

Literature for Competitive Exam
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Module – 05
Lecture – 18
American Literature

Welcome back friends, we are in the week 5; we have already done American transcendentalism this week and who are the great writers I hope you remember.

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We have talked about Emerson Thoreau the great American romanticism and we have also touched upon the works of the dark romantics like Edgar Allan Poe, but that was a different context, now today we are going to look at what made and what are the formative influence what were the formative influences on the early American literature particularly the novel we will be doing other jean also soon including poetry and drama.

We will be also doing plenty of exercises as we have been doing so far, and many of you have already started sending mails that you are enjoying and benefitting for from that. So, I am glad that the exercises are proving beneficial, today we are going to continue with American literature that is what we are going to do in the next few classes. I will start with declaration of independence and the manifesto and what it meant what it is

stand for, how that the declaration of independence inform, how did that ultimately inform the great American writings.

And particularly with reference to Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne; Hawthorne if you may recall also belongs to the great tradition of transcendentalism, he was a contemporary of Emerson and Thoreau also Margaret Fuller. So, we were talking about the transcendentalist the American romantics. Now coming to the declaration of independence what is it? One of the most important documents anywhere in the history, but a particularly in the history of United States America was a colony, it was ruled by Great Britain.

There were 13 American colonies and they all officially declared independence from British rule. People in the colonies as expected were unhappy they did not have a say in the government, they had to pay heavy taxes. You remember we had talked about Boston Tea Party no taxation without representation there was also a dreadful or the dreadful Stamp Act of 1765, which where the British government collected taxes on paper goods like legal documents, newspapers and also playing cards. In one act of protest men dumped the cargo of a ship full of British tea into Boston harbor. And in 1773 famously called the Boston Tea Party.

In 1775 the colonists went to war with Great Britain. The war between the colonies and Great Britain was called the American Revolution or American Revolutionary War that took place between 1775 and 1783. So, it was an 8 years war. Fenimore Cooper has written a series of novels particularly the last of the Mohicans, we will be talking about such great early American works as well in which represent of which portrays the reaction during the of course, it is a romantic version but during the American Revolution. Like in all great or as in all great documents the declaration too is firmly situated in a specific historical context we have to remember that it was a product of its time almost 80 or 90 years before the civil war; remember that slavery the dreadful practice of slavery was still on. So, we have to remember those things. So, the document itself was a product of its time in a situated in a specific historical cultural political context.

The rhetoric of universal human rights ok and I am using the word rhetoric it was a good rhetoric it was a good line it was a good slogan, universal human rights it occupies only

20 percent of the document. Over 60 percent of it is a detailed list of grievances, which the American colonies felt against king George the third and the British government. So, you should remember these names king George the third who was the king when the American declaration of independence was drafted, and what were the features now today we know a lot about pursuit of happiness equality for all the days are partly true mostly rhetorical.

But 60 percent the document consisted of grievances, it also discuss a discusses rather because it is still in practice human rights and the nature of national governance sovereignty of course, a specific complaints which the American colonies had again reactions of the British government is also there is a precise list of it. Those of you who are interested in seeing that you can read the entire declaration of independence, in text book in encyclopedia or in legal documents. However, the dist is the retarder or the document rather declares the 13, British colonies on the east coast of North America independent on 4th July 1776.

And remember Thomas Jefferson who was at the forefront of all this is what he had to say, and this is an interesting passage I have taken the entire passage right from the internet for you, for your benefit please take a look at it. This may be asked in exams and perhaps you may be ask the author of this document. So, please take a look at it.

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- *'The circumstance of Superior beauty, is thought worthy of attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, and other domestic animals; why not in that of man? Besides those of colour, figure, and hair, there are other physical distinctions proving a difference of race. They have less hair on the face and body. They secrete less by the kidneys, and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odour ... I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind ... This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people.*

And this is what Thomas Jefferson has to say about the people the black people in America. The circumstance of superior beauty is thought worthy of attention in the propagation of our horses dogs and other domestic animals. Why not in that of man beside those of colour figure and hair, there are other physical distinctions proving a difference of race.

They have less hair on the face and body, they secrete less by the kidneys and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odour. We are talking about a race. I advance it therefore, as a suspicion only that the blacks whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstances are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. This unfortunate difference of colour and perhaps of faculty now this is again important of faculty is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people I do not want to make any comment here and interpretation here, the other day we were talking about close reading of the text new criticism. Just take a look at the sentences at the words, and derive your own conclusions next. So, from here we will talk about one of the greatest ever authors novelist, Herman Melville, who lived between 1819 to 1891, most of us know him as the author of the great Moby dick the mortal classic for which there are no sufficient words to describe the magnitude the scope and also the wonderful way the author has written the book the language.

Now, coming to Melville's early life this is something that we have to do though it may not be perhaps too relevant for many of you, but the point is the fact is there are some questions that are off lead sort of examining your knowledge of biography and life and of the writers and not just their works. So, this is important to know. Now Melville had a permanently weakened eyesight he attended Albany classical school in 1835. In 1839 he shipped out as cabin boy on the merchant ship called Saint Lawrence, now all these details may not be very relevant but you can never tell.

So, saint Lawrence merchant ship and the school he attended Albany classical school. So, early life in 1841 he sailed on the whaler that is a ship Acushnet and the name of the ship was Acushnet to the South Seas. Now in June 1848 the Acushnet anchored in French Polynesia. Now if you read his nautical novels he is primarily known as the writer of the sea. So, if you read all these novels you will find so many references to people who live on distant islands and their way of life and their cultures. So, he not writing about the white collar white Americans.

All the time remember that his scope his people his characters are derived from the offshore from a different way, from the sea and the seaside. So, that is a different kind of a novelist. Now his adventures in French Polynesia, he whatever he felt experienced they became the subject of his first novel *Typee*, which was 1846 remember the dates please; and then there was a sort of mutiny or uprising that landed the mutineers in a Tahitian jail, from which he escaped and following this he row through the island. So, highly adventurous life a very colorful life he felt the bitterness of the colonials.

And the machinery and the debasement of the natives what these people are doing to them he was inspired by the Sauri state of the Polynesians, his second novel was *Omoo* in 1847 where he details the plight of these people, and also *Mardi* which came in 1849 Polynesian romance, same year he wrote *Redburn* which is based on his first sailing or voyage to England. He also wrote *White-Jacket* which is sort of mixes his experience in the navy and also the sharp protests against its brutality and it is from here onwards that we start finding strong allegorical implications.

Now I do not I am not too sure whether *Typee* and *Omoo* and *Mardi* and *Redburn* or *White-Jacket* they are important enough to be asked for exams, that to exams that test your admission to universities and fellowships and all that. So, I am not too sure how important I am just giving you some kind of an introduction. As I have been saying all through the most important work is *Moby Dick* you can be asked any passages voluminous novel.

We will be doing parts from there, I will be testing or giving you exercises based on that and then of course, there is *Billy Budd the Sailor* Melville. So, in my view those are the two most important works of Melville, but you can never tell. So, please be alert to that Melville also move soon moved to Massachusetts where he became a friend of Hawthorne, and he is started working on his magnum opus *Moby Dick*. Of course, I say *Billy Budd* and *Moby Dick*, but then there is another great work it is called *Piazza Tales*, which he wrote in 1857, *Piazza Tales* p i a double z a contain some of the finest short story fiction, and I will be talking about the kind of fiction that is there in *Piazza Tales*.

But I strongly recommend and there is a possibility that questions may be asked from *Piazza Tales* also, published in 1857 remember the date. Something happened in India of magnet of enormous importance in *Piazza Tales* I mean is just sort of you know

developing our associative memory. In 1866 he was he received a government job and began 10 years of service as a custom official in New York, and then he wrote a philosophical work called *Clarel* in 1876. At his death he left the unpublished manuscript of *Billy Budd* which was eventually published in 1924, his other important works are books of poems *John Marr*.

And other sailors and *Timoleon* in 1899, I am not too sure you may check whether it is a 1891, I am sure I think its 1891 not in 1899. Now how to identify the Melville's style; adventures at sea countries and cultures extraordinary events strong allegory imagery in poetics language, stories are rich in symbolism and they are difficult to understand that goes without saying. We have done what is an allegory and you know and when you read Melville you will understand allegory is a great a perfect vehicle for the kind of Melville the writer Melville was. His preoccupation with the conflict between appearance and reality is something that could have been express only and allegorically.

He has diverse he was interested in diverse things you read *Moby dick* and the way he digresses is astounding, but you should know that he has his experiences and adventures were also astounding he did not he never wrote about one place or one kinds of people diversity variety of humankind. In *Bartley the scrivener* one of his most famous tales famous stories from *piazza tales* he combines pathos and humor to create a fable where which is now read as definitive text of existentialism.

And then he also wrote a short story called *poor mans pudding*, and *rich mans crumbs* they are companion pieces that reflect on the contradictions of human behavior and ambivalence. Today he is recognized as the greatest of American literature; however, remember in his own lifetime he was a victim of misunderstanding, typee and *omoo* they reflected a sympathy with pagan tribes and that went beyond the romantic concept of noble savage and therefore, a critics believe that he is portraying a contempt for western attitudes and practices, *Moby dick* remember was also not well received because of its too many main rings

And digressions and then there was another book called *Pierre* and it was reviled for its psychological tones. *Billy Budd* was one of his most famous and well known or and it is also accessible you can read through it and you can although its again very dense packed with historical cultural references try reading *Billy Budd the sailor*, I can very well give

you a one liner of it, I can give you story in one line, but try reading it and you will be searching for where the story is. So, there are so many psychological and moral and cultural social digressions that you have to really look so for it is so, Herman Melville.

A difficult writer to go through therefore, a favorite of examiners Billy Budd remember is a masterpiece set in 1797, depicts the tension of this period following the mutinies in the English fleet during the war with France. It is a novella with metaphysical implications there are three central characters that acquire a symbolical significance I would not be talking about that in detail, but soon when we do our exercises, we will be referring to this another great works of Melville it is a tale of treachery betrayal the tossed tragedy and several things.

And of course, Moby dick at the center of the American cannon is a canonical work. Melville was the first a great novelist to write adventures about and you know it is an enduring romance an enduring adventure about the South Seas. Billy Budd to like all his novels is a nautical work story of a young sailor, where the boy the young man that titular hero he is on board the merchant ship rights of man and that is the name of the ship very symbolic rights of man.

And then he is forced into service on the warship belly potent, that is all powerful in war and the rest of the plot that I am not going to give you today, it follow the narrative of a Billy Budd and captain Edward Fairfax vere John Clagett and the Denskar So, these are the main character today its regarded as a true classic piazza tales has a number of stories Bartley the scrivener is the most well known, but also there is a tale called the piazza Benito Cereno, the lightning rod man the encantados and the Belltower.

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Bartleby the Scrivener

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUBA_KR-VNU

Look at the slide here and here is a short film a film filmic representation of Bartleby the scrivener here that YouTube link please do watch the adaptation. So, from here we move on to another great writer Nathaniel Hawthorne who was born in 1804 in Salem Massachusetts New England. Entire New England culture and Nathaniel Hawthorne was born there his paternal ancestors had been prominent since the founding generation.

But they spelt their name interestingly, with h a t h o r n Hawthorne inserted a w in his name and I will later tell you why. When he began writing fiction the Hawthorne was drawn into a search for material in the careers of his early ancestors and the history of colonial New England. While attending bordering college Hawthorne began writing his major works and again this is important for your exam purpose young Goodman brown twice told tales Ethan brand of course, the scarlet letter the house of the 7 gables.

And the Blithedale romance the scarlet letter was published in 1850. So, what is the theme guilt actual or imagined and he feel the guilt is a universal human experience, and he all his characters suffer due to some sort of guilt hawthorns writings influenced Melville and you have to remember that Melville dedicated Moby dick which was published in 1851 to Hawthorne. Hawthorne lived in New England and as we have been talking about, he also he came into contact with the greats like Emerson and Thoreau at one point.

He also lived in that specific location Concord you should know these names. He died in 1864 and was buried in somewhere in a place called Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord Massachusetts. The Scarlet Letter as I have already told you published in 1850 is his magnum opus. Set in seventeenth century Puritan Massachusetts, and centers around the suffering the guilt the travails of someone called Hester Prynne, who gives birth to a daughter Pearl after an adulterous affair. So, Pearl is a result of this affair.

Now, Hawthorne interestingly divorces very little time between Hester and her husband when she has an affair with her husband is away fighting the Indians the Native Americans. So, the novel is less concerned with the affair itself. It is more interested in the effects of the affair and the theme is guilt and public shaming and that is what Hawthorne was interested in the taboos of Puritan New England in contemporary society. Hester Prynne famously has to have to wear the letter a signifying adulterous it's written in and embroidered form the letter a red embroidery.

And she is supposed to put it on her clothes on the dress she wears. Now this novel became very popular upon publication and this may be of interest to you it was one of the rather it was America's first mass produced book. Before the Scarlet Letter a book in America usually were handmade sold one by one in small numbers, Hawthorne's novel benefited from a machine press and its first run of 2500 copies sold out immediately, as a result the novel benefited one controversial subject.

Also large available readership we will be talking a lot about the Scarlet Letter.

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Young Goodman Brown

- <http://study.com/academy/lesson/young-goodman-brown-summary-analysis-symbolism.html>

And before I wind up today's class please take a look at this slide young Goodman brown, and a very nice version of the story an adaptation available on the YouTube do look at it.

Thank you very much.