

Brief Notes that elaborate on some of the most famous poets, and poems in American Literature, and their most famous themes used in their poetry.

American Literature

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2021-2022

Thursday, September 16th

“The Norton Anthology of American Literature.”

- The ideology of the early colonizers.
- Historical Backgrounds and glimpses of American History.
- The question of Nature < Romanticism.
- Realism < Civil War in The US. moving on to the extreme part of “Realism” which is Naturalism.

Tuesday, September 21st, 2021

- A record of the early immigrants and their lives in relation to Histories in the 17th Century.
- The Puritan Denominations. Their own concept of poetry.
- The idea of having a side who disagrees with you and also a side where you agree with.
- They were against Education and the Revolution against the ruler.
- The Revolution established Human Rights and Freedom.
- William Bradford Chapter 9

Thursday, September 23rd, 2021

- Realism as a literary term, and Naturalism.
- it was mainly new in American Literature but Naturalism had a French origin in Literature.
- Relating Naturalism to Darwin’s Survival of the fittest. To apply this theory into Literature.
- Naturalism is pessimistic about the future of mankind.
- The Puritans believed in the direct relationship of mankind. But they didn't believe in Rituals.

- John Winthrop Journal: The History of New England

-Edward Taylor

- Anne Bradstreet: she wrote about her experience with Indians.<
Contemplations.

-Jonathon Edward

Naturalism is extreme Realism.

Tuesday, September 23, 2021

Nature and how it is conceptualized, it became distinctive through art in American Literature History. That our life is just a passage to the metaphysical < The Afterlife. The belief in God's Providence.

In the 18th Century, Americans believed in the sensible reality of life.

And the reality can be understood too.

- Reason is the key to understanding Nature. Influenced by Francis Bacon in Britain.
- The world of Observation.
- Experiments and Science.
- Life should be lived for its own sake.

Benjamin Franklin, he is known for his Autobiography.

It was based on Reason and Science.

Utilitarianism.

To reach and achieve Moral Perfection, you have to choose what satisfies you and to enjoy the pleasures of life.

The central idea is **God punishes those who do wrong**. Bradford believes that the "proud and very profane" young man's death is "the just hand of God."

Thursday, September 30, 2021

Young Goodman

-Who is the author of the story?

- Provide a brief summary of the author's bio.

-What is the story about? >Provide a very brief summary of the plot.

-Define the word allegory? > is the story at hand allegorical?

- About the theme of the story, is the story satire against the Puritans and the Puritan Morality?

- The time is also symbolic.

Tuesday, October 5th, 2021

- Nathaniel Hawthorne refused to name his short stories 'Novels' instead he called them a 'Romance'.
- the characters in the novels actually represent reality and it should be tied to reality.

Young Goodman Brown:

- Innocence vs the knowledge of the self.
- it is a journey of self-realization.
- the time of the story.
- the forest and the dark unconscious of the self.

Thursday, October 7th, 2021

2 terms and their literary meaning:

- The Rite>Rituals of the passage. It means the access or the development to a new knowledge and to a new state of life. >Self-Realization.
- The Archetypal Night Journey> it refers to the passage that takes place physically or symbolically in the night. It is also a journey of knowledge whether it is done spiritually.

-The 17th Century American Literature focused on Puritans and the question of God and the question of Nature.> the metaphysical world. They've seen nature as a Manifestation of God.

-Nature can be enjoyed in itself, it has romantic scenery and landscape and it can be a reflection of man's soul.

- The 19th and the 20th Century focused on their understanding of Nature.

The pantheistic> worshipping of Nature> Idealism.

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

"Rip Van Winkle"

"The Suspension of Disbelief"

The setting and the content.

-The motif of the change of seasons

Is a reflection that protects the theme of the story.

-The setting is representative of the American Landscape.

-it took place in New York, and the idea of the Dream, it is also very suggestive with laziness.

-What do we see as a major theme related to this story?

-What do we see in common between the loss of his wife and the start of the revolution in terms of their effects on Rip's life?

-Try to sympathetically identify with Rip and imagine that you yourself fell asleep today and awaken twenty years from now, what questions would we ask the first person or persons we encounter.

-How much does the wife occupy as a narrative in the story?

We can only see her description as a POV of man, and she was also passivised.

Next Week: Ralph Waldo Emerson > Self-Reliance.

American Romantic Literature. > Transcendentalism.

Thursday, October 28th, 2021

Bartleby, The Scrivener

Herman Melville > his novel Moby Dick was influenced by Shakespeare.
Especially: Tempest.

Do you see Bartleby as a civil peaceful resistance?

Do we see Bartleby as a Christ Figure?

Thursday, November 4th, 2021

How do we interpret this ending of Bartleby?

How could we describe the narrative technique? How was Bartleby addressed through the story?

- we have first person narrative, letter like, straightforward, The “ I” is too much intruding, authorial intrusion. The author used strategic words to focus on some terms.
- The Question of Reliability of the authorial intrusion of the narrator.
- Multiple POVs of the narrator.
- Writing is a kind of trick.
- Nicknames usage? Connects to themes of alienation, isolation, materialism, but they are not proof to the inhumanity of the narrator, on the contrary, the narrator is nice.
- it is a rich story, multidimensional, anti-materialist, criticism of the whole culture of materialism, the setting of the story is very telling of the themes. It can be read as human alienation. One of the reasons which is really causing a confusion, non-clarity, is the Christian references.
- Bartleby might be an alter ego of the narrator. Like Christ in character.

Tuesday, November 9th, 2021

Ralph Waldo Emerson- Self-Reliance.

- The father of American Literature.
 - the head of the Transcendentalism movement.
 - he wanted to be a naturalist.
 - That Man and Nature are one.
 - he was a philosopher.
 - Some refer to it as the American Renaissance.
 - The importance of Emerson is due to his influence and lectures.
 - his essay “ The Poet”
 - >The influence of European Romantics on Americans. Wordsworth and S.T Coleridge.
 - > The main influence is something regarding the concept of Nature.
- Is Nature a Manifestation of God? Or is it pantheistic?

- Pantheism.

-Why has Nature become so much of an influence in American Literature?- American Landscape.

“Civil Disobedience” David Foryo.

> Harriet Stowe- Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

> The theme of Democracy, Humanism, Equality, Justice.

“Nature” - Emerson> help us understand Self- Reliance.

Tuesday, November 23rd, 2021

Civil Disobedience By Henry David Thoreau

- He wrote a book> “ The Walden” The practical experience of Emerson’s Nature.

“ Leaves of Grass”- Song of Myself by Whitman.

>The use of key images or key words.

Sofism.

Romanticism.

Platonic principles.

School of thoughts.

Anthological.

Epistemological.

-His Book of Nature is a Bible of Transcendentalism.

Transcendentalism: School of Thoughts.

>Based on assumptions.

>Anthological assumption. That the ultimate absolute reality is not the material reality, it is the spiritual reality.

>God is in Man, and it is in every other thing as matter.

>The perception of Knowledge: Epistemological.

>The omnipresence of the soul. The unity of everything in Life.

> The marriage of the body and the soul in “Song of Myself”.

> The controlling image is the image of Marriage. (The soul and the Body)

>The Grass takes place everywhere. It grows everywhere as a symbol of equality. It represents Nature at large.

>The grass is the bedroom of this marriage between the body and the soul. Rebirth of Humans, immortality.

>The Acquiring of Knowledge> The Intuitive Knowledge. Based on Reason, through the senses of humans. They should be transcended to ideal or spiritual knowledge.

Thursday, December 9th, 2021

-Emily Dickinson expressed her appreciation for Walt Whitman's poems. Next Tuesday> read a background story about her poetry. "Dying", "The soul selects her own society.", "This was a poet.", "I died for beauty/ but was scarce. "I heard a fly buzz." "a narrow fellow in the grass." "because I couldn't stop for death."

-Animal imagery and the question of nature(landscape).

>Edgar Allan Poe. The Gothic traditions, especially the British gothic novels. "The cask of Amontillado."

>1865-1914 American Literature after the break.

Tuesday, December 14th, 2021

"The aesthetics of poets"

-Density/Intensity. The controlling image/or the key image.

-The death question/it doesn't depend on Age.

- "Recluse" favouring a solitary life.

-all kinds of God's creatures are animate and intimate.

-First steps into Modernism in poetry. It was influenced by the metaphysical poetry of John Donne/Spiritual poetry. Mostly regarding death, and the after death.

-Darwin Naturalism and his understanding of human society into American Literature> human society is no different from the jungle.

>Friends with God's creatures/the inhabitants of nature.

Thursday, December 16th, 2021

- the metaphysical conceit. Finding similarity between extremely unfamiliar things.
- “Because I Could not stop for death” : using dark connotations, a plot twist of things such as death and the afterlife.
- ”Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –”
- “Every Man play”
- the vulnerability of the protagonist.

“The Soul selects her own society”

- The soul is personified.
- The soul itself has its own divinity> The divine.

“This was a poet”

- The poet's language used in enriching their poems is like Attar.
- out of what's ordinary, we will find the abnormal.
- The poet should be seeking for the abnormal to be outstanding, and unique.

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

“Edgar Allan Poe” Romantic writer.

- “The Cask of Amontillado”
- ‘Dark Literature’
- Themes of:** death, revenge, murder, dectet.

Important works:To Helen, The Raven.

>“The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym”

>A vocation of the irrational power which ultimately dominates the universe.

> The appearance of reason and order.

“The fall of the house of Usher”

>a symbolic study in psychic disintegration.

>His certain understanding of Nature.

“To transcend is ultimately to see nature as symbol and not sign.”

>Helen is the embodiment of a pure image, in beauty.

>“Legia”

>The Love-Hatred paradox is also a reflection of the Ego and The Alter Ego paradox.

- Evidences to support this analysis.
- The symbolic importance of the carnival and the way they are dressed.
How is it related to identity?
- To analyze the underground(catacombs)
- The symbolism of Darkness.
- >he will never face justice because of the murder and he wasn't even detected.

Answer: Alter Ego in The Cask of Amontillado.

Montresor's Alter Ego is shown in the short story. For instance, at the very beginning we can understand that Montresor is seeking revenge. However, it is obvious that he has a grudge against his 'friend' Fortunato, seen in the short story "but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge". On the other hand, Montresor acts nice around Fortunato, smiling to him all the time, but what Fortunato doesn't realize is that Montresor's smiles are meant for destroying him. So he is putting this "good intention and will" mask to deceive Fortunato into his miserable death, seen in the short story "I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation".

Answer: what is the importance of the symbol of the carnival, how are their outfits related to one's identity?

The importance of the carnival as a symbol used by Edgar Allan Poe, shows the perception of energy and the celebration of freedom. However, this symbol is also 'ironic', because it is related to the outfits people wear attending those carnivals. Thus, Fortunato's jester outfit reflects his inner self and identity, describing him as foolish. On the other hand, Montresor isn't disguising himself, he is only showing his true self. Nevertheless, people's identities are defined based on their outfits and whether they look smart or not.

Answer: The symbolism of Darkness.

Poe uses the 'dark' as a setting to correspond with the theme of the story, such as revenge, death, and deception. The Darkness invisible-

the lowest part of the human unconscious: it is not seen by Reason or Ego.

Tuesday, February 15th, 2022

Tennessee Williams- A Streetcar named Desire.

Realism-American Literature

What are the characteristics of realism in American literature?

- Objective.
- Free Will.
- Sometimes Optimistic.
- Everyday Settings.
- Ordinary Events.
- Common Man Characters.
- There is frequent use of colloquial speech. Diction is natural vernacular, not heightened or poetic; tone may be comic, satiric, or matter-of-fact.
- Characters are of the middle and low classes.

- Final Exam Material:
- After Midterm Material>Edgar Allan Poe: The Cask of Amontillado/ Emily Dickinson/ Realism and the American Novel. A Streetcar Named Desire.

American Drama> Robert Frost Poetry in the compiled material.

Thursday, February 17th, 2022

-American Drama; focused more on the individual, and the absence of love in the 20th century.

-Eugene O'Neill/ Tennessee Williams/ Robert Frost.

-Cat on a Hot tin roof by Williams/ The Glass...

- What does the title symbolically mean? "A Streetcar named Desire" was first named "The Poker Night".

-the significance of the scene that is given the title?

-The importance of the poker game in relation to the characters, most specifically Stanley, and Blanche.

-The Motif of the Wife-Husband Relationship/ the significance of the opening quote with the play itself?

-The Setting of the play and how is it significant? Elysian fields? This has to do with mythology. The Belle Reve, and the irony of it, and the humour associated with it.

-Foreshadowing Blanche's life throughout the whole play.

-The Dark Brother=Alter-Ego, the dark part of ourselves that we cannot recognize or reach.

