

美国文学精要

Essentials of American Literature



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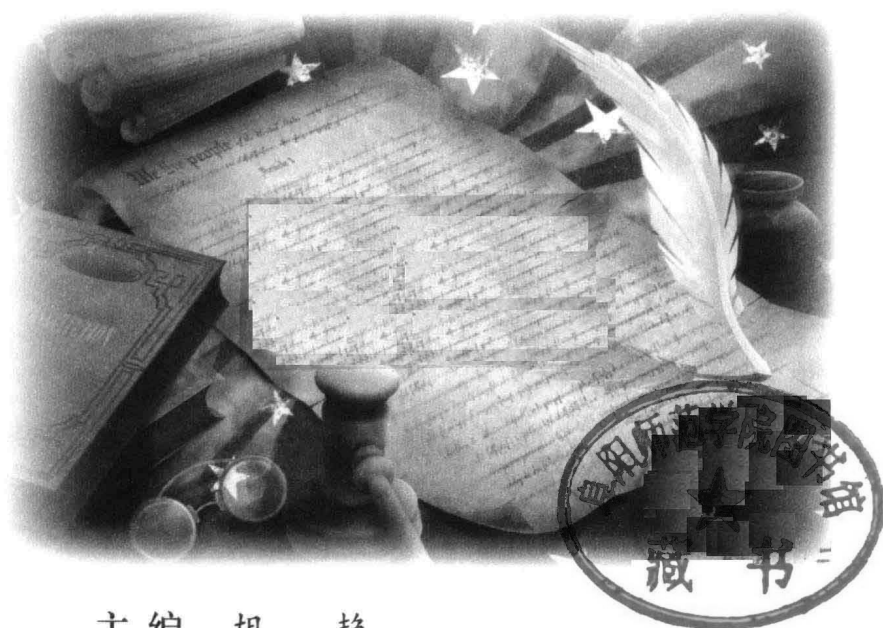


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前 言

至今只有两百多年历史的美国文学，在世界文学领域已经成为不可忽视的组成部分。在这短短的两百多年里，美国涌现出了一大批优秀的作家，他们创作出许多内容丰富、风格多样、具有生命力的作品。这些作品不仅为美国人民提供着精神力量，而且被世界人民传诵和喜爱。为了使读者在提高语言能力的基础上增长知识，并通过阅读能对美国文学的历史和现状有所了解，本书将美国文学发展史与优秀作家的经典作品选读融为一体，以加深读者对美国文学精华的认识、理解与鉴赏。

本书分四部分：美国早期文学、美国浪漫主义文学、美国现实主义和自然主义文学、美国现代文学。在每一部分中，编者先概述了本时期的社会、政治、经济、意识形态的状况，归纳本时期的文学趋势与流派特征，之后介绍了本时期具有代表性的优秀作家的生平、写作特色及重点选文，并对文中难点加以注释，以供读者参考。

本书的使用对象为高等院校英语专业高年级学生，对美国文学感兴趣的非英语专业的学生、教师、硕士研究生和文学爱好者，也希望能有所帮助。

本书由胡艳担任主编，徐慧晶编写了本书第一部分，杨晓丽编写了第二部分，最后两部分由石冠辉编写。全书的结构设计，作家、作品的取舍和最后的定稿由胡艳负责。

由于水平有限，书中疏漏和不妥之处，恳请读者指正。

编 者
2007 年 10 月

Foreword

As the youngest national literatures in the world, American literature swiftly developed and received the international recognition within a period of two hundred years or more. With a large number of renowned writers and their literary works, American literature has exercised a huge influence upon world literature.

This book is divided into four parts: the early American literature, American romanticism, American realism and naturalism, American modernism. In writing this book, we integrated the history of American literature and the selected readings organically so as to help readers to acquire some acquaintances with American literary history and major writers, and to build a better knowledge of American literature. We have done a careful study of relevant books used in American literature teaching and made every effort to attain a concise account of highlights of American literature.

This book does not intend to be all-including, being in fact a brief introduction to American. It has two tasks: to outline the cultural, political and economic events which have given rise to American literal life; to offer a brief view of the most important writers who have written about it. So the book attempts to provide a window on American literature.

If the book might render any help to readers of American literature anyway and serve as a point of departure for further reading, we would feel more gratified.

Editor
Oct. , 2007

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Part I

The Early American Literature

The beginning of American literature, generally called the early American and colonial period, is the literary phase before the great American Revolution against the British colonial power (1775—1783). The early American literature can be divided into two parts: the literature of colonial America and the literature of revolutionary America.

Chapter I . The Literature of Colonial America

I . The Background

After Christopher Columbus discovered America, European explorers came to the vast continental area, part of which was to become the United States, to seek a fortune, and most important of all, a new paradise. The earliest settlers were Dutch, Swedish, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. It was not until early in the 17th century that the English began their settlement of the North American continent. They, together with other early settlers, made their contribution to the forming of an American civilization by establishing colonies. Of the colonies that flourished, however, and later developed into the United States, the clear majority were English.

Among the early settlers who were to become founding-fathers of the United States years later were the Puritans. The Puritans were originally pious members of the Church of England who wanted simply to “purify” the rituals and to lessen the authority of bishops. To them, religion had the highest priority and man should live, think, and act in a way which tended to the glory of God. The doctrines of predestination, original sin, total depravity, and limited atonement through a special infusion of grace from God were all that they believed in. However, the Puritan’s cleansing efforts were not well received by the Church of England and the Puritans were severely oppressed — so much that they sought escape to an untamed new land rather than face the increasing persecution in England. Finally, they were here on a new continent with a promising hope of creating a new paradise. These enthusiastic advocates of highly religious and moral principles brought with them beliefs that were to become known as American Puritanism, which, in fact, was a dominant factor in American life and worked as one of the most enduring shaping influences in American thought and American literature.

II . The Literature of Colonial America

Upon their arrival in the early 17th century, the colonists began to write about their experiences:

how they survived their voyage to the new continent; how they adapted themselves to the new, harsh environment; and how they dealt with the Indians, just to name a few. The unimaginably vast stretches of terrain, the abundantly luxuriant forests, the fertile land, and many other things new to the colonists' experience served as their Muses from whom they obtained imagination and inspiration to voice what they felt about all these new experiences.

John Smith's descriptions of America were filled with themes, myths, images, scenes, characters, and events that were a foundation for the nation's literature, which were regarded as the first distinctly American literature to be written in English.

Chapter II . The Literature of Revolutionary America(1700—1800)

I . The Background

By the mid-eighteenth century colonial America was no longer a group of scattered, struggling settlements. It was a series of neighboring, flourishing colonies with rapidly expanding, mixed populations. The word "state", which suggests an independent government, was beginning to replace "colony" in the people's thinking — an important sign of the political trend. The people of these states were vigorous, the natural resources were rich and plentiful, and native industries were sprouting everywhere.

The industrial growth led to intense strain with England. The British government did not want colonial industries competing with those in England. The British wanted the colonies to remain politically and economically dependent on the mother country. They took a series of measures to insure this dependence: economically, they hampered colonial economy; politically, the government forced dependence by ruling the colonies from overseas and by taxing the colonies without giving them representation in Parliament. The short-sighted British policies stirred colonial unrest. In the seventies of the 18th century the English colonies in North America rose in arms against their mother country and founded a federative bourgeois democratic republic — the United States of America.

II . The Literature of Revolutionary America

Politics is the great subject of this period. With the political development, literary activities were growing at the same time. The spiritual life at this period was to a great degree moulded by the bourgeois Enlightenment — a movement supported by all progressive forces of the country, whose representatives set themselves the task of disseminating knowledge among the people and advocating revolutionary ideas, and participated in the War for Independence. The writing for civil and religious freedom, and for independence began. Writers deserving special mention include Roger Williams (1603—1683) (*The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience*, 1644), John Woolman (1720—1772) (*Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes, A Plea for the Poor*), Thomas Paine (1737—1809) (*Common Sense, American Crisis, The Rights of Man, The Age of Reason*).

son), Philip Freneau (1752—1832) (*The Rising Glory of America, The Wild Honey Suckle, The Indian Burying Ground, The Dying Indian: Tomo Chequi*), and most importantly, Benjamin Franklin (1706—1790), who had tremendous influence on the subsequent development of American literature.

III. Benjamin Franklin and *The Autobiography*

Benjamin Franklin (1706—1790) was recognized as the epitome of the Enlightenment, the versatile, practical embodiment of rational man in the 18th century. He was a printer, publisher, editor, postmaster, educator, humanitarian, philanthropist, economist, scientist, inventor, musician, man of letters, diplomat and statesman. He didn't receive much formal education. At the age of 12, he was apprenticed to his brother, a printer, and at 16 took over the editorship of the paper *New England Courant*. At 17 he moved to Philadelphia and became sole owner of a printing firm. He retired from active business at 42 to engage whole-heartedly in politics and science. He helped to draft *The Declaration of Independence* (1776), was ambassador to France (1776—1785) and took part in the peace negotiations (1781—1783) at the end of the War of American Independence. He won a worldwide reputation for his scientific work and inventions, including the lightning conductor.



His main works include *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1733), *The Way to Wealth* (1758), and *The Autobiography* (1771, 1783, 1784, 1788). In *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Franklin compiled useful information, literary selections, and the editorial wisdom of the fictional Richard Saunders with the usual astronomical and agricultural data. *The Way to Wealth* was a collection of the most utilitarian proverbs. *The Autobiography* is the most important single document entitling him to a place of prominence as a writer. In 1771, Franklin wrote an account of his first 24 years, intended for his son, William. Later he was persuaded by friends to continue it so additions in 1783, 1784 and 1788 more than doubled the size of the original, but brought the account only to the years 1757—1759. It is a record of the mythic American success story, in which the hero rose, by alertness to opportunity and by hard work together with ingenuity, to a position of wealth and influence. *The Autobiography* also made Franklin master of the plain style: the art of writing clear and simple sentences and using familiar vocabulary. The following selection from *The Autobiography* is the interesting presentation of his private morals, indicating how he tried to improve or discipline himself to perfect his personality.

Like most autobiographers, Franklin tells his life story in the first person, writing as "I". The first person point of view can give writing immediacy and intimacy. The writer speaks as the person to whom the events actually happened. The writer can also speak to the reader confidentially, person to person. The first-person point of view has some disadvantages as well. The writer cannot speak with first-hand knowledge about events he or she did not witness, even when they may be important

to the story. And the writer's view point colors and may distort the entire account. Franklin tends to focus on his rise in the world; someone else writing about Franklin's life might have stressed his faults.

The Autobiography

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the Pilgrim's Progress, my first collection was of John Bunyan's¹ works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's² Historical Collections; they were small chapmen's books³, and cheap, 40 or 50 in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman. Plutarch's Lives⁴ there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of De Foe's⁵, called an Essay on Projects, and another of Dr. Mather's⁶, called Essays to do Good, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life.

This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession. In 1717 my brother James returned from England with a press and letters⁷ to set up his business in Boston. I liked it much better than that of my father, but still had a hankering for the sea. To prevent the apprehended effect of such an inclination, my father was impatient to have me bound⁸ to my brother. I stood out some time, but at last was persuaded, and signed the indentures⁹ when I was yet but twelve years old. I was to serve as an apprentice till I was twenty-one years of age, only I was to be allowed journeyman's wages during the last year. In a little time I made great proficiency in the business, and became a useful hand to my brother. I now had access to better books. An acquaintance with the apprentices of booksellers enabled me sometimes to borrow a small one, which I was careful to return soon and clean. Often I sat up in my room reading the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed in the evening and to be returned early in the morning, lest it should be missed or wanted.

And after some time an ingenious tradesman, Mr. Matthew Adams, who had a pretty collection of books, and who frequented our printing-house, took notice of me, invited me to his library, and very kindly lent me such books as I chose to read. I now took a fancy to poetry, and made some little pieces; my brother, thinking it might turn to account, encouraged me, and put me on composing occasional ballads. One was called The Lighthouse Tragedy, and contained an account of the drowning of Captain Worthilake, with his two daughters: the other was a sailor's song, on the taking of Teach (or Blackbeard) the pirate. They were wretched stuff, in the Grub-street-ballad style; and when they were printed he sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise. This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by

ridiculing my performances, and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars. So I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one; but as prose writing had been of great use to me in the course of my life, and was a principal means of my advancement, I shall tell you how, in such a situation, I acquired what little ability I have in that way.

There was another bookish lad in the town, John Collins by name, with whom I was intimately acquainted. We sometimes disputed, and very fond we were of argument, and very desirous of confuting one another, which disputatious turn, by the way, is apt to become a very bad habit, making people often extremely disagreeable in company by the contradiction that is necessary to bring it into practice; and thence, besides souring and spoiling the conversation, is productive of disgusts and, perhaps enmities where you may have occasion for friendship. I had caught it by reading my father's books of dispute about religion. Persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and men of all sorts that have been bred at Edinburgh.

A question was once, somehow or other, started between Collins and me, of the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary side, perhaps a little for dispute's sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words; and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. As we parted without settling the point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my arguments in writing, which I copied fair and sent to him. He answered, and I replied. Three or four letters of a side had passed, when my father happened to find my papers and read them. Without entering into the discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the manner of my writing; observed that, though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which I owed to the printing-house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remark, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to endeavor at improvement.

Notes:

1. John Bunyan (1628—1688) published *Pilgrim's Progress* in 1678; his works were enormously popular and available in cheap one-shilling editions.
2. Burton was a pseudonym for Nathaniel Crouch (1632—1725), a popularizer of British history.
3. Peddlers' books, hence inexpensive.
4. Plutarch (46—120 A. D.), Greek biographer who wrote *Parallel Lives* of noted Greek and Roman figures.
5. Daniel Defoe's *Essay on Projects* (1697) proposed remedies for economic improvement.
6. Cotton Mather published *Bonifacius: An Essay upon the Good* in 1710.
7. Type.
8. Apprenticed.

9. A contract binding him to work for his brother for nine years. James Franklin (1697—1735) had learned the printer's trade in England.

It was about this time I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employed in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct¹. For this purpose I therefore contrived the following method.

In the various enumerations of the moral virtues² I had met with in my reading, I found the catalogue more or less numerous, as different writers included more or fewer ideas under the same name. Temperance, for example, was by some confined to eating and drinking, while by others it was extended to mean the moderating every other pleasure, appetite, inclination, or passion, bodily or mental, even to our avarice and ambition. I proposed to myself, for the sake of clearness, to use rather more names, with fewer ideas annexed to each, than a few names with more ideas; and I included under thirteen names of virtues all that at that time occurred to me as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept, which fully expressed the extent I gave to its meaning³.

These names of virtues, with their precepts, were:

Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.⁴

Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself⁵; avoid trifling conversation.

Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

Frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i. e., waste nothing.

Industry. Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.

Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

Chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury

of your own or another's peace or reputation.

Humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

My intention being to acquire the habitude of all these virtues, I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone thro' the thirteen; and, as the previous acquisition of some might facilitate the acquisition of certain others, I arranged them with that view, as they stand above. Temperance first, as it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits, and the force of perpetual temptations. This being acquired and established, Silence would be more easy; and my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improved in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtained rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into of prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling company, I gave Silence the second place. This and the next, Order, I expected would allow me more time for attending to my project and my studies. Resolution, once become habitual, would keep me firm in my endeavors to obtain all the subsequent virtues; Frugality and Industry freeing me from my remaining debt, and producing affluence and independence, would make more easy the practice of Sincerity and Justice, etc. Conceiving then, that, agreeably to the advice of Pythagoras⁶ in his Golden Verses, daily examination would be necessary, I contrived the following method for conducting that examination.

.....

Notes:

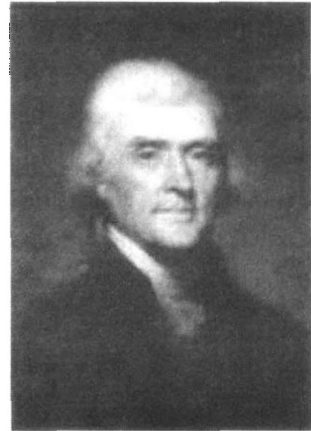
1. and that...conduct: and that the bad habits must be removed and good ones must be acquired and formed so that we will be able to have steady and consistent conduct.
2. the moral virtues: According to the Christian tradition, there are seven virtues and seven vices. The seven virtues are: Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. The seven vices are: Pride, Wrath, Envy, Lust, Gluttony, Avarice and Sloth.
3. which fully expressed the extent I gave to its meaning: which gave each of my virtues a full and accurate definition.
4. Eat...to elevation: Don't eat so much as to get stupefied; don't drink so much as to become wild.
5. speak...yourself: Speak only what may be good to others or yourself. The word "but" here means "except" or "unless".
6. Pythagoras (c. 580 — c. 500 B. C.): a Greek philosopher and mathematician who founded the Pythagorean School which believed that the soul imprisoned in the body could be purified by study; he followed a strict discipline of purity and self-examination.

IV. Thomas Jefferson and *The Declaration of Independence*

Thomas Jefferson (1743—1826), the third President of the United States, and first Secretary of

State, once said that he wanted to be remembered for only three things: drafting *The Declaration of Independence*, writing and supporting *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (1786), and founding the University of Virginia.

Jefferson was born into a prominent Virginia family. In 1769, he was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses, after which he was almost constantly in the political service of Virginia and of the nation until his retirement from the presidency. From 1775 to 1776, he served in the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, and was elected to draft a declaration of independence. He was almost wholly responsible for the spirit and phrasing of *The Declaration of Independence*, his great monument in literature and political theory.



Although committee members made suggestions, the draft was very much his own. Jefferson was unhappy with the changes made by the Congress to his draft, for congressional changes went contrary to some of his basic arguments.

In 1784, he published his only book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In 1800, he was elected President of the United States.

The Declaration of Independence

In Congress, July 4, 1776

(The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America)

When¹ in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolis-

hing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain² is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws of Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others³ to subject us to a jurisdiction⁴ foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: