

Poetry
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American Poetry

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American Poetry



- Historical and Literary Context
- Early Twentieth-Century American Poetry
- American Modernism and Modernists
- The Fugitives
- The Beat Generation
- African American Poetry
- Confessional Poetry
- Feminist Poetry
- Eco-poetry
- New York School of Poets
- Language Poetry
- Native American Poetry



Hello, we are moving into the eighth week today with American Poetry. We will briefly provide a synoptic view of American Poetry with reference to the historical and literary context of American Poetry. We will refer to the nineteenth century and before for some contextual information otherwise we will focus more on the developments in American Poetry in twentieth century.

As we can see from these topics, these are the major movements, major poetic experiments in American Poetry from American Modernism and Modernist, The Fugitives, The Beat Generation African American Poetry, Confessional Poetry, Feminist Poetry, Eco-poetry, New York School of Poets, Language Poetry and more importantly Native American Poetry.

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Historical Context



- European expeditions to various parts of the world
- Colonization of the Americas
- Initially 13 colonies but later a country of 50 states
- Political independence from Britain in 1776
- The literature was all imported from Europe.
- People of different origins, including native Americans
- Some sense of literature began in the early 19th century
- Interaction with the American soil and society, a prerequisite to write American literature
- The multicultural experience is central to American literature and culture



Let us look into the historical context now. America is a country is actually a discovery of the Europeans. Many European expeditions to various parts of the world led to the discovery of different continents. One of them was this Americas and wherever they went, they discovered, they colonized to those places. Initially, in the North America that we refer to as US, thirteen colonies were established but later these colonies evolved into 50 different states making up the United States that we know today. America got its political independence from Britain in 1776 but the cultural independence was not attained for a long time.

So, this country with people of different origins including native Americans, produced some literature with a sense of its own literature only in the early nineteenth century. What we have to notice is, the interaction with American soil and society which is a pre requisite to write truly great American literature. As the base of all these experiences, what we have to emphasize is the multi cultural experience which is central to American literature and culture.

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Literary Context



- Ralph Waldo **Emerson** (1803-1882), the transcendental thinker, called for a truly American poet in "The Poet."
 - The 'true' poet appeared in the form of Walt Whitman (1819-1892) with his *Leaves of Grass* in 1855.
 - Edgar Allan **Poe** (1809-1849) also contributed notable poems like "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee"
 - Another great poet is Emily **Dickinson** (1830-1886).
 - Her poetry is characterized by profound observations of life with her metaphysical wit and precision.
 - Most of her poems were published after her death.
 - Poems of the British variety were also published in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Henry Wadsworth **Longfellow** (1807-1882)



Now let us move onto this literary context. We have listed a few poets here with a focus on how this original American literature evolved in America. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson, that transcendental thinker, who call a truly American poet in his essay on "The Poet." We are familiar with his essay on 'The American Scholar' which is considered to be the declaration of cultural independence for America. The true poet appeared in the form of Walt Whitman with his great poem "Leaves of Grass" in 1855.

During the same period in the nineteenth century, we have Edgar Allan Poe who also contributed notable poems like "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee" in addition to his contribution to short stories. Another great poet we have to remember is Emily Dickinson. Her poetry is characterized by profound observations of life with her metaphysical wit and precision. Most of her poems were published after her death only.

During this period, poems of the British variety were also published in the nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries. One example we have is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who is known for many of his poems including his epic poem on 'Hiawatha.'

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Early 20th C. American Poetry



- The predominantly fast and materialistic American society did not promote great poetry.
- The reading public was happy with conservative poems.
- With recognition from Theodore Roosevelt, E A Robinson became a notable poet of the US.
- Edgar Lee **Masters**, Vachel **Lindsay** and Carl **Sandburg** wrote poems on the unique American experience.
- Women poets, Sara **Teasdale**, Edna **St Vincent Millay**, and Elinor **Wylie** expressed feminine sensibility in their poems.³
- Robert **Frost** was a lone figure following the Romantic tradition and yet questioning it but neglected by the modernist movement.
- Poets like Ezra **Pound**, Robert **Frost**, T S **Eliot** had to move to Europe for cultivating and promoting their poetry.



It was in the early twentieth century the experiments began to take shape very seriously. The predominantly fast and materialistic American society did not have much interest in promoting great poetry. The reading public was generally happy with many of those conservative traditional poems written and published in the US.

With recognition from Theodore Roosevelt, the President of the US, a small poet E A Robinson became a notable poet of the US. Because he was poor, he did not have access to resources. Somehow, Theodore Roosevelt, the President happen to read one of his poems and then wrote a letter to Robinson and provided him some job. We have poets like Masters, Lindsay, Sandburg who were writing about the unique American experience in the early twentieth century. We also have some women poets like Teasdale, Saint Vincent Millay and Elinor Wylie expressing their own feminine sensibility in their poems.

Now, we come to the great figure in American poetry that is, Robert Frost. He was a lone figure following the romantic tradition and yet questioning it but he was generally neglected by the modernist movement although he was associated with Pound and Eliot for some time. Pound, Frost, Eliot, actually these are American poets born in America but they had to move to Europe for cultivating and promoting their poetry. While Frost returned to US, T S Eliot chose to stay back and became a British citizen.

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American Modernism



- British modernist poetry was shaped by E. Pound and T. S. Eliot to a large extent.
- Pound helped American modernism flourish from London.
- Three major literary magazines for the promotion of poetry:
 - Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* (1912-), Chicago
 - Margaret Anderson's *The Little Review* (1914-1929), Chicago, San Francisco, New York, Paris
 - Thayer and Dr. Watson, Jr.'s *The Dial* (1920-1929), NY.
- *The Dial* published Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1922
- Pound's influential role in American modernist poetry
- His recommendation of poets from London and Paris
- His mentorship of poets like Eliot, Frost, and W. C. Williams



Here is the context of American modernism. As we can understand, British modernist poetry was shaped by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot to a large extent. The Edwardian and Georgian poetry in Britain was largely traditional. It was, T. S. Eliot and Pound who shaped up this modernist movement in Britain and then, which came to the US. Pound helped American modernism flourish from London, from Europe; 3 major literary magazines for the promotion of poetry were established in the early period in American literary scene.

One of the most important magazines which is still published today is 'Poetry,' which was founded by Harriet Monroe in Chicago in 1912. It is surprising that more than hundred years have gone by but this magazine continues today with the donation, with the philanthropy of one person called Ruth Lilly. Most of the poems are freely available to us through the Poetry Foundation we have now.

Next magazine that we have to remember is Margaret Anderson's 'The Little Review.' It was started in Chicago then moved to San Francisco, then New York. Later on, it had to move out of the country to Paris. Next, we have another important magazine of this period 'The Dial' established by Thayer and Watson from New York. It was this Dial magazine which published Eliot's epic poem 'The Waste Land' in 1922 and awarded him a rich prize of 2000 dollars.

Pound's influential role in American modernist poetry is remarkable. It was he who was a link between editors and poets in different parts of Europe. His recommendation of poets from

London and Paris was considered to be crucial for promoting American poets, even other poets. We may remember even Rabindranath Tagore's poem was published in the first issue of poetry magazine. His mentorship of poets like Eliot, Frost and William Carlos Williams is enormous. Something truly remarkable service to poetry we find in the case of Pound.

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American Modernists



- Various practices of modernism in the US.
- **Hart Crane** (1899-1932): influenced by Emerson, Whitman, Browning, Rimbaud, Eliot, and others; an extraordinary genius but died early due to depression; absorbed technology into his poem, *The Bridge* (1930)
- **Wallace Stevens** (1879-1955): a lawyer and poet; concerned with the interplay of reality and imagination; *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* (1942) states "Poetry is a supreme fiction."
- **William Carlos Williams** (1883-1963): a doctor and poet mentored by Pound's imagism but developed into an independent poet of open forms; enormously influential in American poetry; *Paterson* (1963), an epic poem.



Although, American modernism was shaped from Britain, poets writing in the US shaped their own modernist version. Different poets practiced American modernism in various ways. We have the case of 3 poets here; Hart Crane, he was influenced by Emerson, Whitman, Browning, Rimbaud, Eliot and many others. He was an extraordinary genius but died very early due to depression. It was he who absorbed the futuristic focus of technology into his poem called 'The Bridge,' considered to be a very important poem for American poetry.

Next, we have Wallace Stevens, he was basically a lawyer and chose to write poetry out of passion for poetry. He was concerned with the interplay of reality and imagination in all of his poems. In his well-known poem called "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," he says 'poetry is a supreme fiction.' Then we have William Carlos Williams, again a very interesting case of devoted doctor, medical practitioner turning out to be a very well-known poet. He was initially mentored by Pound and his movement called 'imagistic movement' but then Carlos Williams became an independent poet of open forms. He became enormously influential in American poetry and he is known for his epic poem 'Paterson.'

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Objectivist Poetry



- Used by Zukosfky to describe a group of poets in 1930s
- Represented in the volume, *An "Objectivists" Anthology* (1932), edited by Zukofsky
- A further development of Pound's and Amy Lowell's imagism
- A second generation of modernists
- Use of concise image and free verse
- Treatment of poetry as a process and an object
- Focus on everyday life, sincerity, simplicity, and clarity⁷
- Louis Zukofsky: "A," George Oppen: "From a Photograph," Charles Reznikoff: "Depression," Lorine Niedecker: "Darwin"
- The British poet Basil Bunting is also an Objectivist p



Many developments happened in American poetry out of this modernist movement in America. This Objectivist Poetry is one of them. This term was used by Zukofsky to describe a group of poets in 1930s. These poets were represented in an anthology called an Objectivist Anthology edited by Zukofsky in 1932. This is a further development of Ezra Pound's and Amy Lowell's imagism giving importance to objective presentation of experience in modern life.

These poets were considered to be a second generation of modernist. They used concise and free verse. They also treated poetry as a process and an object. They focused more on everyday life, sincerity, simplicity and clarity in their poems. Here we have some examples of these poets and their poems. Louis Zukofsky's poem called "A," then George Oppen's poem "From a Photograph." Next, Charles Reznikoff's poem "Depression" and lastly, we have Lorine Niedecker whose poem is called "Darwin." We also have the case of Basil Bunting who is essentially a British poet but followed this objectivist poetry group.

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The Fugitives



- A group of poets from Vanderbilt University, Tennessee.
- Published a poetry magazine, *The Fugitive* (1922-1925)
- Wrote a kind of traditional poetry about the South
- They regarded the poet as a fugitive.
- Members: A. **Tate**, J. C. **Ransom**, and R. P. **Warren**
- These three were also linked to the Agrarian poets.
- Contributed immensely to the Southern Renaissance.
- As poet-critics, they promoted New Criticism too.
- C. Brooks and R. P. Warren published one of the most influential textbooks, *Understanding Poetry* (1938).
- **Tate**: "Edges," **Ransom**: "Janet Walking," **Warren**: "Evening Hawk"



Then we have another group of poets called Fugitives. These are a group of poets from Vanderbilt University located in Tennessee. They published a poetry magazine called "The Fugitive." It was short lived from 1922 to 1925. They wrote a kind of traditional poetry about the south, about the American South. They regarded the poet as a Fugitive trying to escape from some society or materialistic world.

Some of the notable members of this group are Allen Tate, J. C. Ransom, Robert Penn Warren. These 3 were also connected with another group of poets called Agrarian Poets because they were writing about the Agrarian movement in the south. They contributed immensely to their Southern Renaissance which was flourishing in the early twentieth century. As poet critics, they promoted new criticism as well. Cleanth Brooks and R. P. Warren published one of the most influential textbooks of understanding poetry in the twentieth century.

Some poems from this group we have here, Tate is known for "Edges," Ransom for "Janet Walking" and Warren for "Evening Hawk." These are poems which we can easily locate on the poetry magazine page from Poetry Foundation.

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The Beat Generation



- A 1940s and 1950s phenomenon in American poetry
- Experimental and rebellious poetry
- Disillusioned by the mass destruction of people during the Second World War and Cold War
- Drew inspiration from drugs, sexual freedom, Eastern religion, nature, jazz music, surrealism, metaphysical poetry, visionary poetry, haiku, and Zen poetry
- Known as 'Beat' due to a beaten and weary sense
- **Beat Poets:** Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gary Snyder, Diana Di Prima, etc.
- **Ginsberg:** "Howl," **Kerouac:** "Useless, Useless," **Ferlinghetti:** "Dog," **Snyder:** "Above Pat Valley," **Di Prima:** "Buddhist New Year Song"



Then, we go to another influential moment in American poetry, The Beat Generation. In the 1940s and 1950s, a group of poets wrote about a new kind of experience. They were experimental, they were rebelling against the society, they were rebelling against traditions, they were disillusioned by the mass destruction of people during the Second World War and the Cold War. They drew inspiration from drugs, sexual freedom, eastern religion, nature, jazz music, surrealism, metaphysical poetry, visionary poetry, haiku poetic form and Zen poetry.

We can see a mix of many traditions, east and west, trying to find a new experience through these poets called Beat generation poets, they are called Beat, because they expressed a sense of being beaten and being weary. Some of the well-known poets of this group are Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Garry Snyder, Diana De Prima and many others.

Some examples of poems from this group, we have Ginsberg's "Howl" Kerouac's "Useless, Useless," Ferlinghetti's "Dog," Snyder's "About Pat Valley" and Di Prima's "Buddhist New Year Song." The poem "Useless, Useless" may tell us about the kind of useless life they were talking about in this group.

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African American Poetry - I



- **Early African American Poets:**
 - Lucy Terry Prince, Jupiter Hammon, George Moses Horton, Phillis Wheatley, and Paul Laurence Dunbar
 - **Wheatley:** “On Being Brought from Africa to America”
 - **Dunbar:** “The Poet and His Song,” and “The Poet”
- **Harlem Renaissance Poets:**
 - W. E. B. Du Bois, Carl Sandburg, Claude Mackay, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Langston Hughes
 - **Sandburg:** “Chicago”
 - **Hughes:** “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”
 - The river of humanity and civilization



Another major strand of American poetry that we have to understand is African American poetry. It is a stream; it is a river by itself. So we have two sections to discuss African American poetry. Almost again we have a synoptic view of entire African American poetry here. Of course, some representative poets we mentioned, there are many others. In the early American context, we see African American poets writing poems.

Some examples are Lucy Terry Prince, Jupiter Hammon, George Moses Horton, Phillis Wheatley and Paul Laurence Dunbar. Wheatley is known for one poem called “On Being Brought from Africa to America.” Paul Dunbar is known for many poems. This one is very interesting, “The Poet and His Song” and another poem also he has on “The Poet.” These are traditional poems. They touch our heart if you read them.

Then we have a movement called Harlem Renaissance and those who were associated with this movement are called Harlem Renaissance poets. We have W. E. B. Du Bois, Carl Sandburg, Claude Mackay, Jessie Fauset and Langston Hughes. Some examples of poems from this group, we have here Sandburg’s “Chicago” is well known like Ginsberg’s poem called “Howl.” Next, we have Hughes who wrote this poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” Among many other poems, this particular poem can be a reference to a kind of the river of humanity and civilization. They are also equally part of this movement, that is what many of this African American poets are trying to convey to the world.

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African American Poetry - II



- **Black Arts Movement Poets:**
 - Began with the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965
 - Asserted the Black Power aggressively
 - Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni, Haki R Madhubuti
- **Baraka:** “Legacy”
- **Giovanni:** “I Wrote a Good Omelet”
- **African American Feminist Poets:**
 - Margaret Walker, Audre Lorde, Lucille Clifton, Rita Dove
- **Clifton:** “homage to my hips”
- **Dove:** “Banneker,” “Ars Poetica”



We another moment called Black Arts Movement in part of this African American literature in general and poetry in particular. This movement began with the assassination of an influential thinker called Malcolm X in 1965. This movement later on asserted the black power more aggressively than the previous groups. We have some examples of poets like Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni, Haki R Madhubuti. Two examples of poems we have from Baraka whose “Legacy” is known. Then we have Giovanni, let us pay attention to the title “I wrote a Good Omelet,” more experimental than the previous African American poets.

Then we have a group of African American feminist poets. They may be connected with many other groups but specifically these are identified as African American feminist poets. Margaret Walker, Audre Lorde, Lucille Clifton and Rita Dove. Some examples are Clifton’s “homage to my hips,” see the title of the poem in lawyer case. Then we have Dove, “Banneker” and the important poem is “Ars Poetica.” African American poets also could write about the art of poetry.

One of the major elements of this black arts movement or Harlem Renaissance was this to prove that African Americans also can culturally be as important as the rest of the world, particularly the white Americans.

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Confessional Poetry



- Coined by M. L. Rosenthal in his review of Lowell's *Life Studies* in 1959.
 - An anti-modernist movement in the 1960s & 1970s
 - Frank exploration of the poet's personal life; mental, marital and social problems
 - Removal of the poet's mask from personal poetry
 - Revolutionized poetic subject and style
 - Used direct and colloquial speech rhythms
- Anne **Sexton**: "The Expatriates," Sylvia **Plath**: "Daddy," Robert **Lowell**: "Skunk Hour," W D **Snodgrass**: "Heart's Needle," John **Berryman**: "Dream Song 14"



A major phenomenon of American poetry is Confessional poetry. This term was coined by M. L. Rosenthal in his review of Robert Lowell's poem "Life Studies" in 1959. This was an anti-modernist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. These poets explored the poet's personal life frankly, openly focusing on the mental, marital and social problems they faced in their own lives. They removed the poet's mask from personal poetry. They did not have much of the difference between the poet and the person. They expressed themselves openly. Thus, they revolutionized poetic subject and style.

Now, we can recall Eliot's Objective theory of poetry but then these poets were writing against the grain the modernism. Some examples we have Anne Sexton's poem, "The Expatriates," Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," Robert Lowell's "Skunk Hour," W D Snodgrass's "Heart's Needle." This title is very interesting to see how the heart was bleeding openly in front of the public. Then John Berryman's "Dream Song," it is a sequence, we have mentioned only one poem "Dream Song 14."

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American Ecopoetry



- Realistic, cautionary, accusative, and apocalyptic as against traditional nature poetry
 - Raises the political question of the survival of the earth
 - Examines the complex interrelationships between human beings and nature
 - Records proactive responses to climate change
 - Numerous poets from various positions, African American, feminist, Native American, etc.
- **W S Merwin:** "For a Coming Extinction," **A R Ammons:** "World," **William E Stafford:** "The Well Rising," **Jay Parini:** "Anthracite Country," **Stephanie Burt:** "Advice from Rock Creek Park"



A very important dimension of American poetry is Ecopoetry. They were always concerned with nature in some form or other. American Ecopoetry is known for realistic, cautionary, accusative and apocalyptic vision as against the traditional nature poetry. It raises the political question of the survival of the earth. It examines the complex interrelationships between human beings and nature. One of the most important points that we have to remember is, we are all interconnected in some way. Some virus came out from somewhere but now you can see the whole world is affected by Covid 19. This proves the ecocritical principle or ecological principle that we are all interconnected. If one suffers, all of us will suffer, this is the basic dharma of Eco-poetry or dharma of life that we find in life in general.

Numerous poets from various positions like African American feminist, native Americans and all that write, continue to write Ecopoetry in American's context. We have some examples here. W. S. Merwin's "For a Coming Extinction," A. R. Ammons's "World," William E Stafford's "The Well Rising," Jay Parini's "Anthracite Country." Lastly, we have Stephanie Butt whose poem is "Advice from Rock Creek Park." Are we listening to nature? Are we really able to understand the kind of extinction that we are going to face? That is what these nature poets though not like romantic nature poets, they are writing, they are drawing attention to our own life.

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- ### Feminist Poetry
- **Themes** of sexuality, authorship, motherhood, gender, nature, language, power, sisterhood, love, death, etc.
 - **Modernist poets** like Gertrude Stein, H.D., Marianne Moore, and Amy Lowell addressed feminist concerns
 - **African American poets** like Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, Lucille Clifton examined both racial and gender issues
 - **Confessional poets** like Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, and Sharon Olds also discussed feminist themes
 - **Radical feminists** like Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde have presented the ways of dignified living for women.
- **Stein:** "A Substance in a Cushion," **Brooks:** "the mother," **Sexton:** "All My Pretty Ones," **Rich:** "What Kind of Times Are These," **Lorde:** "A Woman Speaks"



Another major dimension of American poetry is specifically feminist poetry. It is very strong in American literature. The poets of this group deal with the themes of sexuality, authorship, motherhood, gender, nature, language, power, sisterhood, love, death and everything else. We have some feminist poets in the modernist group like Gertrude Stein, Hilda Doolittle, Marianne Moore and Amy Lowell. While writing about life in general, according to modernist movement, they were also writing about feminist concerns.

Then we have African American poets but they are also part of this feminist movement what we have in Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, Lucille Clifton are all poems about not only black people but also black women, that is why we have these racial and gender issues in African American feminist poetry.

Then we saw these confessional poets, they were talking about themselves like Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and Sharon Olds. They were also dealing with women's concerns. We have another group from this feminist poetry, that is radical feminists. Two of the notable examples from this group are Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. They have presented the ways of dignified living for women.

Some examples of poems we have here now. Stein's "A Substance in a Cushion," Gwendolyn Brooks's "the mother," Sexton's "All My Pretty Ones," Adrienne Rich's "What Kind of Times Are These? And lastly Audre Lorde's "A Woman Speaks." Does a man listen? That is a big

question. Does a black man listen? Does a white man listen? Does a man from any other place listen to a woman? That is a huge problem for this feminist poetry.

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Black Mountain Poets

- A group of poets associated with the short-lived Black Mountain College, Asheville, North Carolina
 - Labelled Black Mountain Poets by David Allen in his anthology of *The New American Poetry* in 1960
 - Guided by the theory of "Projective Verse" advanced by Charles Olson
 - Believed in breath or syllable as the unit of composition
 - Used the whole page as a field of composition
 - Removed their individual ego from their poetry and emphasized the community
- **Charles Olson:** "Maximus, to himself," **Robert Creeley:** "The Door," **Robert Duncan:** "Food for Fire, Food for Thought," **Hilda Morley:** "Winter Solstice," and **Denise Levertov:** "The Communion"



Here is another group of poets called Black Mountain Poets. These are a group of poets associated with the short-lived Black Mountain College in Asheville that is North Carolina State. They were called labeled or called Black Mountain Poets by David Allen in his anthology of *The New American Poetry* published in 1960. These poets were guided by the theory of Projective Verse advanced by one of the leaders Charles Olson. They believed in breath or syllable as a unit of composition. They used the whole page as a field of composition to write their poems.

They were to attempting to remove the individual ego from their poetry and emphasized the community. Here we have some examples, Charles Olson's "Maximus, to himself," Robert Creeley's "The Door," Robert Duncan's "Food for Fire, Food for Thought," Hilda Morely's "Winter Solstice" and Denise Levertov's "The Communion."

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New York School of Poets



- Basically experimental painter-poets
- Coined by Robert Motherwell, a painter, to identify themselves
- A divergent group but shared a few common features of wit, urbanity, and conversational tone
- Influenced by literary surrealism and abstract expressionism
- Collaborated with painters like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning
- John **Ashbery**: "The Painter," Frank **O'Hara**: "Meditations in an Emergency," James **Schuyler**: "A Stone Knife," Kenneth **Koch**: "The Circus," and Barbara **Guest**: "The Blue Stairs"
- Second generation of poets: Alice **Notley**: "No world intact," and Ted **Berrigan**: "A Certain Slant of Sunlight"



One of the groups from this American Poetry is New York School of Poets. Basically, they were all experimental painter poets that means, they were painting and also writing poems. This term was coined by Robert Motherwell, a painter to identify these poets as a group. It is a divergent group of people sharing a few common features of wit, urbanity and conversational tone. These poets were influenced by literary surrealism and abstract expressionism from painting. These painters themselves were poets. They also were collaborating with other well-known painters like Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning.

Well known examples of this group are John Ashbery's "The Painter," Frank O'Hara's "Meditations in an Emergency," James Schuyler's "A Stone Knife," Kenneth Koch's "The Circus" and Barbara Guest's "The Blue Stairs." We also have a second generation of New York School of Poets in Alice Notley and Ted Berrigan, who are known for two poems we have mentioned here Notley for "No World is intact," Berrigan for "A Certain Slant of Sunlight."

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Language Poetry



- An experimental poetry movement in the 1970s
 - Derived from the poetry magazine edited by Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews, **L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E**
 - Pays attention to how language constructs meaning
 - Involves the reader in the construction of meaning
 - Connected with contemporary literary theories of deconstruction and post-structuralism
 - Associated with the objectivist poetry of Louis Zukofsky
- **Michael Palmer**: "Eighth Sky," **Lyn Hejinman**: [The water was rising], **Ron Silliman**: "You, Part I," **Rae Armantrout**: "The Fold," **Charles Bernstein**: "Questionnaire"
- A key theoretical text: Silliman's *The New Sentence*



One more group of poets we have in a movement called Language Poetry. It was an experimental poetry movement in 1970s. The term was derived from the poetry magazine edited by Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews called Language hyphenated like this L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E with hyphens. This kind of poetry pays attention to how language constructs meaning. It involves the reader the construction of meaning. This is connected with the contemporary literary theories of deconstruction and post-structuralism because this group shares their questions about language, meaning, construction, social construction and things like that.

This group is further associated with the objectivist poetry of Louis Zukofsky. We have Michael Palmer's "Eighth Sky," Lyn Hejinman's "The Water Was Rising," Ron Silliman's "You, Part 1," Rae Armantrout's "The Fold," Charles Bernstein's "Questionnaire." For those of you who are interested in how to prepare a questionnaire? What is the structure of question? and all that can see how this poem called Questionnaire is written in the form of a questionnaire. It is interesting to see this, again available on Poetry Foundation page.

A key theoretical text of this group is Silliman's "The New Sentence." They were concerned with how language is used, how words mean, how the interconnections exist between words and sentence structures and the society as well.

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Native American Poetry

- 560 Indigenous nations in the U.S. alone
- Rich diversity but underrepresented
- An anthology of native American poetry: *New Poets of Native Nations*, edited by Heid Erdrich, published by Graywolf Press in 2018
- Erdrich is from the Ojibwe tribe
- Includes 21 poets writing since 2000
- Sherman Alexie: "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel"
- Joy Harjo: "Eagle Poem"
- Harjo: Poet Laureate, the first one from the Native American community



Now we come to the last group of poets in Native American Poetry but this is not the last, this is the first. America was a land of native people and these native people were not able to get any voice but recently they have got some attention. So, we have brought here to draw our attention to the kind of poetry, that is written by Native Americans. Almost 560 indigenous nations are there in the US alone. Then we have other Americas like Canada and South America. Here alone we have 560 indigenous nations. That means, we have a very rich diversity but these poets and writers are not represented as they ought to be.

We have few anthologies of poems by these native Americans. One is, "New Poets of Native Nations" edited by Heid Erdrich, published by Graywolf Press in 2018. This editor Erdrich is from Ojibwe tribe. This collection includes 21 poets writing since 2000, that means lot of poets are there before some other anthologies are there but we have chosen to pay attention to this volume. Well known poets are Sherman Alexie and Joy Harjo. Alexie's poem "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel" is interesting in its title itself.

Then we have Joy Harjo's poem, "Eagle Poem." Quite strangely, we have Joy Harjo as a poet Laureate now. All those poets who were neglected so far, now they have got some representation through Harjo as Poet Laureate of the US, the first one from this native American community. They have got some voice now. Let us hope they will be able to write more poems and they will be able to get more attention from the American public and the rest of the world.

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Harjo's "Eagle Poem" [Extract]

To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can't see, can't hear;
Can't know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren't always sound but other
Circles of motion.
Like eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky
In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.



To end this lecture on American Poetry, we have chosen an extract from Joy Harjo's poem "Eagle." A poem, the title itself Eagle Poem. It tells us about the kind of spirit these native Americans have. Let us read it.

"To pray you open your whole self

To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon,

To one whole voice that is you.

And know there is more

That you can't see, can't hear;

Can't know except in moments

Steadily growing, and in languages

That aren't always sound but other

Circles of motion.

Like Eagle that Sunday morning

Over Salt River, Circled in blue sky

In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.”

There is always an attempt of great poets to reach silence, to go beyond language, to go beyond words. That is what we find in the circles of motion by this eagle through this poem Eagle Poem. The kind of native interest in spirituality, nature, community and a greater understanding of life than what we have in western civilization that is something remarkable. To read the whole poem, please visit Poetry Foundation web page.

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Summary

- Historical and Literary Context
- Early Twentieth-Century American Poetry
- American Modernism and Modernists
- The Fugitives
- The Beat Generation
- African American Poetry
- Confessional Poetry
- Feminist Poetry
- Eco-poetry
- New York School of Poets
- Language Poetry
- Native American Poetry



We have a summary of the whole presentation now. We have seen the historical and literary context of American poetry from nineteenth century to twentieth century. We first looked at early twentieth century American poetry where we found this modernism and modernist along with the traditionalists. Then different groups of poets like The Fugitives, The Beat Generation, African American Poetry, Confessional Poetry, Feminist Poetry, Eco-poetry, New York School of poets, Language Poetry and then, Native American Poetry.

All these poets from different groups have contributed to the topic that we have American Poetry. In the subsequent lectures, we will see some sample poems by well-known poets.

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Here are some references. From one of the references by Philip Young, it is interesting to see that Indian literature, our own Sahitya Akademi Journal was published in 1957. And the first issue of Indian literature carried an article on American Poetry by an American. That is a cross cultural interaction through literature and poetry. Thank you.