WHAT IS AMERICAN LITERATURE? AN OVERVIEW

When the English preacher and writer Sidney Smith asked in 1820, "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?" little did he suspect that less than two hundred years later the answer in literate quarters would be "just about everyone." Indeed, just a few years after Smith posed his inflammatory question, the American writer Samuel Knapp would begin to assemble one of the first histories of American literature as part of a lecture series that he was giving. The course materials offered by *American Passages* continue in the tradition begun by Knapp in 1829.

One goal of this *Study Guide* is to help you learn to be a literary historian: that is, to introduce you to American literature as it has evolved over time and to stimulate you to make connections between and among texts. Like a literary historian, when you make these connections you are telling a story: the story of how American literature came into being. This Overview outlines four paths (there are many others) by which you can narrate the story of American literature: one based on literary movements and historical change, one based on the *American Passages* Overview Questions, one based on Contexts, and one based on multiculturalism.

TELLING THE STORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Literary Movements and Historical Change

American Passages is organized around sixteen literary movements or "units." A literary movement centers around a group of authors that share certain stylistic and thematic concerns. Each unit includes ten authors that are represented either in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* or in the Online Archive. Two to four of these authors are discussed in the video, which calls attention to important historical and cultural influences on these authors, defines a genre that they share, and proposes some key thematic parallels.

Tracking literary movements can help you see how American literature has changed and evolved over time. In general, people think about literary movements as reacting against earlier modes of writing and earlier movements. For

example, just as **modernism** (Units 10–13) is often seen as a response to **realism** and the Gilded Age (Unit 9), so **Romanticism** is seen as a response to the **Enlightenment** (Unit 4). Most of the units focus on one era (see the chart below), but they will often include relevant authors from other eras to help draw out the connections and differences. (Note: The movements in parentheses are not limited to authors/works from the era in question, but they do cover some material from it.)

Century	Era	*American Passages* Literary Movements
Fifteenth– Seventeenth	Renaissance	(1: Native Voices) 2: Exploring Borderlands 3: Utopian Promise
Eighteenth	Enlightenment	(3: Utopian Promise) 4: Spirit of Nationalism (7: Slavery and Freedom)
Nineteenth	Romanticist	4: Spirit of Nationalism 5: Masculine Heroes 6: Gothic Undercurrents 7: Slavery and Freedom
Nineteenth	Realist	(1: Native Voices) 6: Gothic Undercurrents 8: Regional Realism 9: Social Realism
Twentieth	Modernist	(1: Native Voices) 10: Rhythms in Poetry 11: Modernist Portraits 12: Migrant Struggle 13: Southern Renaissance
Twentieth	Postmodernist	1: Native Voices 2: Exploring Borderlands 12: Migrant Struggle 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity

Each unit contains a timeline of historical events along with the dates of key literary texts by the movement's authors. These timelines are designed to help you make connections between and among the movements, eras, and authors covered in each unit.

Overview Questions

The Overview Questions at the start of each unit are tailored from the five *American Passages* Overview Questions that follow. They are meant to help you focus your viewing and reading and participate in discussion afterward.

1. **What is an American? How does literature create conceptions of the American experience and American identity?**
    This two-part question should trigger discussion about issues such as, Who belongs to America? When and how does one become an American? How has the search for identity among American writers changed over time? It can also encourage discussion about the ways in which immigration, colonization, conquest, youth, race, class, and gender affect national identity.

2. **What is American literature? What are the distinctive voices and styles in American literature? How do social and political issues influence the American canon?**
    This multi-part question should instigate discussion about the aesthetics and reception of American literature. What is a masterpiece? When is something considered literature, and how is this category culturally and historically dependent? How has the canon of American literature changed and why? How have American writers used language to create art and meaning? What does literature do? This question can also raise the issue of American exceptionalism: Is American literature different from the literature of other nations?

3. **How do place and time shape the authors' works and our understanding of them?**
    This question addresses America as a location and the many ways in which place impacts American literature's form and content. It can provoke discussion about how regionalism, geography, immigration, the frontier, and borders impact American literature, as well as the role of the vernacular in indicating place.

4. **What characteristics of a literary work have made it influential over time?**
    This question can be used to spark discussion about the evolving impact of various pieces of American literature and about how American writers used language both to create art and respond to and call for change. What is the individual's responsibility to uphold the community's traditions, and when are individuals compelled to resist them? What is the relationship between the individual and the community?

5. **How are American myths created, challenged, and re-imagined through this literature?**
    This question returns to "What is an American?" But it poses the question at a cultural rather than individual level. What are the myths that make up American culture? What is the American Dream? What are American myths, dreams, and nightmares? How have these changed over time?

Contexts

Another way that connections can be made across and between authors is through the five Contexts in each unit: three longer **Core Contexts** and two shorter **Extended Contexts**. The goal of the Contexts is both to help you read American literature in its cultural background and to teach you close-reading skills. Each Context consists of a brief narrative about an event, trend, or idea that had particular resonance for the writers in the unit as well as Americans of their era; questions that connect the Context to the authors in the unit; and a list of related texts and images in the Online Archive. Examples of Contexts include discussions of the concept of the Apocalypse (3: "Utopian Visions"), the sublime (4: "Spirit of Nationalism"), and baseball (14: "Becoming Visible").

The Contexts can be used in conjunction with an author or as stand-alone activities. The Slide Show Tool on the Web site is ideal for doing assignments that draw connections between archive items from a Context and a text you have read. And you can create your own contexts and activities using the Slide Show Tool: these materials can then be e-mailed, viewed online, projected, or printed out on overhead transparencies.

Multiculturalism

In the past twenty years, the field of American literature has undergone a radical transformation. Just as the mainstream public has begun to understand America as more diverse, so, too, have scholars moved to integrate more texts by women and ethnic minorities into the standard canon of literature taught and studied. These changes can be both exhilarating and disconcerting, as the breadth of American literature appears to be almost limitless. Each of the videos and units has been carefully balanced to pair canonical and noncanonical voices. You may find it helpful, however, to trace the development of American literature according to the rise of different ethnic and minority literatures. The following chart is designed to highlight which literatures are represented in the videos and the units. As the chart indicates, we have set different multicultural literatures in dialogue with one another.

Literature	Video Representation	*Study Guide* Representation
African American literature	7: Slavery and Freedom 8: Regional Realism 10: Rhythms in Poetry 13: Southern Renaissance 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation	4: Spirit of Nationalism 5: Masculine Heroes 7: Slavery and Freedom 8: Regional Realism 9: Social Realism 10: Rhythms in Poetry 11: Modernist Portraits 13: Southern Renaissance 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity

Native American literature	1: Native Voices 5: Masculine Heroes 14: Becoming Visible	1: Native Voices 2: Exploring Borderlands 3: Utopian Promise 4: Spirit of Nationalism 5: Masculine Heroes 7: Slavery and Freedom 8: Regional Realism 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity
Latino literature	2: Exploring Borderlands 10: Rhythms in Poetry 12: Migrant Struggle 16: Search for Identity	2: Exploring Borderlands 5: Masculine Heroes 10: Rhythms in Poetry 12: Migrant Struggle 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity
Asian American literature	12: Migrant Struggle 16: Search for Identity	9: Social Realism 12: Migrant Struggle 16: Search for Identity
Jewish American literature	9: Social Realism 11: Modernist Portraits 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity	9: Social Realism 11: Modernist Portraits 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity
Women's literature	1: Native Voices 2: Exploring Borderlands 3: Utopian Promise 6: Gothic Undercurrents 7: Slavery and Freedom 8: Regional Realism 9: Social Realism 11: Modernist Portraits 12: Migrant Struggle 13: Southern Renaissance 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity	1: Native Voices 2: Exploring Borderlands 3: Utopian Promise 4: Spirit of Nationalism 5: Masculine Heroes 6: Gothic Undercurrents 7: Slavery and Freedom 8: Regional Realism 9: Social Realism 10: Rhythms in Poetry 11: Modernist Portraits 12: Migrant Struggle 13: Southern Renaissance 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity
Gay and lesbian literature	2: Exploring Borderlands 5: Masculine Heroes 10: Rhythms in Poetry 11: Modernist Portraits 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity	2: Exploring Borderlands 5: Masculine Heroes 10: Rhythms in Poetry 11: Modernist Portraits 12: Migrant Struggle 13: Southern Renaissance 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity

Literature cont'd	Video Representation	*Study Guide* Representation
Working-class literature	2: Exploring Borderlands 4: Spirit of Nationalism 5: Masculine Heroes 7: Slavery and Freedom 9: Social Realism 12: Migrant Struggle 16: Search for Identity	2: Exploring Borderlands 4: Spirit of Nationalism 5: Masculine Heroes 7: Slavery and Freedom 9: Social Realism 10: Rhythms in Poetry 12: Migrant Struggle 14: Becoming Visible 15: Poetry of Liberation 16: Search for Identity

LITERATURE IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

When you study American literature in its cultural context, you enter a multi-disciplined and multi-voiced conversation where scholars and critics in different fields examine the same topic but ask very different questions about it. For example, how might a literary critic's understanding of nineteenth-century American culture compare to that of a historian of the same era? How can an art historian's understanding of popular visual metaphors enrich our readings of literature? The materials presented in this section of the *Study Guide* aim to help you enter that conversation. Below are some suggestions on how to begin.

Deep in the heart of the Vatican Museum is an exquisite marble statue from first- or second-century Rome. Over seven feet high, the statue depicts a scene from Virgil's *Aeneid* in which Laocoön and his sons are punished for warning the Trojans about the Trojan horse. Their bodies are entwined with large, devouring serpents, and Laocoön's face is turned upward in a dizzying portrait of anguish, his muscles rippling and bending beneath the snake's strong coils.

   The emotion in the statue captured the heart and eye of critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who used the work as the starting point for his seminal essay on the relationship between literature and art, "*Laocoön*: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry." For Lessing, one of the most common errors that students of culture can make is to assume that all aspects of culture develop in tandem with one another. As Lessing points out, each art has its own strengths. For example, literature works well with notions of time and story, and thus is more flexible than visual art in terms of imaginative freedom, whereas painting is a visual medium that can reach greater beauty, although it is static. For Lessing, the mixing of these two modes (temporal and spatial) carries great risk along with rewards. As you study literature in conjunction with any of the fine arts, you may find it helpful to ask whether you agree with Lessing that literature *is* primarily a temporal art. Consider too the particular

strengths of the media discussed below. What do they offer that may not be available to writers? What modes do they use that complement our understanding of the literary arts?

Fine Arts

Albrecht Dürer created some of the most disturbing drawings known to humans: they are rife with images of death, the end of the world, and dark creatures that inhabit hell. Images such as *The Last Judgement* (below) can be found in the Online Archive. In *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (1513), a devout Christian knight is taunted by the Devil and Death, who gleefully shakes a quickly depleting hourglass, mocking the soldier with the passing of time. Perhaps the tension and anxiety in Dürer's print resonated with the American poet Randall Jarrell in his struggle with mental illness. In "The Knight, Death, and the Devil," Jarrell opens with a description of the scene:

> Cowhorn-crowned, shockheaded, cornshucked-bearded,
> Death is a scarecrow—his death's-head a teetotum . . .

[7995] Albrecht Dürer, *The Last Judgement* (1510), courtesy of the print collection of Connecticut College, New London.

Jarrell's description is filled with adjectives in much the same way that the print is crowded with detail. The poem is an instance of what critics call **ekphrasis**: the verbal description of a work of visual art, usually of a painting, photograph, or sculpture but sometimes of an urn, tapestry, or quilt. Ekphrasis attempts to bridge the gap between the verbal and the visual arts. Artists and writers have always influenced one another: sometimes directly as in the case of Dürer's drawing and Jarrell's poem, and other times indirectly.

The *Study Guide* will help you navigate through these webs of influence. For example, Unit 5 will introduce you to the Hudson River School, the great American landscape painters of the nineteenth century. In the Context focusing on these artists, you will learn of the interconnectedness of their visual motifs. In Unit 11, William Carlos Williams, whose poems "The Dance" and "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" were inspired by two paintings by Breughel, will draw your attention to the use of ekphrasis. Williams's work is a significant example of how multiple traditions in art can influence a writer: in addition to his interest in European art, Williams imitated Chinese landscapes and poetic forms.

When you encounter works of fine art, such as paintings, photographs, or sculpture, in the Online Archive or the *Study Guide*, you may find two tools used by art historians helpful: **formal analysis** and **iconography**. Formal

analysis, like close readings of poems, seeks to describe the nature of the object without reference to the context in which it was created. A formal analysis addresses such questions as Where does the central interest in the work lie? How is the work composed and with what materials? How is lighting or shading used? What does the scene depict? What allusions (mythological, religious, artistic) are found in the work?

Once you have described the work of art using formal analysis, you may want to extend your reading by calling attention to the cultural climate in which the work was produced. This is called an iconographic reading. Here the Context sections of the *Study Guide* will be useful. You may notice, for example, a number of nineteenth-century paintings of ships in the Online Archive. One of the Contexts for Unit 6 argues that these ships can be read as symbols for nineteenth-century America, where it was common to refer to the nation as a "ship of state." The glowing light or wrecked hulls in the paintings reflect the artists' alternating optimism and pessimism about where the young country was headed.

Below are two possible readings of Thomas Cole's painting *The Falls of Kaaterskill* that employ the tools of formal analysis and iconography.

[3694] Thomas Cole, *The Falls of Kaaterskill* (1826), courtesy of the Warner Collection of the Gulf States Paper Corporation, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

WRITER A: FORMAL ANALYSIS

In this painting by Hudson River School artist Thomas Cole, the falls that give the painting its name grab our attention. The shock of the white falls against the concentrated brightness of the rocks ensures that the waterfall will be the focus of the work. Even amidst this brightness, however, there is darkness and mystery in the painting, where the falls emerge out of a dark quarry and crash down onto broken tree limbs and staggered rocks. The descent is neither peaceful nor pastoral, unlike the presentation of nature in Cole's other works, such as the *Oxbow*. The enormity of the falls compared to the lone human figure that perches above them also adds to the sense of power the falls embody. Barely recognizable as human because it is so minute, the figure still pushes forward as if to embrace the cascade of the water in a painting that explores the tension between the individual and the power of nature.

WRITER B: ICONOGRAPHY

I agree with Writer A that this painting is all about the power of nature, but I would argue that it is about a particular kind of power: one that nineteenth-century thinkers called the "sublime." Cole's portrait of the falls is particularly indebted to the aesthetic ideas formulated by Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century. Burke was interested in categorizing aesthetic responses, and he distinguished the "sublime" from the "beautiful." While the beautiful is calm and harmonious, the sublime is majestic, wild, and even savage. While viewers are soothed by the beautiful, they are overwhelmed, awestruck, and sometimes terrified by the sublime. Often associated with huge, overpowering natural

phenomena like mountains, waterfalls, or thunderstorms, the "delightful ter-ror" inspired by sublime visions was supposed to both remind viewers of their own insignificance in the face of nature and divinity and inspire them with a sense of transcendence. Here the miniature figure is the object of our gaze even as he is obliterated by the grandeur of the water. During the nineteenth cen-tury, tourists often visited locales such as the Kaaterskill Falls in order to expe-rience the "delightful terror" that they brought. This experience is also echoed in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Nature," in which he writes of his desire to become a "transparent eyeball" that will be able to absorb the oversoul that surrounds him. The power that nature holds here is that of the divine: nature is one way we can experience higher realms.

How do these readings differ? Which do you find more compelling and why? What uses can you see for formal analysis or iconographic readings? When might you choose one of these strategies over the other?

History

As historian Ray Kierstead has pointed out, history is not just "one damn thing after another": rather, history is a way of telling stories about time or, some might say, making an argument about time. The Greek historian Herodotus is often called the father of history in the western world, as he was one of the first historians to notice patterns in world events. Herodotus saw that the course of empires followed a cyclical pattern of rise and fall: as one empire reaches its peak and self-destructs out of hubris (excessive pride), a new empire or new nations will be born to take its place. Thomas Cole's five-part series *The Course of Empire* (1833) mirrors this Herodotean notion of time as his scene moves from *savage*, to *pastoral*, to *consummation*, to *devastation*, to *desolation*. This vision of time has been tremendously influential in literature: whenever you read a work written in the **pastoral mode** (literature that looks back with nostalgia to an era of rural life, lost simplicity, and a time when nature and culture were one), ask yourself whether there is an implicit opti-mism or pessimism about what follows this lost rural ideal. For example, in Herman Melville's South Sea novel *Typee*, we find the narrator in a Tahitian vil-lage. He seeks to determine if he has entered a pastoral or savage setting: is he surrounded by savages, or is he plunged in a pastoral bliss? Implicit in both is a suggestion that there are earlier forms of civilization than the United States that the narrator has left behind. Any structural analysis of a work of literature (an analysis that pays attention to how a work is ordered) would do well to consider what notions of history are embedded within.

In addition to the structural significance of history, a dialogue between his-tory and literature is crucial because much of the early literature of the United States can also be categorized as historical documents. It is helpful, therefore, to understand the genres of history. Like literature, history is comprised of dif-ferent genres, or modes. Historian Elizabeth Boone defines the main traditional genres of history as ***res gestae***, **geographical**, and **annals**. *Res gestae*, or "deeds done," organizes history through a list of accomplishments. This was a popu-

lar form of history for the ancient Greeks and Romans; for example, the auto-biography of Julius Caesar chronicles his deeds, narrated in the third person. When Hernán Cortés and other explorers wrote accounts of their travels (often in the form of letters to the emperor), Caesar's autobiography served as their model. Geographical histories use travel through space to shape the narrative: Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative is an example of a geographical history in that it follows her through a sequence of twenty geographic "removes" into Indian country and back. Annals, by contrast, use time as the organizing principle. Information is catalogued by year or month. Diaries and journals are a good example of this genre.

These three genres can also be found in the histories of the Aztecs and Mayans of Mesoamerica and in those of the native communities of the United States and Canada. For example, the migration legend, a popular indigenous form of history, is a geographical history, whereas trickster tales often tell the early history of the world through a series of deeds. Memoirists also mix genres; for example, the first section of William Bradford's *Of Plimouth Plantation* is a geographical history, whereas the second half is annals. Today the most common historical genres are intellectual history (the history of ideas), political history (the story of leaders), and diplomatic history (the history of foreign relations). To these categories we might add the newer categories of "social history" (a history of everyday life) and "gender history" (which focuses on the construction of gender roles).

Finally, history is a crucial tool for understanding literature because literature is written in—and arguably often reflects—a specific historical context. Readers of literary works can deepen their understanding by drawing on the tools of history, that is, the records people leave behind: political (or literary) documents, town records, census data, newspaper stories, captivity narratives, letters, journals, diaries, and the like. Even such objects as tools, graveyards, or trading goods can tell us important information about the nature of everyday life for a community, how it worshipped or what it thought of the relationship between life and death.

Material Culture

[6332] Archibald Gunn and Richard Felton Outcault, *New York Journal's Colored Comic Supplement* (1896), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-25531].

When you look at an object, it may call up associations from the past. For example, for the first-time viewer the clown figure in the image above may seem innocuous, yet at the end of the nineteenth century his popularity was so intense that it started a newspaper war fierce enough to spawn a whole new term for sensationalist, irresponsible journalism—"yellow journalism." Objects such as this comic supplement constitute "material culture," the objects of everyday life. In *Material Culture Studies in America*, Thomas Schlereth provides the following useful definition of material culture:

> Material culture can be considered to be the totality of artifacts in a culture, the vast universe of objects used by humankind to cope with the physical world, to facilitate social intercourse, to delight our fancy, and to create symbols of meaning. . . . Leland Ferguson argues that material culture includes all "the things that people leave behind . . . all of the things people make from the physical world—farm tools, ceramics, houses, furniture, toys, buttons, roads, cities." (2)

When we study material culture in conjunction with literature, we wed two notions of "culture" and explore how they relate. As critic John Storey notes, the first notion of culture is what is often called "high culture"—the "general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic factors"; and the second is "lived culture"—the "particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group" (2). In a sense, material culture (as the objects of a lived culture) allows us to see how the prevailing intellectual ideas were played out in the daily lives of people in a particular era.

Thus, as Schlereth explains, through studying material culture we can learn about the "belief systems—the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular community or society, usually across time" (3). In reading objects as embedded with meaning, we follow Schlereth's premise that "objects made or

modified by humans, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, reflect the belief patterns of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and, by extension, the belief patterns of the larger society of which they are a part" (3). The study of material culture, then, can help us better understand the cultures that produced and consumed the literature we read today.

Thomas Schlereth suggests a number of useful models for studying material culture; his "Art History Paradigm" is particularly noteworthy in that it will help you approach works of "high art," such as paintings and sculptures, as well. The "Art History Paradigm" argues that the interpretive objective of examining the artifact is to "depict the historical development and intrinsic merit" of it. If you are interested in writing an "Art History Paradigm" reading of material culture, you might look at an object and ask yourself the following questions, taken from Sylvan Barnet's *Short Guide to Writing about Art*. These questions apply to *any* art object:

First, we need to know information about the artifact so we can place it in a historical context. You might ask yourself:

1. What is my first response to the work?
2. When and where was the work made?
3. Where would the work originally have been seen?
4. What purpose did the work serve?
5. In what condition has the work survived? (Barnet 21–22)

In addition, if the artifact is a drawing, painting, or advertisement, you might want to ask yourself questions such as these:

1. What is the subject matter? What (if anything) is happening?
2. If the picture is a portrait, how do the furnishings and the background and the angle of the head or the posture of the head and body (as well as the facial expression) contribute to our sense of the subject's character?
3. If the picture is a still life, does it suggest opulence or want?
4. In a landscape, what is the relation between human beings and nature? Are the figures at ease in nature, or are they dwarfed by it? Are they one with the horizon, or (because the viewpoint is low) do they stand out against the horizon and perhaps seem in touch with the heavens, or at least with open air? If there are woods, are these woods threatening, or are they an inviting place of refuge? If there is a clearing, is the clearing a vulnerable place or is it a place of refuge from ominous woods? Do the natural objects in the landscape somehow reflect the emotions of the figures? (Barnet 22–23; for more questions, see pp. 23–24)

Material culture is a rich and varied resource that ranges from kitchen utensils, to advertisements, to farming tools, to clothing. Unpacking the significance of objects that appear in the stories and poems you read may help you better understand characters and their motives.

Architecture

Most of the time we read the hidden meanings of buildings without even thinking twice. Consider the buildings below:

Above: **[9089]** Anonymous, Capitol Building at Washington, D.C. (1906), courtesy of Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-121528].
Right: **[6889]** Anonymous, *Façade of the Sam Wah's Chinese Laundry* (c. 1890–1900), courtesy of the Denver Public Library.

Even if we had never seen either of these buildings before, it would not take us long to determine which was a government building and which was a small-town retail establishment. Our having seen thousands of buildings enables us to understand the purpose of a building from architectural clues.

When first seeing a work of architecture, it is helpful to unpack cultural assumptions. You might ask:

1. What is the purpose of this building? Is it public or private? What activities take place within it?
2. What features of the building reflect this purpose? Which of these features are necessary and which are merely conventional?
3. What buildings or building styles does this building allude to? What values are inherent in that allusion?
4. What parts of this building are principally decorative rather than functional? What does the ornament or lack of it say about the status of the owners or the people who work there?
5. What buildings surround this building? How do they affect the way the building is entered?
6. What types of people live or work in this building? How do they interact within the space? What do these findings say about the relative social status of the occupants? How does the building design restrict or encourage that status?
7. How are people supposed to enter and move through the building? What clues does the building give as to how this movement should take place?

These questions imply two basic assumptions about architecture: (1) architecture reflects and helps establish **social status** and social relations; and (2) architecture is often **processual**—that is, it guides the movement of people both between and among buildings and within them.

First, how does architecture embody notions of social status and social relations? Most twentieth-century American homes (domestic architecture) divide the space according to the age of the inhabitants: adults and children tend to have different bedrooms and "play" areas. Historically, this has not always been the case: in some societies, domestic space is divided based on social status and gender, rather than age. As you look at examples of American homes from before the twentieth century, you might look for clues as to how space was divided and what this arrangement says about the relationships among the inhabitants. Similarly, in fiction and nonfiction it is important to pay attention to what buildings tells us about characters and social relations. When in William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" the poor white father is told by a black servant in a nearby mansion that he must "Wipe yo foots, white man, fo you come in here," it is clear that he is being reminded through the encounter with the building and servant of his lower social status. The injunction to "wipe yo foots" is meant as an insult, just as the white man returns the insult when he refuses to wipe his feet, or when—as a result—he is told later that "you have ruined that rug. . . . It cost a hundred dollars. But you never had a hundred dollars. You never will." Floor plans, along with urban-planning documents and maps of towns and homesteads, can help provide a context for understanding the status of characters and relations between them.

A second concept to remember is that architecture is processual: the order of the rooms and the arrangement within the rooms encourage you to move through the building and to view the objects within the building in a particular order. While you can transgress this order—for example, in a museum you can skip an exhibit and go straight to the bathroom or cafeteria—when you do so, you are violating the normal order of the building. Though we don't think about it often, even domestic structures have a built-in order: a first-time visitor would be unlikely to visit the bedrooms of a house, unless invited to do so. The notion that architecture is processual is useful for thinking about architecture in conjunction with literature because characters often follow (or break!) these rules. Their comfort or discomfort with the rules can tell us much about their relationship to society. For example, that Gertrude Simmons Bonnin's (Zitkala Ša's) mother is uncomfortable cooking in a Western-style house and cooks instead in a tipi communicates important information about her relationship to Western culture.

The notion of architecture as processual applies both to an individual building and to a group of buildings. Plantation architecture is a good example of this. The stereotypical long tree-lined drive channeled visitors to the "big house." With its white pillars, the entryway resembled a Roman or Greek temple and emphasized the power of the patriarch who lived within. In contrast, the slave quarters were secondary, and their humble appearance emphasized the lower status of their residents. As you read a work of literature, pay attention to the description of the town, city, or homestead and how the buildings create a sense of social space.

Religion

While the Bill of Rights establishes the separation of church and state, the culture of America has always been profoundly religious. Though scholars, notably Perry Miller, have sought to create a cohesive story about American **religion**, America's religious traditions have been diverse since the earliest colonies: in addition to the indigenous religious traditions that had been evolving for millennia, Puritans, Quakers, Catholics, Jews, and Anglicans came to the Americas, bringing with them a wide range of theologies. For those interested in the religious history of the Americas, an essential resource is *Religions of the United States in Practice*, ed. Colleen McDannell. As this work and others like it show, the study of religion is itself interdisciplinary, drawing most commonly on the disciplines of literature and history, as well as theology. Although it necessarily oversimplifies three rich and varied traditions, the chart below can be a useful starting point for understanding some of the religious differences in early America. You might want to make a similar chart comparing Calvinism ("Puritanism") to the Quaker and Native American religious traditions during the first Great Awakening (1740s).

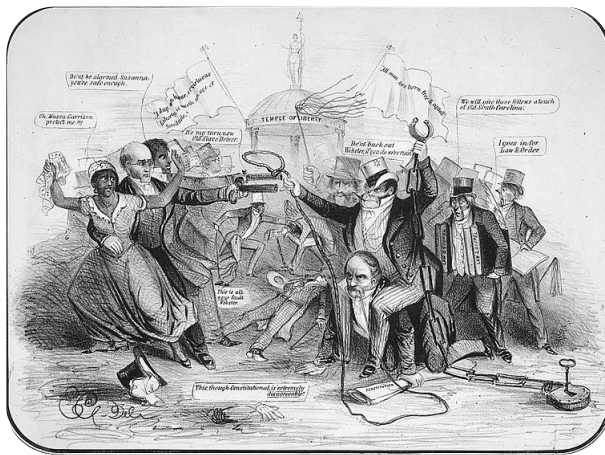| THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING: EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY CALVINISM, UNITARIANISM, AND TRANSCENDENTALISM			
Topic	**Calvinism**	**Unitarianism**	**Transcendentalism**
God	Supreme patriarch; Trinity	Supreme being; one person	Supreme mind ("Oversoul"); God animates everything
People	Innately sinful (Original Sin)	Innately good (*tabula rasa*)	Have part of the divine within
Who runs the world	God: all is predestined	Man: has free will to determine own fate	Supreme Mind: is present within all of us
Truth comes from	God, his texts	Within	Signs present everywhere in nature
Leaders of the movement in the 1820s (Second Great Awakening)	Timothy Dwight, Lyman Beecher	William Ellery Channing, early Emerson	Doesn't really begin until 1836; do see attacks on Locke (the Miracles debate) and essays on Carlyle in the 1820s
Main followers in the 1820s	Laboring classes	Wealthy Bostonians and land owners	Transcendental Club (begins 1836)

The chart on page 17 forces a question: What is religion, after all? The anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his essay "Religion as a Cultural System" suggests one important possibility. Geertz argues that religion is "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (90). One of the most influential aspects of this definition is its ability to step outside of an understanding of religion as being about a creator: indeed, you might ask if Geertz's definition of religion is so broad as to apply, for example, to deeply held beliefs in the sciences. You will probably want to come up with your own definition of religion and to compare it with that of your classmates.

Most of the early American literary texts in *The Norton Anthology* deal with religion in one way or another. These include conversion narratives, sermons, creation stories, religious verse, and chants. How does one read a work of religious literature? Readers should remember that religious texts are often intended to be **performed** or to be **performative**. Many of the above genres were enacted—performed—in a specific context and for a specific audience. For example, when Samson Occom gave his "Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul," his intended audience was both Indians and white community members. It is crucial to consider who the intended audience is for a religious work. Many religious works are performative in that the words spoken are intended to bring about a particular deed. For example, saying the words "I do" performs the act of marriage—the words accomplish the act. An example of this performative power can be found both in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* and in her autobiography *Storyteller* in the poem-myth "Long Time Ago." In this story, a witch has a performative power of language: as the witch tells the origin of the white people, the whites are created. The witch cannot take the words back "because it is already done." Other religious texts, such as conversion narratives, are thought to have this performative function. Preachers hoped that reading about or listening to a conversion would bring about more conversions. Whatever the traditions, as you read a religious text, it is important to consider its goal.

Politics

Where does literature begin and where do politics end? The definition of what constitutes literature has changed over time: types of texts that we might be likely to consider political, such as speeches, are found in *The Norton Anthology*. Political texts ask us to consider the social work of a piece of literature: tracts such as slave narratives or even sentimental novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had a great impact on American politics and political history. Understanding the political debates of an era can help us understand the popularity of a work in its own time. Similarly, political cartoons can provide us with insights into pervasive cultural metaphors, or **tropes**. For example, consider the following anti-slavery cartoon:

[6586] E. C. Dell, *Practical Illustration of the Fugitive Slave Law* (1851), courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Then, as now, cartoons were an effective way to garner support for or create distrust of individuals and groups within the United States. In this cartoon, the illustrator makes an analogy between protecting runaway slaves and protecting women from the animalistic passions of deviant men. This is a cultural metaphor that Harriet Jacobs and other slaves drew upon in their narratives, as did Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

In addition to providing important information about cultural tropes, political science offers a wealth of resources for better understanding the populations that are described and addressed in American literature. What segments of society comprised a reading public? Were they well educated? Was reading a leisure activity or a hard-won skill? Likewise, census data, immigration records, and political polls can tell us about whether the characters in a work of literature were representative of their era, or of the dreams and hopes—or nightmares—that a population faced.

Music

Some of the earliest American poems are songs: Sorrow Songs sung by the Aztecs as Hernán Cortés conquered Tenochtitlan; Sorrow Songs sung by slaves as they worked the soil of the New World and dreamed of a way out of bondage; or hymns sung by religious refugees as they embraced the hardships sent to them by their God. Poet Ezra Pound once said that there were three types of poems: those dominated by images, those dominated by the use of language and logic, and those dominated by the use of music and sound. Poetry is the literary genre perhaps most influenced by music, though fiction writers also use rhythms and melodies to set the tone of their work. Poetic forms are often borrowed from musical forms. Emily Dickinson's quatrains borrow from church hymns and popular songs, and Langston Hughes's verse borrows from the blues. This borrowing may occur both on a structural and on a rhythmic

level. A poet may use the line length and stanza structure of a particular type of song or she may borrow just the beat from a musical mode. Recently, literary scholars have tended to view songs themselves as a form of literature, particularly for groups that did not traditionally record their verse in written form: for example, the Sorrow Songs of American slaves, the ballads of the cowboy, and the Nightway chant of the Navajo or the Ghost Dance songs of the Sioux.

Musical genres that have been particularly influential for American literature include hymns, blues, jazz, ballads, *corridos*, and chants. Hymns are one of the earliest musical influences on American poetry. One of the most popular early American books was the *Massachusetts Bay Psalm Book* by Reverend Richard Mather. Hymns and psalms from the Puritan colonies tend to be less ornate and less contrapuntal than church music from Catholic colonies of the same era. This difference is related to the general interest in a plain-style aesthetic held by the Puritans and Quakers. Psalms, or hymns, take their context from the Book of Psalms in the Bible but are written in rhyming quatrains of alternating iambic pentameter and tetrameter, the same form that a **ballad stanza** takes. The main difference between hymns and ballad stanzas is that hymns tend to be rhymed *abab*, while ballad stanzas are rhymed *abcb*. Ballad stanzas usually tell a story, whereas hymns are more meditative. Hymns are used differently in different communities: in a Wampanoag Indian praying town on Martha's Vineyard, many of the hymns were set to indigenous melodies; in the Spanish American colonies, Nahuatl (Aztec) speakers wrote hymns that combined the **jeremiad** tradition with Sorrow Songs lamenting the fall of their city; similarly, African American spirituals retain some of the rhythms and melodies brought over from Africa.

These African influences can also be found in **blues** and **jazz** and the poetic and narrative forms that they have inspired. People often think of the blues as a sort of melancholia, what people in the nineteenth century would have called the "hypos." The blues, however, have a rich range of associations and often rely upon humor and sexual innuendo to get their message across. According to scholar Steven Tracy, favorite subjects of blues songs and poems are relationships, love, poverty, politics, dreams, upward mobility, violence, death, sex, alcohol, skin color, and the harshness of the city versus the lost rural past. Traditional blues emerge out of the Sorrow Songs and take either a twelve- or eight-bar form. The meter of both of these forms is a swing; that is, the first beat is longer than the second, rather than the even meter of most Western music and verse: "GON-na," not "going to."

The lines of blues songs and poems are often given in a "call and response," a pattern that has its origins in African and slave oral traditions and that is also reflected in African American church oratory. The response line may comment on the call in a variety of ways; it may affirm, reject, undermine, emphasize, or increase the pathos of the call. The response may also mock the call: humor in the blues comes in many varieties and ranges from slapstick, to wry, to painful recognition. Blues poems borrow from the blues formally, metrically, and thematically.

Jazz and jazz poetry, like the blues, tend to use a swing meter, but unlike the blues rely on improvisation to create a new form, rather than adhering to the traditional song structures. Jazz is an example of what literary critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. has called "signifyin(g)": the rhetorical practice in Black

English vernacular of repeating with a "signal difference," or a comment on the initial version that calls attention to the change. John Coltrane's jazz rendition of "My Favorite Things" epitomizes the art of signifyin(g) and improvisation: in the original version of the song from *The Sound of Music*, Julie Andrews explains that the way to deal with scary events is to think of one's favorite things, such as "whiskers on kittens" and "sleigh bells." Out of context this seems innocuous enough, but given that the Von Trapp children must ultimately flee their home to escape the Nazis, such advice seems vapid at best. In Coltrane's version the beat is swung sideways and the melodic line is ripped apart and improvised upon and made anew: perhaps Coltrane references the original song to argue for a revolution through music, where platitudes (like those expressed in *The Sound of Music*) are replaced with radical rethinkings. Jazz poetry and fiction carry on this tradition of signification and revolution.

Another American musical form is the ballad. The ballad stanza lies behind many forms of popular American poetry, ranging from cowboy songs, to Civil War tunes, to borderlands *corridos*. Ballads in general, and *corridos* in particular, tell through song and verse the story of folk heroes who go against the status quo and subvert the social order. As oral historian Americo Paredes notes, *corridos* feature a hero who defends his rights, particularly with regard to territory; shows of bravado by the hero ("I am Joaquin!"); a lack of morality or repentance by the hero; and a family that will suffer after he is captured.

In *With a Pistol in His Hand*, Paredes explains that while ballads were popular throughout the United States during the nineteenth century, the **corrido** was the dominant form of balladry in the Texas border region between 1836 and 1930, in part because of the popularity of its subject: the racial conflict of the region and the ultimate triumph of the Chicano who sought to defend his civil rights. *Corridos* derive their power from the heraldic stories of Spain and Europe: a wronged man is made into an outlaw and is hunted down for his crime. The word *"corrido"* is derived from the Spanish *"correr"* ("to run"), signaling the rapid tempo and brisk narrative pace that usually characterize these songs. *Corridos* do not have refrains or choruses; rather, the lyrics move the listener through the narrative quickly and without digression. Like their English cousin the ballad, *corridos* consist of four-line stanzas in iambic tetrameter and trimeter.

The **chant** is another genre of American music useful for understanding American poetry. In his research on Native American verse patterns, anthropologist and linguist Dell Hymes has found that Native American verse tends to use repetition of numerical sets to build the underlying rhetorical and metrical form for song and verse. The most common pairs of numerical sets are 3 and 5 and 2 and 4. Often these numbers have deep associations within the communities that use them. For example, the Nightway chant relies on repetitions of 4 and a 4/4 beat to unify its message and emphasize the completeness and wholeness that the chant seeks to achieve. Look for numerical patterns in the other chants (such as the Ghost Dance songs) that appear in *The Norton Anthology* and the Online Archive and in the poetry of contemporary Native American poets.

Psychology

Although contemporary psychology has expanded beyond Freud, Freudian psychoanalysis has had an enduring influence on literary scholarship. The conversation among literary critics and scholars of psychoanalysis is rich and diverse, but at least two ideas are worth emphasizing here: the notions of the **cultural work of mourning** and the **cinematic gaze**.

One of the most important dialogues between psychology and literary analysis has been the application of Freud's theories about mourning to poetic elegies. Elegies are more than sad poems lamenting the loss of a beloved. As poet and literary critic Peter Sacks explains in *The English Elegy* (1985), **elegies** (and other artifacts of mourning such as mourners' rings and embroidery) attempt to take the reader, as well as the speaker, through the mourning process. The traditional structure of the elegy, Sacks argues, displays the speaker's transformation from an emotional state of melancholia (inconsolable identification between the ego and the dead) to one of consolable mourning. Using Freud and his analysis of the structure of mourning, Sacks suggests that the speaker in an elegy models the mourning process for the reader, ultimately warding off the reader's fears by laying claim to the power of art to reply to and ward off death. He notes that the poetic conventions that aid the movement from grief to consolation include the pastoral, myths, repetition and refrains, outbreaks of anger and cursing, the procession of mourners, and images of resurrection. In the movement out of grief, poetry and art come to replace the lost person and thereby console readers by reminding them of the ability of poetry to transcend mortality.

A second influence of psychoanalysis on literary analysis is the work of film critic Laura Mulvey, particularly her investigation of the cinematic gaze. Mulvey applies Freud's notion of **scopophilia** to the experience of watching films: in his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud defines scopophilia as the pleasure associated with "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze." While watching a film may appear to be innocuous, Mulvey argues, "Among other things, the position of the spectators in the cinema is blatantly one of repression of their exhibitionism and projection of the repressed desire onto the performer" (9). In most films, this repressed desire belongs to an active male gaze and is projected onto a passive feminized body. When applied to literature, Mulvey's argument has significant implications: Who is the narrator of the story? How is this narration gendered? Who is the object of visual pleasure for the narrator? These questions can be profitably asked of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Blithedale Romance*, in which the story is channeled through the narrator, the bachelor Mr. Coverdale, who covets the two main female characters of the text and projects our desire as readers onto the women. This tension between the two desires (one of the women is chaste, the other is worldly) reflects what Mulvey identifies as the common splitting of the Western hero between integration into society via marriage and resistance to social demands and responsibilities.

Cultural Geography

In Margaret Fuller's autobiographical travel narrative *Summer on the Lakes* the author recounts passing time by watching what was considered by many to be the sublime spectacle of her generation: the cascading waters of Niagara Falls. As the water rushed over the precipice, Fuller recounts, "I felt nothing but a quiet satisfaction . . . everything looked as I thought it would." For readers of the nineteenth century, such a response was heretical: the falls were well known to invoke feelings of fear and trepidation in viewers. The experience, they believed, should be at once violent and beautiful, but surely not mere banal "satisfaction."

Margaret Fuller's response to Niagara, along with that of other writers and tourists of her generation, brings into view the discipline of **cultural geography**, the intersection of the fields of cultural studies, geography, and urban planning. Cultural geography asks questions such as, What cultural forces influence our response to natural landscapes? What makes cityscapes culturally meaningful? What symbolism is embedded in the settings on which the national character is based, and how do these settings change with time? For surely, as Fuller's experience with Niagara Falls demonstrates, no two people experience a place in the same way, and those experiences are bound to change over time. As Niagara Falls came to represent a source of electrical power and mechanized miracles, its essence as a "natural wonder" changed for the American public.

[9026] George Barker, *Niagara Falls, N.Y., Close-Up View from Below* (1886), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-97270].

Cultural geography and spatial analysis have had important ramifications for feminist literary studies as well. Feminist literary critics have explored how place and gender are mapped onto not only urban and rural space but also the body of characters themselves. As Margaret Higonnet suggests in *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space (Theory and Applied Theory)*, "Feminist literary critics have begun to undertake new cartographies, to trace the ways writers inscribe gender onto the symbolic representations of space within texts, whether through images of physical confinement, of exile and exclusions, of property and territoriality, or of the body as the interface between individual and communal identities" (2). As you read the works in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, you might consider how the characters' bodies are themselves spaces mapped with cultural meanings.

Folklore

In the discipline of **folklore**, **myths** refer to stories that take place in a prehistoric time and involve supernatural, as well as sometimes human, beings. Myths may be stories of how the world was created (as in the Danbala story) or how Coyote stole the water from the waterfalls. Time may not function typically in myths and characters in myths may not be subject to ordinary rules. Myths often are about the creation of culture and the rules that govern the natural universe. In contrast, **legends** usually take place at the edges of historical record and involve heroes that are human yet have magical or extraordinary abilities. For example, the story of Troy is a legend for the ancient Greeks: it took place before the Dark Ages and involved both gods and heroes capable of superhuman feats. Other examples of legends include the migration legends told by American Indian communities about how they came to live on these lands.

Folklore also draws on contemporary events and contemporary notions of time and causality. Urban legends are one example of folklore, as are jokes. Jokes are an important cultural resource as they express the anxieties and boundaries of a community. In her work on resentment humor in Guatemala surrounding the controversial figure of Rigoberta Menchú, anthropologist Diane Nelson argues that jokes can also help restore jeopardized power relations and manipulate public opinion. Humor has a parallel purpose when it is part of religious or spiritual practice or part of myth, legend, or folklore. Trickster figures such as Coyote or Raven are good examples of the way in which sacred play can bring about what Paul Radin has called "the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries" (185); such figures "add disorder and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed boundaries of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted." Humor is always worth keeping an eye out for in literature—it often represents more than comic relief.

Structuralism, or the investigation of underlying structures of thought and language, draws upon the conventions of folklore to explain the network of relations between units in a narrative. For structuralist theorist Mieke Bal, a tale is always composed of three levels: the **text**, the **fabula**, and the **story**. Bal defines these levels of the tale as follows: "a *narrative text* is a text in which an agent relates a narrative. A *story* is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (5).

An example will help clarify Bal's distinctions: when we read Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, we hold a text in our hands in which an agent—Ishmael—narrates a narrative, namely the story of how the *Pequod* was lost at sea. The fabula of *Moby-Dick* is the sequence of events as they occurred (what we often call the "plot"), without all the narrative filler on whales and whaling. The story is the way in which the events are presented: When are events told out of sequence in order to heighten the tension? For example, although Ahab's monomaniacal obsession with Moby-Dick precedes the signing of Ishmael and Queequeg onto the *Pequod*, it is not revealed to them or to us until the ship has set sail. With its examinations of the layers within tales, structuralist theory is a crucial tool that literary scholars have used to better understand an author's rhetorical strategies.

Anthropology

Anthropology has had a significant influence on literary scholarship and vice versa. One of the conversations between anthropology and literature has come in the form of **dialogical anthropology**, as practiced by James Clifford and others. Dialogical anthropology argues that the interpretation of a text or event is necessarily an event in which both the creator and the interpreter of the text/event participate; thus, it is a dialogue.

Another conversation between anthropology and literary analysis has concerned kinship and social structure. **Kinship** consists of the ways in which social relations are passed along through families and community lines. For example, author and scholar Paula Gunn Allen has argued that Laguna Pueblo Indians originally were a matriarchal and matrifocal people; that is, unlike modern American culture, in which our names and identities are passed on through the paternal line, in Laguna culture, people belong to the mother's clan and women are at the center of the tribe's power systems. In Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, Tayo's identity comes through his mother, his aunt, and his grandmother. In mainstream American fiction the story of the foundling, the child with unknown parents, is common, but Tayo has a family and does not search for or long for his white father as he attempts to heal. His father is not a part of his identity; rather, it is his mother's family that provides his identity. Importantly, the main male figure who helps Tayo heal is his maternal uncle Josiah, whereas his aunt's husband is almost completely absent. As you read texts from Native American cultures, you may find it helpful to trace identity through inheritance patterns. Creating family trees for texts not only may help you keep the characters straight but also can help you understand the influences among them.

Literary critics share with anthropologists and philosophers an interest in the subject of time. Anthropologists have argued that there are two basic notions of time: **chronological** and **nonlinear**, or **cyclical**. In the chronological notion of time familiar to most North Americans, time progresses in a linear fashion. Once an event has occurred, it is in the past and does not return or occur again in exactly the same fashion. Nonlinear time, which is less familiar to the majority of North Americans, is sometimes described as domelike, a concept of time in which events can be connected in a random fashion. Others describe nonlinear time as cyclical, with events repeating or reoccurring as instances of a prior experience.

These two modes of experiencing time—chronological and nonlinear—are not mutually exclusive: after all, even though the majority of North Americans believe that time progresses in a linear manner from past to present to future, they mark this linear time in a calendar fashion with recurring seasons, months, and dates. These different notions of time have had a great cultural impact, particularly on religious literature and Native American literature. Apocalyptic literature, for example, often predicts the end of linear time and the beginning of a timeless, pastoral state. Anthropologists and Native Americans have argued that American Indians traditionally have organized time in nonlinear and cyclical ways, a temporal organization that has influenced Native American written traditions, which sometimes lack a traditional chronological plot.

Implicit within any history, autobiography, or work of fiction is an underly-

ing notion of time. As you read literary texts, consider the way time is constructed and presented in them.

GLOSSARY

annals   A mode of history that uses time as its organizing principle. Diaries and journals are good examples of this genre.

ballad stanza   A rhyming quatrain of alternating iambic pentameter and tetrameter lines. Variations of the ballad stanza are used in many forms of popular American poetry, from cowboy songs, to Civil War tunes, to borderlands *corridos*. Many hymns use a modified ballad stanza.

blues   A musical genre that developed out of Sorrow Songs and takes either a twelve- or eight-bar form. The meter of both of these forms is a swing; that is, the first beat is longer than the second.

chant   Native American music, often religious and performative in nature. Anthropologist and linguist Dell Hymes argues that Native American verse tends to repeat numerical units to build the underlying rhetorical and metrical form for song and verse. The most common pairs of numbers are 3/5 and 2/4. Often these numbers have deep associations within the communities that use them.

chronological time   The notion that time progresses in a linear fashion.

cinematic gaze   See **scopophilia**.

corridos   The dominant form of balladry in the Texas border region between 1836 and 1930. Popular subjects of *corridos* were the racial conflict of the region and the ultimate triumph of the Chicano seeking to defend his civil rights. The word *"corrido"* is derived from the Spanish *"correr"* ("to run"), signaling the rapid tempo and brisk narrative pace that usually characterize these songs.

cultural geography   The intersection among the fields of cultural studies, geography, and urban planning. Cultural geography asks questions such as, What cultural forces influence our response to natural landscapes? What makes cityscapes culturally meaningful? What symbolism is embedded in the settings on which our national character is based and how do these settings change with time?

cultural work of mourning   A Freudian term used to describe the psychological and cultural accomplishments of mourning for the dead. See **elegy**.

cyclical time   See **nonlinear time**.

dialogical anthropology   As practiced by James Clifford and others, the mode of anthropology that argues that the interpretation of a text or an event is necessarily a dialogical process, one in which both the creator and the interpreter of the text/event participate.

ekphrasis   The verbal description of a work of visual art, usually a painting, photograph, or sculpture. Ekphrasis attempts to bridge the gap between the verbal and the visual arts.

elegy   A poetic genre that attempts to take the reader, as well as the speaker, through the mourning process. The traditional structure of the elegy displays the speaker's transformation from an emotional state of melancholia to one of consolable mourning. The poetic conventions that aid this process

include the pastoral, myths, repetition and refrains, outbreaks of anger and cursing, the procession of mourners, images of resurrection, and the movement from grief to consolation.

Enlightenment   An era in eighteenth-century American culture influenced by philosophers like Isaac Newton and John Locke, who argued that the universe is arranged in an orderly system, and that by the application of reason and intellect, human beings are capable of apprehending that system. This philosophy represented a radical shift from earlier notions that the world is ordered by a stern, inscrutable God whose plans are beyond human understanding and whose will can only be known through religious revelation.

fabula   According to narratologist Mieke Bal, "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors." See **text** and **story**.

folklore   A genre that involves contemporary events and contemporary notions of time and causality. Urban legends are one example of folklore, as are jokes.

formal analysis   A tool of art historians. Like close readings of poems, formal analysis seeks to describe the nature of a work of art without attending to the context in which it was created. Questions that might be asked in formal analysis are, Where does the central interest in the work lie? How is the work composed? With what materials is it composed? How is lighting or shading used? What is the scene depicting? What allusions (mythological, religious, artistic) are found in the work?

geographical history   A historical mode that uses travel through space to shape a narrative: Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative is an example of a geographical history in that it follows her through a sequence of twenty geographic "removes" into Indian country and back.

iconography   An analytical tool used by art historians. It calls attention to the cultural climate in which the work of art was produced.

jazz   A musical genre that, like the blues, tends to use a swing meter, but unlike the blues relies on improvisation to create a new form, rather than adhering to traditional song structures. Jazz is an example of what literary critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. has called "signifyin(g)"; that is, the rhetorical practice in Black English vernacular of repeating with a "signal difference," or a comment on the initial version that calls attention to the change.

kinship   The ways in which social relations are passed along through families and community lines. For example, author and scholar Paula Gunn Allen has argued that Laguna Pueblo Indians originally had a matriarchal and matrifocal kinship structure.

legends   Folklore term for stories that take place at the edges of the historical record and that involve heroes that are human yet possess magical or extraordinary abilities.

modernism   A movement in early-twentieth-century American culture that responded to technological innovation, increased urbanization, and the accompanying sense of a world changing too quickly to comprehend. Modernists tended to self-consciously oppose or reinvent traditional forms, which they believed to be out of step with the modern world.

myths   Stories that take place in a prehistoric time and involve both supernatural and human beings. Myths are often about the creation of the world and the rules that govern the natural universe.

nonlinear (or cyclical) time   Conception of time that holds that time does not progress in a linear fashion from past to present to future, and that moments repeat themselves either in a fixed pattern or in a random manner.

pastoral mode   Literature or art that looks back with nostalgia to an era of rural life, lost simplicity, and a time when nature and culture were one.

performative   Intended to bring about a particular deed. For example, saying "I do" performs the act of marriage—the words accomplish the act. An example of performative language can be found in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* and in her autobiography *Storyteller* in the poem-myth "Long Time Ago." In this story a witch brings the white people into being by telling a story about them.

performed   Enacted in a specific context and for a specific audience.

postmodernism   A movement in late-twentieth-century American culture that rejected objectivity and stability in favor of more fluid understandings of reality. Postmodern philosophers argue that there are no absolutes and reject "essentializing" systems and ideas.

processual   According to architectural theory, the characteristic of buildings such that the order of the rooms and the arrangement within the rooms themselves control how one moves through the building and views the objects within it.

realism   A movement in late-ninteenth-century American culture in which writers and artists expressed a new commitment to the truthful, accurate representation of life as it was experienced by ordinary Americans. Realism was characterized by its uncompromising, literal representations of the particularities of the material world and the human condition. This passion for finding and presenting the truth led many American practitioners of realism to explore characters, places, and events that had never before seemed appropriate subject matter for literature.

religion   According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, "A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."

Renaissance   Literally "re-birth" (French); refers to the revival of the classical tradition in Europe during the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. The Renaissance marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Age of Exploration and modern science.

res gestae   Literally "deeds done" (Latin); the organization of history through a list of accomplishments. This was a popular form of history for the ancient Greeks and Romans, and these histories in turn served as the model for those of early explorers like Hernán Cortés.

Romanticism   A movement in early-nineteenth-century American culture that stressed creativity, sensation, subjectivity, emotion, and fulfillment. Romanticism saw nature as an inspiring force and emphasized the radically innovative individual, as opposed to the Enlightenment tendency to focus on the rationally ordered society.

scopophilia   According to Sigmund Freud, the pleasure associated with "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze." Scopophilia is a key term for psychoanalysis and film theory.

social status   The relative and culturally determined value attributed to persons within a society.

story   According to narratologist Mieke Bal, the level of a tale in which "a fabula . . . is presented in a certain manner." For example, although Ahab's obsession with the whale chronologically precedes the signing of Ishmael and Queequeg onto the *Pequod* in *Moby-Dick*, it is not revealed to them or to us until the ship has set sail. Here the fabula (the chronological tale) is presented in a more suspenseful manner. See **text** and **fabula**.

text   According to narratologist Mieke Bal, the level of a tale in which "an agent relates a narrative." For example, when we read *Moby-Dick*, we hold a text in our hands in which an agent—Ishmael—narrates a narrative, namely the story of how the *Pequod* was lost at sea. Also see **story** and **fabula**.

trope   A pervasive cultural metaphor.

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