




**21ST-CENTURY NEW  
SELECTED READINGS  
IN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

21世纪新编

**美国文学选读(上)**

主 编 © 陈世丹 屈晓丽

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 中国人民大学出版社

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# 美国文学选读

*21st-century New Selected  
Readings in American Literature*

(上)

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中国人民大学出版社  
· 北京 ·

## 前 言

《21 世纪新编美国文学选读》(上、下)是与《美国文学史》(上、下)配套使用的高校英语专业本科美国文学课程教学用书。本书每册设 18 个单元。每一单元由三部分构成:1) 代表作家传记 (Biography); 2) 代表作品短评 (Comments); 3) 作品选读 (Selected Readings)。为了配合课上的讨论,作品选读带有注释 (Notes) 和讨论题 (Questions)。

本书选择 Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, William Cullen Bryant, Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville 和 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 为 19 世纪浪漫主义时期美国文学的代表作家; Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, Henry James, Edith Wharton, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser 和 Willa Cather 为 19 世纪现实主义时期美国文学的代表作家; Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner 和 Eugene O'Neill 为 20 世纪现代主义时期美国文学的代表作家; Robert Lee Frost, F. Scott Fitzgerald 和 Arthur Miller 为 20 世纪现代主义文学繁荣时期仍坚持现实主义文学创作的代表作家。第二次世界大战后 1945 年以来的美国文学虽然有 Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, John Updike 和 Joyce Carol Oates 等著名作家仍在坚持现实主义和现代主义小说创作,但从整体上看,后现代主义文学占主导地位。因此,本书选择 Robert Lowell, Charles Olson, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, Vladimir Nabokov 和 Toni Morrison 作为后现代主义文学的代表作家。后现代主义是西方后工业社会、后现代社会、晚期资本主义的文化现象,对于我们仍处在农业社会、前工业社会、前现代社会的大多数中国读者来说还是一个比较陌生的概念。这些后现代主义作家的作品表现了后现代主义的核心观念:在今天的世界上,各种各样不稳定、不确定、非连续、无序、断裂和突变现象的重要作用越来越为人们所认识并重视。在这种情况下,一种新的看待世界的观念开始深入人们的意识:它反对用单一的、固定不变的逻辑、公式和原则以及普适的规律来说明和统治世界,主张变革和创新,强调开放性和多元性,承认并容忍差异。在后现代,彻底的多元化已成为普遍的基本观念;后现代的多元性是一切知识领域和社会生活各方面的本质。这种多元性原则的直接结论是:反对任何统一化的企图;后现代思维积极维护事物的多样性和丰富性,坚决反对任何试图将自己的选择强加于别人、使异己的事物屈服于自己意志的霸权野心;它尊重并承认各种关于社会构想、生活方式以及文化形态的选择。后现代主义文学以多元变化的、不断创新的叙事技巧和多样杂糅的文本结构表现后现代人类经验,揭示现实与历史的文本性和不确定性。本书由于出版时间仓促,个别文章无法与其作者取得联系,请作者看到本书后与我社联系。

教学建议:本书教学应与《美国文学史》(上、下)教学结合并同步进行,学生课前阅读文学史书中的相关部分,课上在教师组织、启发、引导下讨论作品的主题思想和艺术技巧。美国文学教学一般在两个学期内完成,每个学期 18 个教学周。根据这样的课程设置,第一学期可完成上册的

浪漫主义和现实主义两个时期的 18 位作家及其代表作品的研讨，第二学期完成下册的现代主义和后现代主义时期的 18 位作家及其代表作品的研讨，两个学期共重点讨论 36 位代表作家及其代表作品。教师可根据学期实际长度情况选讲其中的 32 或 34 位作家及其作品，其余作家及其作品可留给学生课外自学。

本书的内容设计和编写体例特别适合师生课前共同备课、合作建构教学内容，课上教师可抛砖引玉引发学生创新思考，自我消解权威，让学生充分展示才华。本书的教学主张采用学思结合的启发式、探究式、讨论式、参与式培养学生创新能力的大学文学课堂教学模式，具有极大的实用性。

主 编

2013 年 8 月



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# AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

(1800—1865)

## Romanticism: A Historical Introduction

Romantic period has always been regarded as one of the most important periods in the history of America. It is generally agreed that American Romantic Movement emerged at the beginning of the 19th century under the influence of its European counterpart. Literary romanticism flourished in America during the period between the War of 1812 and the Civil War. It started with the publication of Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book* and ended with Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Accurately, it refers to the fifty-year period from 1815 to 1865, which witnessed miraculous achievements in American literature, and this period was also called "the American Renaissance." However, at the beginning of the movement, most critics pointed out that the American romanticism was just imitating, and some formalists pointed out that the works of the early romanticists were not indigenously American enough. After then, the writers, however, clearly reversed the trend to prove that American romanticism was shaped uniquely because of its particularly historical, cultural, political, and economic elements.

Historically, the War of 1812 with British Empire saved the young nation from the danger of being colonized by Britain once again and produced a sense of euphoria over a "second war of independence" against Britain. The United States also emerged from the war with a heightened sense of national feeling and solidarity. In the following years of 1812, the country lived more self-sufficiently and the contact with Europe became less and less due to the inconvenience of transportation and underdevelopment of communication tools. Meanwhile, the United States also



witnessed a fast growth of population because of the large amounts of immigrants pouring into America. In 1800, the United States was a country with only 5,308,483 inhabitants, mainly living around the seacoast, but within only a few decades it grew to be an immense area with a population of over 76,000,000. American people started gradually migrating toward the west, looking for a better life, which led to the Westward Movement, one of the key elements that influenced the formation of the American romanticism. The incredible westward expansion had accelerated the construction of American national identity. The conquest of new territories certainly opened new horizons but it did not come without a price: the new settlers had to contend the land with the native Americans, immigrants from Asia faced widespread discrimination, the heavy hunting of buffalo brought the animal to the verge of extinction, etc., to name a few of the problems that occurred in those years. However, taking “Manifest Destiny” as their slogan and “civilizing the Indian people” as their task, these European descendants believed that westward expansion was one way to stir up their self-righteous feeling and the key to sustain the health of the nation even though there were the negative elements. To Americans, the young nation was destined to expand across the North American continent even if this meant taking Indians’ land, destroying their culture and slaughtering Indians. The concept, born out of “a sense of mission to redeem the Old World,” was enabled by “the potentialities of a new earth for building a new heaven,” and manifest destiny provided the dogma and tone for the largest acquisition of US territory. Just as President Jefferson pointed out that a republic depended on an independent, virtuous citizenry for its survival, and that independence and virtue went hand in hand with land ownership, especially the ownership of small farms. In order to provide enough land to sustain this ideal population of yeomen, the United States would have to continue to expand. During the westward expansion, the country was also confronted with the risk of internal division: the conflicts between the industrial North and the rural-agricultural South, whose economic pattern largely based on slave labor, which eventually escalated to the secession of eleven southern states from the young nation, in spite of the treaties of 1820 and 1850. This event led to the American Civil War of 1861—1865 between the United States and several southern slave states. The war had its origin in the fractious issue of slavery. After four years of bloody combat (mostly in the South), the southern part was defeated, slavery was abolished, and the difficult reconstruction process of restoring unity and guaranteeing rights to the freed slaves began. Hence the evils of capitalistic industrialism—unemployment, starvation wages, and the herding of working people in unspeakable slums—developed more slowly in America than in England. During the romantic period, America was the land of opportunity, the welfare of the industrious citizen was assured, and the temper of the American people was accordingly buoyant and hopeful. In the midst of this environment, American romanticism could hardly fail to be more optimistic than European romanticism, more self-satisfied, less radical and challenging. At that time, the American dream had glowed with the greatest intensity and American writers had made a great literary period by

capturing on their pages the enthusiasm and the optimism of that dream. Moreover, the attention that was turned to internal exploration and expansion encouraged the impulse towards self-definition.

Economically, the whole nation was experiencing the industrial transformation, which affected the rural and urban life. The impact of industrialization and urbanization ushered the youthful country into the self-sufficient mode. The Industrial Revolution occurred in Great Britain stirred up a series of significant changes in American society. The use of steam power in industry and agriculture, the erection of factories and textile mills, the demand of a large employment, and the technical inventions and innovations, all helped restructure the economic life in America. However, the Industrial Revolution, while helping the nation prosper in many ways, also aroused widespread corruption and contradiction between northern and southern states in America. The sudden influx of immigrant gave a big push to the already booming industry. Before the Civil War, northern states had experienced the prosperity in manufacturing and the big cities of the north employed many people, satisfying the demand for job pressure. In contrast, the southern states had fewer big cities and agriculture was the major source of economic pattern. Cotton was the premier crop and staple of the southern economy. To maximize the potential of this agricultural economy to the greatest extent efficiently and to promote their financial prosperity, slave labor was necessary. This ultimately led to a division between northern and southern economic patterns, and later culminated into the Civil War. After the war, the improvement in manufacturing accelerated economic development and altered the nature of American employment. A lot of sizable businesses and factories emerged in the new-born country, with the result of the advent of mechanized factories which allowed greater production of goods. This coupled with the advancements in transportation technology—namely the railroad and steamboat—helped American goods to be sold nationally and even internationally.

Religiously, far more than in Europe, public opinion in America was under the control of aggressively Protestant religious sects. They were the Congregationalists, the direct descendants of the Puritans, and the evangelical denominations—Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist—whose power had been founded during the 18th century, which were more widely dispersed. But overall, American moral ideals were largely Puritan that had a profound effect upon American culture. Apart from the culture, the puritanical strands of religious thought and moral judgment continued to influence, in varying degrees, the social and political thinking in America. As one historian stated, "Without some understanding of Puritanism, it may safely be said, there is no understanding of America." Though by no means in agreement on theological matters, the romanticists insisted as stoutly as the Puritans upon a rigorous personal morality. Together with the Congregationalists, they frowned on any amusement that smacked the sins of the flesh. Sexual laxity was one of the acts they especially abhorred. They upheld the sanctity of marriage and the permanent solidarity of the home. The Puritans also believed in the innate depravity of

man. They believed that some people were “predestined” to experience an afterlife with God. Only the “elect” or “chosen” were in a good relationship with God. Puritanism was the very thing that provided a firm foundation for American democracy, and they were remarkably successful in forming the moral opinions of the nation. Puritanism also exerted great impact on the writers’ world view and value system. The force of Puritan opinions and the control they exercised over American literature could be judged from the relative importance of the themes of writers, such as Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, to name just a few. In positive ways, too, as well as in merely negative, American romanticism adapted itself to American moralism. Polite literature had long been under suspicion from the devout, as being frivolous if not pernicious. Nevertheless, nineteenth-century literature in America does carry an unusually heavy load of didacticism.

Culturally, even though with the founding of an independent government, the young nation, more evidently, also witnessed its writings being influenced by their cultural immaturity as a nation. At that time, American people were seeking the way to make their cultural independent and more mature to identify themselves. American culture, during the romantic period, was a vigorous, fast-growing, adolescent civilization, though immature quality still existed. As a result, the nation felt an urge to have its own literary expression, to make known its new experience: the early Puritan settlement and the confrontation with the Indian, the frontiersmen’s life and the Wild West. In literature, they preferred a stilted, formal, and somewhat florid style. They revealed the “sensibility” in the 18th century, extolled the cultured young female and expressed the tender emotions of the romanticists. With a strong sense of optimism and the mood of “feeling good” of the whole nation, a spectacular outburst of romantic feeling was brought about in the first half of the 19th century. The so-called “exceptional” character of American culture and politics in contrast to other “developed” nations has been attributed to the absence of feudalism on American soil and to an attendant absence of class struggle and consciousness. This character of the American culture at that time also could be caused by the cultural diversity of the American immigrant population and challenges to the solidification of class consciousness posed by the extreme cultural diversity of the American working class. Furthermore, the flourish of the publishing industry, the appearance of many magazines and newspapers and the financial support to the writers also promoted the development of romanticism in America. The publication of *Webster’s Dictionary* marked the beginning of the American English. Increasing wealth and increasingly widespread popular education furnished a steadily enlarging reading public and made publication a large commercial venture, a development which increased the rewards of authorship, but which tended at the same time to enslave the professional author to contemporary standards of taste. Financial support for the profession of letters came perhaps more from periodicals than from separately published books. Newspapers were numerous and widely read, and though often up

to the ears in political controversies, they found space for an occasional poem. Magazines were especially numerous between the Revolution and the War of 1812; but they were widely scattered and financially uncertain. After 1812, magazines which wielded more influence and showed more stamina began to appear. *The North American Review*, founded at Boston in 1815 under the editorship of William Tudor, served as a dignified medium for conservative New England opinion. Authors received substantial returns not only from the better-established magazines, but from a kind of periodical now almost extinct—the annual. Originating in Germany, the publication of annual miscellanies of literature had spread to England and thence to America. In the United States, annuals became so popular that more than sixty a year were produced between 1846 and 1852.

Politically, democracy and political equality became the ideals of the new nation. Radical changes came about in the political life of the country. Parties began to squabble and scramble for power, and new system was in the making.



## Literary Characteristics

When discussing the literary characteristics of American romanticism, the outstanding differences and relations between European romanticism and American romanticism couldn't be avoided to mention first: The New World environment had shaped the attitude of America's writers, but the influence from its European counterparts could not be ignored. The European Romantic Movement reached America in the early 19th century and exerted great impact on the growth of American romanticism. The European literary masters, especially the English counterparts exerted a stimulating impact on the writers of the New World and the American romanticists shared many characteristics with British writers.

Europe in the 18th century was an old and familiar land with rooted traditions and cultures, whereas America was a new land without indigenous traditions and cultures other than those of the Indians, which were at first totally rejected and have only recently been faintly recognized and absorbed into American cultural stream. However, the new-born country could not totally get rid of the influence of the European culture. Because most of the citizens at that time were the descendants of the Europeans, the cultures of Europe were still the dominant and shaping inheritance. The life that they knew and the land that they wished to describe and interpret were alien to the modes of thought and the forms of writing to which they were habituated. Accordingly, American romantic literature was affected by its English counterparts to a great extent at early stage. It was greatly inspired by Wordsworth's poetic encounter with nature and

himself in *The Prelude*, Coleridge's literary theories about the reconciliation of opposites, the romantic posturing and irony of Byron, the luxurious imagery of Keats, and the transcendental lyricism of Shelley, and even the Gothicism of Mary Shelley and the Brontë sisters. It should be noted that during the 1820s, Americans took pride in the literature that they regarded not as distinct but rather in close relation with the English literary traditions. Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book* (1819—1820) was largely based on the essays of Addison and Steele, Bryant's poetry was enlightened by Wordsworth, and Copper's novels were modeled after the works of Walter Scott.

At that time, books, literary quarterlies, and magazines from England and Europe were readily available as they were frequently published in the New World, or their distribution was facilitated by the relatively inexpensive shipping fees for printed materials coming from Europe. American literature was usually not taught in American universities, and it was referred to as a sub-current of English literature. Even though American writers' works hadn't been as popular as their European counterparts' at the beginning of American romantic period, they shared some common features with the English romanticists. Some critics judged that American romanticism is derivative. Like the Europeans, the American romantics demonstrated a high level of moral enthusiasm, commitment to individualism and the unfolding of the self, an emphasis on intuitive perception, and the assumption that the natural world was inherently good, while human society was filled with corruption. The American writers believed that personal intuitions have moral authority precisely because individuals contain the divine within themselves. Emerson argued that people should trust themselves, reject external rules, express their inner natures, and become self-reliant. Henry Thoreau, another member of the transcendental club, proclaimed the individual conscience, not the law, as the supreme moral arbiter: political obligation depends on the moral judgment of the individual, and the best government is one which does not govern. Similarly, British romantics rejected the formal rules and public codes that had dominated the outlook of the Augustans in favor of a belief in the individual questioning and testing of values and experiences, and their rejection of Augustan limits sometimes spilled over into an opposition to all restrictive codes, as evidenced by the appeal of Godwin's anarchism to Wordsworth and Shelley. In general, the romantics' debt to Rousseau appears in their almost unanimous call for a natural, wholesome existence based on man's true instincts. Yet the American romantics drew heavily on frontier individualism in a way the British did not. British romantics typically looked to the example of the Middle Ages, although they rarely agreed on the details of an ideal community, with, for instance, Coleridge calling for a clerisy and national church to balance the forces of progress with those of stability, and Ruskin trying to revive a moral economy based on craftsmanship and guilds. In contrast, the American romantics succumbed to an idealized picture of American democracy. This gave rise to two important theoretical tendencies. First, the American romantics saw their ideal as something which was being realized through the action

of the divine purpose in history. Here Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman drew inspiration from Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democratic theory, which in turn restated the eighteenth-century belief in the perfectibility of mankind, a belief which fitted well with their own immanentism. Just as the democrats described the American polity as part of God's design, so the romantics could take the American ideal to be the summit of the immanent working-out of the divine will. Just as the Jacksonian, George Bancroft, wrote his famous history of America to show how America expressed the will of God, William Channing spoke of the dawn of a new age in which people would surmount their political difficulties to realize their inner spirit. Second, the American romantics inherited the ideal of a democratic republic composed of self-sufficient farmers. They believed in the virtue of the rough-and-ready life spent working the land. It was true that some British romantics called for the simplification of life and the rejection of the unnatural wants created by industrial society, as when Ruskin used the example of Gothic architecture to illustrate how mechanism had replaced skill in the work-place. But whilst Ruskin wanted a return to the skilled craftsmanship which he thought produced artistic goods, Thoreau wanted people to minimize their possessions; and whilst Ruskin wanted workers to be able to exercise their creative impulses free from the regime of the machine, Thoreau wanted people to become effectively self-sufficient. Thus, whereas Ruskin established new guilds and revitalized the handmade-linen industry in Langdale, Thoreau lived alone in a hut at Walden Pond where he tried to "simplify, simplify" to obtain spiritual wealth by living close to nature, reducing his material wants, and satisfying any residual needs by his own manual labor.

Even though the literature in American romantic period could not totally get rid of the influence from its European counterparts and being criticized to be an imitator, it also exhibited some unique characteristics which only belonged to this special nation and to this special period. In literature, it still was the first great creative period in American history, which experienced a full flowering of the romantic impulse on American soil. As the romantic writers, Irving, Cooper, Poe, Freneau, and Bryant revolted against the literary forms and ideas of the period of classicism. The American romanticists emphasize the free expression of emotions and psychic states of the characters, and the emotional and imaginative qualities of literature, which includes a liking for the picturesque, the exotic, the sensuous, the sensational, and the superstitious. They exalt the individual and the common man, and show a great interest in the external nature. American romanticism was in essence the expression of a "real new experience" and contained "an alien quality" because of the simple reason that "the spirit of the place" was radically new and alien. For instance, the growth of cultural nationalism urged the American writers to draw upon the American experience of "pioneering into the West" as the rich sources to express themselves. Through their works they exhibited the willingness for an escape from society and a return to nature. The wilderness with its virgin forests, the sound of the axe cutting its way westward, the exotic landscape with its different sights, smells, and sounds, and the quaint, picturesque

civilization of a primitive race—all these constituted an incomparably superior source of inspiration for native authors. Therefore, they celebrated America's landscape with its virgin forests, meadows, groves, endless prairies, streams, and vast oceans. The wilderness came to function almost as a dramatic character that symbolized moral law, which became a permanent convention of American literature. American character types speaking local dialects appeared in the poetry and fiction with increasing frequency, and the literature began to celebrate the farmers, the poor, the unlettered, the children, the noble savages untainted by society. For example, in Cooper's "Leatherstocking series" a rude Natty Bumppo in buckskin, dwelling in a frontier blockhouse, treading a solitary bridle path through virgin forests was, perhaps, matter enough for any romantic genius. And indeed, American authors were quite responsive to the stimulus which American life offered. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's tentative treatment of the frontier and the Indians in his works such as *Hiawatha* (1855), Washington Irving's portrayal of the scenes from the Hudson valley, William Cullen Bryant's sketches of the wild west prairie where no human being had ever set foot and James Fenimore Cooper's five Leatherstocking tales with "their majestic descriptions of America's limitless forests and broad blue inland lakes"—these are but a few instances whereby the new American sensibility began to make itself felt. And, of course, we should not forget to mention Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman, all people who were instrumental, in one way or another, in creating an indigenous American literature. Surviving from the Federalist Age were its three major literary figures: Bryant, Irving, and Cooper. Emerging as new writers of strength and creative power were the novelists Hawthorne, Simms, Melville, and Harriet Beecher Stowe; the poets Poe, Whittier, Holmes, Longfellow, Lowell, Dickinson, and Whitman; the essayists Thoreau, Emerson, and Holmes; the critics Poe, Lowell, and Simms. In their works the distinct characteristics of American romanticism were illustrated clearly and powerfully.

American romanticism embraced the individual and rebelled against the confinement of neoclassicism and religious tradition. The Romantic Movement in America created a new literary genre that continues to influence American writers. Novels, short stories, and poems replaced the sermons and manifestos of yore. Romantic literature was personal, intense, and portrayed more emotion than ever seen in neoclassical literature. America's preoccupation with freedom became a great source of motivation for romantic writers as many were delighted in free expression and emotion without so much fear of ridicule and controversy. They also put more effort into the psychological development of their characters, and the main characters typically displayed extremes of sensitivity and excitement. The works of the Romantic Era also differed from preceding works in that they spoke to a wider audience, partly reflecting the greater distribution of books as costs came down during the period. The romantic period saw an increase in female authors and also female readers.

Moral qualities were significantly present in the verse of Emerson, Bryant, Longfellow,

Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, and Thoreau. The sectional issues were debated in poetry by Whittier and Lowell speaking for abolition, and Timrod, Hayne, and Simms speaking for the South. Poe formulated his theories of poetry and in some fifty lyrics practiced a symbolist verse that was to be, despite the change of triviality by such contemporaries as Emerson, the strongest single poetic influence emerging from pre-Civil War America, particularly in its impact on European poetry. Whitman, beginning with the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, was the ultimate expression of poetry organic in form and romantic in spirit, united to a concept of democracy that was pervasively egalitarian. In essays and in lectures the New England transcendentalists—Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Alcott—carried the expression of philosophic and religious ideas to a high level. In the 1850s emerged the powerful symbolic novels of Hawthorne and Melville and the effective propaganda novel of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Poe, Hawthorne, and Simms practiced the writing of short stories through the period, taking up where Irving had left off in the development of the form.

When talking about the elements that formed the unique characteristics of American romanticism, the Puritan factor could not be ignored. Puritan influence over American romanticism was conspicuously noticeable. As a cultural heritage, the American Puritanism exerted a great influence over the American value. Because of the immense affect American romantic writers tended more to moralize than their English and European counterparts. On the one hand, the Puritans accepted the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, total depravity, original sin, and salvation of a selected few through a special infusion of grace from God (limited atonement). Being a group of seriously religious people, they had a strong sense of mission and were very idealistic, for they thought they were the “chosen” people by God and sent to the New World to purify the beliefs and practices of the Church of England, from which they had separated themselves, and built in America a new church. The Puritans in New England practiced theocracy, a form of government in which religion and government are combined into one. On the other hand, the Puritans were very practical, for the survival in the New World had taught them to work hard for profits and material success, which they believed as a sign of God’s benevolence. Puritans in America were living a very disciplined and simple style of life, devoid of earthly joy and extravagancy. Their way of life was based on their somber religion and stressed hard work, thrift, piety, and sobriety. As a dominant factor in American life, a philosophy of life and a culture heritage, American Puritanism was one of the most enduring shaping influences in American thought and American literature. It has become, to some extent, so much a state of mind, rather than a set of tenets, so much a part of the national cultural atmosphere that the American breathes, that we may state with a degree of safety that, without some understanding of Puritanism, there can be no understanding of America and its culture. Under the influence of Puritanism we could not omit the fact that many American romantic writings intended to edify more than they entertained. Sex and love were, for instance, subjects American authors were particularly careful in approaching. A



preoccupation with the Calvinistic view of original sin and the mystery of evil marked the works of Hawthorne, Melville, and a host of lesser writers. Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* illustrates powerfully the effect of the adultery on the people and their lives and the inner sin itself, and Whitman was for a long time misunderstood by his own countrymen because his *Leaves of Grass* contains lines and passages not at all agreeable to their "genteel" taste. Nonetheless, Edgar Allan Poe fought vehemently against "the heresy of the didactic," and the writers like John Greenleaf Whittier tried to advocate both beauty and goodness.

If Irving, Cooper, and other writers raised the curtain of American romanticism, it was transcendentalism that energized the movement into a more vigor and vital stage, and inspired many romanticists to greatness. Romanticism became popular in American politics, philosophy, and art. The movement appealed to the revolutionary spirit of America as well as to those longing to break free of the strict religious traditions of early settlement. The Romantic Movement gave rise to New England transcendentalism which portrayed a less restrictive relationship between God and universe. As a philosophical and literary movement, transcendentalism flourished in New England from the 1830s to the Civil War. In 1836, an informal group gathered in Concord, Massachusetts, to discuss the theology, philosophy, and literature. The scholars in the group were not quite happy about the materialistic-oriented life of their time and rejected rationalism and religious intellect. Then, they formed themselves into an informal club, the transcendentalist club, which was named by good-intentioned neighbors, and met to discuss matters of interest to the life of the nation as a whole. They expressed their views, published their journal, *The Dial*, and made their voice heard. In the same year, a little book was published which made a tremendous impact on the formation of the intellectual life and the value of America, and regarded as the mark of New England transcendentalism. The publication of the book also witnessed the summit of American romanticism. It was entitled *Nature* by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Some 30 men and a couple of women such as Emerson, Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and Margaret Fuller, most of them teachers or clergymen, were radicals against rigid rationalism of unitarianism. As the climax of American romanticism, transcendentalism shares the romantic characteristics: the exaltation of the individual over society, the significance of intuition, the new and thrilling exultation and appreciation of nature, fascination with the Gothic and the "Oriental," and the expectation to build a national literature and culture. Moreover, transcendentalism, as a type of romanticism peculiar to New England, assumed a specific moral and philosophical tone. The moral implications came from the environment where Puritan idealism persisted, but the philosophical tone was largely defined by Emerson. The New World was excited and thrilled to get the new voice like the following. "The universe is composed of Nature and the Soul," it says, "Spirit is present everywhere." It was apparent that the world had had enough of Benjamin Franklin, and a wind of change was beginning to blow. A whole new way of thinking began to exert its influence on the consciousness of man. Emerson's *Nature* has been called the "manifesto