way off. Stand you here, and let me run and catch it. I am but a child. It will not flee from me – for I wear nothing on my bosom yet!

'Nor ever will, my child, I hope,' said Hester.

'And why not, mother?' asked Pearl, stopping short, just at the beginning of her race. 'Will not it come of its own accord when I am a woman grown?'

25 'Run away, child,' answered her mother, 'and catch the sunshine. It will soon be gone.' Pearl set forth at a great pace, and as Hester smiled to perceive, did actually catch the sunshine, and stood laughing in the midst of it, all brightened by its splendour, and scintillating with the vivacity excited by rapid motion. The light lingered⁸ about the lonely child, as if glad of such a playmate, until her mother had drawn almost nigh

30 enough to step into the magic circle too.

'It will go now,' said Pearl, shaking her head.

'See!' answered Hester, smiling; 'now I can stretch out my hand and grasp some of it.' As she attempted to do so, the sunshine vanished; or, to judge from the bright expression that was dancing on Pearl's features, her mother could have fancied that the child had

35 absorbed it into herself, and would give it forth again, with a gleam about her path, as

1 **morrow**: tomorrow, the following day.

2 **betimes**: (arch.) early.

3 **wayfarers**: travellers.

4 **straggled**: (here) moved.

5 **amiss**: wrongly.

6 **feebly**: weakly.

7 **nigh**: near.

8 **lingered**: stayed, delayed.



Section 4

they should plunge into some gloomier shade. There was no other attribute that so much impressed her with a sense of new and untransmitted vigour in Pearl's nature, as this never failing vivacity of spirits: she had not the disease of sadness, which almost all children, in these latter days, inherit, with the scrofula,⁹ from the troubles of their
40 ancestors. Perhaps this, too, was a disease, and but the reflex of the wild energy with which Hester had fought against her sorrows before Pearl's birth. It was certainly a doubtful charm, imparting a hard, metallic lustre to the child's character. She wanted – what some people want throughout life – a grief that should deeply touch her, and thus humanise and make her capable of sympathy. But there was time enough yet for
45 little Pearl.

'Come, my child!' said Hester, looking about her from the spot where Pearl had stood still in the sunshine – 'we will sit down a little way within the wood, and rest ourselves.' 'I am not awary,¹⁰ mother,' replied the little girl. 'But you may sit down, if you will tell me a story meanwhile.'

50 'A story, child!' said Hester. 'And about what?'

'Oh, a story about the Black Man,' answered Pearl, taking hold of her mother's gown, and looking up, half earnestly,¹¹ half mischievously,¹² into her face.

'How he haunts this forest, and carries a book with him, a big, heavy book, with iron clasps; and how this ugly Black Man offers his book and an iron pen to everybody that
55 meets him here among the trees; and they are to write their names with their own blood; and then he sets his mark on their bosoms. Didst thou¹³ ever meet the Black Man, mother?'

'And who told you this story, Pearl,' asked her mother, recognising a common superstition of the period.

60 'It was the old dame in the chimney corner, at the house where you watched last night,' said the child. 'But she fancied me asleep while she was talking of it. She said that a thousand and a thousand people had met him here, and had written in his book, and have his mark on them. And that ugly tempered lady, old Mistress Hibbins, was one. And, mother, the old dame said that this scarlet letter was the Black Man's mark on
65 thee, and that it glows like a red flame when thou meetest him at midnight, here in the dark wood. Is it true, mother? And dost thou go to meet him in the night-time?'

'Didst thou ever awake and find thy mother gone?' asked Hester.

'Not that I remember,' said the child. 'If thou fearest to leave me in our cottage, thou mightest take me along with thee. I would very gladly go! But, mother, tell me now! Is
70 there such a Black Man? And didst thou ever meet him? And is this his mark?'

'Wilt thou let me be at peace, if I once tell thee?' asked her mother.

'Yes, if thou tellest me all,' answered Pearl.

'Once in my life I met the Black Man!' said her mother. 'This scarlet letter is his mark!'

9 **scrofula:**
tuberculosis.

10 **awary:** weary,
tired.

11 **earnestly:** seriously.

13 **didst thou:** did you.

12 **mischievously:**
playfully.

Focus ON the text

COMPREHENSION

1 Reorder the following jumbled statements to get a summary of the extract.

- 1 Hester meets Rev. Dimmesdale, while she is attending a sick chamber.
- After that, Pearl insistently asks her mother if she has ever met the Black Man.
- Pearl tells her mother that the sunshine does not like her because of the thing she wears on her bosom.
- When they sit down to rest, Pearl reports a story that an old lady told her about a Black Man who makes people write their names with their own blood in his book, and then sets his mark on their bosom.
- Hester manages to quench Pearl's insistence by telling her that she met the Black Man once, and that the scarlet letter is his mark.
- Pearl then explains that the old lady also said that it was the Black Man who had set his mark on her mother's bosom and that the mark shines like a flame whenever her mother goes to meet him in the forest at night.

- Hester thinks that suffering would make Pearl more human and capable of sympathy.
- The next day Hester walks in the forest with her daughter.
- Pearl is convinced that she will also have to wear something on her bosom, when she grows up.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

2 Answer the following questions.

- Underline the expressions which refer to the setting. What kind of atmosphere does the setting help to create?
- From whose viewpoint is Pearl described?
- How is Pearl described? What's her attitude to her mother?
- Consider Hester's thoughts. What impression of her does the reader get?
- What is the narrator's attitude towards Hester?
- What might the dark forest and the scarlet letter symbolise?
- What kind of language is used?
- In your opinion, how is the theme of the fallen woman dealt with in the novel?

INSIGHT

3 Now complete the analysis with the words given below.

withdrew • elf-like • determined • witches • dense • freedom •
avoids • sin • adulteress • vanishes

Reading a few pages from *The Scarlet Letter* is like entering a magic world populated by creatures like Pearl. Hester and Pearl walk into "the primeval forest" that is and black. The sunlight is "flickering" and seems to from them as they approach. Then it becomes clear that the sunlight only Hester when she tries "to step into the magic circle" and immediately when she tries to catch it. On the contrary, the light seems to love and "linger about" Pearl who represents innocence and, and acts as a saviour to her mother. Yet, Pearl appears quite when she asks her mother if she has ever met the Black Man in the forest at night and if the scarlet letter 'A' on her bosom is his mark. To quench Pearl's insistence, Hester eventually confesses she once met the Black Man and the scarlet letter is his mark.

The Scarlet Letter is like a forest of symbols: Hester represents the, the fallen woman, Pearl stands for innocence and freedom, the forest symbolises both the place where meet to perform their rituals and the place where illicit lovers secretly meet, and the scarlet letter 'A', which Hester has to wear on her bosom, is a powerful symbol of





Herman Melville (1819-1891)

"Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee"

Herman Melville was born in New York in 1819. He was the son of a merchant who died when Melville was only twelve. He went to school until he was fifteen. When he was nineteen, he joined the crew of an English merchant ship bound for Liverpool. He worked as a schoolteacher on his return. In 1841, he joined the crew of the American whaler *Acushnet* bound for the Pacific. On board, he was upset by the cruelty of his shipmates. In a helter-skelter period of adventures, he deserted from the ship with a companion when it stopped at the Marquesas Islands, in the South Sea. On an island, they found a valley inhabited by a tribe called Typees who turned out to be cannibals. After four weeks on the island, Melville managed to escape on an Australian whaler bound for Tahiti. In 1844, he travelled back to America. He then began to **romanticise his adventures in fiction**. His experiences at sea were, in fact, the subject-matter of his first book, *Typee* (1846), which describes his experiences among the cannibals. His next novels *Omoo* (1847) and *Mardi* (1849) are both based on his experiences on different whaling ships in the South Seas. In 1847, Melville got married and by 1850, he was an established, **successful writer** who mixed with literary circles in New York. In 1851, after travelling to England, he and his wife moved to a farm in Massachusetts, where he made friends with Hawthorne and he published the novel *Moby Dick*, which is now regarded as one of the masterworks of American fiction.

In 1856-1857, he travelled to Europe and the Holy Land. He published *The Piazza Tales* (1856), a collection of short stories. Financial problems made him sell his farm and start to

work as a customs inspector for some years. His financial worries came to an end in 1883, when he inherited a large sum of money from a relative and was able to return to New York.

Before his death in 1891, he wrote the novel *Billy Budd* which was published posthumously. The reading public had already forgotten his work at his death and it was not until the 1920s that critical interest in his work revived.

Melville can be seen as a writer who was ahead of his time when his masterpiece *Moby Dick* (1851) was published. Very few readers were, however, able to respond positively to the innovative elements he introduced. In *Moby Dick*, Melville used Shakespearian, Miltonic and Biblical language and changed the hunt for the white whale into **a great epic centred on a spiritual drama**.

In all his works, Melville combined **realism** and **symbolism**, dealt with **moral** or **metaphysical issues**, used **different narrators**, either the first-person or the third-person narrator, made an extensive use of **complex symbols**, adopted a **satirical** or **ironical tone** and employed **dramatic forms** like the aside, the soliloquy, and sometimes even 'stage directions'. The **main theme** of his novels is the quest to understand man's place in **a universe where religion does not provide a final answer**. Melville satirised the values of European and North American societies that he associated with primitive civilisation and he was deeply interested in the problem of evil and in the life of the individual. His characters are often in conflict with fate and God, but also with nature which becomes a spiritual reality or evil force.

1819	He was born in New York.
1841	He joined the crew of different ships.
1844	He returned to the USA.
1846	He published <i>Typee</i> .
1847	He published <i>Omoo</i> and got married.
1849	He published <i>Mardi</i> .
1851	He moved to a farm in Massachusetts and published his masterpiece <i>Moby Dick</i> .
1856	<i>The Piazza Tales</i> was published.
1883	He returned to New York, after inheriting a large sum of money.
1891	He died.
1924	His novel <i>Billy Budd</i> was published.

Ahab's Last Breath

Herman Melville

Moby Dick (1851), Chapter 135

Captain Ahab and his crew have been chasing the white whale Moby Dick for three days. The whale has been wounded several times. In this extract from the conclusion of the novel, Captain Ahab, his crew and the *Pequod* all meet a tragic destiny. Captain Ahab is obsessed by the white whale Moby Dick in a maniacal way. His last monologue shows all his heroic stature. Totally blinded by his hate towards the whale, which he sees as the embodiment of evil in the world, and thirsty for revenge, Ahab is ready to sacrifice his crew and ship. He thus fights against Moby Dick bravely, until he is killed while trying to kill the whale.

Diving beneath the settling¹ ship, the whale ran quivering² along its keel;³ but turning under water, swiftly shot to the surface again, far off the other bow, but within a few yards of Ahab's boat, where, for a time, he lay quiescent.⁴

5 'I turn my body from the sun. What ho, Tashtego! let me hear thy hammer. Oh! ye three unsundered spires⁵ of mine; thou uncracked keel; and only god-bullied⁶ hull;⁷ thou firm deck, and haughty⁸ helm,⁹ and Pole-pointed¹⁰ prow, – death-glorious ship! must ye then perish, and without me? Am I cut off from the last fond pride of meanest shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief. Ho, ho! from all your furthest bounds, pour ye now
10 in, ye bold billows¹¹ of my whole foregone life, and top this one piled comber¹² of my death! Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple¹³ with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses¹⁴ to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou
15 damned whale! THUS, I give up the spear!

The harpoon was darted; the stricken whale flew forward; with igniting velocity the line ran through the grooves;¹⁵ – ran foul.¹⁶ Ahab stooped¹⁷ to clear it; he did clear it; but the flying turn caught him round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring¹⁸ their victim, he was shot¹⁹ out of the boat, ere²⁰ the crew knew he was gone. Next
20 instant, the heavy eye-splice²¹ in the rope's final end flew out of the stark-empty tub,²² knocked down an oarsman,²³ and smiting²⁴ the sea, disappeared in its depths.



- 1 **settling**: sinking.
- 2 **quivering**: shaking.
- 3 **keel**: structure on the bottom of a ship.
- 4 **quiescent**: quiet, still.
- 5 **spires**: masts.
- 6 **god-bullied**: badly treated by a god.
- 7 **hull**: the back of a ship.
- 8 **haughty**: disdainful.
- 9 **helm**: wheel used to steering the ship.
- 10 **Pole-pointed**: pointing towards the Pole star.
- 11 **billows**: big waves.
- 12 **comber**: huge long curling waves.
- 13 **grapple**: fight, struggle.
- 14 **hearses**: vehicles used to carry a coffin.
- 15 **grooves**: long narrow cuts on a surface.
- 16 **ran foul**: got twisted, entangled.
- 17 **stooped**: bowed, leaned.
- 18 **bowstring**: strangle.
- 19 **shot**: thrown.
- 20 **ere**: before.
- 21 **eye-splice**: knot joining ropes.
- 22 **tub**: round open topped wooden container.
- 23 **oarsman**: rowing mariner.
- 24 **smiting**: striking hard.

Whalers off Twofold Bay, New South Wales (1867)
by Oswald W. Brierly.



Section 4

For an instant, the tranced boat's crew stood still; then turned. 'The ship? Great God, where is the ship?' Soon they through dim, bewildering mediums saw her sidelong fading phantom, as in the gaseous²⁵ Fata Morgana; only the uppermost masts out of water; while fixed by infatuation, or fidelity, or fate, to their once lofty perches,²⁶ the pagan harpooners still maintained their sinking lookouts on the sea. And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lance-pole, and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex, carried the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight.

But as the last whelmings²⁷ intermixingly poured themselves over the sunken head of the Indian at the mainmast, leaving a few inches of the erect spar²⁸ yet visible, together with long streaming yards of the flag, which calmly undulated, with ironical coincidings, over the destroying billows they almost touched; – at that instant, a red arm and a hammer hovered²⁹ backwardly uplifted in the open air, in the act of nailing the flag faster and yet faster to the subsiding spar. A sky-hawk that tauntingly³⁰ had followed the main-truck³¹ downwards from its natural home among the stars, pecking³² at the flag, and incommoding Tashtego there; this bird now chanced to intercept its broad fluttering wing between the hammer and the wood; and simultaneously feeling that ethereal thrill, the submerged savage beneath, in his death-gasp, kept his hammer frozen there; and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his imperial beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive³³ form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his

25 **gaseous:** insubstantial.

26 **perches:** standpoints.

27 **whelmings:** waves of covering water.

28 **spar:** wooden pole used as a mast.

29 **hovered:** stayed in one place in the air.

30 **tauntingly:** mockingly.

31 **main-truck:** main block through which a rope is threaded.

32 **pecking:** striking.

33 **captive:** captured.

» FROM TEXT TO VISUALS MOBY DICK



ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it.

Now small fowls³⁴ flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat
45 against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago.

34 fowls: birds.

Focus ON the text

COMPREHENSION

- 1 Read the extract and answer the following questions.
 - 1 How does Ahab die?
 - 2 What happens to the ship, the Indian harpooners and the boat?
 - 3 How does the crew react to Ahab's death?
 - 4 Ahab describes Moby Dick as "all-destroying but unconquering" (l. 11). What is his attitude towards the white whale?
 - 5 How does Ahab face death?
 - 6 What happens to the sky hawk?

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- 2 Read the extract again and do the activities.
 - 1 Box the words/expressions which help to create a surreal, supernatural and mysterious atmosphere.
 - 2 There are lots of symbolical moments in the extract.
 - a Focus on line 4: "I turn my body from the sun". What might Ahab's turning his back on the light of the sun symbolise?
 - b Focus on the expression "death-glorious ship" (l. 6). Identify the figure of speech used to refer to the ship. How does Ahab consider the *Pequod*?



C



D

LOOK AT THE IMAGES

- 1 Melville's *Moby Dick* inspired these artworks. Read the captions on the right and make a list of the techniques and materials employed to realise them.

SPEAKING

- 2 Choose the materials and/or techniques you would use to make your own Moby Dick. Then describe your work to your classmates. Here are some more words to help you.
 - wood • vinyl • foam • acrylic paint • watercolour • paper • digital art

- A A sand sculpture of Moby Dick and the *Pequod*.
- B Frank Stella, *The Pequod Meets the Jeroboam. Her Story*. Table from *Moby Dick Deckle-Edges* series, 1993. Colour lithograph, etching, aquatint, relief and mezzotint on paper.
- C *Mocha Dick* by Tristin Lowe. A 52-foot-long recreation – made out of industrial wool felt – of the albino whale that, in the 19th century, terrorised whaling vessels near Mocha Island in the South Pacific.
- D A slipcase made of inlaid leather with an art binding holds the Lakeside Press edition of Rockwell Kent's illustrations of Melville's *Moby Dick*.



Section 4

c Complete the paragraph with the words from the list.

hearse • mast • represents • evil • failure • sky

The sinking *Pequod* is changed into a , bringing down also the hawk which by ending its life impaled to the of the ship, symbolically not only Ahab's , but also his tragic end, tied to the whale.

d What might the sea and the white whale symbolise?

3 Focus on language. Highlight a few examples of archaism, metaphor, alliteration and assonance, and then explain what effect they create.

4 Define the type of language used. Choose from the following.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a <input type="checkbox"/> colloquial | d <input type="checkbox"/> simple |
| b <input type="checkbox"/> emphatic | e <input type="checkbox"/> evocative |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> symbolic | f <input type="checkbox"/> realistic |

VOCABULARY LINK

3 Success (⊕ Route 2, p. 280) Match the verbs to the words to form phrases. You may use some verbs more than once.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| a reach | 1 an ambition |
| b attain | 2 a dream |
| c secure | 3 an agreement |
| d realise | 4 an obligation |
| e fulfil | 5 a target |
| f achieve | 6 a compromise |



INSIGHT

4 Now complete the analysis with the words given below.

forces • defeated • disappearance • embodiment • condition • throws • evil • line • but • strangle

This extract is centred on the tragic destiny awaiting Captain Ahab, the *Pequod* and its crew.

Captain Ahab is obsessed by the white whale Moby Dick in a maniacal way, he considers the animal as a less worthy opponent. Ahab knows that his ship, the crew and himself are going to be destroyed, nonetheless he does not feel

By going forward with the fight against the whale, which he considers as the of the force of evil in the world, Ahab completes a larger design and gives his life and death greater significance.

When Ahab a harpoon which hits the whale and the flying part of the catches his neck (i.e. he accidentally kills himself), he is abruptly shot out of the boat into the sea. His quick, silent is associated with the powerful image of "Turkish mutes" who "their victim".

Ahab's death is a metaphor for the human Man, of limited knowledge and meagre powers, lives and dies struggling against that he can neither understand nor dominate.

The white whale, which is a central symbol in the novel and which Ahab calls "all-destroying but unconquering whale" and less worthy opponent, might represent because of its ferocity, but also good because of its white colour. The whale may also symbolise Ahab's conscience, the limitations imposed on man by God or the absence of meaning in the world.



Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

"By Chivalries as tiny, A Blossom, or a Book, The seeds of smiles are planted—Which blossom in the dark"

Emily Dickinson was born in a small town near Boston in an important and wealthy family with strong Calvinist principles. Her grandfather was the founder of Amherst College, a preachers' training institution, while her father was a famous attorney and member of the House of Representatives. Emily benefited from an **excellent education**: she attended Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary for a year, where she studied a variety of subjects, from Latin to English literature. However, as a girl, she did not have the same opportunities to join intellectual circles as her brother had. She was introduced to the poetry of Emerson (☉ p. 198) by one of his friends, Benjamin Newton, who understood Emily's talent for poetry and encouraged her to write. He was the first of a number of older men with whom Dickinson established intellectual and friendly relationships, which helped her enlarge her knowledge and develop her opinions. Although she probably fell in love with two of them, she never married and lived all her life in her family home, spending many years taking care of her ill mother, who died in 1882.

When she was twenty, a strong religious movement called The Great Revival began to encourage believers to publicly declare their faith. Emily, who believed spirituality was a private matter, never joined the Church publicly and later stopped going to religious services. Her growing scepticism was also the result of her reading of **Emerson's poems** which made her question ideas of judgment and hell, nature and the divinity of man, death and the soul. All these reflections became the subject matter of her writing.

After 1858, she devoted herself entirely to poetry, writing 681 **poems** between 1862 and 1864, but, since she was reluctant to have her

poems printed, she simply shared a few of them with family and friends. After her father's death, in 1874, Dickinson withdrew from the world, never leaving home and, it is said, dressing only in white. During her **secluded life**, Dickinson wrote a large number of **letters** in a style which does not differ much from that of her poems and whose themes reveal her **unconventionality and great introspective capacity**. She died of a kidney disease when she was only fifty-five, leaving behind very few clues about her personal life besides the wealth of poetry found only after her death. Her sister discovered 1775 poems written on small slips of paper and sewn together in little booklets.

Dickinson seems to have used language as the fundamental medium between the **individual** and the **transcendental**. Her verse covers a large variety of themes ranging from death, love, religion, solitude, nature and eternity, which she presents in a highly original voice. A **tension between silence and speech** can be felt throughout Dickinson's work as if the poet resisted giving herself away for fear of revealing her own inner struggle. Therefore, her verse, which shows intellectual wit, paradox and irony, is extremely dense, sometimes also **cryptic**, filled with riddles, fragments and nursery rhymes. This kind of style was also inspired by her reading of the Metaphysical poets of the 16th century. Her use of an epigrammatic style, made of **short explosive statements**, at the same time rich and elusive, might have been influenced by her reading of the Bible, where language is economical and elliptical. Dickinson's attitudes towards language, her elaboration of an extremely personal style and strategies of **reticence** make her one of the most outstanding American poets, who cannot easily be placed into any traditional category.



1830 She was born in Amherst, Massachusetts.

1847 She graduated from Amherst Academy.

1852 Her poem *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi* was published anonymously.

1862 In this *annus mirabilis* she wrote 366 poems.

1874 Her father died.

1882 Her mother died.

1886 She died of a kidney disease.



Wild Nights! Wild Nights!

Emily Dickinson

Poem 249 (1860-1861)

Composed around 1860, this is one of Dickinson's most openly passionate poems, where the sea is used to express the reckless emotion of love.

- 1 **done with the Compass:** I am finished with the compass (the instrument showing the North).
 2 **Chart:** map.
 3 **rowing:** it. *remare*.
 4 **moor:** put down the anchor so that a boat stops moving.

Wild Nights! – Wild Nights!
 Were I with thee,
 Wild nights should be
 Our luxury!

- 5 Futile – the Winds –
 To a Heart in port, –
 Done with the Compass,¹ –
 Done with the Chart!²

- Rowing³ in Eden –
 10 Ah! the Sea!
 Might I but moor⁴
 Tonight – in Thee!

Stormy Sea with Translucent Breakers
 (1894) by David James.



Focus ON the text

COMPREHENSION

- 1 Read the poem and say if the following statements are true (T) or false (F). Correct the false ones.

- 1 The speaker is with somebody at night.
 2 The speaker's heart is in a safe place.
 3 The speaker needs directions.
 4 The speaker expresses the hope to safely anchor.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- 2 Read the poem again and do the following activities.

- 1 Focus on the first stanza and complete the paragraph with the words from the list.

passion • nights • lover

In these lines the speaker anticipates to be spent with a loved one. If the speaker were with her, there would be nights for them characterised by

- 2 Focus on the second stanza and complete the paragraph with the words from the list.

directions • useless • needs • voyage • found • love

The speaker remarks that the winds are for the lover who has dared to look for Now that love is , the lover no longer to worry about as the is complete.

- 3 The third stanza is the most reticent part of the poem. What do you think the image of “rowing in Eden” might suggest? Choose from the following options. More than one is possible.
- A feeling of abandonment.
 - A religious sentiment.
 - The fear of carnal sin.
 - Paradise is reached here in this world.
- 4 What do you think the poem might suggest about love? Choose from the following options. More than one is possible.
- Love is like a paradise where the ups and downs of life are levelled.
 - Love is to be refused as it represents a threat.
 - Love is to be desired despite the anxieties it may bring.
 - Love is best when it remains unrequited.

- 3 Focus on language and style. Go back to the poem and do the following activities.

- Does the poem follow a regular rhyme scheme? Why? Why not?
- In this poem Dickinson uses trochees. How would you describe the rhythm of the poem? Choose from the following adjectives.

harmonious • sustained • broken • fragmented • intense • hammering

INSIGHT

- 5 Now complete the analysis with the words given below.

style • passion • courage • exclamation • heaven • sea • love • metaphor

In this poem, which sounds like a sustained , Dickinson seems to celebrate in its yearning and its consummation. In an extremely elliptical , the poet condenses these thoughts in a few images associated with the , using an extended This device allows her to associate the stormy sea with tumultuous and to suggest that love is worth embracing even though it takes to take on such a troublesome voyage. In the end, the journey might lead to a taste of on earth.

- 3 Read the poem aloud and say what it sounds like. Choose from the following.

- a dialogue
- an exclamation
- a prayer

- 4 Dickinson usually employs dashes to isolate words and to imitate oral language. Here, dashes serve a slightly different function. Choose from the following.

- They create suspense.
- They stop the rhythm of language.
- They suggest a pose in reflection.

- 5 In the text, underline the words associated with the sea. Which rhetorical device does the poet employ to talk about love? Choose from the following.

- personification
- simile
- extended metaphor

Which other poets use this strategy?

YOUR TURN

- 4 Because of the lack of information about Dickinson's life, there has been much speculation about whether or not this poem derived from autobiographical experience. Whatever the case, the poem might be read as a questioning of the traditional passive role of women in matters of love and marriage. Do some research and find a poem or a song by a modern-day female author which shows how the poet/singer no longer has to face difficulties in reconciling her gender with the artistic vocation. Compare the two biographies emphasizing differences and similarities.



Albert Bierstadt
(1830-1902)

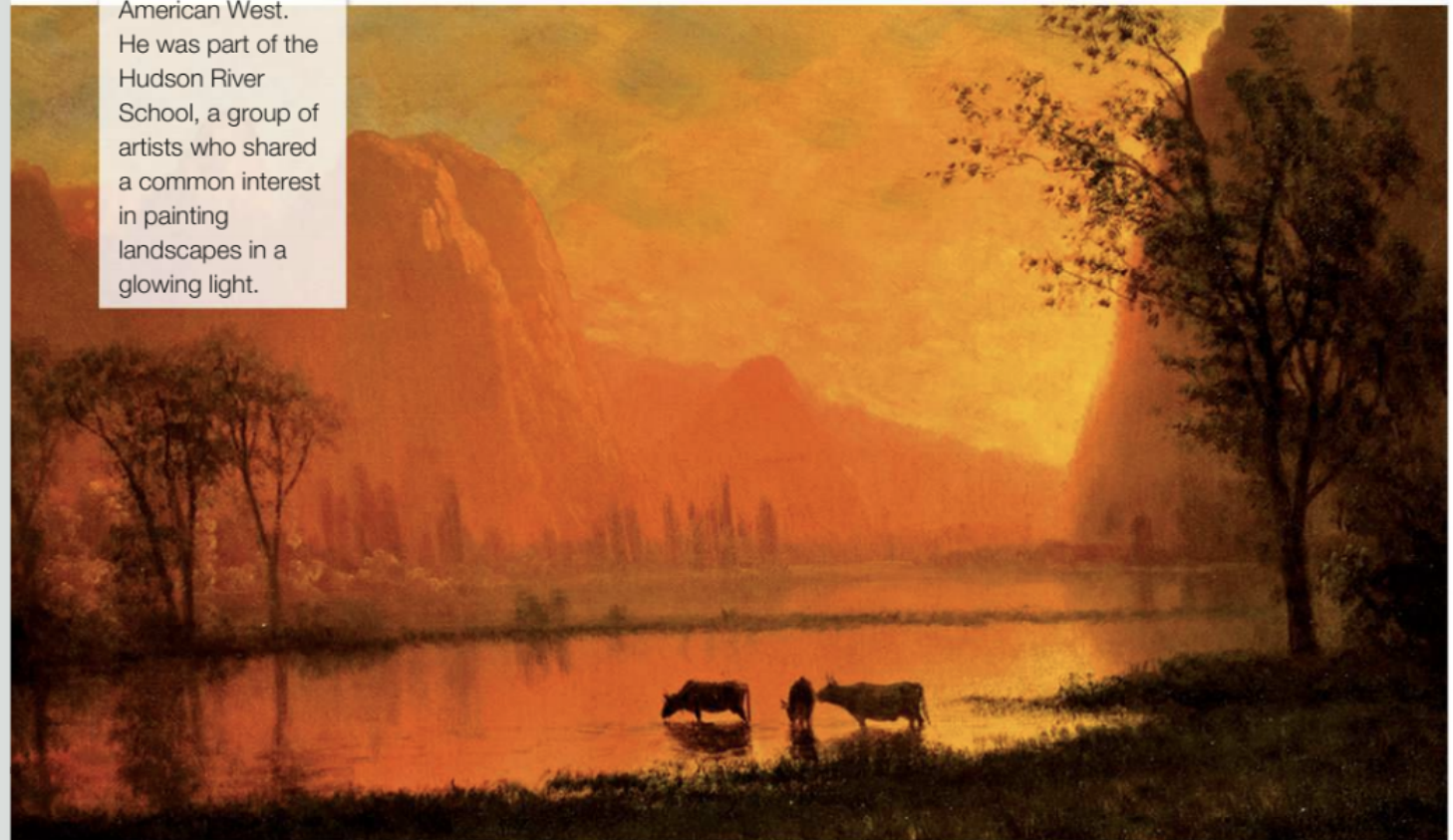
He was born in Germany but lived all his life in the USA. He established his reputation as a landscape artist, particularly of the American West. He was part of the Hudson River School, a group of artists who shared a common interest in painting landscapes in a glowing light.

Sundown at Yosemite

(ca 1863, oil on canvas, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid)

This picture was painted after one of the artist's trips to the West, when he made sketches and oil studies of the landscapes which he then used to depict large panoramic views of Western scenery. Bierstadt was deeply impressed by the flaming colours of the sunset breaking through granite walls in the Yosemite Valley.

➔ **Art Kit**; ➔ **eBook** Expansions, Crossing over... Art, *American Landscape*



Focus ON the painting

- 1 Describe the composition of the painting and highlight what can be seen in the foreground and in the background.
- 2 Are the natural elements detailed or indefinite?
- 3 What are the predominant colours?
- 4 Is the composition static or dynamic? How is this effect achieved?
- 5 What kind of atmosphere does the painting evoke? Choose from the following.
frightening • serene • melancholic • peaceful • sublime

LITERARY LINK

- 6 Read the following poem by Emily Dickinson (© p. 275) and highlight similarities in the images presented in both works of art.

Nature rarer uses yellow
Than another hue;
Saves she all of that for sunsets,—
Prodigal of blue,

- 5 Spending scarlet like a woman,
Yellow she affords
Only scantily and selectly,
Like a lover's words.