

LITERATURE OF THE  
AMERICAN RENAISSANCE  
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Philipp Kneis, M.A. • [pjkx.com](http://pjkx.com) • 05/10/2010

# Overview

2

1. Historical Overview
2. Main Figures
3. Themes, Movements and Connections

3

# 1. Historical Overview

# 1. Historical Overview

## TERRITORIAL GROWTH

### COLONIAL PERIOD: 1775

- Original Thirteen Colonies
- Other British territories

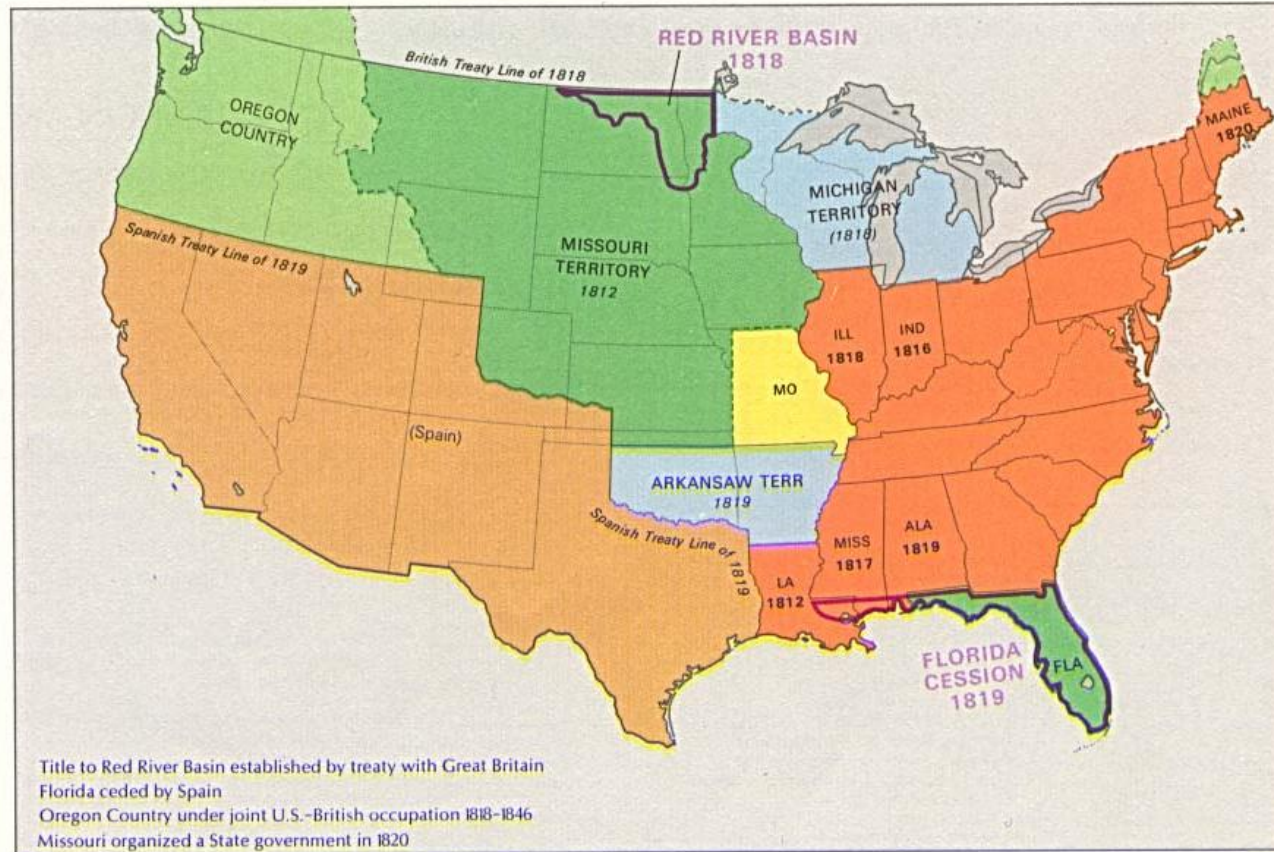
### UNITED STATES: 1790–1920

- States
- State claims
- Special status areas
- Territories
- Unorganized territories
- Claimed areas
- Foreign areas

- 1803** Dates of territorial acquisitions
- 1805** Dates of initial territorial organization
- (1809)** Dates of latest change within given time period
- 1812** Dates of admission to the Union

Map scale 1:34,000,000

Compiled by H. George Stoll, Hammond Incorporated, 1967;  
rev. by U.S. Geological Survey, 1970



# 1. Historical Overview

5

Year	Events USA	Events Europe	Arts and Literature
1770s		Watts: Steam Engine	
1776	Declaration of Independence		
1803	Louisiana Purchase		
1804		World's First Railway in Wales	
1807			Hegel, <i>Phenomenology of Mind</i>
1808			Goethe, <i>Faust I</i>
1812	War of 1812		
1813 - 1814	Creek War		
1813			Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
1815		Congress of Vienna	
1815	2nd Barbary War		
1818	First Seminole War		
1819			Irving, <i>Rip van Winkle</i>
1820	Missouri Compromise		
1826			Cooper, <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i>
1830	Indian Removal Act		
1831 - 1839	Trail of Tears		
1832			Goethe, <i>Faust II</i>
1832			Bryant, <i>The Prairies</i>
1835			<b>Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"</b>
1835			Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i>

# 1. Historical Overview

6

1835 - 1842 Second Seminole War

1836

1837

1837 Morse: Telegraph patent

1837 - 1839

1839

1840 - 1929

1841

1841

1841 - 1869 Oregon Trail

1843

1843

1844

1845

1845

1845

1845 Texas Annexation

1846 - 1848 US-Mexican War

1848

1848 OR Territory established

1849

1849

1849 California Gold Rush

1850

**Emerson, "Nature"**

**Emerson, "The American Scholar"**

Dickens, *Oliver Twist*

**Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"**

Magazine "The Dial"

**Emerson, "Self-Reliance," "The Over-Soul"**

**Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"**

Wagner, *The Flying Dutchman*

Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

**Emerson, "The Poet," "Experience"**

**Poe, "The Raven"**

**Fuller, *The Great Lawsuit, or, Woman in the Nineteenth Century***

**Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave***

Revolutions in Europe

**Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers***

**Thoreau, *Resistance to Civil Government, or Civil Disobedience***

**Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter***

# 1. Historical Overview

1850 Compromise of 1850

1851

1851

1852

1853 - 1856 Crimean War

1854

1854 Kansas-Nebraska-Act

1854 KS, NE, NM Territory established

1855

1855

1857

1857 Dred Scott Case

1859

1859

1860 Abraham Lincoln elected

1861

1861 - 1865 American Civil War

1861 - 1865

1862 Dakota War

1864 Sand Creek Massacre

1865 Lincoln assassinated

**Melville, *Moby-Dick***

**Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables***

**Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin***

**Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods***

**Whitman, *Leaves of Grass***

Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha*

**Melville, *The Confidence-Man***

Darwin, *On the Origin of the Species*

Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

**Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl***

**Dickinson, various poems, most productive phase**

# 1. Historical Overview

8

1865 - 1869

Tolstoy, *War and Peace*

1867 - 1877 Great Sioux War

1867

Marx, *Das Kapital Vol I*

1867

Twain, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*

1868

**Alcott, *Little Women***

1869

Wagner, *Das Rheingold*

1869 First Transcontinental Railroad

1869

Twain, *The Adventures of Mark Twain*

1873

**Alcott, "Transcendental Wild Oats"**

1876

Bell: telephone patent

1877

James, *The American*

1890

Wounded Knee Massacre

1892

Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*



9

## 2. Main Figures

## 2. Main Figures

10

- F.O. Matthiessen:  
*American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (1941)*
  - ▣ Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Hawthorne
  - ▣ canon-making

# 2. Main Figures

11

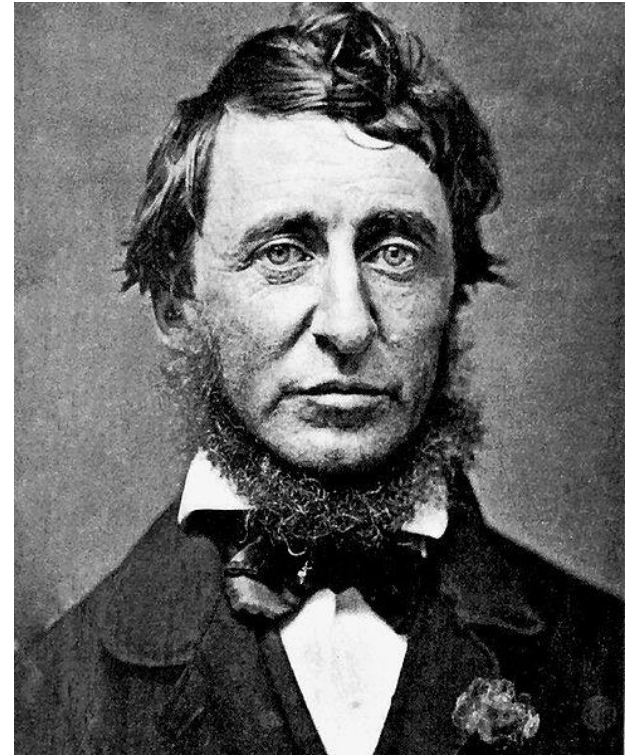
- Ralph Waldo Emerson  
1803-1882
- Unitarian Preacher
- Essayist and Poet
  - *Nature* (1836)
  - “The American Scholar” (1837)
  - ...
  - articles for transcendentalist journal *The Dial* (est. 1840, ed M. Fuller)



## 2. Main Figures

12

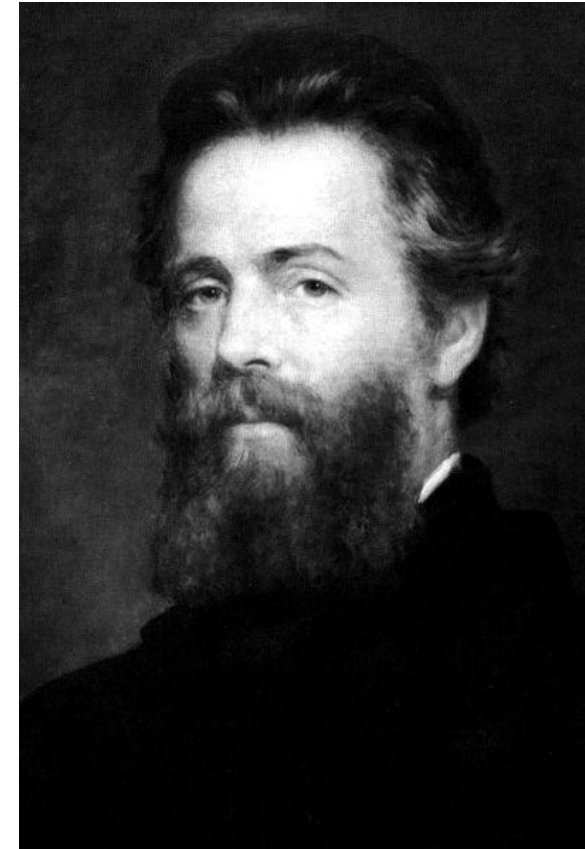
- Henry David Thoreau  
1817-1862
- Essayist, Poet, Naturalist
  - *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849)
  - *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854)
  - “Civil Disobedience” (1849)
  - ...
  - wrote for *The Dial*



# 2. Main Figures

13

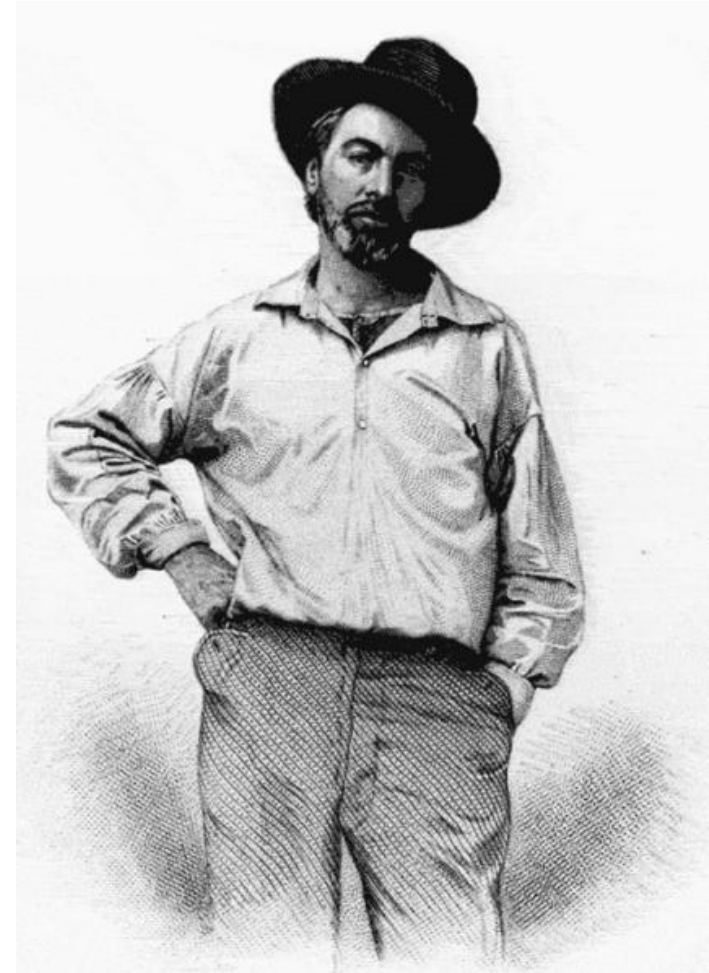
- Hermann Melville  
1819-1891
- Novelist
  - *Moby-Dick* (1851)
  - “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1856)
  - “Benito Cereno” (1856)
  - *The Confidence-Man* (1857)
  - ...



# 2. Main Figures

14

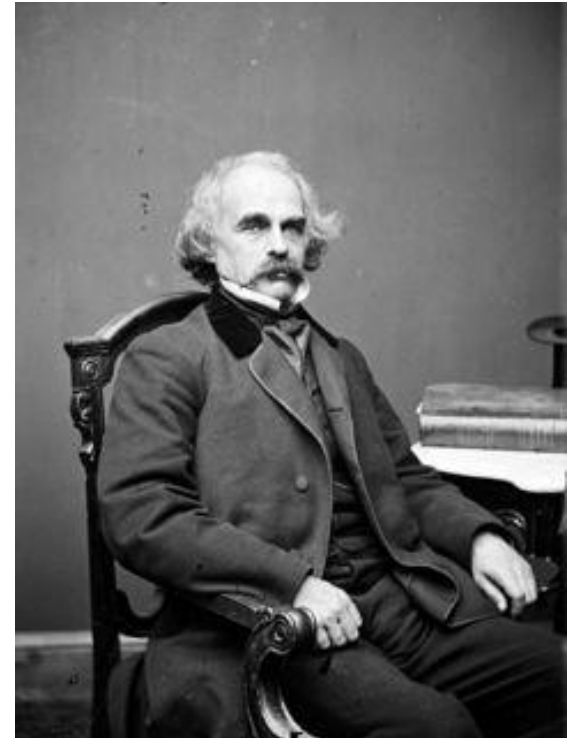
- Walt Whitman  
1819-1892
- Poet
  - ▣ *Leaves of Grass* (1855)
  - ▣ *Drum-Taps* (1865)
  - ▣ ...



# 2. Main Figures

15

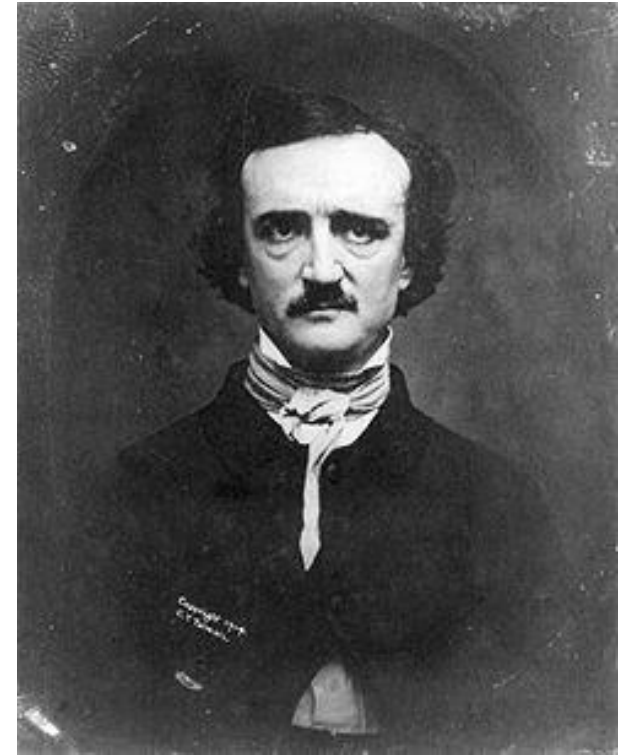
- Nathaniel Hawthorne  
1804-1864
- Writer
  - ▣ *The Scarlett Letter* (1850)
  - ▣ *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851)
  - ▣ “Young Goodman Brown” (1853)
  - ▣ ...



# 2. Main Figures

16

- Edgar Allen Poe  
1809-1849
- Poet/Writer
  - “The Fall of the House of Usher”  
(1839)
  - “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843)
  - “The Raven” (1845)
  - ...





## 2. Main Figures

17

- Emily Dickinson  
(1830-1886)
- several poems



# 2. Main Figures

18

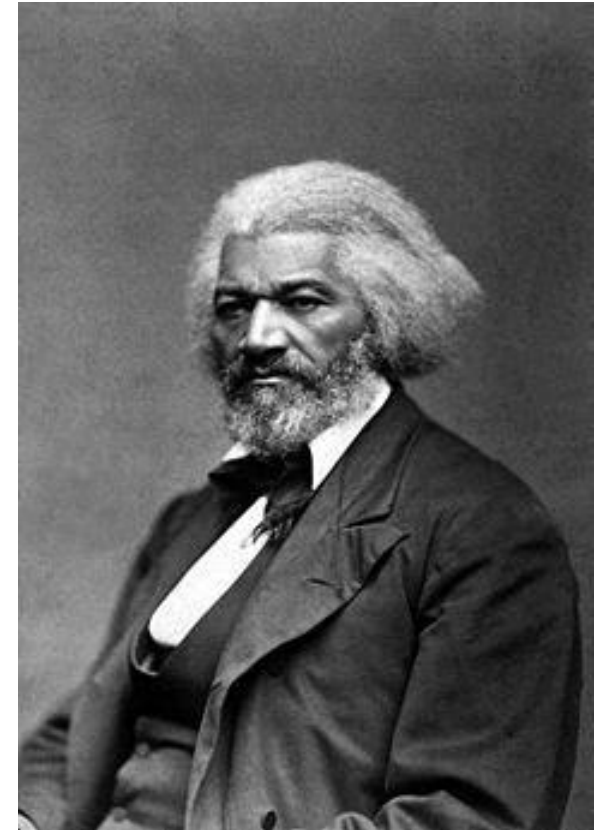
- Stowe  
1811-1896
- Novelist
  - ▣ *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)
  - ▣ *Palmetto Leaves* (1873)
  - ▣ ...
- “So you're the little lady who started this great war!”



# 2. Main Figures

19

- Frederick Douglass  
1818-1895
- Politician, Writer
  - *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Narrated by Himself* (1845)
  - “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” (1852)
  - ...



# 2. Main Figures

20

- Harriet Jacobs  
1813-1897
- Activist, Writer
  - ▣ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*  
(1861)



# 2. Main Figures

21

- William Lloyd Garrison  
1805-1879
- Activist, Journalist
  - ▣ *The Liberator* (1831-1866)
  - ▣ ...



# 2. Main Figures

22

- Margaret Fuller  
1810-1850
- Activist, Writer
  - *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845)
  - ...
  - Editor, *The Dial* (1840-1844)



# 2. Main Figures

23

- Louisa May Alcott  
1832-1888
- Novelist
  - ▣ *Little Women* (1868)
  - ▣ “Transcendental Wild Oats” (1873)
  - ▣ ...



# 2. Main Figures

24

- This is only a selection



25

## 3. Themes, Movements & Connections

# 3. Themes, Movements & Connections

26

- ❑ romanticism
- ❑ transcendentalism
- ❑ intellectual independence from Britain:  
creating an American literature
- ❑ moral responsibility:  
democracy, abolitionism, women's rights
- ❑ nature and civilization