

Unit 14

BECOMING VISIBLE

*Ethnic Writers and the Literary
Mainstream, 1945–1969*

Authors and Works

Featured in the Video:

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (novel), “Cadillac Flambé” (short story)

Philip Roth, *Portnoy’s Complaint* (novel), “Defender of the Faith” (short story)

N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, *House Made of Dawn* (novels)

Discussed in This Unit:

Bernard Malamud, “The Magic Barrel” (short story)

Saul Bellow, “Looking for Mr. Green” (short story)

Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (play)

Gwendolyn Brooks, “The White Troops Had Their Orders But the Negroes Looked Like Men,” “We Real Cool,” “A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon,” “The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till” (poems)

Grace Paley, “A Conversation with My Father” (short story)

James Baldwin, “Going to Meet the Man” (short story)

Paule Marshall, “Reena” (short story)

Overview Questions

■ How did this diverse array of minority and ethnic voices enrich an American literary tradition that once was defined almost exclusively by white men?

■ What relationship can we see between innovations in twentieth-century popular culture, especially jazz and rock and roll, and experimentation in literary style?

■ How do the writers in this unit greatly expand the conventional definitions of what it means to be an American?

■ Several of these writers experienced moral, political, or psychological crises during the course of their lives and in the process became disillusioned with radical agendas and mass movements. How do these crises show in their work, and what similarities do you see between their experience with political movements and that of authors from earlier periods in American literature?

■ What experimental styles and strategies become apparent in the literary works featured in this unit?

■ Much of the literature in this unit responds to an age in which the pressures of conformity and assimilation led to a climate of political protest. What resemblances and differences do you see between the moral issues that these writers address and those confronted by earlier American writers?

■ What relationship is conveyed between each writer and his or her own communities—both the ethnic or racial community in which he or she grew up, and the larger society encountered as an adult? How might the complexity of this relationship give each text and writer a special importance?

■ The suburbs expanded in the 1950s and after, rivaling cities and rural settings as places for Americans to live. How do some writers from this unit represent the suburban experience?

■ Almost all of the works included in this unit focus on the problems and challenges of forging identity. How do they achieve a measure of relevance for a broad range of American readers?

■ What modern American aspirations, myths, and fears are present in the work of these writers, and how does each writer address them?

■ What myths about American family life were reinforced in the popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s? How have those myths been challenged in literary works, and how have those myths endured or evolved today?

Learning Objectives

After students have viewed the video, read the headnotes and literary selections in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and explored related archival materials on the *American Passages* Web site, they should be able to

1. see and discuss connections among Ralph Ellison's enthusiasm for jazz, his deep experience in classic American and European literature, and his own style and experiments as a writer;
2. hear and discuss the various ways in which these writers use American urban and ethnic dialects, speech patterns, and folkways in writing for a multiethnic audience;
3. understand how traditional American themes (growing up, breaking away from established values, finding love, pursuing dreams) are addressed and transformed by each of these authors;
4. understand how change in cultural and personal life is addressed in the work of several of these writers;
5. appreciate the dynamics of assimilation and acculturation;
6. define the "novel of identity" as a distinct literary genre and discuss how it relates to the broader tradition of the bildungsroman;
7. identify hallmarks of modern and contemporary Native American, African American, and Jewish American literature.

Instructor Overview

In the folk memory of the twenty-first century, the 1950s are recalled as a decade of bland conservatism and imaginative complacency in the United States. Television came of age in the 1950s, and it proclaimed that suburban ranch houses, station wagons, "Father Knows Best," and "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit" were the icons and obsessions of postwar America. An investigation of newspapers, however, or a sampling of the literary and intellectual life of the 1950s will demonstrate that there was no shortage of vitality, independent thought, and moral uncertainty during this time in American history. As the severe housing shortage after World War II gave way to suburban sprawl and interstate

highways, the dynamics of ordinary life were radically reinvented. Women who had worked in the defense industries and who remembered the scarcity and hardship of the 1930s and 1940s now faced the heady challenges of prosperity and conflicting social values. Propelled by the G.I. Bill, the vast expansion of the American college and university system brought higher education to millions of people from ordinary backgrounds—yet life after college did not always reflect the possibilities that had opened up to these bright and hopeful undergraduates. Women with college degrees, for instance, still faced an economic and social system that regarded them as aspiring housewives.

The G.I. Bill also changed the bloodlines of American thought. By the mid-1950s, the dominion of the New England Ivy League Brahmin with an Anglo-Saxon pedigree had ended, and the arts and intellectual life were energized by people with names and faces that Henry Adams and T. S. Eliot would have thought strange indeed. Many of the emerging authors, including Lionel Trilling, Ralph Ellison, Bernard Malamud, Gwendolyn Brooks, Delmore Schwartz, James Baldwin, Norman Mailer, Paule Marshall, Grace Paley, Philip Roth, and Saul Bellow, did not come from families that would have made the "Blue Book" of any prewar American social hierarchy.

Unit 14, "Becoming Visible," provides background and classroom materials on Baldwin, Bellow, Ellison, Arthur Miller, Roth, Paley, Malamud, Marshall, N. Scott Momaday, Richard Wright, and Brooks. The video for Unit 14 focuses on three of these authors and explores how writers from this period responded to the challenge of being American in a decade of Cold War, material comfort, moral anxiety, and deep concern about the place of independent thinkers and ethnic minorities within the United States. Ellison, Roth, and Momaday are known for their "novels of identity," works that relate a long adventure of growing up and achieving a self. Their heroes and journeys are sometimes emblematic of the aspirations and crises of people who had not previously figured so powerfully in the American imagination. Bellow, Malamud, and Miller also became famous as contributors to this expanded American mythology.

The video and curriculum materials for Unit 14 pay special attention to the mingling of American traditions in the works under discussion. *Invisible*

Man draws heavily on jazz, blues, and African American culture, as well as on the literary traditions of James Joyce, Mark Twain, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann. In *Portnoy's Complaint*, Philip Roth echoes the Anglo-Saxon nostalgia of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe, as well as the exuberance of *yiddishkeit*, the folk culture of Eastern European Jews. N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* is experimental in its use of collage, recalling moments in the works of William Faulkner, as well as the Kiowa oral tradition. Unit 14 also explores how these ethnic American writers won the attention of readers and critics beyond the reach of their own communities. What aspects of these works resonated for Americans living lives very different from the protagonists in these narratives? Unit 14 helps answer these questions by offering suggestions about how to connect these writers to other writers of the era, to their cultural context, and to other units in the series.

The video, the archive, and the curriculum materials situate writers of this generation with reference to several key issues of their day: (1) the rise of suburbs and the intensification of the conflict between individuality and conformity; (2) the migration to urban centers by ethnic minorities; (3) baseball as a symbol of national identity, and the consequent importance of desegregation in the sport; (4) anxiety over the threat of nuclear annihilation; (5) the plight of veterans returning to civilian life and seeking to be accepted as Americans, regardless of ethnicity; (6) the influence of jazz on American literature and style; and (7) the continuing impact of World War II on American social life.

The archive and curriculum materials suggest how students might connect the readings from this unit to those of other units in the series: How do the lives and work of Jewish American women differ from era to era? How does Ellison's protagonist compare with Dave Saunders in Wright's "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"? Similarly, students are encouraged to compare the rhetorical strategies used by Ellison and other African American writers of the 1950s and 1960s to those used by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs in Unit 7. Roth's emphasis on combat experience and ethnicity in imagining American manhood is compared to the construction of American masculinity discussed in Unit 5. Unit 14 is also designed to get students thinking about postmodernism and post-World

War II American culture, topics that will be explored in Units 15 and 16. Why were the writers discussed in Unit 14 sometimes attacked by members of their own ethnic groups? How do the writers discussed in Units 15 and 16 respond to similar attacks and accusations?

Student Overview

In the folk memory of the twenty-first century, the 1950s are recalled as a decade of bland conservatism and imaginative complacency in the United States. Television came of age in the 1950s, and it proclaimed that suburban ranch houses, station wagons, "Father Knows Best," and "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit" were the icons and obsessions of postwar America. An investigation of newspapers, however, or a sampling of the literary and intellectual life of the 1950s will demonstrate that there was no shortage of vitality, independent thought, and moral uncertainty during this time in American history. As the severe housing shortage after World War II gave way to suburban sprawl and interstate highways, the dynamics of ordinary life were radically reinvented. Women who had worked in the defense industries and who remembered the scarcity and hardship of the 1930s and 1940s now faced the heady challenges of prosperity and conflicting social values. Propelled by the G.I. Bill, the vast expansion of the American college and university system brought higher education to millions of people from ordinary backgrounds—yet life after college did not always reflect the possibilities that had opened up to these bright and hopeful undergraduates. Women with college degrees, for instance, still faced an economic and social system that regarded them as aspiring housewives.

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Bellow, did not come from families that would have made the “Blue Book” of any prewar American social hierarchy.

Unit 14, “Becoming Visible,” explores the expansion of American literary culture after World War II and the new voices entering American cultural conversation. African Americans, Native Americans, American Jews, and citizens of many other ethnic backgrounds participated in the fight against Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire; when the war was over, these people—as individuals and as groups—sought greater visibility and recognition within American society.

As the video explains, Ralph Ellison, N. Scott Momaday, and Philip Roth faced an artistic predicament shared by many other American minority writers. They experienced isolation from their own racial or ethnic literary communities, as well as from the larger culture, because of risks they took in their writing and their insistence on writing as individuals rather than as generic representatives of a larger group. Each of these three felt compelled to risk a great deal by saying things that would not, in Ralph Ellison’s words in *Invisible Man*, “yes ’em to death.”

This willingness to speak honestly, and in ways that might not please a wide audience, is shared by other writers discussed in Unit 14. Each affirmed the right to speak as an individual first and to give limited allegiance to coteries, hierarchies, and fashions. These writers thus join the ranks of Herman Melville, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Douglass, Emily Dickinson,

Walt Whitman, and others who won widespread admiration only after a long and difficult conversation with the larger culture.

The video, the archive, and the curriculum materials for this unit connect the writers of this generation to the key issues of their day: (1) the rise of the suburbs after World War II, and the conflict between individuality and conformity that suburban life intensified; (2) the continuing migration to urban centers by ethnic minorities; (3) baseball as a symbol of American identity, and the impact of the desegregation of the sport in the early 1950s; (4) the arms race with the Soviet Union and the threat of nuclear annihilation; (5) the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the special predicament of the minority veterans of the American armed forces; (6) the influence of jazz on American literature and fashion; and (7) the continuing impact of World War II on American ethnic communities.

On a thematic level, this unit explores ways in which American minority writers, including Ellison, Roth, and Momaday, achieved an important presence in the literary culture of the United States. How did our national literary traditions help these authors achieve recognition as American voices? What aspects of their work seemed to hit home for large numbers of readers during this era? Unit 14 helps answer these questions by offering suggestions on how to connect these writers to other writers of the era, to their cultural context, and to other units in the series.

Video Overview

- **Authors covered:** Ralph Ellison, Philip Roth, N. Scott Momaday
- **Who's interviewed:** Judith Baskin, professor of religious studies and director of the Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies (University of Oregon); John Callahan, Ralph Ellison's literary executor and Morgan S. Odell Professor of Humanities (Lewis and Clark College); Joy Harjo, poet/musician, professor of English (University of California, Los Angeles) (Muscogee/Creek); N. Scott Momaday, Pulitzer Prize-winning author; Greg Sarris, professor of English (Loyola Marymount University) (Miwok Chief/Pomo); Pancho Savery, professor of English (Reed College); Eric Sundquist, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of English (Northwestern University); Wendy Wasserstein, Tony Award, Dramatists Guild Award, and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright
- **Points covered:**
 - The decades after World War II were a conflicting time, characterized by prosperity and conformity for some and rebellion for others. Mass consumption, a movement to the suburbs from the inner cities, and a fear of communism helped to stifle dissent. During the 1950s and 1960s mainstream literary and popular culture embraced some ethnic writers who achieved both commercial success and literary acclaim.
 - Writers Ralph Ellison, Philip Roth, and N. Scott Momaday grappled with issues of ethnicity and race and redefined what it meant to be American and part of the American literary canon. Each produced a **novel of identity** in which an existential hero goes on a journey of self-discovery. Widely appreciated for their universal appeal, these authors also tackled issues unique to their particular cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
 - Ellison's *Invisible Man* sparked an ongoing debate about the obligations and consequences of a "black identity."
 - Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* explores the anxieties and aspirations of Jewish Americans as they attempt to adapt to life among the gentiles.
 - N. Scott Momaday explores ethnic identity in *House Made of Dawn*. Influenced by the Native American oral tradition, Momaday's experimental style juxtaposes three kinds of voices: mythic, historical, and personal.

PREVIEW

- **Preview the video:** In the 1950s and 1960s, ethnic writers moved onto the bestseller lists and achieved recognition in literary circles. Ralph Ellison, Philip Roth, and N. Scott Momaday showed how Americans once at the margins were now closer to the country's cultural center. In doing so, all three writers expanded the boundaries of American literature and opened up the definition of what it is to be American. The video provides the backdrop for this era, as a post-World War II America began to enjoy a prosperity that led it toward conformity and mass consumption. However, the postwar economic boom and "white flight" to the suburbs increased the physical and class distance between the white middle class and ethnic minorities who remained in older neighborhoods closer to the city centers. Ellison, Roth, and Momaday helped to resist the imaginative segregation that accompanied these changes in the urban and suburban landscape. Ellison's adaptations from jazz and blues, Roth's ethnic comedic rifts, and Momaday's ingenious use of Native American narrative traditions all helped to make storytelling richer and expanded readers' awareness of where narrative art comes from and who is capable of creating it. The video also emphasizes the risk these authors took in their innovative approaches as representatives of their own communities, often facing fierce criticism and misunderstanding of their fiction and its intentions.
- **What to think about while watching:** How do Ellison, Roth, and Momaday expand the definition of what it means to be American? What traditions influenced each of these writers? How do they respond to the social and political tensions of the time, such as the pressure to conform and the need for overall recognition of civil rights for minorities? What American icons do the authors invoke and redefine in their works?
- **Tying the video to the unit content:** This unit focuses on "novels of identity" from the 1950s and 1960s, particularly those dealing with issues of ethnicity and race. In an era remembered now for conformity, but also for the cultural rebellions of the 1960s, these writers spoke both as individuals and as members of groups. In doing so, they exemplify a conflict between being American and being part of an ethnic community. Unit 14 provides background information that will help readers understand this literature.

The Context "With Justice for All: From World War II to the Civil Rights Movement" provides a surprising picture

Video Overview (continued)

of how ethnic minorities who had served their country well in war were subjected to hatred and racism upon their return to civilian life. In one sense, these citizens were assimilated into the dominant culture through their service during the war but then were expected to return to disenfranchised minority status after the war was over. Alternatively, Japanese Americans were detained and confined without representation during the war because of widespread fear about their loyalties. Major works exploring such themes include Philip Roth's "Defender of the Faith," N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. In the Context "Suburban Dreams: Levittown, New York" students learn how new suburban subdivisions intensified a pressure to assimilate and conform and eroded the sense of coherence and belonging that had been possible for many families when they lived in ethnic neighborhoods. Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* and even Arthur Miller's *Death of a*

Salesman explore the suburban setting, while Bellow's "Looking for Mr. Green" is set in the city. The Context "Living with the Atomic Bomb: Native Americans and the Postwar Uranium Boom and Nuclear Reactions" deals with Native Americans working in uranium mines and with the cultural paranoia of living with "the bomb" in the late 1950s and the 1960s. "Jazz Aesthetics" helps readers understand the influence of this music as it crossed over into other arts, such as writing and painting. Note the influences of jazz and the blues in Ellison's *Invisible Man* and "Cadillac Flambé," along with works by writers such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, and James Baldwin. Finally, "Baseball: An American Pastime" discusses the influences of the "all-American" sport across the country, demonstrating how it reflected the ethnic and labor struggles that were occurring in the rest of American society. Note the use of baseball in the works of Ellison, Miller, Malamud, and Roth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE VIDEO

	What is American literature? What are the distinctive voices and styles in American literature? How do social and political issues influence the American canon?	How are American myths created, challenged, and reimagined through this literature?	What is an American? How does literature create conceptions of the American experience and American identity?
Comprehension Questions	What changes in literary style are discussed in the video? Why did some Jewish American critics condemn Philip Roth's novels as anti-Semitic while Ellison was charged with not "being black enough"? Why is N. Scott Momaday's <i>The Way to Rainy Mountain</i> hard to classify?	How is the concept of "the American Dream" challenged in this unit? Why do so many people still think of the 1950s and 1960s as a wonderful, peaceful time, as envisioned in sitcoms like <i>Happy Days</i> or movies like <i>American Graffiti</i> ? Who is excluded from these scenarios?	How do Roth, Ellison, and Momaday define America or Americans? Why does the Invisible Man leave the South? What is he looking for, and what does he find when he arrives in 1930s New York City? What does N. Scott Momaday mean when he describes his childhood as a "Pan-Indian experience"?
Context Questions	What traditions influenced each of these writers? How are these writers' ethnic traditions reflected in what and how they write?	Ellison, Roth, and Momaday explore the role of minority Americans in the armed forces, particularly in World War II. How does this war inform the construction of the American hero during the 1950s and 1960s?	How do the themes and styles of these writers reflect economic, cultural, and political changes in American culture in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s? Consider changes occurring with the civil rights movement, the Cold War, and the social rebellion sparked by the Vietnam War that extended to the needs of women, gay and lesbian Americans, and members of other minority groups.
Exploration Questions	Ellison's <i>Invisible Man</i> has been hailed as a classic novel of American literature. What makes a piece of literature a classic?	What American myths do you associate with the 1950s and 1960s? Some possibilities might be the idyllic imaginary world that television provided in programs like <i>Leave It to Beaver</i> or <i>My Three Sons</i> . Others might include the notions that "popularity leads to success in life," that "good always wins and evil always loses," or that "everyone has a fair chance at success if they just try hard." How do these myths relate to the authors and events covered in the video?	Ellison, Roth, and Momaday use ethnic stereotypes. When is using stereotypes useful and when is it not?

TIMELINE

	Texts	Contexts
1940s	<p>Saul Bellow, <i>The Dangling Man</i> (1944), <i>The Victim</i> (1947)</p> <p>Gwendolyn Brooks, <i>A Street in Bronzeville</i> (1945), "The White Troops Had Their Orders But the Negroes Looked Like Men" (1945), <i>Annie Allen</i> (1949)</p> <p>Arthur Miller, <i>All My Sons</i> (1947), <i>Death of a Salesman</i> (1949)</p>	<p>Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt, ordering all persons of Japanese ancestry out of the Pacific military zone to inland internment camps (1942; ends 1945)</p> <p>All Girls Professional Baseball League (1943–54)</p> <p>Filipino Naturalization Act (1946)</p> <p>Jackie Robinson becomes the first African American to officially play Major League Baseball (1947)</p>
1950s	<p>Bernard Malamud, <i>The Natural</i> (1950), <i>The Assistant</i> (1957), "The Magic Barrel" (1958)</p> <p>Saul Bellow, "Looking for Mr. Green" (1952), <i>The Adventures of Augie March</i> (1953), <i>Henderson the Rain King</i> (1959)</p> <p>Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (1952)</p> <p>James Baldwin, <i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> (1953), <i>The Amen Corner</i> (1955), <i>Notes of a Native Son</i> (1955), <i>Giovanni's Room</i> (1956)</p> <p>Gwendolyn Brooks, <i>Maud Martha</i> (1953), <i>Bronzeville Boys and Girls</i> (1956)</p> <p>Arthur Miller, <i>The Crucible</i> (1953), <i>A Memory of Two Mondays</i> (1955), <i>A View from the Bridge</i> (1955)</p> <p>Paule Marshall, <i>Brown Girl, Brownstones</i> (1959)</p> <p>Grace Paley, <i>Little Disturbances of Man</i> (1959)</p> <p>Philip Roth, <i>Goodbye Columbus</i> (1959), "Defender of the Faith" (1959)</p>	<p>Korean War (1950–53)</p> <p>Racial segregation in schools banned (1954)</p> <p>Rosa Parks arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus; sparks Montgomery bus boycott (1955)</p> <p>Supreme Court rules that bus segregation is illegal (1956)</p> <p>Voting Rights Bill passed by Congress (1957)</p> <p>President Eisenhower sends U.S. Army troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce desegregation in public schools (1957)</p>
1960s	<p>Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool" (1960), "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon" (1960), <i>In the Mecca</i> (1968)</p> <p>Bernard Malamud, <i>The Tenant</i> (1960), <i>The Fixer</i> (1966)</p> <p>James Baldwin, <i>Nobody Knows My Name</i> (1961), <i>Another Country</i> (1962), <i>The Fire Next Time</i> (1963), "Going to Meet the Man" (1965)</p> <p>Paule Marshall, <i>Soul Clap Hands and Sing</i> (1961)</p> <p>Arthur Miller, <i>The Misfits</i> (1961), <i>After the Fall</i> (1964), <i>Incident at Vichy</i> (1965), <i>The Price</i> (1968)</p> <p>Philip Roth, <i>Letting Go</i> (1962), <i>When She Was Good</i> (1967), <i>Portnoy's Complaint</i> (1969)</p> <p>Saul Bellow, <i>Herzog</i> (1964)</p> <p>Ralph Ellison, <i>Shadow and Act</i> (1964)</p> <p>N. Scott Momaday, <i>The Journey to Tai-me</i> (1967), <i>House Made of Dawn</i> (1968), <i>The Way to Rainy Mountain</i> (1969)</p>	<p>Greensboro sit-in protests begin (1960)</p> <p>Civil rights march on Washington, D.C. (1963)</p> <p>President John F. Kennedy assassinated (1963)</p> <p>Civil Rights Act (1964)</p> <p>Vietnam War (1964–75)</p> <p>Malcolm X assassinated (1965)</p> <p>Voting Rights Act (1965)</p> <p>Black Panther Party for Self Defense founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale (1965)</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated (1968)</p>

AUTHOR/TEXT REVIEW

Bernard Malamud (1914–1986)

In Saul Bellow's eulogy to Bernard Malamud, he writes that "a language is a spiritual mansion from which no one can evict us. Malamud in his novels and stories discovered a sort of communicative genius in the impoverished, harsh jargon of immigrant New York. He was a mythmaker, a fabulist, and a writer of exquisite parables. . . . The accent of hard-won and individual emotional truth is always heard in Malamud's words." Along with Bellow, Malamud is one of the most important contributors to the body of Jewish American writing coming out of the 1950s. Like Bellow, he captured the cadences of the speech and manners of the newly immigrated, working-class Jews and used reality and myth to "convey the most intimate details of existence."

Bernard Malamud was born in Brooklyn and graduated from Erasmus High School and the City College of New York. He received his M.A. from Columbia University in 1942 and taught at high schools in New York City as well as at Oregon State University and Bennington College. By 1950 his short stories had started to appear in *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*, and his first novel, *The Natural* (1950), a fable about an injured baseball hero gifted with miraculous powers, added the realm of the mythic to the already popular American pastime. His second novel, *The Assistant* (1957), tells the story of a young gentile hoodlum and an old Jewish grocer. *The Fixer* (1966), the story of a Jewish handyman unjustly imprisoned in Czarist Russia for the murder of a Christian boy, won the Pulitzer Prize.

In the 1960s, Malamud tackled a subject central to Jewish experience and literature of the era: Jewish and African American relations. During the 1950s and 1960s, Jewish-black relations became increasingly strained as competition for inner-city housing became even greater than before. As anthropologist Karen Brodtkin points out in *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America*, Jews had just begun to make the transition into being considered "white" during the

1950s and 1960s; one consequence of this transformation was that many Jews tried to distance themselves from other, less "white" ethnic groups, often in racist and unappealing ways. In *The Tenant* (1960), Malamud plays one minority's experience against another's. Inter-ethnic tensions are also central to Jo Sinclair's path-breaking novel *The Changelings* (1955) and Saul Bellow's controversial *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970). These novels by Malamud and others provide an important counternarrative to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Malamud's later works include *Dubin's Lives* (1979) and *God's Grace* (1982) as well as an important body of short fiction.



[7855] Jack Delano, *Children Studying in a Hebrew School in Colchester, Connecticut* (1940), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-042452-D].

TEACHING TIP

■ Before reading “The Magic Barrel,” organize a student discussion on the problems of dating and finding a mate. Why is finding a date or a mate so difficult? What qualities do most students want in a date or a mate? What are the qualifications parents would set for the “perfect date” or mate? What mechanisms or customs did people use to find dates or mates in the past? What mechanisms do we use now? Do they work?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In what ways does Salzman in “The Magic Barrel” almost seem magical himself? Where does Malamud allude to Salzman’s magical qualities? Why might Malamud want to include a sense of “magic” in this tale?

Comprehension: Why doesn’t Malamud use a first-person narrator in “The Magic Barrel,” as Roth does in “Defender of the Faith” and as Paley does in “A Conversation with My Father”? What are the advantages of an omniscient teller for this particular story?

Comprehension: Malamud was sometimes accused of sentimentalizing the ethnic experience in America. Is “The Magic Barrel” sentimental? What elements of the story complicate any answer to this question?

Context: Like Roth’s “Defender of the Faith,” Malamud’s “The Magic Barrel” gives us a glimpse of a society in transition and of an individual quarreling with the traditional values that support his social identity. Compare the endings of the stories: what remains uncertain for both of the protagonists?

Exploration: Read aloud a sampling of the dialogue in “The Magic Barrel.” What is your impression of its cadences, its sound? Are we listening to a conversation in American English? In translated Yiddish? Are we hearing voices in transition, as well as a tale of social values and personal identity? How can you tell?

Exploration: Several times, Malamud reminds readers of the long-standing suffering associated with being Jewish. Where does this suffering come from, historically and culturally, and why does it continue to exist? Why would this sense of cultural suffering be reinforced, especially after World War II?

Ralph Ellison (1914–1994)

Ralph Ellison grew up in Oklahoma City and attended college at the Tuskegee Institute, where he was a music major who admired both the classics of the European tradition and Kansas City **jazz**. After graduation he moved to New York City, where he met Richard Wright, who encouraged him to pursue his writing career. *Invisible Man* (1952), the result of seven years of writing, won the National Book Award and brought Ellison into the national spotlight. Critics disagreed about whether the book made a statement about African Americans, but

MALAMUD WEB ARCHIVE

[7194] Samuel H. Gottscho, *New York City Views. Financial District, Framed by Brooklyn Bridge* (1934), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-G612-T01-21249]. River and New York City skyline. Bernard Malamud grew up and was educated in Brooklyn. Some of his work deals with Jewish and African American relations in the 1950s and 1960s.

[7855] Jack Delano, *Children Studying in a Hebrew School in Colchester, Connecticut* (1940), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-042452-DJ]. Novelist and short-story writer Bernard Malamud focused on the traits and language of recently immigrated and working-class Jews.

[8855] Eric Sundquist, Interview: “Becoming Visible” (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. Professor Eric Sundquist discusses the means by which Jewish Americans became assimilated into American culture.



[7852] Arthur Rothstein, *Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Students* (1942), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USW3-000237-D].

Ellison felt both sides had missed the point. He had never aimed to be a spokesperson and asked to be judged simply as a writer. After the enormous success of *Invisible Man*, Ellison began teaching, and from 1970 until his retirement he was the Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at New York University. His essays are collected in *Shadow and Act* (1964).

In the 1930s the communist party attracted much community attention as a force in the civil rights movement, and many African American intellectuals gravitated to it. Ellison found his way into the party because it seemed at the time to be the strongest and most promising force for change in African American life, a major presence in inner-city

neighborhoods, with skilled organizers and an agenda that offered hope in the midst of a worldwide depression. Like Richard Wright and James Baldwin, however, Ellison broke with communism when he came to understand that the party, under the control of the Stalinist Soviet Union, was exploiting black Americans rather than genuinely championing their causes. This disappointment with the communist party is a central theme in Ellison's *Invisible Man*, contributing to the novel's pervading sense of alienation and dashed hopes. That mood is also palpable in his short story "Cadillac Flambé," in which a black man acts out of anger not only against the complacent racist remarks of a national politician, but also against his own susceptibility to consumerism, the dream that something purchased, something material, can bring fulfillment and peace.

By the early 1960s, *Invisible Man* was being praised at American universities as the greatest novel by an African American; later in that decade, however, as campus radicalism shook up literary and scholastic life in the United States, the book and its author were faulted for showing too much respect for traditions both literary and social. Ellison's wry humor and his public demeanor were liabilities at a time when artists tended to take themselves and racial politics very seriously. When the politics of the 1960s subsided, Ellison's reputation recovered.

ELLISON WEB ARCHIVE

[7140] Emory, *One of Our Main Purposes Is to Unify Brothers and Sisters in the North with Our Brothers and Sisters in the South* (c. 1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-10248]. Political poster for the Black Panthers. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Black Panthers and black nationalist writers emphasized the need for solidarity among African Americans and people of African descent throughout the world.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Have a class discussion about the links between American capitalism, conspicuous consumption, the expansion of the suburbs, and the postwar era's movement toward **assimilation** and complacency. Also discuss the idea prevalent in the 1950s that, in a dangerous world where communists and enemies of the state lurk around every corner, you are either part of the problem or part of the solution. Discuss the complexities of what happens when you are "not allowed" to fit into or conform within the dominant society. Where are ethnic minorities left at such a time?

■ Ask your students to rewrite a paragraph or two of the Battle

Royal scene from *Invisible Man* using a different kind of narrator—either third-person or omniscient. Read several of the paragraphs aloud in class. How does narrative change affect the mood or tone of the text? Why is perspective so crucial to the scene’s power and meaning?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In “Cadillac Flambé,” what seems to be the implied threat when Lee Willie Miniffee says he no longer wants a Cadillac, a Ford, a Rambler, a Ninety-eight (Oldsmobile), a Chevy, or a Chrysler?

Comprehension: Miniffee states, “It is enough to make a citizen feel alienated from his own times, from the abiding values and recent developments within his own nation.” How might this statement relate to the African American veterans who had just returned from serving in World War II?

Comprehension: What does the blindfold symbolize in Chapter 1 of *Invisible Man*? How does the narrator’s limited sight inform the way we read the story?

Comprehension: Define surrealism for your students and situate it historically. Ellison likes to place his characters in surreal circumstances: illuminated holes in the ground; lush lawns on which expensive cars are burning; lurid evenings during which African American boys beat each other for the amusement of a white audience. What does this surrealism accomplish? Is Ellison focusing on something particular about contemporary life? What things can make “real” life seem surreal?

Context: How does the use of the first-person narrator in *Invisible Man* enhance the reader’s understanding of what is happening to the protagonist during the Battle Royal in Chapter 1?

Context: At the opening of both *Invisible Man* and “Cadillac Flambé,” the main character portrays himself as essentially alone. If Ellison means to speak for a large American minority group, what are the advantages and risks of beginning with an isolated hero?

Context: In the video, John Callahan says that Ellison believed that “every one of us is black” in a sense. How do “Cadillac Flambé” and the excerpt from *Invisible Man* convey the sense that something universal is being explored?

Exploration: Compare characteristics of the various works from the 1950s in this unit. Can you find specific instances of **existentialism** (writing that embraces the view that the individual must create his or her own meaning in an unknowable, chaotic, and seemingly empty universe) in works by Ellison, Bellow, and others? Do these works seem to differ substantially from works that fit into the categories of literary realism, **naturalism**, or modernism? How so?

Exploration: In *Shadow and Act*, Ellison writes, “I did not know my true relationship to America . . . but I did know and accept how I felt inside. And I also knew, thanks to the Renaissance Man, what I expected of myself in the matter of personal discipline and creative

[7852] Arthur Rothstein, *Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Students* (1942), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USW3-000237-D]. The Tuskegee Institute was the lifelong project of Booker T. Washington and also the site of George Washington Carver’s revolutionary agricultural experiments. Tuskegee was the model for the college in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Note the neoclassical architecture.

[7865] Charles Keck, *Statue of Booker T. Washington* (1922), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-103181]. “I am standing puzzled, unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place; whether I am witnessing a revelation or a more efficient blinding.”—Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*. The narrator’s comment reflects the debate over how African Americans should be educated. Born into slavery but freed after the Civil War, Booker T. Washington devoted his life to the advancement of African Americans. Although he was respected by both blacks and whites, Washington came under criticism for his willingness to trade social equality for economic opportunity.

[8613] Vito Marcantonio, *Labor’s Martyrs* (1937), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. This socialist publication describing the “great labor martyrs of the past 50 years” discusses the trial and public execution of the “Chicago Anarchists” who organized the Haymarket bombing in 1887 as well as the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927 and the Scottsboro Boys in the 1930s. It also talks about the thriving state of the 1930s labor movement. Labor activism is depicted in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Carlos Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart*.

[8849] John Callahan, Interview: “Becoming Visible” (2003), courtesy of American Passages and Annenberg/CPB. John Callahan discusses Ralph Ellison’s conception of African influence on all Americans.

quality. . . . I rejected all negative definitions imposed on me by others.” How does this quotation ring true not only with Ellison’s writing but also with that of other key figures in this unit, such as Momaday and Roth?

Saul Bellow (b. 1915)

Saul Bellow remains one of the most important post–World War II Jewish American writers. Like Roth, Malamud, and Paley, he offers a Jewish perspective on themes of alienation and “otherness” during an age of postwar fragmentation, materialism, and **conformity**. Like Anzia Yezierska and Abraham Cahan a generation before him, he translates the Yiddish American experience into English.

Born to parents who emigrated from St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1913, Bellow, the fourth and youngest child, grew up in the Jewish ghetto of Montreal and learned to speak both Yiddish and English. In 1924 he moved with his family to Chicago, the city that would influence much of his early fiction. He attended the University of Chicago and then transferred to Northwestern University, from which he graduated in 1937 with a degree in anthropology and sociology. He then moved to New York. His plan was to begin graduate work at New York University, but he married instead and eventually moved back to Chicago in 1962. Chicago became the setting for many of his novels of the 1970s and 1980s. In 1993 he accepted a position in the English department at Boston University. Early in his career, Bellow cultivated a friendship with fellow writer Ralph Ellison—an often-forgotten point in the controversy surrounding his much debated stance on Jewish–African American relations and the attacks he endured for the supposed racism of such novels as *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* (1970).

Bellow wrote his first book, *Dangling Man* (1944), while serving in the Merchant Marine during World War II and followed it with *The Victim* in 1947. In 1976 his novel *Humboldt’s Gift* won the Pulitzer Prize. His analysis of American cultural anxiety and his belief in the possibility of greatness in spite of human frailty and failure are at the core of much of his work. Bellow’s prolific output includes the frequently anthologized novella *Seize the Day* (1956), *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Herzog* (1964), *The Dean’s December* (1982), and *Ravelstein* (2000). He has also written plays and short stories.



[3048] Anonymous, *Free Classes in English! Learn to Speak, Read, & Write the Language of your Children . . . Special Classes for Educated Foreign Born*. N.Y.C. (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-946].

BELLOW WEB ARCHIVE

[3046] Lewis Hine, *Old Jewish Couple, Lower East Side* (1910), courtesy of George Eastman House. Upon arrival in the United States, Eastern European Jewish immigrants found themselves faced with difficult questions: which aspects of their ethnic identity should they preserve and which should they reshape? Writers like Abraham Cahan and Anzia Yezierska asked these ques-

TEACHING TIPS

■ “Looking for Mr. Green” is set during the depression. You may find it helpful to review some of the materials in Unit 12 to help students understand the lingering legacies of the Roosevelt administration’s methods of assisting the poor and destitute. You might remind them that during the Great Depression over a third of the U.S. population needed and received government relief just to survive. Also review the state of race relations in the 1950s to understand some reasons why distrust of “the man” (the white man in a position of power or

authority) would be so prevalent at this time. Have students put together a slide show using depression-era photographs that might help to illustrate issues presented in “Mr. Green.”

■ Have your students build a “character trait” description of the narrator, George Grebe, describing their ideas about his personality and character. Where would he go for fun? What would he do? With whom would he hang out? What would his politics be? What kinds of movies would he like?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In “Looking for Mr. Green,” why might Bellow name an elusive black man “Mr. Green”? How does that name contribute to the atmosphere or themes of the story?

Comprehension: What are the obvious differences between George Grebe’s attitude towards African Americans and the attitude of the Italian grocer? What purpose do these differences serve in the story? What does the author’s attitude seem to be regarding racism and stereotyping?

Comprehension: What are readers to make of the ending of “Looking for Mr. Green”? Does Grebe feel a true or a false sense of elation? Does Grebe seem more cynical or idealistic to you?

Context: Bellow was born in poverty in an ethnic neighborhood in a French Canadian city. He graduated from Northwestern University, a prestigious American school. What transformations, expansions, and compromises might be required in making a journey from poverty to an exclusive American institution of higher education? Are the effects of such a journey evident in “Looking for Mr. Green,” particularly in the personality of Grebe?

Context: Many of the literary works of the mid-twentieth century focus on protagonists who create illusions of a better world in order to cope with the harsh and unpleasant reality they find themselves in. Can you think of stories where this happens? Do you think this is happening in “Looking for Mr. Green”?

Exploration: Bellow often gives his protagonists unusual names, and assertion of ethnicity is not always the obvious objective. For example, a grebe (*Podicipedidae*) is a small, stocky bird that spends most of its time in the water and is ungainly on land. Why call a protagonist “Grebe”? How does the name affect our response to Grebe? Bellow’s naming his character after a bird may remind us of a famous parallel: Washington Irving’s Ichabod Crane from “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” If “Grebe” recalls “Crane,” who also goes into a strange place as a confused, over-educated, inquisitive outsider, what thematic parallels should we consider between “Looking for Mr. Green” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”?

Exploration: One of Bellow’s favorite themes is that a liberal arts education, the kind acquired with great effort and expense at institutions like Columbia, Amherst, Chicago, Georgetown, and other elite universities, teaches no skills for surviving in the “real” world. How are such American campuses designed to be places apart? When

tions in the early twentieth century, from the perspective of the Lower East Side; later writers like Saul Bellow and Philip Roth reflected on the transformation of Jewish identity in the United States.

[3048] Anonymous, *Free Classes in English! Learn to Speak, Read, & Write the Language of your Children . . . Special Classes for Educated Foreign Born*. N.Y.C. (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-946]. Sign in Hebrew and English advertising free English-language and naturalization classes aimed at European Jewish immigrants. The classes were offered through the Works Progress Administration’s Adult Education Program in New York City. Most Jewish immigrants in New York and other major cities lived in tight-knit communities where Hebrew or Yiddish was spoken.

[6248] Anonymous, *Ginsberg with Classmates, the Columbia Campus Quadrangle* (1948), courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Allen Ginsberg had a precarious relationship with Columbia University: as a sophomore, he was expelled for sketching obscene drawings and phrases on his dorm window, which he said he did to demonstrate its dustiness. And although he eventually graduated, Ginsberg’s final years at the school were complicated after he allowed an addict friend to store stolen items in his apartment: in order to avoid prosecution, Ginsberg pled insanity and spent eight months at the Columbia Psychiatric Institute.

[9072] U.S. Department of the Interior, *Map of Chicago, 1970* [from *The National Atlas of the United States of America*, U.S. Geological Survey] (1970), courtesy of the General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin. At the age of nine, Saul Bellow moved from the Jewish ghetto of Montreal to Chicago, where he would reside for much of his adult life. Bellow’s “human understanding and subtle analysis of contemporary culture,” in the words of his Nobel Prize citation, reflect in part his witnessing Chicago’s transformation from a stockyard and rail town to a booming metropolis of business and industry.

FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

BY THE WIVES OF
THE HOLLYWOOD TEN

This brief, amicus curiae, was submitted to the
Supreme Court of the United States.

Believing it will interest the wives and mothers
of a people fighting to retain the right to speak
and act for a peaceful world for their children
—the Committee For The Hollywood Ten has
caused this brief to be published especially for
the women of America.

COMMITTEE FOR THE HOLLYWOOD TEN

1586 CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD
HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIF.

Price 5 cents

[8611] Wives of the Hollywood Ten,
For Justice and Peace (1950), courtesy
of Special Collections, Michigan State
University Libraries.

MILLER WEB ARCHIVE

[3024] Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc.,
*Levittown House of Mrs. Dorothy
Aiskelly, Residence at 44 Sparrow Lane
(1958)*, courtesy of the Library of
Congress [LC-G613-72794]. The post-
war generation saw the development of
so-called “Levittowns,” homogeneous
suburbs that were first conceptualized by
William Levitt in response to the postwar
housing crunch. These communities
were typically middle-class and white.
Jewish Americans flocked to the suburbs
during this era. Philip Roth satirizes
Jewish suburban life in *Goodbye,
Columbus*, and Arthur Miller dramatizes
the plight of the suburban Willy Loman
in *Death of a Salesman*.

you consider the relationship between the landscape of a great campus and the landscape of a major city, what questions can you form about the relationship between education and life?

Arthur Miller (b. 1915)

Arthur Miller was born in Manhattan to a German Jewish family. His father, a successful clothing manufacturer, lost the business in the 1929 stock market crash, and the family was forced to move to Brooklyn. After working two years to earn tuition, Miller enrolled at the University of Michigan to study journalism and began writing plays as well. Following graduation he worked for the Federal Theater Project, writing for radio, and eventually married Mary Slattery. His first Broadway success, *All My Sons*, was produced in 1947 and won the Drama Critics’ Circle Award. *Death of a Salesman* (1949) won the Pulitzer Prize. He also has won Tony Awards, an Obie, and the John F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award and has earned honorary degrees from Harvard and Oxford Universities.

Miller’s inspiration for *The Crucible* (1953) came from the McCarthy hearings in Washington, during which those suspected of communist sympathies were subpoenaed to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee and “confess” as well as name other “suspected” subversives. Miller himself was a victim of **McCarthyism** and in 1957 was convicted of contempt for refusing to identify writers with supposed communist allegiances, a conviction which the Supreme Court overturned on appeal a year later. *The Crucible*, a rather transparent allegory of the communist witch hunts of that era, received unfavorable reviews. Nevertheless, this morally complex play has remained one of Miller’s most powerful and popular creations.

Miller is perhaps best known for *Death of a Salesman*, a tragic homage to the average American middle-class, mid-century man, personified by salesman Willy Loman. Alienated from work, community, and family, Loman hungers for prosperity and personal glory but is trapped by his circumstances.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Have your students brainstorm about the many versions of the American Dream. Categorize these versions as a class. Discuss which versions are mostly based on illusion and which are more realistic and possible. Explore for whom they might be possible and who could probably not realize these dreams.

■ In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy says, “The man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want.” Discuss with students the differences between character and personality. You might have students explore how Americans once idolized mainly people who had good “character.” Then discuss how that has seemed to change to an appreciation for public figures with interest-

ing personalities, or those who are “well liked.” After this discussion, apply the conversation to *Death of a Salesman*.

■ Have students consider Willy’s definition of masculinity and its dependence on a triad of sexual appeal, work, and sports. This is one of the places where you could discuss what is considered Jewish about the text. When Willy wants his sons not to be bookish but instead to be sports heroes and be “liked,” he engages in a classic juxtaposition of Jewish and American conceptions of manhood.

■ Have students view selected segments of *Death of a Salesman* on film. Use these segments as a springboard for discussing Miller’s critique of mid-twentieth-century life in America. Note that this play is set entirely in the house and in this sense depends upon classical (Greek) dramatic conventions, in which everything happens around the ancestral house, and we are just told about other events/places. What kind of house is the Loman house? How does it symbolize the action that will take place?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why does Willy Loman continue to idolize his son Biff throughout most of the play?

Comprehension: Does Willy Loman learn anything by the end of the play? Or does he continue to see the world as one of limitless promises?

Comprehension: Examine the role of Linda Loman. Is she typical of a housewife of this era? What do we make of her when reading the play today?

Comprehension: What do Charley and Bernard seem to represent in the story? Are they living a different version of the American Dream? What is their version?

Context: One of the risks of literary naturalism is caricature and condescension. How do the mixed modes of *Death of a Salesman*—its dream-sequences and interludes of surrealism—help it resist these pitfalls?

Context: How important to the play is the design and style of its set? What audience might Miller have had in mind when he wrote the play? Is *Death of a Salesman* a “period piece” about a particular era or a play that can be reimagined as relevant to our own time? How do we account for its perennial popularity in high school and college English courses?

Exploration: Ellison and Bellow fill their stories with the music, food, and popular tastes of Harlem and Chicago. Why are there so few such details in Miller’s portrait of the Loman household?

Exploration: Does *Death of a Salesman* attempt to refute the American Dream, as some critics have noted? Is the play devoid of hope? What myths are challenged in this play, and how are they transformed?

[6240] Anonymous, *Look Behind the Mask! Communism Is Death* (n.d.), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-80757]. Propaganda poster depicting Stalin and a skull. U.S. anti-communism peaked during the 1950s Red Scare. Many political, union, and popular-culture figures were accused of being communists. Writers responded to the Red Scare with such works as Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*.

[6404] Joseph Glanvill, *Frontispiece, Saducismus Triumphatus: Or Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (1681), courtesy of the Annenberg Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. Fear of witchcraft was widespread in Puritan New England, as evidenced by the Salem witch trials. Nathaniel Hawthorne dramatized this fear in such works as “Young Goodman Brown.” In the twentieth century, Arthur Miller made a powerful connection between McCarthyism and America’s history of the witch hunt in *The Crucible*.

[8567] Carla Mulford, Interview: “Becoming Visible” (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. Professor Carla Mulford discusses the origins of the American Dream.

[8611] *Wives of the Hollywood Ten, For Justice and Peace* (1950), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. When members of the movie industry were questioned by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947, ten Hollywood producers, directors, and screenwriters refused to testify about their possible communist ties. They were briefly put in jail and then blacklisted from Hollywood studios. The “Committee for the Hollywood Ten” was formed to fight on their behalf.

[8612] Anonymous, *Facts on the Blacklists in Radio and Television* (1950), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. By 1950, the number of movie industry people blacklisted had grown to over two hundred. Blacklists were issued by “independent” sources like the Catholic Church and religious/moral citizen watchgroups. These lists usually devastated the careers of those targeted.

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000)

Born in Topeka, Kansas, Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks grew up in Chicago. As a child she attended both all-white and all-black schools,



[7851] Jack Delano, *Chicago, Illinois. A Poetry Study Circle at the South Side Community Art Center* (1944), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USW3-000701-D].

BROOKS WEB ARCHIVE

[3010] Austin Hansen, *Woman and Baby Evicted from Their Harlem Apartment*, 1950s (c. 1950s), courtesy of Joyce Hansen and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. This photo's echoes of the traditional iconography of the Madonna and Child comment ironically on life in inner-city New York. Gwendolyn Brooks's work addresses the struggles of raising children in poverty.

[3013] Austin Hansen, *The Apollo Theater in Harlem* (c. 1940s), courtesy of Joyce Hansen and the Schomburg Center. Printed on back of photo: "Exterior view of the Apollo Theatre, with marquee advertising appearances by Jimmie Lunceford and his band and other acts, 1940s." Beginning in the 1930s, the Apollo Theater, in the heart of Harlem, played a crucial role in the development of black music. Famous performers like Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan got their first break at the Apollo's Amateur Night. The experience of watching such performers inspired Langston Hughes's "The Weary Blues"

as well as the integrated Englewood High School. This background helped create for her a rich perspective on race and identity issues in the city that had such an impact on her work. By the time she was thirteen, her first poem, "Even-tide" (1930), was published, and by 1934 she had worked for and was a weekly contributor to the *Chicago Defender*, in which over one hundred of her poems appeared. Brooks won her first major award, the Midwest Writers Conference Poetry Award, in 1943, and in 1945 her first book, *A Street in Bronzeville*, was published. With her second book, *Annie Allen* (1949), she became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. Other books soon followed, such as *Maud Martha* (1953), *Bronzeville*

Boys and Girls (1956), and *In the Mecca* (1968).

A pivotal moment in Brooks's life occurred in 1967 when she attended the Second Black Writers' Conference at Fisk University, where she encountered young black poets writing "as blacks, about blacks, to blacks." She began conducting poetry workshops for gang members and inner-city black youth and became associated with more militant political groups. Stylistically, she combined the sermonizing style of black preachers, street talk, and some of the more standard forms of verse, and her later work echoes the rhythms of jazz and the combinations of African chants. Brooks's work also addresses issues of abortion, violence, abandonment by men, and the struggles of raising children in poverty. Her penetrating insights into and commentary on African American life, ethnicity, and identity are vividly and powerfully articulated in her poetry and prose.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Brooks's work changed during the Black Arts movement of the 1960s. Have a group of students research the Black Arts movement (or read the materials on it in Unit 15) as well as the concept of Black Power and present their findings to the class. In an era in which black men were disempowered, disenfranchised, and often incarcerated, images of black men as strong and influential were particularly empowering. Ask students to consider both the "Black Is Beautiful" cultural program and the self-presentation of leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. What strategies do these images share with Brooks's presentation of black male subjectivity?

■ Have students create a poetry family tree for one of Brooks's poems that puts an attribute of the poem on each branch and traces it back to an earlier or contemporary poet. They should define each

attribute on their trees and list the influencing poet's name and birth/death dates.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Reread "The White Troops Had Their Orders But the Negroes Looked Like Men." What is the "formula" in the first line? To what might a "box for dark men and a box for other" allude?

Comprehension: "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon" is a long and unusual title for a long poem. In the poem, details from ordinary life, northern and southern, are interspersed with meditations on the perils of growing up black in America. What holds the poem together? What is the effect of the changes in pace and focus? Why do the lines grow briefer at the very end? You might compare the mixture of the ordinary and meditative here with Romare Bearden's use of magazine and newspaper images in canonical settings.

Comprehension: What is the controlling tone of "We Real Cool"?

Context: What do Brooks's poems suggest about the special challenges of being an African American poet in a time when many other genres and media compete for attention? What do her poems suggest about the challenges of being a poet who deals with social and moral problems? How does poetry, in Brooks's hands, become an effective means for observing and teaching?

Exploration: Brooks's poetry shows the influences of many writers: Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Marianne Moore, Claude McKay, Elizabeth Bishop, William Carlos Williams, and the Beats, to name a few. Which of her poems particularly recall the work of one or more of these forebears? Within those poems, what stylistic experiments or other strategies make the work uniquely her own?

Grace Paley (b. 1922)

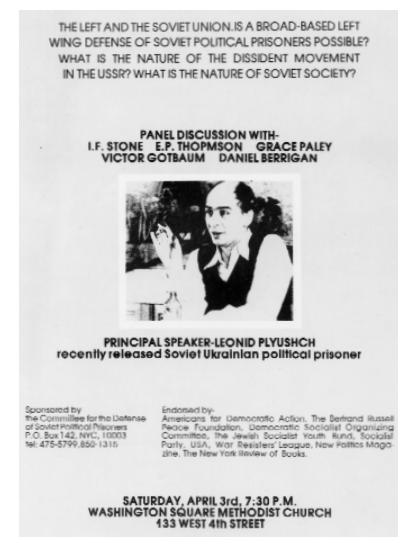
Of her early writing, Paley notes, "I didn't yet realize that you have to have two ears. One ear is that literary ear," and the other is "the ear of the language of home . . . the language of your street and your people." Such an intuitive ear helped define her as one of the twentieth century's most noted American writers and "urban chroniclers."

Grace Paley was born to Russian Jewish immigrants in New York City and grew up listening to the stories of her family, sometimes told in English, sometimes in Russian or Yiddish. She attended Hunter College and the Merchants and Bankers Business and Secretarial School, although she never received a degree from either. She attributes her political activism to her parents, both of whom were political exiles in Europe and later were active members of a variety of progressive movements. A self-described "combative pacifist and cooperative anarchist," Paley has continued to play an active role in peace, feminist, and anti-nuclear war movements throughout her

and Gwendolyn Brooks's "Queen of the Blues."

[7138] Anonymous, *Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) Leads the Black Arts Parade Down 125th Toward the Black Arts Theater Repertory/School on 130th Street, New York City* (1965), courtesy of *The Liberator*. Inspired by civil rights activism and black nationalism, Baraka (Jones) and other African American artists opened the Black Arts Theater in Harlem in 1965.

[7851] Jack Delano, *Chicago, Illinois. A Poetry Study Circle at the South Side Community Art Center* (1944), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USW3-000701-D]. Gwendolyn Brooks's engagement with poetry began as early in her life as her strong association with Chicago's black community. In her early work, Brooks followed in the modernist tradition of Pound and Eliot and in the Harlem Renaissance tradition of poets such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. Following the 1967 Second Black Writers Conference, Brooks began writing specifically for black audiences under the auspices of African American publishers.



[7863] Committee for the Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners, *The Left and the Soviet Union: Is a Broad-Based Left Wing Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners Possible?* (n.d.), courtesy of the Library of Congress.

PALEY WEB ARCHIVE

[3043] John A. Gentry, LCpl, *Vietnam . . . Private First Class Joseph Big Medicine Jr., a Cheyenne Indian, Writes a Letter to His Family in the United States* (1969), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Soldier from Company G, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, on clear, search and destroy mission near An Hoa. U.S. military involvement in Vietnam encouraged antiwar protests and distrust of the government. Writer Grace Paley described herself as a “combative pacifist and cooperative anarchist” and was deeply involved in the antiwar movement.

[3296] Dick DeMarsico, *Protesting A-Bomb Tests* (1962), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-126854]. Demonstrators protesting U.S. tests of atomic weapons. The use of nuclear weapons in World War II prompted a variety of responses from U.S. citizens, including fear, protest, and feelings of alienation.

[6180] United Women’s Contingent, *When Women Decide This War Should End, This War Will End: Join the United Women’s Contingent on April 24* (1971), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-6882]. Protest poster against the Vietnam War. The antiwar, civil rights, women’s rights, and gay liberation movements were connected politically and artistically. In 1961, writer and activist Grace Paley founded the Greenwich Village Peace Center, which was integral to draft resistance during the Vietnam War.

[7360] Frank Moffit, SPC 5, *Vietnam . . . A Sky Trooper from the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) Keeps Track of the Time He Has Left on His “Short Time” Helmet* (1968), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Soldier, part of Operation Pershing, near Bong Son. By 1968, many Americans were ambivalent about U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Most of the soldiers drafted after 1965 were troubled by their role in what they saw as a morally ambiguous conflict. A variety of American poets protested the war, including Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Robert Bly, Robert Lowell, Adrienne Rich, James Wright, and Galway Kinnell.

life. Paley balanced married life, motherhood, and teaching creative writing at such institutions as Sarah Lawrence, Syracuse, and Dartmouth.

Although she began her career as a poet, Paley is best known for her short stories. Her first collection, *Little Disturbances of Man* (1959), while highly praised by novelist Philip Roth, was not an immediate success. It did help her to establish a steady readership that grew over time and positioned her as a contemporary local-color writer. Her second collection, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (1974), was published fifteen years later. Paley’s other collections include *Later the Same Day* (1985), *The Collected Stories* (1994), and her most recent, a collection of essays, *Just as I Thought* (1999). Her insight into the complexities of post-World War II Jewish American urban life is vibrant and telling, her characters opinionated, stubborn, angry, and outspoken. Critic John Leonard notes that her writing combines “a Magical Socialism” with “Groucho Marxism.” Through her stories, Paley has been able to capture the cadences and complexities of everyday life and give voice to the causes of those who are both American and part of an ethnic community.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Invite a speaker to discuss what it was like to be young in the late 1960s and early 1970s. You could also have your students interview their parents and grandparents about what it was like to be alive during this era. (It would be useful to have more than one generation commenting on what those years were like.) Alternatively, have students volunteer their impressions of hippies, “free love,” campus antiwar protests, the drug culture, etc. Then discuss “A Conversation with My Father” in the context of your students’ comments.

■ Have students discuss how place or a sense of place affects a person’s identity. Ask how they might be different if they had grown up in a different location or environment. Then discuss Paley’s story in terms of place and identity.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In “A Conversation with My Father,” how do the narrator and her father have different concepts of the truth and of what fiction is supposed to do?

Comprehension: “A Conversation with My Father” seems to call into question Paley’s own career as a conscientious creator of and experimenter in self-consciously “literary” trends. The narrator’s father asks for a simple, readable story: why does the narrator listen to the complaints of an eighty-six-year-old man?

Comprehension: Does the father teach the writer an important lesson about fiction? About life or the relationship of art to life? What does he mean by those last words: “Tragedy! You too. When will you look it in the face?”

Context: Compare the dialogue in “A Conversation with My Father” to

the dialogue in “The Magic Barrel.” Do you hear differences in the voices? Consider carefully the voice of the writer herself: in becoming a New York artist, has she lost or forgotten something of who she once was?

Exploration: Use Grace Paley’s work as a springboard for an exploration of **metafiction**. Read another piece of metafiction, such as Pynchon’s “Entropy.” Think about whether such works as *The Way to Rainy Mountain* or *Invisible Man* qualify as metafiction.

James Baldwin (1924–1987)

The eldest of nine children, James Baldwin was born in Harlem. An excellent student who read and wrote from an early age, he developed his writing with the encouragement of his high school teacher, poet Countee Cullen. Influenced by his stepfather, a factory worker and Pentecostal preacher, Baldwin originally planned on becoming a minister himself; he composed and delivered his own sermons in a storefront church at the age of fourteen and developed a style that would influence much of his later work. After graduating from high school, he moved to Greenwich Village and began to write full time. His book reviews and essays in *The New Leader*, *The Nation*, and *Partisan Review*, along with the aid of author Richard Wright, helped earn him a fellowship, but his career did not blossom until he moved to France in 1948, where he wrote essays critiquing America’s failed promises. Baldwin returned to the United States in 1957, chiefly to join in the struggle for African American civil rights. Not surprisingly, he emerged as one of the movement’s most vocal participants, composing powerful commentaries in a style that incorporated the rhythms of gospel and the themes of preaching. His first novels, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) and *The Amen Corner* (1955), explore both his painful relationship with his stepfather and his search for his racial heritage. *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *The Fire Next Time* (1963), and “Going to Meet the Man” (1965) helped establish him as a leading black voice of the 1950s and 1960s.

In most of his works, Baldwin intertwines issues of race and sexuality. *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), for instance, explores a homosexual relationship between a white American expatriate and a young Italian man. Similarly, *Another Country* (1962) ruminates about what it means to be black and homosexual in a white society. Baldwin explained his diverse thematic interests this way: “I have not written about being a Negro at such length because I expect that to be my only subject, but because it was the gate I had to unlock before I could hope to write about anything else.” Although Baldwin’s move to France was in response to discrimination and bigotry in the United States, he never considered himself an expatriate. Rather, he referred to himself as a “commuter” with active and vocal interest in racial issues in his homeland. He became one of the most prolific spokespersons for black America, and *Notes of a Native Son* remains to this day a key text of the civil rights movement.

TEACHING TIPS

[7362] Phil Stanziola, *800 Women Strikers for Peace on 47th St. near the UN Building* (1962), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-128465]. Women protest for peace. Antiwar sentiment grew throughout the 1960s as many Americans became more critical of the Cold War mentality. Throughout the Cold War, the United States became involved in international conflicts that had high American death tolls and no apparent resolution, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

[7863] Committee for the Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners, *The Left and the Soviet Union: Is a Broad-Based Left Wing Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners Possible?* (n.d.), courtesy of the Library of Congress. While dominant U.S. political movements condemned communism and socialism throughout the Cold War, many activists, writers, and intellectuals supported non-capitalist forms of government while also grappling with political repression and authoritarian rule in the Soviet Union. This panel discussion on “The Left and the Soviet Union” featured such figures as the English historian E. P. Thompson.



[3355] Jack Delano, *At the Bus Station in Durham, North Carolina* (1940), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-USF33-020522-M2].

BALDWIN WEB ARCHIVE

[2256] Russell Lee, *Negro Drinking at "Colored" Water Cooler in Streetcar Terminal, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma* (1939), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-80126]. Jim Crow laws in the South insulated whites and oppressed and demoralized African Americans. Many black writers, from W. E. B. Du Bois to James Baldwin, examined the negative economic, physical, and psychological effects of segregation in their work and challenged other black and white Americans to do the same.

[3355] Jack Delano, *At the Bus Station in Durham, North Carolina* (1940), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-USF33-020522-M2]. African American man in a segregated waiting room at bus station. Jim Crow laws severely divided the experiences of whites and African Americans in the South.

[4012] Carl Van Vechten, *Portrait of James Baldwin* (1955), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-42481]. Photographer Van Vechten was an important patron of Harlem Renaissance writers and artists. The Harlem Renaissance laid an important foundation for writers like Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. James Baldwin is remembered as a civil rights activist and author of plays, poetry, and novels, including *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.

[5085] Esther Bubley, *A Rest Stop for Greyhound Bus Passengers on the Way from Louisville, Kentucky, to Nashville, Tennessee, with Separate Accommodations for Colored Passengers* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-62919]. "If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane," wrote Justice Brown of the United States Supreme Court in the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which upheld the legality of segregation in the United States. Not until 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, did the Court find the "separate but equal" doctrine unconstitutional.

■ Before they read "Going to Meet the Man," have students research the post-Civil War lynchings that took place in the United States, even up until the mid-twentieth century. They may be surprised to find that nearly two thousand lynchings of African Americans by whites took place in the twentieth century. You may wish to use the story of Emmett Till and his 1955 lynching as a focus of the research. Till was a fourteen-year-old African American from Chicago who was visiting relatives in Mississippi. After an incident where he apparently "whistled" at a white woman in a store, he was found shot and battered almost beyond recognition. An all-white jury acquitted the men accused of the crime. This miscarriage of justice led to demonstrations by African Americans throughout the South and helped to spark the civil rights movement.

■ Show students portions of the 1915 D. W. Griffith film *Birth of a Nation*, which is still used today as a recruitment tool for the Ku Klux Klan and is still taught in film classes for its groundbreaking cinematography. Discuss its blatant racist message and have students research why this film was one of the biggest blockbusters of its time. Make sure to preview the film ahead of time (it is three hours long) to select applicable scenes and to prepare students for its content. Finally, ask them to make connections between the film and Baldwin's story.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Baldwin's story is full of sound, with juxtapositions of moaning, singing, and screaming, along with passages pointing out silence. Describe how sound is used in "Going to Meet the Man" to intensify the action and memories and to provide an understanding of Jesse's mental state.

Comprehension: Sexuality, violence, guilt, and hatred are intertwined in this story. What connections do you see among them in Jesse's mind? Why does the story end in the way it does and what is ironic about that ending?

Comprehension: What is ironic about Jesse's relationship with his young friend, Otis? Do you think Jesse's life could have been different if he had more liberal parents, even growing up in the South?

Context: Was publishing "Going to Meet the Man" in the midst of the civil rights struggle of the 1960s an act of special significance? What aspects of the story help you construct your answer?

Context: Do you believe that Baldwin excuses Jesse and his actions in any way because of the culture Jesse was brought up in? Why or why not?

Exploration: More than thirty years after the first publication of "Going to Meet the Man," American writers and film directors are often faulted for imagining the psychological life of someone of the other gender or from a different race or culture. How does Baldwin succeed or fail in his representation of Jesse, a white deputy sheriff in a small southern town?

Exploration: Compare the racism in “Going to Meet the Man” with the racism encountered in a novel (or movie) like Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. What are the differences and similarities?

Exploration: In *Gender Trouble* (1990), feminist theorist Judith Butler argues that gender is not constant but rather is fluid and changes with a given context. In this sense, one “performs” one’s gender. Test Butler’s theory using Baldwin’s characters. Does Jesse’s gender depend on the circumstances in which he finds himself?

Paule Marshall (b. 1929)

Born Valenza Pauline Burke to parents who had emigrated from Barbados to New York, Paule Marshall explores the contrasts between her West Indian heritage—a heritage of slavery and colonial exploitation—and her Brooklyn background and confronts the issues of identity and assimilation that face Caribbean American families. Maintaining one’s identity and voice while dealing with these issues remains a common theme in her work.

Marshall graduated from Brooklyn College in 1953 and worked for a popular African American magazine, *Our World*. Her first novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, was published in 1959. *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) established her as a major writer and won her the Columbus Foundation American Book Award. Other works include *Soul Clap Hands and Sing* (1961), *Reena and Other Short Stories* (1983), *Daughters* (1991), and *The Fisher King* (2000).

While Marshall claims that she is indebted to the “literary giants,” both black and white, she notes that “they were preceded in my life by another set of giants . . . the group of women around the table long ago—this is why the best of my work must be attributed to them; it stands as testimony to the rich language and culture they so freely passed on to me in the wordshop of the kitchen.” Indeed, her early novels focus on the power of the **oral tradition** and the idea of women as oral translators of their culture who are able to define themselves and their world based on their ability to articulate their feelings. In Marshall’s works, conversation becomes a means of empowerment, and addressing the spiritual over the material offers important affirmation. Marshall’s focus on the Afro-diasporic culture as well as black women protagonists as voices of the immigrant community has opened new avenues of discussion and expanded the concept of what it means to be American.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Before teaching Marshall, have students record an oral history. Instruct them to inconspicuously write down the topics, threads, and themes of a family conversation they overhear, or perhaps a conversation in a dorm or a lunchroom between friends. In addition, have them record the conversation at the same time that they are transcribing it and then compare what they have written to what was recorded. Have them then examine and analyze the dynamics of conversation in con-

[5719] *Cleveland Advocate*, article: “Oppose Birth of a Nation” (1915), courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society. Civil rights groups, including the NAACP, launched protests and a nationwide campaign to boycott D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, which glorified the KKK and helped the organization revive after it had been virtually dead for several decades.

[8604] Ku Klux Klan, *Constitution & Laws of the Knights of the KKK* (1921), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. The KKK had nearly died out by the turn of the twentieth century, but was resurrected in 1915, due largely to the film *Birth of a Nation*. Lynching by the KKK and other white supremacists led Langston Hughes to write “Song for a Dark Girl” and set the stage for Lewis Allan’s “Strange Fruit,” sung by Billie Holiday.

[9071] Anonymous, *Ku Klux Klan Parade, Washington, D.C., on Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.* (1926), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-59666]. This photograph of a huge Ku Klux Klan march in Washington, D.C., attests to the mainstream acceptance of the group in the 1920s and 1930s. The KKK organized under the guise of a civic organization and enforced Jim Crow laws and white supremacy with intimidation and violence. The group regained popular support after the release of *Birth of a Nation*.



[6715] Romare Bearden, *The Return of Ulysses* (1976), courtesy of the Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

MARSHALL WEB ARCHIVE

[4327] Anonymous, *Slave Quarters on St. Georges Island, Florida* (n.d.), courtesy of the collection of The New-York Historical Society. Slaves photographed in front of cabins near the Gulf of Mexico. Slave quarters throughout the South were similar in size and shape, but these cabins were built of “tabby,” an aggregate of shells, lime, and sand more common to the Caribbean region. Contemporary writer Paule Marshall’s work explores connections between her West Indian heritage and her Brooklyn upbringing.

[6715] Romare Bearden, *The Return of Ulysses* (1976), courtesy of the Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Romare Bearden’s paintings and collages distinguish him as one of the great artists in the twentieth-century African American aesthetic tradition. Derek Walcott’s long poem *Omeros* is a Caribbean retelling of the Odysseus (Ulysses) myth, and Caribbean American author Paule Marshall’s writing emphasizes the need for black Americans to reclaim their African heritage.

[7194] Samuel H. Gottscho, *New York City Views. Financial District, Framed by Brooklyn Bridge* (n.d.), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-G612-T01-21249]. River and New York City skyline. Hart Crane used the figure of the Brooklyn Bridge to represent modernization’s unifying potential; some authors saw technology and urbanization as fragmenting.

[7641] Anonymous, *NAACP Members Picketing Outside the Republic Theatre, New York City, to Protest the Screening of the Movie Birth of a Nation* (1947), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-84505]. Despite the protests of civil rights groups, D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* achieved massive popularity.

trast to more formal types of communicating. Try to have them pluck out any serious themes or topics amidst all the casual conversation and remarks. Discuss how they write down colloquial or accented English when it is present.

■ To prepare for Marshall, have groups of students research both the history and the culture of Barbados in particular and Caribbean culture in general. Have them present their findings in class. Then, after they’ve read “Reena,” have them discuss their research in relation to the story’s use of characterization and setting.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What kinds of pressures contributed to the divorce between Reena and her husband?

Comprehension: Of the stories discussed in Unit 14, “Reena,” in which a writer hears about an old friend’s life, covers the broadest landscape and the longest expanse of time. Does “Reena” hold together as a short story? How does the narrator create coherence in her account of Reena’s adventures?

Comprehension: In what ways is “Reena” a universal story about women in America, rather than an exploration of the lives of urban African American women?

Context: “Reena” ends with a long overview of the modern African American experience, a sequence of paragraphs from Reena herself that read at times like an opinion piece in a newspaper. Comment on how effective you find this overview as the ending to a short story.

Context: Reena and the narrator, who is also African American, speak to each other in dialect only infrequently, and only when they are being ironic. Otherwise, their exchanges are in an English more standard than that used by Malamud’s or Paley’s characters. Why might Marshall have these intimate friends talk to each other in this way?

Exploration: Compare Marshall’s style of writing in “Reena” with the styles of other African American writers, such as Hughes, Hurston, Wright, Brooks, Morrison, and Walker. What is so comfortable and familiar about the way Marshall composes her art?

Philip Roth (b. 1933)

Philip Roth was born in Newark, New Jersey. His father was a struggling businessman for most of Roth’s young life, and financial setbacks were not unusual for the family. Roth attended the Newark branch of Rutgers University for several years, then transferred to Bucknell University, from which he graduated in 1954. After earning an M.A. in English literature from the University of Chicago, he went on to teach there, as well as at the University of Iowa and Princeton University, among other schools. In 1959 he published *Goodbye, Columbus*, a collection of five stories and a novella that won the

National Book Award for Fiction. Roth continued teaching during the 1960s and published two somewhat disappointing novels, *Letting Go* (1962) and *When She Was Good* (1967), both of which took him some distance from the topic of Jewish Americans and assimilation, which he had explored so effectively in *Goodbye, Columbus*.

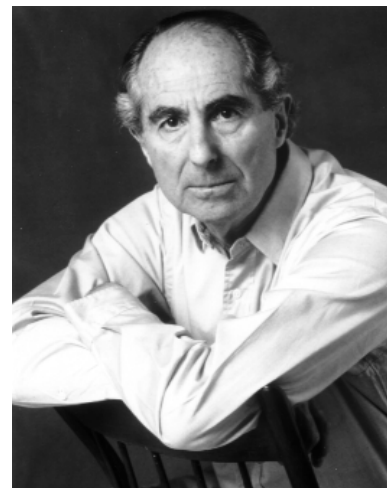
In 1969, Roth re-emerged as an exciting writer with the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint*, an over-the-top exploration of Alexander Portnoy, a neurotic Jewish American male who struggles both to satisfy and be satisfied by the cultural, economic, and sexual demands of American society. After the success of *Portnoy's Complaint*, which challenged the generic boundaries of the **bildungsroman**, Roth composed novels of increasingly fantastical showmanship, among them *Our Gang* (1970) and *The Breast* (1971). In the late 1970s, he began publishing work that has brought him steady attention, respect, and awards. One of his most recent novels, *The Human Stain* (2000), takes up the subject famously found in the novels of Nella Larsen and James Weldon Johnson—that of a light-skinned African American who passes for white.

Roth has been a wanderer—in his upbringing, his various homes, and the subjects he has chosen for his fiction: suburban life, an American Jewish boyhood, the United States Army, baseball, love and marriage, the art and predicament of being an author. He can be funny and poignant about divided loyalties, about growing up and growing away from old neighborhoods and traditions, about friendship, duty, sex, and the mutual exploitation that can characterize a life in which art, business, and show business commingle.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Mark Twain once said, “The Jew has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him.” What role has humor played in this fight? Students might be most familiar with Jewish humor from *Seinfeld*. Or perhaps they have seen some Woody Allen movies. It might be worthwhile to show clips of either. Then have the class brainstorm about Jewish stereotypes and list elements of this humor and what makes it distinctive from and similar to other types of humor.

■ Have your students discuss the manner in which Jews are sometimes portrayed in canonical literature, especially by non-Jewish writers. Common controversial literary renditions of Jewish characters might include Shakespeare’s Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Dickens’s Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, Fitzgerald’s Meyer Wolfsheim in *The Great Gatsby*, and Hemingway’s Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*. Then have your students compare these portrayals to Roth’s characterizations. What similarities and differences do they see? How might Roth be playing off these other characterizations?



[4764] Anonymous, *Current Photo of Philip Roth* (n.d.), courtesy of Nancy Crampton and Houghton Mifflin Publishing.

ROTH WEB ARCHIVE

[3024] Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc., *Levittown House of Mrs. Dorothy Aiskelly, Residence at 44 Sparrow Lane* (1958), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-G613-72794]. The postwar generation saw the development of so-called “Levittowns,” homogeneous suburbs that were first conceptualized by William Levitt in response to the postwar housing crunch. These communities were typically middle-class and white. Jews, only recently being considered “white,” also flocked to the suburbs during this era. Philip Roth satirizes Jewish suburban life in *Goodbye, Columbus*, and Arthur Miller dramatizes the plight of the suburban Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

[3048] Anonymous, *Free Classes in English! Learn to Speak, Read, & Write the Language of your Children . . . Special Classes for Educated Foreign Born*. N.Y.C. (1936), courtesy of the

Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-946]. Sign in Hebrew and English advertising free English-language and naturalization classes aimed at European Jewish immigrants. The classes were offered through the Works Progress Administration's Adult Education Program in New York City. Most Jewish immigrants in New York and other major cities lived in tight-knit communities where Hebrew or Yiddish was spoken.

[4743] Anonymous, *Roth National Book Award* (1960), courtesy of the Associated Press (AP), Wide World Photos Office. The narrator of "Defender of the Faith," published in Roth's award-winning *Goodbye, Columbus*, makes poignant reference to the contradictions of military service and Jewish assimilation in the wake of World War II.

[4764] Anonymous, *Current Photo of Philip Roth* (n.d.), courtesy of Nancy Crampton and Houghton Mifflin Publishing. Philip Roth's works vary from somber and unresolved questionings of Jewish American life, like his early story "Defender of the Faith" and his later *American Pastoral*, to more fantastical works like his 1971 novel *The Breast*.

[8854] Eric Sundquist, Interview: "Becoming Visible" (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Professor Eric Sundquist discusses Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: "Defender of the Faith" is a story about rules and loyalties—to country, to personal heritage, to friends and pseudo-friends. Is the story a situation comedy; that is, is it a story with a stock setting, stereotypical characters, a recurring motif, running jokes, and catchphrases? How would you describe its tone?

Comprehension: In "Defender of the Faith," what experiences and ethics separate Grossbart and Marx? What brings them together? Does Grossbart get what he deserves? Which side of Marx makes the decision—the soldier or the American Jew? Or do both sides of Marx participate in what he eventually decides to do?

Context: In "Defender of the Faith," why might Roth name the narrator and major character Marx? What jokes or ironies are implied by that choice? What Marxes are familiar to Roth's readers, and how does the story invoke or play with those namesakes?

Context: How does the issue of assimilation play into "Defender of the Faith"? What stance does Roth take on assimilation as opposed to hanging onto one's roots, customs, and backgrounds? Why is it hard to tell?

Exploration: Some critics have noted that a number of Jewish writers create stories that demonstrate ordinary people attempting to control their fates, even in a world that seems absurd and uncertain. Simply by making this attempt, whether they are successful or unsuccessful, they succeed. Is this a characteristic only of Jewish writers? Can you think of other works in this unit that illustrate this idea? What about other works from any of the units of *American Passages*?

Exploration: Guilt seems to play a large role in the canon of American literature. What other works focus on guilt? Where does this guilt come from? Are Americans just a guilty people? Of what are they guilty?

N. Scott Momaday (b. 1934)

Writer, teacher, artist, and storyteller, Navarre Scott Momaday has spent his life preserving the oral traditions and culture of Native American peoples. As the only child of Al Momaday (Kiowa) and Natchee Scott (part Cherokee), he grew up on Navajo and Apache reservations in Arizona and New Mexico, though he continued to visit his Kiowa family in Oklahoma. His parents, who were artists as well as teachers, taught in a small school in New Mexico's Rio Grande Valley, and he attended a variety of schools, including reservation, mission, and military, with classmates of not only Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache descent but Hispanic and Anglo as well. After earning his B.A. at the University of New Mexico in political science, he went on to receive his M.A. and Ph.D. in English from Stanford under the guidance of poet and critic Yvor Winters. In addition to visiting professorships at institutions such as Columbia University, Princeton University, and the University of Moscow, Momaday holds honorary

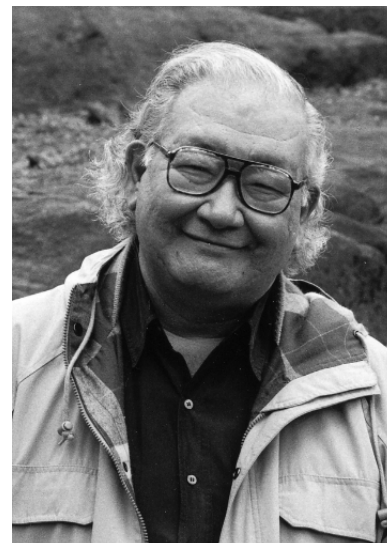
degrees from a variety of American universities, including Yale. Well-schooled in canonical American literary traditions as well as Native American narratives, he writes as a member of many worlds, and sometimes as an exile from them all, as he tackles the effects of a post-World War II materialistic culture on his people.

Momaday uses Native American oral and European American poetic traditions, oral and written history, autobiography, and legend to create a rich panorama of Native American life. His first major work, *House Made of Dawn* (1968), is about a Native American who cannot reconcile his Pueblo heritage with city life. This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel heralded the beginning of what many scholars refer to as “the Native American Renaissance.” Other works by Momaday include *The Ancient Child* (1989), a novel about a San Francisco artist struggling with his Kiowan identity; three volumes of poetry; three autobiographical works, which include *The Journey to Tai-me* (1967) and *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969); a collection of essays, *The Man Made of Words* (1997); and various pieces of literary criticism and works on Native American culture.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Students may be surprised by the innovative format of Momaday’s autobiography and by the way that he moves between myth and personal recollections. In an interview for *American Passages*, Momaday notes that “the voices are all around us, the three voices. You have the mythic and the historical and the personal and then they become a wheel, they revolve, they alternate. . . . Myth becomes his-tory becomes memoir becomes myth.” Ask students to prepare for a discussion on *The Way to Rainy Mountain* by reviewing the Momaday interviews in the archive.

■ Today over 11,000 Kiowa live on their reservation in Oklahoma, but Kiowa oral tradition tells of how the Kiowa originally lived and hunted in what is now Montana. The Kiowa are a Plains Indian community. Traditionally, Kiowa have lived in tipis; they have ridden horses since their introduction in the seventeenth century, and each of the six bands has its own Sun Dance ritual. Most Kiowa stories about the self customarily took the form of what critic Hertha Wong has called “communo-bio-oratory”—that is, community-life-speaking (for more on this see Unit 1). These tales include oral stories of counting coup, narrative paintings on tipis and Buffalo hides, and ledger books and pictorial calendars from the late nineteenth century. As early as the nineteenth century, Kiowa art was commissioned for exhibitions. Some of this work, along with more recent drawings, can be seen in the Smithsonian. This tradition has continued into the twentieth century and can be seen in the work of writers such as N. Scott Momaday, as well as paintings by the Kiowa Five of the “Oklahoma school”: Spencer Asah, James Auchiah, Jack Hokeah, Stephen Mopope, and Monroe Tsatoke, all of whom studied at the University of Oklahoma in the late 1920s. You may find it helpful



[5972] Nancy Crampton, *N. Scott Momaday Portrait* (n.d.), courtesy of Nancy Crampton.

MOMADAY WEB ARCHIVE

[4203] Anonymous, *Protest Against the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)* (1970), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. Along with the development of contemporary Native American writing in the late 1960s and 1970s, protest movements arose against the discrimination suffered by American Indians.

[5972] Nancy Crampton, *N. Scott Momaday Portrait* (n.d.), courtesy of Nancy Crampton. Momaday (Kiowa) spent most of his childhood on reservations in New Mexico and Arizona, where he was exposed to the rituals and traditions of tribal life, as well as the influence of postwar cultural, unemployment, and alcoholism. Momaday is part of the movement sometimes called the Native American Renaissance.

[5973] Nancy Crampton, *N. Scott Momaday 3/4 Shot* (n.d.), courtesy of Nancy Crampton. Momaday's 1968 *House Made of Dawn* won the Pulitzer Prize and is seen by some scholars as the beginning of the Native American Renaissance. His work focuses on the power of language and place that helps shape Native American identity.

[8106] Anonymous, *Girl's Dress* (c. 1890), courtesy of the Portland Art Museum, gift of Elizabeth Cole Butler. This *hoestótse*, or Cheyenne dress, is made of leather and incorporates glass beadwork. This style was developed by the Kiowa in the mid-1800s and was copied by other Plains tribes.

[8295] N. Scott Momaday, Interview: "Becoming Visible" (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. N. Scott Momaday discusses the relationships among the mythic, the historical, and the personal.

[8861] N. Scott Momaday, Interview: "Becoming Visible" (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. N. Scott Momaday discusses the oral tradition.

to begin a discussion of Momaday's work by analyzing the way that a ledger book, winter count, or painted hide functions as a communo-bio-oratory.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Look carefully at the two-column sections (set in three different typefaces) of *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. How are we to read them? Simultaneously? One at a time? What does this arrangement suggest about the mind of the writer or the kind of thinking we need to be doing to understand him?

Comprehension: Grandparents played a crucial role in educating and acculturating children. They were important storytellers who communicated Kiowa history, legends, and religion. What role does Momaday's grandmother play in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*? What are you led to expect when Momaday invokes his grandmother early in his story? What do you find surprising in the way that he develops that part of his account? In *House Made of Dawn*, what effect does viewing Able through the perspective of Ben Benally in the third section of the book have on your understanding of Able?

Context: *The Way to Rainy Mountain* contains several accounts of Kiowa history from both a native and a non-native perspective, some of which are offered without much interpretation. Why might Momaday allow these stories to float and flow like this?

Exploration: How do Momaday's works, and Native American works in general, seem to fit this unit? How does Momaday represent local cultures and ethnic differences in his writing? Make a list of ways in which Native American cultural concerns are similar to and different from those of African Americans and Jewish Americans.

Suggested Author Pairings

RALPH ELLISON AND SAUL BELLOW

Ellison and Bellow were friends, sharing a house in rural New England when they were aspiring writers. As artists they were highly suspicious of mass movements, of slogans, of attempts to reduce identity and political questions to simple terms. Both were college-educated and respectful of a literary tradition. In echoing and responding to that tradition as they developed contrarian voices, they received high praise but also resentment from other factions in the modern and contemporary arts. Their works, which are often considered to be early glimpses of **postmodernism**, might also be connected thematically and/or stylistically.

PHILIP ROTH AND ARTHUR MILLER

Unlike Bellow and Malamud, these authors were drawn to the flashier circles of postwar American popular culture—Hollywood, the glamorous venues and residential districts of metropolitan New York, and

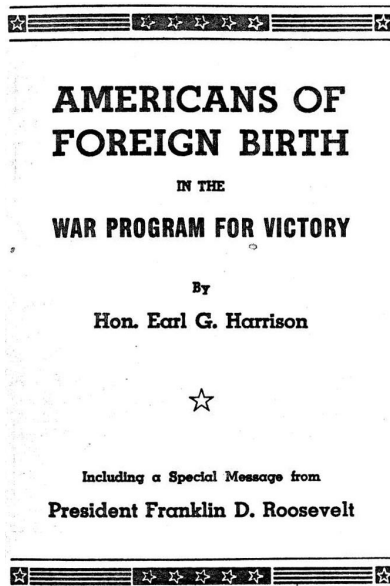
other places where pop and literary life intersected. Though neither cultivated celebrity himself, both were connected for a time to high-profile actresses. Roth's tumultuous relationship with Claire Bloom is recounted in her autobiography; in his play *After the Fall*, Miller told, in thinly fictionalized form, the story of his marriage to and breakup from the legendary Marilyn Monroe. Over the course of their careers, Roth and Miller have moved somewhat uneasily through many sites and varieties of American life—working-class neighborhoods, suburbs, old New England towns, and the sun-drenched boulevards of Los Angeles and the new American West.

**GRACE PALEY, BERNARD MALAMUD,
AND PAULE MARSHALL**

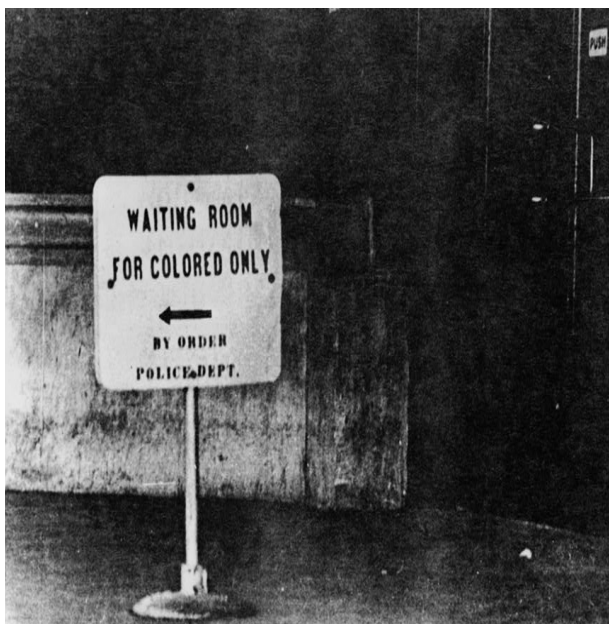
In the works of these three first-generation American writers, the challenge of becoming American in the years after World War II is intensified by special circumstances, one of which involves being a citizen of New York. The United States's biggest and most powerful city figures significantly in their work: their characters cope with the turbulent action of the streets, the marginalization of the elderly in a fast-paced metropolis, the nurture and segregation of ethnic neighborhoods in outlying boroughs, and the complexities of being literary in a culture obsessed with celebrity. The Vietnam War, the civil rights struggles, and the rise of the American university as an employer of writers and an arbiter of taste are all rich topics for discussion in the context of these authors.

N. SCOTT MOMADAY AND RICHARD WRIGHT

Both of these authors write about young men propelled from the world they know into a violent modernity. Momaday's best-known novel, *House Made of Dawn*, is about a Native American who cannot reconcile his Pueblo heritage with the horrors of war and the rootlessness of city life. Momaday's other works attempt a spiritual homecoming—a rediscovery of spirit and consolation in the traditional landscapes of the Kiowa (Momaday's nation) and other Native American peoples. Also a wanderer in his personal life, Richard Wright never goes home in his fiction or in his memoirs. In his novel *Native Son*, his autobiographical work *Black Boy*, and several of his short stories, a key theme is the protagonist's puzzlement as he faces a bleak and menacing future. Like Momaday, Wright depicts both the mysteriousness and the violence of modern life for people who are hurled into it suddenly, without education, family support, or psychological readiness—and both do so as members of historically oppressed minority groups.



[8600] Earl A. Harrison, *Americans of Foreign Birth in the War Program for Victory* (1942), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries.



[5079] NAACP, *Sign Reading "Waiting Room for Colored Only, by Order Police Dept."* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-120260 (b&w film copy neg.)]

CORE CONTEXTS

With Justice for All: From World War II to the Civil Rights Movement

From James Fenimore Cooper to Ernest Hemingway, American heroes have often been defined by their ability to defeat in battle those things and people considered “anti-American.” During World War II, many non-European and non-Christian Americans displayed their patriotism by enlisting in the armed forces. Not only was their enlisting a way to gain—or publicly display—citizenship, but it was also a way of resisting government proclamations about who “the enemy” was. Even as Japanese American families were being interned as “enemies of the state,” for example, Japanese American men were enlisting, fighting overseas, and being honored for their efforts. As these servicemen returned home, however, they were often recognized not so much as heroes but as racial “others.” These situations have been treated by writers like Philip Roth in “Defender of the Faith,” N. Scott Momaday in *House Made of Dawn*, and Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man*.

These diverse veterans of World War II had hoped that their loyalty and service to the country might demonstrate that the stereotypical and racist attitudes held by many white Americans were unfair and undeserved. As with the war years, the decades beyond the war continued to be a time of segregation and discrimination in the United States. It took a threatened coordinated march on Washington and other major cities

by African Americans in June 1941 before Franklin Roosevelt would issue Executive Order 8802, mandating full and equitable participation in defense industries, without discrimination due to race, creed, color, or national origin. This order was, however, rarely enforced over the next few years. Even after the United States entered the war, the War Department refused to integrate military units “on the grounds that it would undermine the morale of white soldiers” (*Oxford Companion to World War II* 5). African Americans who did enlist early during the war were mostly forced into servile support roles in both the army and the navy. The Army Air Corps resisted accepting African Americans until compelled to do so. Eventually, the 99th Fighter Squadron, an African American unit based in Tuskegee, Alabama, would go on to gain fame in the Mediterranean. Many other such units and individuals distinguished themselves in service to their country. By the war’s end in 1945, great gains had been made in

increased service and command opportunities for soldiers of color.

After the war was over, many minority veterans returned to the United States with expectations of social and cultural change, yet in instance after instance they encountered heavy resistance from whites who were determined to return race relations to a prewar state. Just

as most of the women who worked in factories during the war were expected to give up their jobs and return to the home, African American workers were also expected to leave industrial jobs that had previously been held by whites who had gone off to war. Fights and riots related to these issues broke out in Detroit, New York, Mobile, and other cities and towns in the United States. Still, by the late 1940s, African Americans had, by working in industry, government, and military positions, made great strides economically, forming the beginnings of a black middle class. Also, in moving to northern, midwestern, and western urban areas to seek better jobs, they left many of the restrictions and the racist culture of the Jim Crow South behind. Many of these themes are seen in the works of Ralph Ellison and Gwendolyn Brooks.

The 1950s would see African Americans and other minorities strive for even more gains on cultural, political, and economic fronts in the United States. In December 1955 Rosa Parks initiated a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, and one year later the Supreme Court made bus segregation illegal. In 1957, President Dwight Eisenhower sent U.S. Army troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce the desegregation of its public schools. In August 1957, Congress passed the Voting Rights Bill, attempting to ensure equal voting privileges for minorities. In early 1960, the Greensboro sit-ins began, with students protesting segregation policies at a Woolworth's lunch counter. Such protests spread to many other towns in the South. In the 1960s, mostly under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., Freedom Rides in the South and marches on Washington helped make the civil rights movement one of the major cultural events of the twentieth century. Still, racial discord and strife continued throughout the 1960s.

World War II also had a major impact on Japanese Americans, especially those living and working in the western United States. With the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II. Fears about national security, especially on the West Coast, influenced by racial ideology, led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 9066 in February 1942. All persons of Japanese ancestry, both citizens and aliens, were ordered out of the Pacific military zone to inland internment camps. Roosevelt's order affected 117,000 people, two-thirds of whom were native-born citizens of the United States. There was no distinction made between designated aliens from Japan, Japanese immigrants, and second-generation American-born citizens of Japanese descent. Many families lost their homes and possessions in the move, as they were unable to work in order to pay rents and mortgages. The struggling United States economy was greatly affected, as Japanese American farmers on the West Coast had been producing a significant amount of the country's vegetables and fruits. The effects of the Executive Order were far-reaching. Medical and legal licenses were revoked, life insurance policies cancelled, and bank accounts confiscated.



[8522] Ansel Adams, *Manzanar Relocation Center from Tower* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Ansel Adams Manzanar War Relocation Photographs [LOT 10479-2, no. 8].

"WITH JUSTICE FOR ALL" WEB ARCHIVE

[3035] *Chicago Daily Defender*, Newspaper Headline: "President Truman Wipes out Segregation in Armed Forces" (1948), courtesy of the Library of Congress [microfilm 1057]. A major victory against segregation, Truman's executive order eliminated segregation in the military after thousands of African American veterans threatened to march on Washington in protest. African American veterans found the return to life in Jim Crow America especially difficult after the relative freedom and enlightened racial attitudes they experienced in Europe during World War II. Many of these men became local leaders in civil rights struggles in the South.

[4087] Arthur S. Siegel, *Baltimore, Maryland. Women Learning to Use (?) a Pantograph and Template for Cutting at the Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyards* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USW3-028672-C]. In order to sustain the massive war production needed for fighting on both the European and the Pacific fronts, women were hired in many factory and heavy industry jobs—positions from which they had been previously excluded. Such

independence and civic participation helped bolster women's organizing after the war, including protests for equal rights and welfare reform.

[5079] NAACP, *Sign Reading 'Waiting Room for Colored Only, by Order Police Dept.'* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-120260 (b&w film copy neg.)] Martin Luther King Jr. was a brilliant orator. His skill with language was one of his most powerful weapons in the fight for civil rights. King's fight for equality was crucial to ending the "separate but equal" policy that had reigned in the southern states following Reconstruction.

[7865] Charles Keck, *Statue of Booker T. Washington* (1922), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-103181]. "I am standing puzzled, unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place; whether I am witnessing a revelation or a more efficient blinding."—Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*. Ellison's narrator's comment reflects the debate over how African Americans should be educated. Born into slavery but freed after the Civil War, Booker T. Washington devoted his life to the advancement of African Americans. Although he was respected by both blacks and whites, Washington came under criticism for his willingness to trade social equality for economic opportunity.

[8522] Ansel Adams, *Manzanar Relocation Center from Tower* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Ansel Adams Manzanar War Relocation Photographs [LOT 10479-2, no. 8]. In 1943 one of America's best-known photographers, Ansel Adams, documented the daily life of the Japanese Americans interned at the Manzanar Relocation Center in the high desert of California.

[8523] Ansel Adams, *Loading Bus, Leaving Manzanar for Relocation, Manzanar Relocation Center, CA* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Ansel Adams Manzanar Relocation Photographs [LOT 10479-2, no. 14]. The Manzanar Relocation Center was one of nine Japanese internment camps. In what would come to be seen as among the greatest mistakes made by the U.S. government during

The inland internment camps were little more than primitive prisons, often located in remote areas. Multiple families were housed in quickly constructed and poorly made barracks with little or no privacy. Some have compared these places to European concentration camps. It took until 1945 for the order barring Japanese Americans from the West Coast to be terminated. Though many Japanese Americans were greatly angered by this treatment and some renounced their citizenship, a large number volunteered to serve in the armed forces.

It was decades before the United States government would admit to its error in this decision. In 1989, nearly fifty years after the fact, President George Bush signed the Internment Compensation Act, which awarded twenty thousand dollars to each surviving victim of the camps. A class-action lawsuit in 1993 also recognized that these citizens' constitutional rights had been violated. Many nonfiction works have been written on the subject of Japanese American internment camps, such as *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973) by Jeanne Wakatsuki Huston. Fiction dealing with this subject includes works like Yoshiko Uchida's *Journey Home* (1978) and Margaret Poynter's *A Time Too Swift* (1990).

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why do you think whites, especially in the South, were so reluctant to provide equal civil rights to minorities in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, even to veterans who had served their country well and returned home?

Comprehension: Examine the archive image of the statue of Booker T. Washington, who founded the Tuskegee Institute for Colored Teachers in 1881 in Tuskegee, Alabama. More than 100,000 people were present when the statue was unveiled on Founder's Day, April 5, 1921. Washington, the standing figure, is larger than life. The former slave next to him has an anvil and a plow. The lifting of the veil is said to represent Washington's plan to educate recently freed slaves. How does this interpretation compare to Ralph Ellison's treatment of the veil in *Invisible Man*, Chapter 2? Is the veil being lifted or lowered? Compare the veil in this statue to veil images used by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Comprehension: Who might have benefited from Japanese Americans being placed in detention camps, which led to foreclosures on their homes and prevented them from continuing with their farming?

Context: Besides racism, why might the U.S. government have considered Japanese Americans more of a threat than German or Italian Americans? Could something similar to the internment camps happen today? Why or why not? To whom do you think it could happen?

Exploration: From the perspective of over fifty years, it is easy to look back and see that it was unjust to restrict the civil rights of certain groups. Looking back over the other units of *American Passages*, what do you see that was also obviously unfair? Fifty or sixty years

from now, what might historians see as unjust about our society today?

Exploration: Why is it that so much time has to pass before societies can recognize the mistakes of their past? How is the situation of Japanese Americans during World War II similar to what happened to Jewish people in Eastern Europe? How is it different? Can it be equated to the institution of slavery in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America? All three groups have recently used the legal and political systems to seek redress for these crimes. Why haven't descendants of African American slaves been as successful as members of the other two groups?

Suburban Dreams: Levittown, New York

Levittown, New York, is an enormous middle-income housing development built during the late 1940s and early 1950s; it epitomizes the architecturally homogeneous towns and subdivisions that popped up across the United States during the Truman and Eisenhower years. When William Levitt began erecting low-cost Cape Cod houses on potato fields east of New York City in 1946, his planned community had a population of 450; by the late 1950s, its population was 60,000. Builders liked "housing developments" such as Levittown: their lack of distinctive style made them quick and cheap to construct. Families liked them too, and not just because of their affordability: living in a house allowed for more privacy than living in an apartment building, and certainly allowed more access to the outdoors. At the same time, living in a moderately populated, planned community like Levittown, with its yards opening one onto the other, fostered feelings of instant neighborhood and shared upward mobility.

Not surprisingly, these housing developments tended to contain only white middle-class families. Black families were not welcome, and the sameness of the homes enforced, at least outwardly, the sameness of the lives lived inside them. The explosion of areas like Levittown, and suburban areas outside core cities around the country, came in large part from returning World War II veterans taking advantage of the G.I. Bill. The benefits of having served in the armed forces included money for a college education and a down payment on a new home. Federal Housing Administration mortgage policies and a better transportation infrastructure also helped accelerate the growth of suburbs. For these new homebuyers, many from lower- and middle-class backgrounds, obtaining such a home was partial fulfillment of the American Dream. Still, Levittown, social historians have said, was emblematic not only of the successes of the American Dream in the prosperous years following World War II, but also of its quieter, more insidious failures. As part of white flight from more ethnically diverse urban areas, suburban subdivisions became notorious for continuing and solidifying a trend of ethnic and class segregation across the entire nation, as well as the neglect of economically challenged and rapidly deteriorating city centers.

World War II, thousands of Japanese citizens were held in camps against their will.

[8598] War Relocation Authority, *Relocation of Japanese Americans* (1943), courtesy of Vincent Voice Library, Michigan State University. On February 19, 1942, just over two months after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed the Japanese Relocation Act and created the War Relocation Authority. The WRA removed and detained some 120,000 Japanese over the next four years. Over 60 percent of the internees were U.S. citizens; many others had resided in the country for decades.

[8600] Earl A. Harrison, *Americans of Foreign Birth in the War Program for Victory* (1942), courtesy of special collections, Michigan State University Library. Speech delivered in 1942 by Harrison to the American Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born addressing the special role of millions of non-native-born Americans in the war effort. The speech commends this group's loyalty and help to their new country. Though non-U.S. citizens could not fight in the war, they helped "provide the armed forces and the military supplies to facilitate the development of a second military front on the battlefield of Europe to ensure the complete defeat of the Nazi army."



[3024] Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc., *Levittown House of Mrs. Dorothy Aiskelly, Residence at 44 Sparrow Lane* (1958), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-G613-72794].



[3062] Carl Mydans, *House on Laconia Street in a Suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio* (1935), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-000658-D].



[2165] Ludwig Baumann, *Home Furnishings Exhibit* (1952), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-G612-62235].

“SUBURBAN DREAMS” WEB ARCHIVE

[2165] Ludwig Baumann, *Home Furnishings Exhibit* (1952), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-G612-62235]. “Cookie-cutter” communities like Levittown spread rapidly in postwar America, characterized by not only homogeneous architecture but also homogeneous furniture and lifestyle. Writers like John Cheever, John Updike, and Arthur Miller critiqued suburban life.

[2749] John Collier, *Store Dummy Displaying Daniel Boone Hat, Fur*

Intrigued and alarmed by the paradoxical nature of these communities, a handful of American writers in the 1950s and 1960s explored the ramifications of life within suburbia. Most were critical. While authors such as John Cheever and John Updike focused on upper-middle-class suburbs and the stifled emotional and intellectual milieu of the WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) within them, Jewish American writers looked at the suburbs from a different perspective: both in appreciation of the respite they afforded Jewish Americans striving to leave the chaotic, dirty cities and with concern about the consumerism and conformity that such communities seemed to promote. Most vexing for Jewish American writers was the move away from the expression of any distinctive religious and cultural identity that necessarily accompanied relocation into towns such as Levittown, Scarsdale, or Short Hills. Philip Roth in particular explored the uneasiness of such an assimilated Jewish American suburban family.

In *Good-bye, Columbus* (1959), protagonist Neil Klugman, a Newark, New Jersey, resident, partakes enthusiastically of the tennis courts, houses, and country club girls of suburban New Jersey, only to find that that world contains as much hypocrisy and pain as the cramped apartments of the inner city. Published a decade later, Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969) harnesses the somewhat fond and lyrical observations of his earlier work to wickedly dissect the suburban American Dream. *Portnoy’s Complaint* satirizes the consumption and assimilation that had become the hallmark of the good Jew, especially the good Jew outside of the city. Touching directly on “cookie-cutter” communities such as Levittown, Alex Portnoy’s mother extols her nephew, the “biggest brain surgeon in the entire Western Hemi-sphere,” whose genius is confirmed by his possession of “six different split-level ranch type houses.” Granted, her annoying praise makes us laugh, but its comical partnering of enormous professional success with duplicate dull-as-dishwater house ownership points to some of the complexities of America’s suburban dream, complexities felt early in the remarkable attractions of Levittown. Issues such as the struggle over neighborhoods can be seen in other literary works, among them Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) and Jo Sinclair’s *The Changelings* (1955).

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why were these planned communities built close to highways?

Comprehension: In what ways might a community in which all the dwellings are the same have allowed for more individualism than city dwelling?

Comprehension: What significance do you see in the fact that fences between yards were not allowed during Levittown’s early years?

Context: How might the heritage shared by those who grew up in suburban housing developments differ from that shared by people who grew up in other areas of the United States? Consider, for example, the way Ralph Ellison depicts the city in *Invisible Man*.

Context: If Levittown and communities like it helped empty cities of the white middle class, what effect do you think they had on the areas in which they were built? What do you make of the fact that Levittown was built on fields that had once yielded huge potato crops? Consider the topic of “urban sprawl.” How does a story like Bellow’s “Looking for Mr. Green” reflect what happens in situations of “white flight” from urban centers?

Exploration: How might writers of different ethnic backgrounds react to a place like Levittown, or any suburb? Read John Cheever’s “The Swimmer” and John Updike’s “Separating,” and compare their various visions of family life outside the city.

Exploration: How do reruns of TV programs from the 1950s and 1960s, like *Leave It to Beaver*, *My Three Sons*, or *Bewitched*, reflect on suburban life? Are there any programs from this era that are set in locations other than the suburbs? Why or why not?

Living with the Atomic Bomb: Native Americans and the Postwar Uranium Boom and Nuclear Reactions

The **Cold War** arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States created a new U.S. need for uranium to be used in the production of nuclear weapons. The Four Corners area of the Southwest, including Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado, is rich in uranium, much of it on Navajo lands. Struggling economically after World War II, the Navajo people welcomed the jobs created by a new emphasis on uranium mining. The impact of this Cold War development for these Native Americans and their lands has, however, had devastating effects in the areas of health and environment. A significant number of the men who worked in these mines, most of them Navajos, breathed in uranium dust and were consequently exposed to small but constant amounts of radiation. Many of the mines, in their first years of operation, were very poorly ventilated. The mineworkers, unaware of the dangers, often ate and drank down in the mines. In addition, the men would often arrive at their homes after work coated in uranium dust, exposing their family members to small doses of radiation. Some of the radioactive rocks from the mines were used to rebuild houses in the villages. The mill tailings from the mines entered the local environment, contaminating ground water in the surrounding areas. According to UREO (Uranium and Radiation Education Outreach), today there are nearly 1,100 abandoned uranium mines in this region, with only around 450 having been reclaimed to some extent.

Much controversy surrounds the issues associated with uranium mining. Native Americans point out that the government did not tell the Navajos about the dangers of radiation sickness for the men work-

Trimming Detachable, Suitable for Auto Aerial Plume (Advertisement).

Amsterdam, New York (1941), courtesy of the Library of Congress. [LC-USF34-081569-E]. Suburban children in 1950s America were obsessed with cowboys and romanticized stories of the Wild West; one of their favorite games was “Cowboys and Indians,” and stores had a hard time keeping coonskin caps in stock.

[3024] Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc., *Levittown House of Mrs. Dorothy Aiskelly, Residence at 44 Sparrow Lane* (1958), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-G613-72794]. The postwar generation saw the development of so-called “Levittowns,” homogeneous suburbs that were first conceptualized by William Levitt in response to the postwar housing crunch. These communities were typically middle-class and white. Jews, who were only recently being considered “white,” also flocked to the suburbs during this era. Philip Roth satirizes Jewish suburban life in *Goodbye, Columbus*, and Arthur Miller dramatizes the suburban plight of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

[3062] Carl Mydans, *House on Laconia Street in a Suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio* (1935), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-000658-D]. Suburban scene of houses, street, and sidewalk. This is an early example of the type of suburban neighborhood that flourished immediately following World War II.

[8844] Pancho Savery, Interview: “Becoming Visible” (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Professor Pancho Savery discusses life in 1950s America.



[6635] Skeet McAuley, *Fallout Shelter Directions* (1984), courtesy of Sign Language, Contemporary Southwest Native America, Aperture Foundation, Inc.

ing in the mines and with the tailings. While studies show that cancer rates among the Navajo living near the uranium mine tailings are much higher than the national average, some government studies from the 1980s denied that there was any widespread problem with radiation contamination. Native American writers, from Leslie Marmon Silko to Sherman Alexie, have documented the trouble caused by uranium mining, with many of these pieces collected in *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism* (2001).

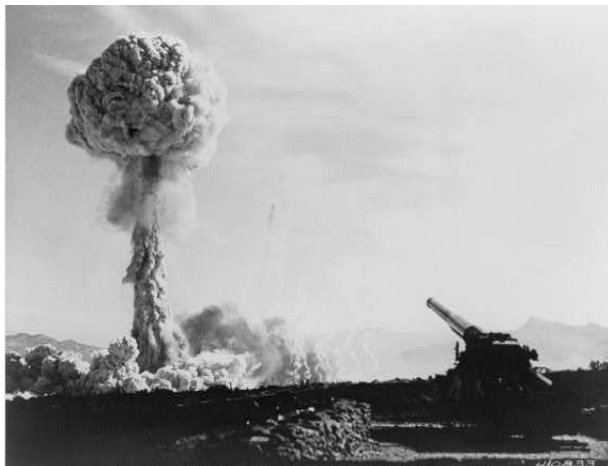
Native Americans had other issues to address in the United States. By 1953, Native American unemployment was a major fact of reservation life. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) attempted to solve

this problem by persuading large numbers of Indians to relocate into urban areas, using the lure of job training and housing brochures depicting Indian families leading a middle-class life. While the initial response was enthusiastic, within five years 50 percent of those who moved had returned to their reservations.

Ironically, as with many other minority groups, Native Americans played important roles in helping to win World War II, only to be relegated to their previous status after the war was over. The story of the Navajo code-talkers is a fascinating one. This top-secret project consisted of Navajo men who joined the Marine Corps to allow their language to act as a code in military communications. Classified information was able to be more readily communicated using the Navajo code-talkers than through previous encryption methods. *Windtalkers*, a 2002 movie, uses the history of the code-talkers for its underlying story.

The story of uranium usage and atomic power in the United States

also touches on the cultural paranoia that was evoked by a fear of atomic weapons. As Paul Boyer puts it in *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (1985), "American culture had been profoundly affected by atomic fear, by a dizzying plethora of atomic panaceas and proposals, and by endless speculation on the social and ethical implications of the new reality." The culture of the Cold War, with political adversaries such as the Soviet Union after World War II, and later communist China, convinced much of the American public that a homeland attack was not just a possibility but, indeed, a probability. The arms race became all the more serious after the Soviet Union successfully tested an



[6467] U.S. Army, *Frenchman's Flat, Nev. Atomic Cannon Test* (1953), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-117031].

atomic bomb in 1949 and developed the hydrogen bomb in the 1950s. Americans and the world were all too familiar with the destructive power of nuclear weapons after they had been used against Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to bring World War II to an end. American

policy on the use of atomic weapons wavered over the decades. Truman vowed never to use them again as a “first strike” weapon; but the Korean War caused reconsideration of this policy. Both Truman and Eisenhower maintained that a major stockpiling of atomic weapons was necessary in the face of an expanding communist threat.

The average American’s fear of a nuclear attack increased even more when the Soviet Union successfully pulled ahead of the United States in what was the beginning of the “space race” by launching the Sputnik satellite in 1957. Both countries had been improving their ability to launch and control rockets since World War II, and the success of Sputnik added to the fear that a Soviet attack could come from outer space itself.

The government and the popular press urged average Americans to construct their own backyard bomb shelters to protect against a nuclear attack. Magazines such as *Popular Mechanics* and *Life* ran articles about shelter designs and described how Americans could seek refuge from falling atomic bombs. Many public and government buildings were designated as nuclear fallout shelters, and schools and civic organizations regularly practiced defensive drills for a possible attack. In “Cultural Aspects of Atomic Anxiety,” Alan Filreis suggests that “the bomb generally made mid-century Americans fear more acutely what they always already feared: that things that had been whole in their lives would now split, and that such splitting could not be controlled. Fragmentation was one fear. The loss of control was another. The bomb symbolized the two fears in one.” Fragmentation, disjunction, and broken verse were modernist innovations (e.g., the poetry of Gertrude Stein or the visual break-up in cubist paintings); however, the atomic bomb “took cultural or aesthetic aspects of modern life—a ‘modernism’ that could be safely imagined as something threatening but very far-off or at least contained, in Paris or New York—and seemed now to bring that incoherence dramatically home, or, indeed, into the home.”

In late 1962, the United States and the Soviet Union stood on the edge of an all-out nuclear conflict due to the Cuban missile crisis. The Soviet Union had constructed a number of missile sites within Cuba, allowing for a much quicker first strike against the U.S. mainland. The United States demanded that these weapons be removed, and over the course of thirteen days of threats and negotiations, Americans prepared for a nuclear war. This incident marked perhaps the height of American fears of nuclear annihilation. Just a few years later, movies such as *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) and *Fail-safe* (1964) demonstrated how these fears continued to be a part of the culture of the times. Interestingly, the documentary film *The Atomic Café* (1982) nostalgically explores the world of living with the atomic bomb during the 1950s and 1960s.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Many U.S. citizens make sacrifices during times of war in order to support their country. What is unique about the sit-

“LIVING WITH THE ATOMIC BOMB” WEB ARCHIVE

[5066] Anonymous, *First 29 Navajo U.S. Marine Corps Code-Talker Recruits Being Sworn In at Fort Wingate, NM* (n.d.), courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration. The Native American contribution to the Allied victory in World War II cannot be underestimated. Navajo “code-talkers” drew on their native language as a code for military communications; many Navajo words change meaning with their inflections, and to the untrained listener the language is incomprehensible.

[5656] Anonymous, *Eight Indian Marine Fighters Serving with the Marine Signal Unit* (1943), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Photograph of Native American soldiers. Despite significant and multifaceted contributions to the war effort, Native Americans continued to be mistreated by the United States government. Many

Navajo men, struggling economically after the war, took jobs mining uranium in the 1950s, with no warning about the dangers associated with working in these mines. Writers such as Leslie Marmon Silko and Sherman Alexie have documented the trouble caused by uranium mining.

[6467] U.S. Army, *Frenchman's Flat, Nev. Atomic Cannon Test* (1953), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-117031]. Atomic detonation and resulting fireball. After the United States dropped atomic bombs on Japan during World War II, poets, novelists, and other artists began to explore the ethical issues surrounding the use of such weapons. John Hersey's *Hiroshima* depicts the horrors of August 6, 1945, in Hiroshima.

[6635] Skeet McAuley, *Fallout Shelter Directions* (1984), courtesy of "Sign Language, Contemporary Southwest Native America" Aperture Foundation, Inc. Nuclear weapons have been tested in the Southwest for over half a century. For writers like Leslie Marmon Silko, weapons-testing is not respectful to the natural world and dims humanity's hopes for renewal and regeneration.



[3075] William P. Gottlieb, *Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister Downbeat*, New York, N.Y. (1947), courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Memory, William P. Gottlieb Collection [LC-GLB23-0428 DLC].

uation of Native Americans and their support of the country during World War II and the Cold War?

Comprehension: Why did Americans have such a fear of atomic destruction in the 1950s and 1960s?

Context: How does knowing what we do about most Native American tribes' relationship with the land shape our understanding of both the uranium mining and the relocation program?

Context: How does the move of many Native Americans to urban areas compare to migration patterns of other minority groups during this era?

Context: How honest was the American government with ordinary citizens in its approach to civil defense during the 1950s and 1960s? Could practicing "duck and cover" drills in schools, going to designated government basement bomb shelters, and building backyard shelters really have helped people during a nuclear attack? Why might the government have found this approach helpful? Could it have led to a suspicion of government, as might be seen in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* or Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, in which the narrator ends up living in an underground "shelter" of sorts?

Exploration: What problems were faced by African Americans, Native Americans, and Japanese Americans who remained in the United States during the war? How were those problems similar to and different from the problems faced by minority veterans when they returned? You might also want to compare the portrait of Native American veterans in Momaday's fiction with that of Jewish military men in Roth's short story "Defender of the Faith."

Exploration: John Hersey's book *Hiroshima* depicts the horrific and altered lives of six individuals who survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945. This story was first published in the *New Yorker* magazine in 1946 as an extended article. The book was a best-seller. How might its publication have led to an increased dread of an atomic attack by the American public?

EXTENDED CONTEXTS

Jazz Aesthetics

Though twenty-first-century American youth may associate jazz with "easy listening," it is important to consider jazz's revolutionary influence on the literature and aesthetics of the 1950s and 1960s. For American writers of this era, jazz referred not only to a musical style but also to a style of dance, literature, dress, and art. Jazz's rebellion could be felt in the freedom of **improvisation**, as well as the ability to take old melodies, split them apart, and make them fit a new rhythm and a new worldview.

The history of jazz is rich and complex. As a musical art form, its roots go back to African and African American musical traditions, spanning tribal drumming, slavery field chants, gospel, ragtime, and

the blues. Once it entered the mainstream, jazz and the blues, often referred to together, quickly became recognized as one of the first truly original American art forms. In the 1920s, a time known as the “Jazz Age,” and beyond, this musical form has enjoyed a widespread public popularity in the United States and Europe.

There are a variety of jazz styles, but most jazz is characterized by improvisation. Rhythmic jazz typically has a forward momentum called “swing” and uses “bent” or “blue” notes. Jazz often includes “call-and-response” patterns in which one instrument, voice, or part of the band answers another. Jazz musicians place a high value on finding their own sound and style, and that means, for example, that trumpeter Miles Davis sounds very different from trumpeter Louis Armstrong. Since jazz musicians play their songs in their own distinct styles and often improvise, a dozen different jazz recordings of the same song will each sound different.

The influences of jazz on the literature of the 1950s were extensive. Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin were among the midcentury writers who incorporated jazz motifs into their works. The use of jazz may also apply more generally to postmodern notions of pastiche and rebellion. Visual artists, such as Romare Bearden, were also influenced by jazz and used it as a subject in their work.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: How might the “improvisation” of jazz have a direct bearing on the sense of improvisation that occurs in postmodern literature?

Context: In Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, what “melodies” from literature, art, music, and culture does the narrator quote? How does he remake them? You may want to begin with his use of Louis Armstrong’s “Black and Blue,” or compare Ellison’s narrative style to other works of jazz, dance, or art.

Exploration: One writer who continuously demonstrates the influences of jazz and the blues in his poetry is Langston Hughes. Read some of Hughes’s poems aloud and try to determine how this music influences his writing. Compare what Hughes does in his poetry to the prose styles of Ellison and Baldwin. Are there similarities?

Baseball: An American Pastime

When Alexander Cartwright, founder of the New York Knickerbockers team, published rules for his baseball team in 1845, a new national pastime was born. The game of baseball gained popularity throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and was featured in Mark Twain’s 1889 novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*. During the second half of the nineteenth century, playing baseball became an important symbolic activity in America, as teams tied together communities and defined a new way of belonging or not belonging. As



[5479] Winold Reiss, *Drawing in Two Colors* (c. 1920), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ64-5687].

“JAZZ AESTHETICS” WEB ARCHIVE

[3071] William P. Gottlieb, *Portrait of Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Brown, Milt (Milton) Jackson, and Timmie Rosenkrantz, Downbeat*, New York, N.Y. (1947), courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Memory, William P. Gottlieb Collection [LC-GLB23-0285 DLC]. During the 1940s and 1950s, America was still a segregated nation, but jazz was one of the few areas where African Americans were accorded respect, and black and white musicians played together.

[3074] William P. Gottlieb, *Portrait of Louis Armstrong, Carnegie Hall, New York, N.Y.* (1947), courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Memory, William P. Gottlieb Collection [LC-GLB23-0024 DLC]. Audiences and musicians have called Armstrong the greatest jazz musician of all time. Raised in New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz, Armstrong was a huge influence on jazz and on later trumpet players such as Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. Equal parts great musician and performer, he was sometimes criticized for his shuffle-along down-South stage personality “Satchmo.” See “Note on Commercial Theatre” by

Langston Hughes for a comment on the “whiting” of black culture. Jazz was crucial to the poetry of the Black Arts movement.

[3075] William P. Gottlieb, *Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister Downbeat*, New York, N.Y. (1947), courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Memory, William P. Gottlieb Collection [LC-GLB23-0428 DLC]. Known as “Lady Day,” jazz legend Billie Holiday got her start in obscure Harlem nightclubs. The white gardenias in her hair in this photo were one of her trademarks. Gottlieb’s collection includes portraits of jazz greats such as singers Sarah Vaughan and Cab Calloway, guitarist Django Reinhardt, and pianist Art Tatum. For a depiction of female blues singers, see Gwendolyn Brooks’s “Queen of the Blues.”

[3548] Anonymous, *Louis Armstrong Conducting Band, NBC Microphone in Foreground* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-118977]. Louis Armstrong was one of the best-known jazz musicians of the 1930s. Jazz was an important theme in modernist writing and visual art. Jazz trumpeter Valaida Snow, nicknamed “Little Louis” due to her Armstrong-like playing style, is eulogized in Colleen McElroy’s poem “It Ain’t Blues That Blows an Ill Wind.”

[5479] Winold Reiss, *Drawing in Two Colors* (c. 1920), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-5687]. Offset lithograph of African American man dancing. Also titled *Interpretation of Harlem Jazz I*. German-born Winold Reiss (1886–1953) studied in Munich before moving to New York in 1913. He is best known for his portraits of African Americans and Native Americans. Poets, novelists, and painters incorporated imagery and rhythms from jazz in their work. In 1924 Aaron Douglas began studying with Reiss: the style and colors of Douglas’s work reflect Reiss’s influence.

early as the 1880s and 1890s, immigrants learned to play baseball in order to shed their greenhorn status and to show their enthusiasm for something truly American. This transformation is recounted in Chaim Potok’s *The Chosen* (1967) and Anzia Yezierska’s *Bread Givers* (1925).

The turn of the century saw the creation of the American League and the two-league system that we are familiar with today. Though professional baseball players in the early part of the twentieth century were largely drawn from colleges, by the 1920s professional players were much more likely to come from the lower and middle classes. Sons of immigrants and midwestern farm boys could rise through the expanding professional farm system and eventually shine on the diamond. These rising stars in baseball helped solidify yet another version of the popular “rags to riches” story. In the 1950s, a number of teams finally moved west, to Milwaukee, Kansas City, and Los Angeles, making the sport more locally available to a wider audience. Baseball often mirrored society at large and reflected its overall attitudes, values, and trends. Organized baseball was racially segregated for decades after its creation. Many cities created their own separate Negro baseball teams that featured outstanding players such as Cool Papa Bell, Josh Gibson, and Satchel Paige.

World War II caused people to question segregation practices and led to the opening of the game to new types of players. One important wartime innovation was the All-Girls Professional Baseball League, in existence from 1943 to 1954. Since many professional male ballplayers and other young men were off serving in the military, women were recruited to play baseball on teams mostly located throughout the Midwest. However, these careers, too, reflected trends in society at large. The codes of conduct and rules of play for these women were much different than they were for male professional players. When the men returned from the war, women baseball players were expected to return to their previous professions and lives, as were the women who took over assembly-line work during the war.

In 1947 Jackie Robinson (1919–1972) became the first African American to officially play in the major leagues. His breaking of the color line was just the beginning of a long struggle for equal status and pay. Racist comments, hate mail, segregated housing, and death threats were to be an everyday part of the game for African American major league players for years to come. When Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth’s home run record in 1974, he too received racial slurs and death threats. It wasn’t until the 1980s and 1990s that African Americans entered the ranks of major league baseball management. The game of baseball tended to reflect in a highly visible public forum some of the backlash against the civil rights movement and the exclusion of people of color from other venues of society.

Jewish players had not been strictly prevented from playing baseball—Hank Greenberg played for the Detroit Tigers in the 1930s and made no effort to hide his religion—but Sandy Koufax, a pitcher for the Dodgers from 1955 to 1960, proved that Jews too could be sports

heroes in American postwar culture. Other Jewish players also made a name for themselves. Buddy Myer, an infielder for the Senators, won the batting title in 1935. Al Rosen was a four-time All Star third baseman for the Indians in the 1950s, and Steve Stone, pitching for Baltimore, won the 1980 Cy Young Award. Chaim Potok's novel *The Chosen* begins its investigation into the conflict between modern orthodox and Hasidic Jews with a baseball game played by teams from the two groups.

Baseball not only reflected changes in race relations in this country, but also brought the subject of labor relations into a much broader cultural context. The "reserve clause" in baseball basically bound a player to one team throughout his career. It took away any right of "free agency," whereby a player could offer himself to the highest bidder. A Supreme Court ruling in November 1953 kept baseball's exemption from antitrust laws in place and the reserve clause in effect. In 1964, players formed a union, the Major League Baseball Players Association, and it took twenty-five more years before a form of "free agency" became available to major league players. These struggles between players and team owners reflect some of the conflict that occurred between labor unions and industry or powerful landowners that is discussed in Unit 12.

Not surprisingly, baseball functions as an important trope in the literature of this era. It stands as an icon for something truly "American." It also, along with other sports, emphasizes the skills and importance of the individual along with the necessity of group organization and collaborative cooperation. Many major American writers have used baseball as subject matter, as exemplified by Ring Lardner's *You Know Me, Al*, Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*, and Philip Roth's *The Great American Novel*.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In what ways does the history of baseball in the United States play off the American Dream?

Comprehension: How does baseball reflect other aspects of American culture?

Comprehension: Baseball is an important symbol of American-ness in *Invisible Man* and *Goodbye, Columbus*. What made baseball such an important symbol of American culture?

Context: How are the individual and collaborative aspects of baseball reflective of important elements of American society at large?

Exploration: Baseball is just one example of America's preoccupation with sports and entertainment. Why do you think American culture has this keen interest? What function do sports and entertainment play in your own life? How are sports and entertainment similar to and different from literature and the arts?



[1992] Anonymous, African American Baseball Players of Morris Brown College, with Boy and Another Man Standing at Door, Atlanta, Georgia (c. 1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-114266 DLC].



[8526] Ansel Adams, Baseball Game (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Ansel Adams Manzanar War Relocation Photographs [LOT 10479-4, no. 22].

[1992] Anonymous, *African American Baseball Players of Morris Brown College, with Boy and Another Man Standing at Door, Atlanta, Georgia* (c. 1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-114266 DLC]. At this traditionally African American institution in Atlanta, baseball has a long and proud history. During the second half of the nineteenth century, playing baseball became an important symbolic activity in America, as teams tied together communities and defined a new way of belonging. The sport was featured in novels such as Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889).

[5162] Dorothea Lange, *Fourth of July, near Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (1939), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-020010-E DLC]. Although baseball had been played widely throughout the United States, using local rules, since the early 1800s, it is said to have been "invented" when Alexander Cartwright formulated formal rules and regulations in 1845; by the 1860s it was widely thought of as America's "national pastime." People from all walks of life played baseball, from immigrants in the late nineteenth century to the depression-era men pictured here.

[6732] Kenji Kawano, *Navajo Indian Boys Playing Baseball* (2001), courtesy of Kenji Kawano. For over two centuries, baseball has been a popular American sport that has attracted players from a number of ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. It wasn't until 1947, however, that major league baseball allowed non-white players.

[8500] Anonymous, *Gary Works Baseball Team* (1912), courtesy of the Calumet Regional Archives, Indiana University Northwest. Members of the baseball team sponsored by the U.S. Gary Steel Works in Indiana. Workers tried out for such teams and practiced in their free time.

[8526] Ansel Adams, *Baseball Game* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Ansel Adams Manzanar War Relocation Photographs [LOT 10479-4, no. 22]. Photograph of a baseball game

ASSIGNMENTS

Personal and Creative Responses

1. *Journal and Letters*: Study some of the stories of the Tuskegee airmen of World War II. Write a letter in the voice of an African American airman at Tuskegee to someone back home. Try to imagine what it was like for a black person who had risked his life in combat, only to encounter continued racism and segregation at the airbase in Alabama. What would the atmosphere have been like? What kinds of frustrations might these airmen have encountered? What would have surprised or pleased them?
2. *Journal*: When in your life have you not fit in? How did you feel? What did you do about it? Conversely, think of instances in your life when you conformed to the expectations of society or close friends or family, without thinking about it too much. After having studied this unit, can you re-evaluate those moments of conformity? Were they mostly good or bad? Would you do the same thing again today?
3. *Journal*: Write a story from the point of view of a young person waiting inside a bomb (fallout) shelter with his or her immediate family after a possible attack warning has been issued. What would life in the bomb shelter be like? What would your concerns be?
4. *Poet's Corner*: Reread Gwendolyn Brooks's "We Real Cool." Choose a topic of your own and write a poem that imitates this style. Think about Brooks's choice of subject matter. What does her language sound like? What are the features of her verse? After you've completed your poem, write a short paragraph analyzing what you have written. What characteristics of Brooks were you trying to capture?
5. *Poet's Corner*: Write a short poem that takes on the point of view of someone who remains culturally "invisible." Perhaps the poem might show why the person actually wishes to remain invisible or perhaps it will be a lament to the ongoing invisibility.
6. *History*: After reading Momaday's *Way to Rainy Mountain*, put together a smaller project that unites your own culture, family history, and personal outlook. Use prose passages, poems, family histories and genealogies, photos, even stories from friends and anything else that helps you toward an understanding of your place within your family, your past, the places you've lived, the things you've done, and your culture.
7. *History*: Interview family members who were adults or children during the 1950s and 1960s. How do they characterize their experiences? Did men and women respond differently to the threat of nuclear attack? How did children cope with the daily fear of annihilation? Did anyone in your family build a bomb shelter?
8. *History*: Do some research on James Meredith, the first African American student to enroll at the University of Mississippi, in October 1962, and the resulting riot. Where did Meredith come from? Why did he put himself at so much personal risk to enroll at Ole Miss? How did the Kennedy administration get involved? How

does this early desegregation contrast with the recent trend of resegregating many state universities?

9. *Multimedia*: Using the *American Passages* archive, along with images available on the web (hint: use <www.google.com> and click on the “images” tab), and slide show software, create a multimedia presentation of photos and paintings that illustrate the struggle for civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s. Write a caption for each image, explaining how the image relates to the civil rights movement.

in one of the Japanese internment camps. In spite of the discrimination against Japanese Americans during World War II, many claimed to wish for a chance to prove their loyalty.

Problem-Based Learning Projects

1. Much of this unit underscores the pressure that many people have felt to “fit in” and to “be an American”; it is ironic that a good portion of “an American’s” qualities include being individualistic and self-reliant. Imagine that you are part of a major advertising agency. Your firm needs to decide whether “conformity” or “independence” sells better. Research advertisements from the popular magazines of the 1950s (*Life*, *Newsweek*, *Time*), and put together a presentation that either confirms the pressures of conformity or demonstrates a trend toward individualism.
2. You are part of a team asked to make a presentation to the U.S. Congress. The United States has never established a “national language,” and today the country is recognized as being more multicultural than ever before. Still, every few years, politicians attempt to make English the “standard” legal language of the country. Prepare a presentation to be offered at a congressional subcommittee hearing that addresses this issue. Argue either for establishing English as the national language or for recommending that such a proposal be voted down.
3. The year is 1961 and you have been sent to cover the Greensboro sit-ins as a reporter. Write a magazine article in which you describe the protests. Why were the demonstrators so upset? What were their arguments? What were the arguments of the store owners and the townspeople who disagreed with the protests? Now imagine that you must present both sides of the issue to different audiences. Rewrite the article so that you can sell it to a northern liberal pro-civil rights magazine; then rewrite the article so that you can sell it to a conservative small-town magazine with mostly southern white readers. What will you need to emphasize and de-emphasize? Are you able to present all the facts in both versions of the article? Why or why not?
4. Debate has broken out among city council members because one of the oldest trees in the county, just inside the city limits, needs to be cut down for a developer to put in a parking lot. However, a contingent of African Americans want the tree preserved because it marks the location of a lynching that occurred there in the early 1940s. Research mid-century lynchings in the United States. Then write an essay that takes a stand on whether or not the tree should be

kept. Be sure to draw on your research and to consider other points of view.

GLOSSARY

assimilation Becoming part of the dominant culture and leaving behind characteristics and qualities that would designate one as different or “other.”

bildungsroman A novel of formation or growth into maturity; a novel of education and an awakening from the innocence of youth.

Cold War A period following World War II up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when communist and democratic countries vied for political control of and influence in the world. The period was marked by a nuclear arms race that guaranteed “mutual annihilation” if either side used its weapons of mass destruction.

conformity Going along with the popular beliefs, trends, and attitudes of the dominant society of the time.

existentialist writing Literature that embraces the view that the individual must create his or her own meaning in an unknowable, chaotic, and seemingly empty universe. French author Albert Camus proposes that in such a world, one may decide either that all efforts are futile or that the mere struggle to continue in such an absurd universe is an act of creation in itself.

improvisation The act or art of composing and rendering music or poetry extemporaneously, in a unique or individual manner.

jazz Music in which improvisation and soloing play an important part. There is tremendous variety in jazz, but most jazz is very rhythmic, has a forward momentum called “swing,” and uses “bent” or “blue” notes. You can often hear “call-and-response” patterns in jazz, in which one instrument, voice, or part of the band answers another.

McCarthyism Related to the period during the Cold War during which Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee sought out American citizens who were suspected of being members or former members of, or sympathizers with, the communist party.

metafiction Fiction that self-consciously refers to writing and its conventions.

naturalism Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literary approach of French origin that realistically depicts social problems and views human beings as helpless victims of larger social and economic forces.

novel of identity Novel that addresses the question of “who am I” and “how do I fit into the society around me.”

oral tradition The passing on of oral culture, tradition, and history from one generation to the next, through stories told time and again. Oral tradition did not, and does not, cease to exist with the rise of literacy; it co-exists, especially in cultures that retain a strong sense of oral dissemination of information and culture.

postmodern literature Literature that responds to, and is written in the context of, philosophical and socio-historical movements that challenge the progress-oriented master narratives of Enlightenment and positivist traditions. At the beginning of the twentieth century, linguists and philosophers questioned the possibility that language can truly reflect reality, or that any essential, categorical, or transcendental truth claims can be made about the world. From the unspeakable violence of the Holocaust, to the assertion of gender and other personal traits as being malleable and socially constructed, postmodernism has sought to explain the many uncertainties, ironies, contradictions, and multiple points of view that animate the world. Postmodern literature is often consciously self-reflexive, questioning the nature of the text and the authority and existence of the author, and uses techniques like pastiche, metanarrative, nonlinear constructions, absurdity, and irony. Postmodernism is at once a literary style, a critical and theoretical movement, and a description of the sociocultural world of globalized consumer capitalism.

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