

"The Canon Debate Today: The Representation of U.S. History and Literature in American High School and College Textbooks"



September 15-16, 2002,
Savoy Hotel, Berlin

Vom 15. bis zum 16. September 2002 veranstaltet die Kulturabteilung der Amerikanischen Botschaft eine Fachkonferenz in Berlin zum Thema:

"The Canon Debate Today: The Representation of U.S. History and Literature in American High Schools and College Textbooks."

Unsere Fachtagung richtet sich insbesondere an Fachreferenten in den Ministerien, an Curriculumplaner der Fächer Englisch, Sozialkunde und Geschichte, an Vertreter der deutschen Schulbuchverlage, und an Schulbuchautoren. Die Tagungssprache wird ausschließlich Englisch sein, da es sich bei den Referenten vorwiegend um Experten aus den U.S.A. handelt.

Folgende Referenten haben zur Konferenz zugesagt:

- **Dr. Peter Freese**, Professor für Amerikanische Literatur und Kultur, Universität Paderborn. Dr. Freese war Präsident der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Amerikastudien.
- **Dr. David R. Goldfield**, Robert Lee Bailey Prof. of History, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Dr. Goldfield ist Autor des Schulbuchs THE AMERICAN JOURNEY: A HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES.
- **Dr. Paul Lauter**, Allan K. & Gwendolyn Miles Smith Professor of Literature, Trinity College, Hartford, CT. Dr. Lauter ist ehemaliger Präsident der American Studies Association und Herausgeber der Heath Anthology.
- **Dr. Joe Pickett**, Vice President and Executive Editor in the Dictionary Department at Houghton Mifflin Company in Boston. Dr.

Konferenz

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◆ [An American Literature Bibliography for Secondary Schoolteachers. By Sarah Robbins](#)

Links

◆ [Amerikazentrum Hamburg](#)

Pickett ist Herausgeber des American Heritage Dictionary.

- **Dr. Sarah Robbins**, Professor of English and Education at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Dr. Robbins war Co-Direktorin des Projekts "Making American Literatures (1997-1999)," einem Curriculum-Entwicklungsprogramm.

Tagungsort ist das Savoy Hotel, Fasanenstr. 3, Berlin Charlottenburg, in Fußnähe zum Bahnhof Zoologischer Garten.

Die Amerikanische Botschaft trägt die Programmkosten inklusive einer Übernachtung. Die Teilnehmer tragen die Reisekosten sowie einen Konferenzbeitrag von EUR 30. Bitte melden Sie die Teilnahme an der Konferenz bis spätestens 22. Juli per Fax an die U.S. Botschaft an: 030/31107-409 (s. Anlage).

Ein Zimmerkontingent ist vorreserviert im Savoy Hotel Berlin, Fasanenstr. 9-10, 10623 Berlin-Charlottenburg, tel: (030) 31 10 30, fax: (030) 31 10 33 33. Bitte reservieren Sie Ihr Zimmer dort direkt unter dem Stichwort "Amerikanische Botschaft" und geben Sie Ihre Kreditkartennummer als Sicherheit an. Sollten Sie kurzfristig absagen müssen, bitten wir um Verständnis, daß die Botschaft keine Ausfallgebühren übernehmen kann. Diese würden dann zu Ihren Lasten gehen.

Für weitere Fragen steht Ihnen die Organisatorin der Konferenz, Dr. Martina Kohl, zur Verfügung (Tel. 030/31107-454; e-mail KohlM@pd.state.gov).

Wir freuen uns auf Ihre Teilnahme.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Thomas J. Delaney
Kulturattaché

last updated July 11, 2002

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September 15-16,
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Conference Program

Sunday, September 15

Participants arrive during the day

14:00

Registration; Welcome Coffee

15:00

Welcome Remarks by Dr. Richard Schmierer, Country Public Affairs Officer

15:15 - 16:30

Lecture by Dr. Peter Freese, University of Paderborn on "**American Studies in the Advanced EFL-Classroom in Germany: Challenges and Limitations.**"
Discussion following.

16:30 - 17:45

Lecture by Dr. Joe Pickett, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, on "**Cultural and Linguistic Change in The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.**" Discussion following.

17:45 - 18:45

Reception

Evening free.

Monday, September 16

9:00 - 10:30

Dr. Paul Lauter, Lecture on "**The Heath Anthology and the Literary Canon: What Has Changed in American Studies at the College Level?**" Discussion following.

	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00 - 12:30	Dr. Sarah Robbins, Lecture on " Teaching American Literature at the High School Level: The NEH's Making American Literatures Project ". <i>Making American Literatures: Overview of the Project Proposal</i> Discussion following.
12:30 - 13:30:	<i>Lunch</i>
13:30 - 15:00	Dr. David Goldfield, Lecture on " Writing an American History Textbook: What Students Need to Learn and Forget ". " <i>Here are the challenges: to include the diverse groups that comprise the United States without making the text read like a catalogue; to ensure that women are well-represented without slighting the men who wielded most of the power through much of American history; to include all of the relevant facts, interpretations, and key dates of American history while at the same time making the narrative flow so that students will not fall asleep; to push students out of their complacency, provincialism, and false assumptions without offending them or their parents; to be politically correct without appearing to be politically correct; and, most important of all, from the perspective of the publisher, to write and design a book that will be successful in a highly competitive market. I will talk about and demonstrate how we responded to these challenges to create <i>The American Journey: A History of the United States</i>, how we included diversity without losing the narrative theme, and the pedagogical tools we used to enable students to both learn and unlearn American history. Finally, I will talk about the marketing strategy of the publisher (Pearson - Prentice Hall) and how that shaped the book and its success. "</i> Discussion following.
	<i>Short Coffee Break .</i>
15:15 - 16:30	Panel discussion with all faculty (Audience included). Moderator: Dr. Rolf Theis, Frankfurt.
	<i>End of Conference</i>

last updated July 17, 2002

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Faculty

• **Dr. Peter Freese** is Professor of American Studies at Paderborn University. He is former President of the German Association of American Studies who has been engaged in teacher training and the development of school materials in American Studies for many years.

• **Dr. David Goldfield** is Robert Lee Bailey Prof. of History at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is author of the American history textbook THE AMERICAN JOURNEY: A HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES.

• **Dr. Paul Lauter** is Allan K. & Gwendolyn Miles Smith Professor of Literature, [Trinity College, Hartford, CT](#). Dr. Lauter is former President of the American Studies Association and editor of the [Heath Anthology](#).

• **Dr. Joe Pickett** is Vice President and Executive Editor in the Dictionary Department at Houghton Mifflin Company in Boston. He is editor of the American Heritage Dictionary. [Interview about 4th ed. of American Heritage Dictionary and short bio on Teachers.Net Gazette](#)

• **Dr. Sarah Robbins** is Professor of English and Education at [Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA](#). She was project co-director for "[Making American Literatures](#)," a 1997-99 curriculum development project. Robbins, a KSU faculty member since 1993, has distinguished herself through a number of nationally recognized, innovative projects, such as the [Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project](#). This National Writing Project site allows K-12 and college-level teachers to study the teaching of writing collaboratively via summer programs funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Georgia Humanities Council. Robbins has expanded the project recently to support other subjects, such as literature and history. [Bio](#)

● **Dr. Rolf Theis** teaches English and History at the Goethe Gymnasium Frankfurt/M. He is author of a number of textbooks and has been the driving force behind curriculum development projects in the state of Hesse.

last update July 11, 2002

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Textbook Conference

Bitte schicken Sie die Anmeldung bis spätestens 22. Juli

- per **fax (030/31107-409)**
- oder **e-mail** (KohlM@pd.state.gov)
- oder per **Brief** an uns zurück:
Amerikanische Botschaft
Kulturabteilung
Stichwort: Amerikastudentagung
Hardenbergstr. 22-24
10623 Berlin

Anmeldung zur Konferenz

"The Canon Debate Today:

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(September 15-16, 2002, Savoy Hotel, Berlin)

	Bitte in Druckbuchstaben ausfüllen:
Name:	
Institution:	
Position:	
Adresse:	
Tel/Fax:	
E-mail:	

Diese Anmeldung ist verbindlich. Die bei einer Absage entstehenden Ausfallgebühren sind vom Teilnehmer der Konferenz zu tragen.

Datum _____ Unterschrift _____

Bitte vergessen Sie nicht, Ihr Zimmer telefonisch unter dem Stichwort "Konferenz der Amerikanischen Botschaft" im Savoy Hotel Berlin, Fasanenstr. 3, Berlin-Charlottenburg zu reservieren: 030/31 10 30.

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Conference Reader

Compiled by

Dr. Martina Kohl

Public Affairs Section, Embassy of the United States of America, Berlin

more texts and links will be added soon

Ever since political movements shattered the consensus of what constituted the great works of American literature, the canon has been hotly debated in the US. As scholars have increasingly demonstrated, that consensus had been built upon the repression of the voices and historical contexts of subordinated social groups as well as literary works themselves, works both outside and within the traditional canon. The struggle over the inclusion of works by minorities (at the expense of classics?) has not been confined to universities, but has initiated a wide public controversy. Increasingly, the point has been made that the result of the canon debate has been the establishment of yet another, alternative canon defined by political correctness, an „ethnic canon“ (Palumbo-Liu) for example. Another result of the canon debate has been a new perspective on canonized authors, ways of rereading our classics.

Books & Articles:

Banks, J. A. (1993). The Canon Debate, Knowledge Construction, and Multicultural Education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(5), 4-14.

Bass, Randy: [New Canons and New Media: American Literature in the Electronic Age](#) . Editor's Introduction to the Third Edition, Heath Anthology of American Literature {Hypertext version, expanded from the Heath Anthology of American Literature Instructor's Resource Manual}

Benton, Michael. Canons ancient and modern: The texts we teach. *Educational Review*, Birmingham; Nov 2000; (ProQuest)

Bland, Guy: Out with the old, in with the (not so) new. *English Journal*; Urbana; Jan 2001. (ProQuest)

Bloom, Allen: *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. Simon and Schuster, 1987 --- The seminal conservative tract on the allegedly deteriorating state of University education. Important in understanding the current debate about core curricula and multiculturalism.

Boss, Shira. 'Creative' approach to teaching religion draws fire. *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 19, 2002

Casement, William: *The Great Canon Controversy: The Battle of the Books in Higher Education*. Transaction Publishers, 1996 --- Examines past and present controversies about the canon. Argues that the canon deals with many issues besides race, gender, or equality, and focusing on these issues alone as the criteria to determine worthiness overly narrows the conversation.

Clayton, Mark. A Page Out of the History-Text Debate. *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 1, 1997

Dundis, Stephen Paul & Bruce R Fehn. Historical thinking skills and computerized archives: Exploring the American Journey CD-Rom series. *The Social Studies*, Nov/Dec 1999. (ProQuest)

Making American Literatures in High School and College. Anne Ruggles Gere and Peter Shaheen, editors . NCTE, 2001. Abstract

Glazer, Nathan: School wars. *The Brookings Review*; Fall 1993 (ProQuest)

Graff, Gerald: *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education*. W. W. Norton & Co., 1992 --- Proposes to take issues such as the multiculturalism/literary canon debate head on in the classroom

Heller, Scott: *Essays That Live On: A Scholar Examines an Overlooked Canon*. An analysis of anthologies and textbooks identifies the authors whose works are still widely taught, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1999. (online)

E.D. Hirsch, Jr.: *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (New York: Vintage, 1988) [orig. pub. 1987]

Hoff, David: 'New standards' leaves legacy of unmet goals. *Education Week*; Washington; Aug 8, 2001; (ProQuest)

Humphreys, Debra: Diversity and The College Curriculum: How Colleges & Universities Are Preparing Students For a Changing World, AAC&U, for the Ford Foundation Campus Diversity Initiative

Lauter, Paul: *Canons and Contexts*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

This collection of essays places issues central to literary study, particularly the question of the canon, in the context of institutional practices in American colleges and universities.

Levine, Lawrence: *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996):

Ling, Amy. Teaching Asian American Literature, University of Wisconsin-Madison, *Essays on Teaching the American Literatures* (from the Heath Anthology Newsletter)

Mcleme, Scott: Making the cut. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; Washington; May 4, 2001; (ProQuest)

Masalski, Kathleen Woods: Examining the Japanese History Textbook Controversies. *Japan Digest*, November 2001. National Clearinghouse for U.S.-Japan Studies Indiana University

Peter Shaheen. Making American literatures in high school. *English Journal*, Nov 1999. (ProQuest)

Links (Web Sites & Bibliographies)

American Studies Crossroads Project

The American Studies Crossroads Project is an international networking and curriculum innovation project sponsored by the American Studies Association and funded with major grants from the U.S. Department of Education and the Annenberg/CPB Project. The Project work includes four major areas: an electronic resource hub for the international American Studies Community, experimental projects in curriculum, workshops and institutes on American Studies curricula, and tools for using technology for international collaboration in the study of American History and Culture.

Bilingual Education Websites

For teachers of bilingual students: A website providing information on classroom centered practices, organizations and programs, funding resources, and online resources related to science, mathematics, and technology education. Developed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education at Columbia Teachers College and the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Culture/Canon Wars. Voice for the Shuttle. Website for Humanities Research. University of California, Santa Barbara.

Canon Revision. History and Practice. Syllabus 1998. Alan Liu, University of Santa Barbara.

Canon Revision. History and Practice. Canon Dreaming 1996. Alan Liu, University of Santa Barbara.

Choices for the 21st Century Education Program

A Program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University

The Concept of Literary Canon: An Overview (Kathryn B. Stockton, U. Utah, and George Landow, Brown U. / Victorian Web) This web site includes: The Literary Canon, Introduction-- Canon: Dictionary Definitions -- Feminist Questions about the Literary Canon --Feminist Responses to the Idea of a Literary Canon -- Calling into Question the Concept and Practice of the Literary Canon -- Inserting Women Writers into the Canon -- Developing a Counter-Canon -- Alternative Readings of Canonical (Male) Texts

DiversityWeb

DiversityWeb serves as an electronic hub linking nearly 300 institutions' work on diversity via the World Wide Web. Developed by AAC&U and the University of Maryland at College Park, DiversityWeb includes a World Wide Web home page connected to campus-based diversity home pages, but also contains essential information about diversity efforts nationwide. DiversityWeb helps participating institutions explain, categorize and link their diversity priorities, practices and accomplishments.

History Matters

History Matters, a project of the American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning of the City University of New York and the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, is a promising teaching resource that offers: a syllabus collection, primary sources, texts, pictures, and links to American History. This site also hosts a monthly moderated e-mail forum on the teaching of U.S. history with "master" teachers. Moderators have included Gerda Lerner on Women's History and Gary Nash on the American Revolution. Upcoming moderators include Lawrence Levine on Cultural History and Marilyn Young on the Vietnam War era.

Imagine

Winner of a prestigious Parents' Choice Award, ***Imagine*** is an exciting periodical for middle and high school students who want to take control of their learning and get the most out of their precollege years. Published five times a year by Johns Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth, Imagine provides insights, information, and solid counseling to young, motivated readers.

The New Jersey Project, William Paterson University

Established in 1986, the New Jersey Project is the first statewide, state-funded curriculum transformation project in the nation. The Project encourages and supports curriculum and faculty development around issues of gender, race/ethnicity, class, culture and sexuality at New Jersey's four-year and two-year public and private colleges and universities.

READINGS ON YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE Kay E. Vandergrift July 9, 2002 . SCILS, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Young Adults Page

last updated July 11, 2002

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Re-viewing American Literature for Secondary Schools

A Discussion Packet of Texts

Collected and Edited by Sarah Robbins
srobbins@kennesaw.edu

Note: All of the texts in this collection are pieces for which the copyright has expired, so they may be reproduced for classroom teaching or for professional development workshops, because each of them is in the public domain.



[\(for a print version click here\)](#)

Learning to Read

By Frances E. W. Harper

From *Sketches of southern life*. Philadelphia: Ferguson Bros. & Co, 1891

Very soon the Yankee teachers
Came down and set up school;
But, oh! How the Rebs did hate it,
It was agin' their rule.

Our masters always tried to hide
Book learning from our eyes;
Knowledge didn't agree with slavery;
'Twould make us all to wise.

But some of us would try to steal
A little from the book,

And put the words together,
And learn by hook or crook.

I remember Uncle Caldwell,
Who took pot liquor fat
And greased the pages of his book,
And hid it in his hat.

And had his master ever seen
The leaves upon his head,
He'd have thought them greasy papers,
But nothing to be read.

And there was Mr. Turner's Ben,
Who heard the children spell,
And picked the words right up by heart,
And learned to read 'em well.

Well, the Northern folks kept sending
The Yankee teachers down;
And they stood right up and helped us,
Through Rebs did sneer and frown.

And, I longed to ready my Bible,
For precious words it said;
But when I begun to learn it,
Folks just shook their heads,

And said there is no use trying,
Oh! Chloe, you're too late;
But as I was rising sixty,
I had no time to wait.

So I got a pair of glasses,
And straight to work I went,
And never stopped til I could read
The hymns and Testament.

Then I got a little cabin,
A place to call my own,

And I felt as independent
As the queen upon her throne.

Lynch Law in Georgia:
A Six-Weeks' Record in the Center of Southern civilization, As Faithfully
Chronicled by the "Atlanta Journal" and the "Atlanta Constitution."
By Ida B. Wells-Barnett
Chicago: 1899. Princeton Avenue Publishers.
The entire preface is reprinted here and is in the public domain.

CONSDER THE FACTS

During six weeks of the months of March and April just past, twelve colored men were lynched in Georgia, the reign of outlawry culminating in the torture and hanging of the colored preacher, Elijah Strickland, and the burning alive of Samuel Wilkes, alias Hose, Sunday, April 23, 1899.

The real purpose of these savage demonstrations is to teach the Negro that in the South he has no rights that the law will enforce. Samuel Hose was burned to teach the Negroes that no matter what a white man does to them, they must not resist. Hose, a servant, had killed Cranford, his employer. An example must be made. Ordinary punishment was deemed inadequate. This Negro must be burned alive. To make the burning a certainty the charge of outrage was invented, and added to the charge of murder. The daily press offered reward for the capture of Hose and then openly incited the people to burn him as soon as he was caught. The mob carried out the plan in every savage detail.

Of the twelve men lynched during that reign of unspeakable barbarianism, only one was even charged with an assault upon a woman. Yet Southern apologists justify their savagery on the ground that Negroes are lynched only because of their crimes against women.

The Southern press champions burning men alive, and says, "Consider the facts." The colored people join issue and also say, "Consider the facts." The colored people of Chicago employed a detective to go to Georgia, and his report in this pamphlet gives the facts. We give here the details of the lynching as they were reported in the Southern papers, then follows the report of the true facts as to the cause of the lynchings, as learned by the investigation. We submit all to the sober judgment of the Nation, confident that, in this cause, as well as al others, "truth is mighty and will prevail."

Ida B. Wells-Barnett
2939 Princeton Avenue. Chicago. June 20, 1899

Newspaper Essays by Fanny Fern

The Model Lady
Fern Leaves from Fanny's Port-folio. Cincinnati: Henry Derby, 1853. 351.

THE MODEL LADY

Puts her children out to nurse and tends lap-dogs; --
lies in bed till noon; -- wears paper-soled shoes, and
pinches her waist; -- gives the piano fits, and forgets to
pay her milliner; -- cuts her poor relations, and goes to
church when she has a new bonnet; -- turns the cold
shoulder to her husband, and flirts with his "friend"; --
never saw a thimble; -- don't know a darning-needle
from a crow-bar; -- wonders where puddings grow; --
eats ham and eggs in private, and dines on a pigeon's
leg in public; -- runs mad after the last new fashion; --
doats on Byron; -- adores any man who grins behind a
moustache; -- and when asked the age of her youngest
child, replies, "Don't know, indeed; ask Betty!"

Children's Rights

Fern Leaves from Fanny's Port-folio. Cincinnati: Henry Derby, 1853. 188-91.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Men's rights! Women's rights! I throw down the gauntlet for children's right! Yes, little pets, Fanny Fern's about "takin' notes," and she'll "print 'em," too, if you don't get your dues. She has seen you seated by a pleasant window, in a railroad car, with your bright eyes dancing with delight, at the prospect of all the pretty things you were going to see, forcibly ejected by some overgrown Napoleon, who fancied your place, and thought, in his wisdom, that children had no taste for anything but sugar-candy. Fanny Fern knew better. She knew that the pretty trees and flowers, and bright blue sky, gave your little souls a thrill of delight, though you could not tell why; and she knew that great big man's soul was a great deal smaller than yours, to sit there and read a stupid political paper, when such a glowing landscape was before him, that he might have feasted his eyes upon. And she longed to wipe away the big tear that you didn't dare to let fall; and she understood how a little girl or boy, that didn't get a ride every day in the year, should not be quite able to swallow that great big lump in the throat, as he or she sat jammed down in a dark, crowded corner of the car, instead of sitting by that pleasant window.

Yes; and Fanny has seen you sometimes, when you've been muffed up to the tip of your nose in woolen wrappers, in a close, crowded church, nodding your little drowsy heads, and keeping time to the sixth-lie and seventh-lie of some pompous theologian, whose preaching would have been high Dutch to you, had you been wide awake.

And she has seen you sitting, like little automatons, in a badly-ventilated school-room, with your nervous little toes at just such an angle, for hours; under the tuition of Miss Nancy Nipper, who didn't care a rush-light whether your spine was as crooked as the letter S or not, if the Great Mogul Committee, who marched in once a month to make the "grand tour," voted her a "model school-marm."

Yes, and that ain't all. She has seen you sent of to bed, just at the witching hour of candle-light, when some entertaining guest was in the middle of a delightful story, that you, poor, miserable "little pitcher," was doomed never to hear the end of! Yes, and she has seen "the line and plummet" laid to you so rigidly, that you were driven to deceit and evasion; and then seen you punished for they very sin your tormentors helped you to commit. And she has seen your ears boxed just as hard for tearing a hole in your best pinafore, or breaking a China cup, as for telling as big a lie as Ananias and Sapphira did.

And when, by patient labor, you had reared an edifice of tiny blocks, --fairer in its architectural proportion, to your infantile eye, than any palace in ancient Rome, --she has seen it ruthlessly kicked into a shattered ruin, by somebody in the house, whose dinner hadn't digested!

Never mind. I wish I was mother to the whole of you! Such glorious times we'd have! Reading pretty books, that had no big words in 'em; going to school where you could sneeze without getting a rap on the head for not asking leave first; and going to church on the quiet, blessed Sabbath, where the minister --like our dear Saviour --sometimes remembered to "take little children in his arms, and bless them."

Then, if you asked me a question, I wouldn't pretend not to hear; or lazily tell you I "didn't know," or turn off with some fabulous evasion, for your memory to chew for a cud till you were old enough to see how you had been fooled. And I'd never wear such a fashionable gown that you couldn't climb on my lap whenever the fit took you; or refuse to kiss you, for fear you'd ruffle my curls, or my collar, or my temper, --not a bit of it; and then you should pay me with your merry laugh, and your little confiding hand slid ever trustingly in mine.

O, I tell you, my little pets, Fanny is sick of the din, and strife, and envy, and uncharitableness! --and she'd rather, by ten thousand, live in a little world full of fresh, guileless, loving little children, than in this great museum full of such dry, dusty, withered hearts.

Excerpt from Zitkala Sa

Excerpt from "The School Days of an Indian Girl." *The Atlantic Monthly* 85 (February 1900): 185-194.

"The Snow Episode" THE SNOW EPISODE

A short time after our arrival we three Dakotas were playing in the snowdrifts. We were all still deaf to the English language, excepting Judewin, who always heard such puzzling things. One morning we learned through her ears that we were forbidden to fall length-wise in the snow, as we had been doing, to see our own impressions. However, before many hours we had forgotten the order, and were having a great sport in the snow, when a shrill voice called us. Looking up, we saw an imperative hand beckoning us into the house. We shook the snow off ourselves, and started toward the woman as slowly as we dared.

Judewin said: "Now the paleface is angry with us. She is gong to punish us for falling into the snow. If she looks strait into your eyes and talks loudly, you must wait until she stops. Then after a tiny pause

say 'No.'" The rest of the way we practiced upon the little word "no."

As it happened, Thowin was summoned to judgment first. The door shut behind her with a click.

Judewin and I stood silently listening at the keyhole. The paleface woman talked in very severe tones. Her words fell from her lips like crackling embers, and her inflection ran up like the small end of a switch. I understood her voice better than the things she was saying. I was certain we had made her very impatient with us. Judewin heard enough of the words to realize all too late that she had taught us the wrong reply.

"Oh, poor Thowi!" she gasped, as she put both hands over her ears.

Just then I heard Thowin's tremulous answer, "No."

With an angry exclamation, the woman gave her a hard spanking. Then she stopped to say something. Judewin said it was this: "Are you going to obey my the next time?"

Thowin answered again with the only word at her command, "No."

This time the woman meant her blows to smart, for the poor frightened girl shrieked at the top of her voice. In the midst of the whipping the blows ceased abruptly, and the woman asked another question: "Are you going to fall in the snow again?"

Thowin gave her bad password another trial. We heard her say feebly, "No! No!"

With this the woman hid away her half-worn slipper, and led the child out, stroking her black shorn head. Perhaps it occurred to her that brute force is not the solution for such a problem. She did nothing to Judewin nor to me. She only returned to us our unhappy comrade, and left us alone in the room.

During the first two or three seasons misunderstandings as ridiculous as this one of the snow episode frequently took place, bringing unjustifiable frights and punishments into our little lives.

Within a year I was able to express myself somewhat in broken English. As soon as I comprehended a part of what was said and done, a mischievous spirit of revenge possessed me. One day I was called in from my play for some misconduct. I had disregarded a rule which seemed to me very needlessly binding. I was sent into the kitchen to mash the turnips for dinner. It was noon, and steaming dishes were hastily carried into the dining room. I hated turnips, and their odor which came from the brown jar was offensive to me. With fire in my heart, I took the wooden tool that the paleface woman held out to me. I stood upon a step, and, grasping the handle with both hands, I bent in a hot rage over the turnips. I worked my vengeance upon them. All were so busily occupied that no one noticed me. I saw that the turnips were in a pulp, and that further beating could not improve them; but the order was, "Mash these turnips," and mash them I would! I renewed my energy; and as I sent the masher into the bottom of the jar, I felt a satisfying sensation that the weight of my body had gone into it.

Just here a paleface woman came up to my table. As she looked into the jar, she shoved my hands roughly aside. I stood fearless and angry. She placed her red hands upon the rim of the jar. Then

she gave one lift and a stride away from the table. But lo! The pulpy contents fell through the crumbled bottom to the floor! She spared me no scolding phrases that I had earned. I did not heed them. I felt triumphant in my revenge, though deep within me I was a wee bit sorry to have broken the jar.

As I sat eating my dinner, and saw that no turnips were served, I whooped in my heart for having once asserted the rebellion within me.

Homestead and its Perilous Trades- Impressions of a Visit

Excerpt from an essay by Hamlin Garland

McClure's Magazine, June, 1894

<http://www.cohums.ohio->

[state.edu/history/projects/HomesteadStrike1892/GarlandHomestead/GarlandHomestead.htm](http://www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/history/projects/HomesteadStrike1892/GarlandHomestead/GarlandHomestead.htm)

A COLD, thin October rain was falling as I took the little ferry-boat and crossed the Monongahela River to see Homestead and its iron-mills. The town, infamously historic already, sprawled over the irregular hillside, circled by the cold gray river. On the flats close to the water's edge there severe masses of great sheds, out of which grim smoke-stacks rose with a desolate effect, like the black stumps of a burned forest of great trees. Above them dense clouds of sticky smoke rolled heavily away.

Higher up the tenement-houses stood in dingy rows, alternating with vacant lots. Higher still stood some Queen Anne cottages, toward which slender sidewalks climbed like goat paths.

The streets of the town were horrible; the buildings were poor; the sidewalks were sunken, swaying, and full of holes, and the crossings were sharp-edged stones set like rocks in a river bed. Everywhere the yellow mud of the street lay kneaded into a sticky mass, through which groups of pale, lean men slouched in faded garments, grimy with the soot and grease of the mills.

The town was as squalid and unlovely as could well be imagined, and the people were mainly of the discouraged and sullen type to be found everywhere where labor passes into the brutalizing stage of severity. It had the disorganized and incoherent effect of a town- which has feeble public spirit. Big industries at differing eras have produced squads of squalid tenement-houses far from the central portion of the town, each plant bringing its gangs of foreign laborers in raw masses to camp down like an army around its shops.

Such towns are sown thickly over the hill-lands of Pennsylvania, but this was my first descent into one of them. They are American only in the sense in which they represent the American idea of business.

The Carnegie mills stood down near the river at some distance from the ferry landing, and thither I took my way through the sticky yellow mud and the gray falling rain. I had secured for my guide a young man whose life had been passed in Homestead and who was quite familiar with the mills and workmen. I do not think he over-stated the hardships of the workmen, whose duties he thoroughly understood. He spoke frankly and without undue prejudice of the management and the work.

We entered the yard through the fence which was aggrandized into a stockade during the riots of

a year ago. We were in the yard of the " finished beams." On every side lay thousands of tons of iron. There came toward us a group of men pushing a cart laden with girders for building. They were lean men, pale and grimy. The rain was falling upon them. They wore a look of stoical indifference, though one or two of the younger fellows were scuffling as they pushed behind the car.

Farther on was heard the crashing thunder of falling iron plates, the hoarse coughing of great engines, and the hissing of steam. Suddenly through the gloom I caught sight of the mighty up-soaring of saffron and sapphire flame, which marked the draught of the furnace of the Bessemer steel plant far down toward the water. It was a magnificent contrast to the dusky purple of the great smoky roofs below.



The ferry-boat and its captain.

The great building which we entered first was a beam mill, "one of the finest in the world," my guide said. It was an immense shed, open at the sides, and filled with a mixed and intricate mass of huge machinery. On every side tumultuous action seemed to make every inch of ground dangerous. Savage little engines went rattling about among piles of great beams. Dimly on my left were huge engines, moving with thunderous pounding.



Crossing the Monongahela.

"Come to the starting point", said my guide. I followed him timidly far up toward the other end, my eyes fixed on the beautiful glow of a redhot bloom of metal saving high in the air. It lighted the interior with a glorious light.

I was looking at this beautiful light when my guide pulled me suddenly behind some shelter. The furious scream of a saw broke forth, the monstrous exaggeration of a circular wood-saw—a saw that melted its way through a beam of solid iron with deafening outcry, producing a gigantic glowing wheel of spattering sparks of golden fire. While it lasted all else was hid from sight.

"That's the saw which cuts the beams of iron into lengths as ordered," my guide said, and we hurried past.



Up the street from the ferry landing.

Everywhere in this pandemoniac shed was the thunder of reversing engines, the crash of falling iron, the rumbling growl of rollers, the howl of horrible saws, the deafening hiss of escaping steam, the wild vague shouts of workmen.

Excerpts from “The Lady Who Does Her Own Work”

By Harriet Beecher Stowe

Household Papers and Stories. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1896. 85-101.

Note: This material is in the public domain and may be duplicated.

“My dear Chris,” said my wife, “isn’t it time to be writing the next ‘House and Home Paper’?”

I was lying back in my study-chair, with my heels luxuriously propped on an ottoman, reading for the two-hundredth time Hawthorne's "Mosses from an Old Manse," or his "Twice-Told Tales," I forget which,—I only know that these books constitute my cloud-land, where I love to sail away in dreamy quietude, forgetting the war, the price of coal and flour, the rates of exchange, and the rise and fall of gold. What do all these things matter, as seen from those enchanted gardens in Padua where the weird Rappaccini tends his enchanted plants, and his gorgeous daughter fills us with the light and magic of her presence, and saddens us with the shadowy allegoric mystery of her preternatural destiny? But my wife represents the positive forces of time, place, and number in our family, and, having also a chronological head, she knows the day of the month, and therefore gently reminded me that by inevitable dates the time drew near for preparing my—which is it, now, May or June number?

"Well, my dear, you are right," I said, as by an exertion I came head-uppermost, and laid down the fascinating volume. "Let me see, what was I to write about?"

"Why, you remember you were to answer that letter from the lady who does her own work."

"Enough!" said I, seizing the pen with alacrity; "you have hit the exact phrase:—"

"The *lady who does her own work.*"

America is the only country where such a title is possible,—the only country where there is a class of women who may be described as ladies who do their own work. By a lady we mean a woman of education, cultivation, and refinement, of liberal tastes and ideas, who, without any very material additions or changes, would be recognized as a lady in any circle of the Old World or the New.

What I have said is, that the existence of such a class is a fact peculiar to American society, a clear, plain result of the new principles involved in the doctrine of universal equality.

When the colonists first came to this country of however mixed ingredients their ranks might have been composed, and however imbued with the spirit of feudal and aristocratic ideas, the discipline of the wilderness soon brought them to a democratic level; the gentleman felled the wood for his log-cabin side by side with the ploughman, and thews and sinews rose in the market. "A man was deemed honorable in proportion as he lifted his hand upon the high trees of the forest." So in the interior domestic circle, Mistress and maid, living in a log-cabin together, became companions, and sometimes the maid, as the more accomplished and stronger, took precedence of the mistress. It became natural and unavoidable that children should begin to work as early as they were capable of it. The result was a generation of intelligent people brought up to labor from necessity, but turning on the problem of labor the acuteness of a disciplined brain. The mistress, outdone in sinews and muscles by her maid, kept her superiority by skill and contrivance. If she could not lift a pail of water she could invent methods which made lifting the pail unnecessary; if she could not take a hundred steps without weariness, she could make twenty answer the purpose of a hundred.

Slavery, it is true, was to some extent introduced into New England, but it never suited the genius of the

people, never struck deep root, or spread so as to choke the good seed of self-helpfulness. Many were opposed to it from conscientious principle,--many from far-sighted thrift, and from a love of thoroughness and well-doing which despised the rude, unskilled work of barbarians. People, having once felt the thorough neatness and beauty of execution which came of free, educated, and thoughtful labor, could not tolerate the clumsiness of slavery. Thus, it came to pass that for many years the rural population of New England, as a general rule, did their own work, both out doors and in. If there were a black man or black woman or bound girl, they were emphatically only the *helps*, following humbly the steps of master or mistress, and used by them as instruments of lightening certain portions of their toil. The master and mistress with their children were the head workers.

Great merriment has been excited in the Old Country because years ago the first English travelers found that the class of persons by them denominated servants were in America denominated help or helpers. But the term was the very best exponent of the state of society. There were few servants in the European sense of the word; there was a society of educated workers, where all were practically equal, and where, if there was a deficiency in one family and an excess in another, a helper, not a servant, was hired. Mrs. Brown, who has six sons and no daughters, enters into agreement with Mrs. Jones, who has six daughters and no sons. She borrows a daughter, and pays her good wages to help in her domestic toil. And sends a son to help the labors of Mr. Jones. These two young people go into the families in which they are to be employed in all respects as equals and companions, and so the work of the community is equalized. Hence arose, and for many years continued, a state of society more nearly solving than any other ever did the problem of combining the highest culture of the mind with the highest culture of the muscles and the physical faculties.

. . . .

I will venture to say that there are at least, to speak very moderately, a hundred houses where these humble lines will be read and discussed, where there are no servants except the ladies of the household. I will venture to say, also, that these households, many of them, are not inferior in the air of cultivation and refined elegance to many which are conducted by the ministrations of domestics. I will venture to assert furthermore that these same ladies who live thus find quite as much time for reading, letter-writing, drawing, embroidery, and fancy work as the women of families otherwise arranged. I am quite certain that they would be found on an average to be in the enjoyment of better health, and more of that sense of capability and vitality which gives one confidence in one's ability to look into life and meet it with cheerful courage, than three quarters of the women who keep servants; and that, on the whole, their domestic establishment is regulated more exactly to their mind, their food prepared and served more to their taste. And yet, with all this, I will *not* venture to assert that they are satisfied with this way of living, and that they would not change it forthwith if they could. They have a secret feeling all the while that they are being abused, that they are working harder than they ought to, and that women who live in houses like boarders, who have only to speak and it is done, are the truly enviable ones. One after another of their associates, as opportunity offers and means increase, deserts the ranks, and commits her domestic affairs to the hands of hired servants. Self-respect takes the alarm. Is it altogether genteel to live as we do? To be sure, we are accustomed to it; we have it all systematized and arranged; the work of our own hands suits us better than any we can hire; in fact, when we do hire, we are discontented and uncomfortable, for who will do for us what we will do for ourselves? But when we have company! There's the rub, to get out all our best things and put them back, --to cook the meals and wash the dishes ingloriously, --and to make all appear as if we didn't do it, and had servants like other people.

There, after all, is the rub.

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"The Canon Debate Today:
The Representation of U.S. History and Literature
in American High School and College Textbooks"
September 15-16, 2002, Savoy Hotel, Berlin

An American Literature Bibliography for Secondary Schoolteachers

By Sarah Robbins

- I. African American Literature
- II. Caribbean American Literature
- III. Multi-ethnic American Literature
- IV. Native American Literature
- V. Memoirs, Regional and "Ecological" Narratives
- VI. American Women Writers: Useful editions
- VII. Anthologies of American Literature
- VIII. Visual American Literature

 [\(for a print version click here\)](#)

Criteria for inclusion:

- This bibliography emphasizes relatively recent editions (i.e., material recently published—or “recovered” for the first time—and new editions of familiar texts).
- Only paperback editions are listed.
- The bibliography editor or a colleague has successfully taught each book, either to middle/high school students or to preservice teachers/teachers who plan to use the selection in their classrooms.
- All texts are in English.
- Texts intended for young children (i.e., picture books) or from the Young Adult juvenile market have been included, both to address the needs of reluctant secondary school readers and to recognize the rise of interest in children’s literature as an important genre in American literature.
- Since the anthologies in this bibliography include substantial collections of poetry and representative drama texts, the rest of the bibliography is devoted to fiction and nonfiction prose.

This bibliography may be duplicated for classroom use, for professional development sessions for teachers, or to facilitate preparation of instructional materials. For any other form of publication, contact the editor, Sarah Robbins, for permission

I. African American Literature

Chesnutt, Charles W. *Collected Stories of Charles Chesnutt*. Ed. William L. Andrews. New York: Mentor, 1992.

Combining stories from Chesnutt's two major anthologies—*The Conjure Woman and The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*—this edition also offers an insightful introduction by William Andrews, who situates Chesnutt's career in a larger context including the work of Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories, the highbrow magazine culture of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and Chesnutt's own later novels (e.g., *The House Behind the Cedars* and *The Marrow of Tradition*).

Du Bois, W.E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ed. Randall Kenan. New York: Signet, 1995.

This affordable edition of Du Bois' groundbreaking essays positions the text as a precursor to writing by authors ranging from Richard Wright to Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin to Toni Morrison. Imagining *The Souls of Black Folk* as both powerful personal writing and a cultural document, Kenan also provides a helpful discussion of the complex relationship between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.

Gaines, Ernest. *A Lesson Before Dying*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1993.

Winning accolades from both the National Book Critics Circle Award and Oprah Winfrey (who made the novel a book club selection), *A Lesson Before Dying* has proven to be an especially engaging reading for secondary school students, in part because of its links between literacy development and moral maturation. Set in rural Louisiana during the 1940s, Gaines' narrative focuses on Jefferson, a young black who has been sentenced to death for his part in a robbery shootout, and Grant Wiggins, who has recently become a schoolteacher and who is seeking to define his role in the community.

Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *The Classic Slave Narratives. The Life of Olaudah Equiano; The History of Mary Prince; Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass; Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

New York: Mentor, 1987.

This volume brings together, in an inexpensive paperback, several of the most important slave narratives with an introduction by eminent scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Grooms, Tony. *Bombingham*. New York: One World, 2002.

Conjuring up the past for its central character Walter Burke, Tony Grooms' first novel revisits the 1960s in Birmingham, Alabama, dubbed "Bombingham" by the city's local black residents after the infamous attack on a Baptist Church and other KKK-led assaults on African Americans. Contrasting the many loving memories of Walter's youth and his early encounters with racism, Grooms interweaves scenes from the Civil Rights era events with a story about a family facing its own crises during a challenging time for the whole nation. Combining its Birmingham focus with scenes in Viet Nam later in Walter's life, *Bombingham* can give mature adolescent readers a powerful introduction to '60s U. S. culture through a regional and racial lens.

Harper, Frances E. W. *Minnie's Sacrifice, Sowing and Reaping, Trial and Triumph: Three Rediscovered Novels by Frances E. W. Harper.* Ed. Frances Foster. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996. Frances Foster's discovery of three previously unknown novels by Frances E. W. Harper has changed the landscape of African American women's literature—indeed, even of American literature. All three novels were published originally, at approximately ten-year intervals beginning in 1869, as serials in the *Christian Recorder*, a church-sponsored periodical aimed at the African American middle classes. Ranging from the era of Reconstruction toward the turn into the next century, these novels set the stage for Harper's masterpiece, *Iola Leroy*, but they also stand on their own as fascinating stories with engaging characters.

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Written by Herself. Ed. Jean Fagan Yellin. Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 1987.

One of the true pioneers in the recovery of women's and African American literature, Yellin provides a model edition of Harriet Jacobs's slave narrative. Writing as Linda Brent, Jacobs traced her personal history from North Carolina slavery to authorship supported by northern friends like Lydia Maria Child. By including a wide array of archival material with Jacobs' personal story, Yellin both sets the work in a rich cultural context and authenticates Jacobs herself as author of the narrative.

Larsen, Nella. *Quicksand and Passing.* Ed. Deborah E. McDowell. New Brunswick: Rutgers U Press, 1986.

These two 1920s novels are interesting not only for their examination of the "passing" theme, but also for their depiction of black middle-class society and their emphasis on psychological and sociological forces at work among the characters. A number of teachers have found that pairing Larsen's work with Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* can make for rich classroom discussions.

Paul, Susan. *Memoir of James Jackson: The Attentive and Obedient Scholar, Who Died in Boston. October 31, 1833.* Ed. Lois Brown. Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 2000.

Lois Brown's edition joins pioneering work by Frances Foster to expand the canon of African American literature by adding new texts. Brown's introduction provides a helpful window into experiences among Boston's antebellum African American community and situates Paul's memoir within several important literary traditions (e.g., writings on education, abolitionist narratives).

Taylor, Susie King. *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs: Reminiscences of my Life in Camp with the 33rd U. S. Colored Troops, Late 1st South Carolina Volunteers.* Ed. Patricia W. Romero and Willie Lee Rose. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997.

Taylor's memoir provides an unusual perspective on the Civil War. Born as a slave, Taylor was freed relatively early in the war, when she joined a regiment to work in a variety of roles (e.g., nurse, laundress, and teacher). King published her own story in 1901, when she could write from a retrospective stance to reflect on her own experience and on its position in history.

Wells, Ida B. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900.* Ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997.

Brilliantly edited by Royster, this handy paperback from the Bedford Series in History and Culture makes available to teachers the tools they will need to plan instruction on Wells' anti-lynching writing. Photographs and other artifacts as well as brief biographies of key figures from the period help establish a clear context for reading Wells's pamphlets: *Southern Horrors*, *A Red Record* and *Mob Rule in New Orleans*. A useful appendix offers a chronology of Wells' life, a bibliography, and discussion questions.

II. Caribbean American Literature

Condé, Maryse. *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Ballantine, 1992.

A creative re-telling of the story familiar to generations of readers of American literature, this novel's action migrates from the Caribbean to New England along with the title character, a slave from Barbados who is a minor figure in Arthur Miller's well-known play (*The Crucible*) about the Salem witch trials. By changing the point of view for this narrative to Tituba's, Condé challenges readers' views on cross-cultural relationships, literary representation, and history-writing. Using postmodern techniques to connect her writing with other familiar literary sources (e.g., *The Scarlet Letter*), Condé invites readers to reconsider canonical texts while re-viewing history.

Dandicat, Edwidge. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Reprint. New York: Random House. 1998.

Set in Haiti and New York, this novel marks numerous challenging transitions for its central character, Sophie, some of whose experiences recall those of the author, an immigrant who moved to the U.S. at age 12. Although Oprah Winfrey enthusiastically touted the novel as a book club choice, some readers have complained that the narrative loses clarity midway through the novel, when the focus shifts from Sophie's efforts to adjust to her new home to a painful turn in her relationship with her mother. In fact, details associated with her mother's obsessions over Sophie's sexual purity (e.g., traumatic mutilation scenes) may make the novel a difficult choice for school-sponsored reading. For mature readers, though, the novel can be a worthwhile introduction to a writer receiving increased attention in university literature courses.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John*. New York: Penguin Plume, 1983.

Set on Kincaid's home island of Antigua, this story about a young girl growing up in a (post)colonial culture addresses universal themes such as mother-daughter relationships, but does so in the striking context of Caribbean culture.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Penguin/Plume, 1981.

Invoking and simultaneously attacking the conventions of Caribbean travel literature, Jamaica Kincaid's slim volume presents a passionate (and at times even angry) picture of the colonized British West Indies island of Antigua, where she grew up. Contrasting the island's sunny beauty with its corrupt government, Kincaid's extended essay conveys a compelling example of post-colonial writing at its most pointed and passionate.

Marshall, Paule. *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. New York: Feminist Press, 1996.

Marshall's impressive first novel first appeared in 1959 but has gained increased attention more recently by way of this Feminist Press edition. Set in Brooklyn in the 1930s and '40s, the autobiographical story follows the experiences of Selina Boyce. While Selina's parents have contrasting reactions to having immigrated from Barbados to the U.S., the heroine tries to find her own place in American society. Notable for its striking use of dialogue, the novel also examines important issues associated with racism directed toward black immigrants.

Santiago, Esmeralda. *When I Was Puerto Rican*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

A story of geographic and cultural migration, Santiago's narrative takes its appealing young central character from her native Puerto Rico to New York City, where language is only one of the many differences she encounters. As a growing-up story, the memoir gives an inspiring account of an American Dream, moving from rural poverty in Puerto Rico to Harvard, by way of New York's High School of Performing Arts.

Walcott, Derek. *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*. New York: Noonday Press, 1993.

Setting up a striking counterpoint between Caribbean and Homeric elements, Nobel prize winner Derek Walcott's book recalls his epic poem *Omeros* but takes the form of a play originally written for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Familiar characters from Homer's *Odyssey* (e.g., the Cyclops, Circe) take on a new life in the Caribbean setting.

III. Multi-ethnic (affectionately called "hyphenated") American Literature

Note: Certainly African American and Native American literature is "ethnic" too, as is literature by white authors. These texts are often studied as "ethnic" literature.

Cisneros, Sandra. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. Although Cisneros' earlier volume of narrative vignettes, *The House on Mango Street*, has become a favorite for use in secondary school literature anthologies, *Woman Hollering Creek* offers similarly vibrant material for classroom discussion, but with the added interest of a focus on the increasingly important theme of American borderlands. Setting her collection on both sides of the Mexican border through characters who have experienced both places, Cisneros writes here with a stronger feminist edge than in the *Mango Street* anthology. While her earlier book continues to stand as an accessible avenue for discussions of urban Mexican-American community life, the *Woman Hollering Creek* collection serves up a closer look at Mexican culture and its border-crossing interactions with the U.S.

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. *An Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio*. New York: Puffin Books, 1995. This short, accessible collection of stories introduces readers to a range of memorable adolescent characters living in a Puerto Rican barrio of New Jersey. With humor, candor, and energy, Ortiz paints an insightful portrait of a neighborhood blending cultures.

Hesse, Karen. *Letters from Rifka*. New York: Puffin, 1992.

Winner of multiple awards (including the National Jewish Book Award and ALA citations), Hesse's young adult novel tackles themes addressed to older readers by authors like Anzia Yezierska (*Bread Givers*) and Henry Roth (*Call It Sleep*).

Jimenez, Francisco. *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of an Immigrant Child*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Winner of multiple awards, Jimenez's narrative tells a simple but powerful story of a Mexican family struggling to survive as migrant workers in the U.S. Writing in the voice of young Panchito, Jimenez has produced a book that has special appeal for young readers interested in cross-cultural experiences, but that is also worthy of careful analysis of its literary structure, use of historical allusions, voice, and characterizations.

Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan*. New York: Anchor Books, 1992.

Canadian author Joy Kogawa draws on her Japanese family heritage to tell the haunting if little-known story of internment camps set up north of the U.S. border during World War II. In an imagistic style, Kogawa's child-narrator struggles to understand how her Canadian homeland can suddenly turn on loyal citizens, depriving them of their rights and even of their families. A challenging read due to its complex structure, the novel nonetheless offers clear rewards, both in literary and social terms. Kogawa's challenging narrative might effectively be paired with the more accessible *Farewell to Manzanar* (by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston), a memoir of Japanese internment camp life in the U.S.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

This Pulitzer prize-winning collection of short stories tends to focus more on character than plot in narratives growing out of the author's experiences as an immigrant from India to the U.S. by way of London. The stories often depict feelings of displacement and spiritual loss associated with immigration and efforts to assimilate. Teachers report that international students who have been quiet and unengaged initially in their classes often open up enthusiastically to discussions of Lahiri's stories.

Ng, Fae Myenne. *Bone*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993.

A favorite of many West coast high school teachers, Ng's first novel explores San Francisco's Chinatown as a cultural space by depicting two generations in the lives of the Leong family. With a narrative structure foregrounding the power of memory, *Bone* is also worthy of study for its author's careful attention to craft.

Rodriguez, Richard. *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*. New York: Viking, 2002.

This new book by the acclaimed yet controversial author of *Hunger for Memory* will be out in paperback soon. Here Rodriguez questions American assumptions about and beliefs in race-based identity. Casting the color "brown" of his title as a controlling metaphor, Rodriguez uses figures from popular and high culture to argue that American conceptions of race may often be damaging to individuals and to the nation as a whole. Suggesting that Hispanics are becoming Americanized even as they are "Latinizing" American communities, Rodriguez urges that we replace false black/white dichotomies with a view of America as a "brown" culture.

Yeziarska, Anzia. *Arrogant Beggar*. Ed. Katherine Stubbs. Durham: Duke U Press, 1996.

Yeziarska's biting assault on "benevolent" do-gooders, *Arrogant Beggar* traces the personal growth of Adele Lindner, who begins the novel trying to escape the Lower East Side of New York but ends it by reconnecting to her origins in the Jewish ghetto as she establishes her own new model for shared community-building. Underscoring the class tensions between well-to-do German American Jews and less affluent Russian American Jews, the novel offers a forceful social critique clarified by Katherine Stubbs' introduction to this recent edition.

IV. Native American Literature

Black Elk and John Gneisenau Neihardt. *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux.* Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2000.

This classic text, dictated by Black Elk to John G. Neihardt, has become a classic in Native American literature studies. Ranging from its firsthand account of an attack on Black Elk's home village during his childhood, through poignant reflections on the decline of the buffalo, to meditations on learning in a society emphasizing acculturation through observation and imitation, *Black Elk Speaks* has been dubbed both an historical and a spiritual masterpiece. Interesting also as a complex text based on collaborative composition practices used by the two authors, this edition is especially useful in that regard because it reprints the various introductions that Neihardt wrote for the text at different points in his career and because it includes art by Lakota painter Standing Bear.

Callahan, S. Alice. *Wynema: A Child of the Forest.* Ed. A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1997.

First published in 1891, this is the earliest known novel by a Native American woman. The novel actually depicts the lifelong connections between two women—the Muscogee Indian Wynema and Genevieve Weir, a white woman who has come west to work as a mission teacher. Callahan herself was a mixed-blood Muscogee who became a teacher for her tribe in Oklahoma after studying at a church-run school in Virginia. Ruoff's introduction to the short novel provides important historical context, including analysis of bicultural issues and cross-class relationships key to reading the narrative.

Conley, Robert J. *Mountain Windsong: A Novel of the Trail of Tears.* Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1986.

This novel interweaves three narrative strands to depict the Cherokee Removal from the Eastern U.S. to Indian Territory, 1835-1838, and to consider the lingering impact of that community experience. One strand focuses on a young couple separated by the Removal (as some Cherokee remained in North Carolina), a second on historical documents related to the Trail of Tears, and a third on a contemporary relationship between a grandfather and a young Cherokee boy who learns about his heritage.

Dorris, Michael. *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water.* New York: Time Warner, 1998 (reissue).

Moving among several narrative voices and across time, Dorris's novel follows the experiences of three women: the adolescent Rayona (whose blending of African American and Native American parentage forms one focus of the book), Christine (Rayona's Native American mother) and Rayona's grandmother Ida. With one of its many dimensions being a coming-of-age story, this novel is also a story of cross-generational relationships and of several very different Native American women seeking to define their identities in contemporary U. S. culture.

Glancy, Diane. *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1996.

Glancy's novel takes the reader on the arduous journey of the Trail of Tears through the voices of a wide array of characters who respond to the ordeal in diverse ways. In vivid and powerful vignettes, Glancy juggles characters and themes to convey the pain and the moral victories associated with the Removal.

Zitkala-Sa. *American Indian Stories.* Ed. Dexter Fisher. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

This affordable edition combines Zitkala-Sa's often-anthologized 1900 essays from *The Atlantic*

Monthly (“Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The School Days of an Indian Girl” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians”) with less well known prose pieces such as “America’s Indian Problem” and “A Dream of Her Grandfather.” Fisher’s introduction tracks Zitkala-Sa’s extended writing career and positions it within the larger tradition of oral and written texts by Native American authors.

Zitkala-Sa. *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and The Sun Dance Opera.* Ed. P. Jane Hafen. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2000.

This new edition of key works unavailable until now will be out in paperback soon.

V. Memoirs, Regional, and “Ecological” Narratives

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life’s Greatest Lesson.* New York: Broadway Books, 2002.

While some critics have complained about the didactic strain evident in this memoir’s aphorisms, teachers report that their high school students are often touched by the relationship revitalized between Albom and Morrie Schwartz, a former teacher with whom the sportswriter reconnects for a series of visits in the months before Schwartz’s death of Lou Gehrig’s disease. The book has also been recommended as an effective entry point into studying earlier American essayists like Emerson and Thoreau. Seeking a balance between charm and emotion, the text can be instructive for writing lessons on tone.

Carter, Jimmy. *An Hour Before Daylight.* New York: Touchstone Books, 2001.

Carter’s memoir of his youth in Depression-era south Georgia is an understated yet moving account of experiences that shaped the man, the rural south, and the nation. Carter’s accounts of his constant interactions with black playmates help illuminate the complex race relations operating in an earlier era while suggesting that much of his personal commitment to community-building was derived from his relationships with those very neighbors. Honoring the land as well as his family and community members, Carter’s book can give students an appreciation for pre-WWII rural history as well as a model for memoir-writing.

Hamper, Ben. *Rivertown: Tales from the Assembly Line.* New York: Warner Books, 1992.

Hamper’s working-class narrative takes readers inside the enormous auto plants of General Motors’ major factory town—Flint, Michigan. Painting a grim but funny portrait consistent with Michael Moore’s *Roger and Me* film from the same period, Hamper’s essays appeared in earlier form in periodicals ranging from *Mother Jones* to *Esquire* and *Harper’s*. An assault on corporate America written in a striking working-class voice, Hamper’s book is also a celebration of the spirit of American labor. The essays do contain some coarse language reminiscent of conversations on the factory floor.

Hickman, Homer. *October Sky: A Memoir.* New York: Dell Books, 1999.

Like the movie based on this memoir, *October Sky* is an inspiring story with great appeal for students, who identify with young Homer Hickman and his 1950s team of would-be rocket men seeking to escape their West Virginia coal-mining town by way of a science fair and a career with NASA. Candid and humorous, but also deftly sentimental, Hickman’s memoir is an involving narrative about growing up, but also about learning to capitalize on and celebrate a community’s strengths.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried: A Work of Fiction.* Reprint of 1990 Houghton Mifflin edition. New York: Broadway Books, 1999.

Despite O'Brien's subtitle, many critics are referring to his latest Vietnam book as a memoir, while others have characterized it as a hybrid, neither novel nor memoir. Whatever the genre, the collection of narratives is unified by the theme signaled in the title—all the heavy kinds of baggage (emotional as well as physical) carried by the soldiers O'Brien characterizes so forcefully. Students unfamiliar with the history of the Vietnam conflict find the book an accessible entry point into historical study. Its raw language may be difficult for some classrooms, but teachers report a powerful payoff in student discussion and writing promoted by these memorable stories.

White, Bailey. *Mama Makes Up Her Mind: And Other Dangers of Southern Living.* Reprint edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

This hilarious memoir focuses on White's own remarkable family but also explores the familiar theme of Southern eccentric behavior with a deft and original touch. Set in south Georgia, White's sketches evoke small-town regional life in a tone that is primarily humorous but occasionally poignant, and never dull. White's writing is a good model for students seeking to develop a distinctive voice.

VI. (White) Women Writers

(Note: Obviously these women belong to ethnic groups as well. Here I've listed mainly white women writers, who are frequently studied as women writers rather than as "white" writers or as white women writers. Note that several of the lists above also include women writers who tend to appear in women's literature courses or units in schools.)

Child, Lydia Maria. *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians.* Ed. Carolyn L. Karcher. New Brunswick: Rutgers U Press, 1986.

One text in the American Women Writers Series, Child's novel and shorter prose pieces signal both the author's enlightened attitudes (for her own day) and the limits of her vision of the relationship between whites and Native Americans. Originally published in 1824, *Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times* depicts a white woman's decision to marry an Indian chief and bear his son, but also her eventual choice to leave her spouse for a white man.

Davis, Rebecca Harding. *Life in the Iron-Mills.* Ed. Cecelia Tichi. Boston: Bedford Books, 1998.

This edition of Davis' narrative, originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1861, is especially helpful for teachers wanting to emphasize historical and cultural studies of literature. Part of the Bedford Cultural Editions series, this edition includes a detailed introduction and documents from the time period to illuminate the text.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo and Margaret Fuller. *Selected Works—Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller: Essays, Poems, and Dispatches with Introduction.* Eds. John Carlos Rowe and Paul Lauter. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Like much recent scholarship in American literature, this text brings together Emerson and Fuller as major authors whose work benefits from comparative study. Since Fuller has tended, more and more, to be studied alongside Thoreau and Emerson as a crucial figure in American literary history, interest in the wide range of her writing has increased. Here, for example, students can be introduced to her

travel writing from Italy as well as to texts on education, women's place in history, and other cultural issues.

Fern, Fanny. *Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time.* Ed. Susan Belasco Smith. Reprint edition. New York: Penguin USA, 1997.

Teachers report that students easily identify with the title character of this 1850s autobiographical novel written by Sara Parton, who was better known by the pen name of Fanny Fern, which she used in her popular newspaper columns. Ruth's experiences as a single mother trying to manage her finances, as an author gaining experience and power, and as a woman seeking acceptance from her family all resonate with today's young readers. While this edition is attractive for its low cost, teachers who would like to introduce students to Fern's satirical and sentimental essays as well as to her novel should choose Joyce W. Warren's groundbreaking Rutgers University Press edition, which includes other writing by Fern along with the novel.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *"The Yellow Wallpaper."* Ed. and introduced by Thomas L. Erskine and Connie L. Richards. Women Writers Texts and Contexts Series. New Brunswick: Rutgers U Press, 1993.

Like other editions in this series, *"The Yellow Wallpaper"* presents a key text from American women's literature along with a series of critical essays, a chronology of the writer's career, and other related writing by the author. In this case, the inclusion of a important essays from feminist scholars such as Judith Fetterley, Annette Kolodny, and Elizabeth Ammons allows this volume to do a double duty, introducing readers to a touchstone narrative from women's literature and critical perspectives important to the field. Teachers might want to consider purchasing one copy of this edition for themselves while using less expensive ones for students.

Kirkland, Caroline. *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* Ed. Sandra Zagarell. New Brunswick: Rutgers U Press, 1990.

In the 1830s, Michigan was considered "the West," and Caroline Kirkland was one of a number of pioneers mixing with long-time residents around the village of Montacute. Kirkland satirizes both her neighbors and her own group of recent arrivals from the East. Zagarell's insightful introduction relates Kirkland's writing to other experiences crucial to women writers of the time—e.g., working as a schoolteacher and writing for magazines.

Paterson, Katherine. *Lyddie.* New York: Puffin, 1991.

Brilliantly researched and carefully crafted to appeal to young readers, Paterson's short narrative captures the experience of young Lowell mill workers in the antebellum era. Introducing issues of social class through the personal experiences of her main character (Lyddie), Paterson draws on her own careful reading of Lucy Larcom's *A New England Girlhood*, factory tract literature, and texts from *The Lowell Offering* to create a "YA" story praised by the American Library Association, *Parents* magazine, and *Booklist*.

Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts.* New Brunswick: Penguin, 1998.

By now a long-time favorite among those who teach courses on American women's writing, *Hope Leslie* takes readers to two different eras in U.S. history—the 17th-century New England settlement period that Sedgwick employs as her setting and the 1820s period when American women writers were beginning to establish themselves in the marketplace. Fascinating as much for its portrayal of interactions between Puritan and Native American culture as for its two energetic heroines, *Hope Leslie* has become a staple of university American literature programs. Carolyn Karcher's thoughtful

introduction clarifies Sedgwick's place in American literary history as one of the most important writers of the antebellum era.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contents, Criticism.* Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: Norton, 1994.

Elizabeth Ammons' 1994 Norton edition of Stowe's novel is especially notable for its inclusion of documents and literary criticism that provide a helpful context for today's readers. While these additional materials make the edition more expensive than those which only reprint the novel itself, this text has the advantage of introducing students to critical perspectives which are typically brought to bear on the novel in university courses. Teachers might want to consider using this edition as a planning resource and having students read the inexpensive 2001 Modern Library edition with an introduction by Jane Smiley. (Using Smiley's edition has the added attraction of potentially interesting readers in her controversial 1996 Harper's magazine essay, where Smiley exalted *Uncle Tom's Cabin* over *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as great American literature.)

VII. Anthologies of American Literature

The Harper American Literature. Ed. Donald McQuade and others. 2nd edition. Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

While perhaps not as popular among college instructors as the Heath, the Harper anthologies offer a comparable assembly of traditional and "new" texts. Besides the two-volume general survey set, Harper also publishes "specialty" anthologies of Native American, Asian American and African American literature.

The Heath Anthology of American Literature. Paul Lauter, general editor. 2nd edition. Vols. 1 and 2. Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1994.

The impact of "the Heath" and other expanded anthologies on American literature may be incalculable. As more and more schoolteachers have entered their own classrooms after studying American literature in survey courses where this capacious anthology was the textbook, secondary school courses have expanded the range of texts studied and adopted a approaches to instruction including cultural critique rather than focusing solely on close reading.

Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets: An Anthology. Ed. Paula Bennett. London: Blackwell, 1997.

Bennett's groundbreaking collection is based on her years researching women's poetry in a wide range of venues, especially periodicals. A particular favorite of Bennett's is Sarah Piatt, who published poems in magazines from the 1860s through the early twentieth century. Bennett's readings of the poetry are insightful and entertaining. This anthology is a helpful resource for teachers unfamiliar with women's poetry from earlier eras or eager to study periodical poetry as serious literature.

Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers: An Anthology. Ed. Karen L. Kilcup.

A collection drawing from multiple genres, this anthology also emphasizes ethnic diversity in the range of authors included. Since the nineteenth century was the era when American women writers became

a major force in the national literature, this anthology is a solid resource for teachers. Kilcup's collection is notable for its use of periodical publications—an important venue for women writers throughout the 1800s. Genres highlighted help stretch readers' conceptions of "the literary" beyond familiar forms like novels and dramas to include advice books, children's literature, journalistic writing, religious texts, travel reports, and even stitched samplers.

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. General editors Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997.

This anthology includes works by well over 100 major authors, with over a dozen complete major works (e.g., Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Toni Morrison's *Sula*). Collaborating with key leaders in the field of African American literature (e.g., William Andrews, Houston Baker, Frances Foster, Richard Yarborough), Gates and McKay assembled a discipline-shaping collection, which has quickly become the standard anthology for African American literature.

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter Fifth Edition. Ed. Nina Baym. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

The latest edition of the Norton anthology condenses the longer earlier versions for convenience but maintains a broad scope nonetheless. Like the earlier editions, this one begins with literature before the New England settlements (e.g., with Native American trickster stories) and closes with texts published after 1945. New material in this edition includes improved coverage of women writers (Susanna Rowson, Lydia Maria Child, Catharine Sedgwick, and Fanny Fern), expanded selections for some authors (e.g., Black Elk, W. E. B. Du Bois) and new poetry (e.g., by poet laureate Robert Pinsky).

The Oxford Companion to African American Literature. Eds. William Andrews, Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris. Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2001.

This vital sourcebook is a helpful supplement to collections like the *Norton Anthology* (listed above). Besides short biographies of hundreds of African American authors, this up-to-date reference text also provides discussion of key topics relevant to the field and background information on important texts from a range of genres. Especially helpful in its treatment of genres crucial to studying African American literature (e.g., oratorical texts, slave narratives, folktales), this resource book is also fun to read for its polished and engaging style.

VIII. Visual American Literature: Teacher-Recommended Films and Picture-books

Amistad. Dir. Stephen Spielberg. Perf. Morgan Freeman, Anthony Hopkins, Matthew McConaughey. Universal. 1997.

While teachers report pairing this film with Melville's *Benito Cereno* works well, the film may also be worth examining on its own for the diversity of responses it evoked from critics and the general public. The customer reviews on amazon.com make for fascinating reading and could provide a worthwhile source of data for a student research project on reception to a "literary" film text.

Anaya, Rudolfo A. *My Land Sings: Stories from the Rio Grande*. Ill. Amy Cordova. New York: Harper Trophy, 2001.

This collection of ten stories offers an appealing way to study folklore. Creating narratives based on tales passed down through oral tradition (including song), Anaya situates these tales in a vibrant New Mexico culture. While some of the stories are humorous accounts of animal experiences, others include riddles, rogue adventures, and myths. Though pitched primarily to very young children, the collection is also appropriate for analyzing connections between visual and print elements in text.

The Innocents. Dir. Jack Clayton. Perf. Deborah Kerr, Peter Wyngarde. Twentieth Century Fox. 1961.

Truman Capote's and William Archibald's screenplay helps make this film, the first psychologically-oriented movie adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, an accessible introduction to James. Still regarded as one of the best "ghost story" films ever made, *The Innocents'* strong cinematography (by Freddie Francis) remains an evident strength even in our own time of polished special effects.

Morrison, Toni and Slade Morrison. *The Big Box*. Ill. Giselle Porter. New York: Jump at the Sun, 2002.

A children's picture book conceived collaboratively by Morrison and her son Slade, *The Big Box* celebrates diversity and freedom. Potter's beautiful illustrations complement the message, which may be a bit heavy-handed. Interesting partly by virtue of being Morrison's first publication in the children's literature genre, this attractive little book is also worth attention for its interplay of art and verbal text.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale and My Father Bleeds History/Here My Troubles Began*. Boxed, two-volume edition. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.

Maus, the first graphic novel in Spiegelman's highly acclaimed two-part narrative, originally appeared in 1987. Based upon interviews with Spiegelman's father Vladek, who was a Holocaust survivor, *Maus* represented the author's creative and compelling approach for using comic-book-like design to tell a story perhaps too painful to record otherwise. By transposing the historical events into a visual allegory where the Germans become cats and the Jews mice, Spiegelman enabled readers to confront the Holocaust in a new art form. This edition combines the first volume in the serial with the sequel, which explores Vladek's life in America as a survivor. Teachers who prefer to teach only one of the two volumes typically choose the first, which can be purchased separately.

Smoke Signals. Dir. Chris Eyre. Perf. Adam Beach, Evan Adams. Miramax. 1998.

Teachers offer enthusiastic recommendations of this film as an engaging way to introduce students to author Sherman Alexie and his creative explorations of Native American life today. The film combines material from short stories in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* collection. The first major movie to be made by a Native American creative team, *Smoke Signals* went from an enthusiastic response at the Sundance festival, to a build-up of box office success, to frequent use in university courses studying literature and film history.

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**"The Canon Debate Today:
The Representation of U.S. History and Literature
in American High Schools and College Textbooks"**

**September 15-16, 2002,
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**Making American Literatures:
First DRAFT
Overview of the Project Proposal
by Sarah Robbins**

The overarching goals of this project include 1) collaborative scholarly examination of the social processes that have defined and delivered “American Literature” as a discipline/subject in universities and schools; 2) consideration of the historical implications of those various contested definitions for the cultural practice of pedagogy; and 3) shared reflection on and revision of school curricula for American Literature from the micro (classroom) to the macro (national) level. To address these goals, participants in this multi-year project will study a cluster of interrelated questions currently being debated in humanities scholarship and teaching:

How do we define the “American” of “American Literature” for schools in the United States in the twenty-first century? What geographical, linguistic, and chronological boundaries have been used in various particular contexts to establish and/or challenge borders for the field? For instance, how and why have various regional and national versions of “American” literature been promoted in such sites as university courses and school anthologies? To what extent has/should “American” literature as a field of study in the schools be internationalized?

How do we define the “Literature” of “American Literature”? In what ways has the category of the “literary” been problematized in recent scholarship in the

humanities? How and why, for example, have popular culture texts that might in the past have been excluded from study in literature courses worked their way into the canon? What impact have moves to open the canon to texts by formerly underrepresented groups had on American “literature(s)”?

Building on a more fully historicized view of “American Literature” as a contested school discipline, how can we better critique (and help our students understand) the ongoing processes always (re)making the field? How can/should our pedagogy in American Literature, in other words, be informed by constant reflective critique of the *subject* we teach? To what extent should our teaching of American Literature, for example, be informed by contemporary practices in the publication of “literature” by trade presses, or the production of current films, or our students’ own “readings” of magazines and television? Similarly, to what extent should we invite our students to critique their own American Literature anthologies and to un-pack the processes which created those collections?

Once we have worked together to re-view the social construction of “American Literature” as a school subject and to consider the implications of that ongoing process for our current pedagogy, how can we become proactive agents involved in the defining of “American Literature” for twenty-first century schools? How can we participate in the continuing recovery enterprise that has expanded the canon by, for instance, reclaiming nineteenth-century women’s texts and valuing such genres as individual memoirs and localized oral histories? How might our students participate in a more democratic yet historically informed remaking of localized and national American Literatures by producing and critiquing their own “literary” texts?

This project will blend sustained local/regional efforts with national-level support, dissemination and ongoing assessment by way of the National Writing Project’s unique network of 160+ sites. The initial phase of the project will be a National Institute in the summer of 1997, with 30 leading K-12 and university teachers of American Literature spending 2 weeks of collaborative study at the University of California, Berkeley, followed by a one-week session in 1 of 3 regional centers (Berkeley, Ann Arbor, or Atlanta). During the regional convenings of the national institute, participants will study another round of humanities texts related to our project themes, with some of the readings during this week being specific to the given region, and several being studied in common with the other members of the larger national group. The 3 centers will stay in close contact with each other, both during the regional convenings and throughout the school year, by way of such support technology as teleconferencing and Internet list-serves and home pages

sponsored by the project. Also throughout the year, the teacher-scholars participating in the project will have multiple opportunities to share their new knowledge of American Literature with colleagues through the National Writing Project's sites' network and the National Council of Teachers of English. They may also participate in national reconvening opportunities in Ann Arbor in November, in connection with the University of Michigan's Year of the Humanities, and at Kennesaw State in April, in conjunction with the college's Contemporary Literature and Writing Conference.

last updated

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Re-viewing American Literature for Secondary Schools

A Discussion Packet of Texts

Collected and Edited by Sarah Robbins

srobbins@kennesaw.edu

Note: All of the texts in this collection are pieces for which the copyright has expired, so they may be reproduced for classroom teaching or for professional development workshops, because each of them is in the public domain.

Learning to Read

By Frances E. W. Harper

From *Sketches of southern life*. Philadelphia: Ferguson Bros. & Co, 1891

Very soon the Yankee teachers
Came down and set up school;
But, oh! How the Rebs did hate it,
It was agin' their rule.

Our masters always tried to hide
Book learning from our eyes;
Knowledge didn't agree with slavery;
'Twould make us all to wise.

But some of us would try to steal
A little from the book,
And put the words together,
And learn by hook or crook.

I remember Uncle Caldwell,
Who took pot liquor fat
And greased the pages of his book,
And hid it in his hat.

And had his master ever seen
The leaves upon his head,
He'd have thought them greasy papers,
But nothing to be read.

And there was Mr. Turner's Ben,
Who heard the children spell,
And picked the words right up by heart,
And learned to read 'em well.

Well, the Northern folks kept sending
The Yankee teachers down;
And they stood right up and helped us,
Through Rebs did sneer and frown.

And, I longed to ready my Bible,
For precious words it said;

But when I begun to learn it,
Folks just shook their heads,

And said there is no use trying,
Oh! Chloe, you're too late;
But as I was rising sixty,
I had no time to wait.

So I got a pair of glasses,
And straight to work I went,
And never stopped til I could read
The hymns and Testament.

Then I got a little cabin,
A place to call my own,
And I felt as independent
As the queen upon her throne.

Lynch Law in Georgia:
A Six-Weeks' Record in the Center of Southern civilization, As Faithfully
Chronicled by the "Atlanta Journal" and the "Atlanta Constitution."
By Ida B. Wells-Barnett
Chicago: 1899. Princeton Avenue Publishers.
The entire preface is reprinted here and is in the public domain.

CONSDER THE FACTS

During six weeks of the months of March and April just past, twelve colored men were lynched in Georgia, the reign of outlawry culminating in the torture and hanging of the colored preacher, Elijah Strickland, and the burning alive of Samuel Wilkes, alias Hose, Sunday, April 23, 1809.

The real purpose of these savage demonstrations is to teach the Negro that in the South he has no rights that the law will enforce. Samuel Hose was burned to teach the Negroes that no matter what a white man does to them, they must not resist. Hose, a servant, had killed Cranford, his employer. An example must be made. Ordinary punishment was deemed inadequate. This Negro must be burned alive. To make the burning a certainty the charge of outrage was invented, and added to the charge of murder. The daily press offered reward for the capture of Hose and then openly incited the people to burn him as soon as he was caught. The mob carried out the plan in every savage detail.

Of the twelve men lynched during that reign of unspeakable barbarianism, only one was even charged with an assault upon a woman. Yet Southern apologists justify their savagery on the ground that Negroes are lynched only because of their crimes against women.

The Southern press champions burning men alive, and says, "Consider the facts." The colored people join issue and also say, "Consider the facts." The colored people of Chicago employed a detective to go to Georgia, and his report in this pamphlet gives the facts. We give here the details of the lynching as

they were reported in the Southern papers, then follows the report of the true facts as to the cause of the lynchings, as learned by the investigation. We submit all to the sober judgment of the Nation, confident that, in this cause, as well as al others, "truth is mighty and will prevail."

Ida B. Wells-Barnett
2939 Princeton Avenue. Chicago. June 20, 1899

Newspaper Essays by Fanny Fern

The Model Lady

Fern Leaves from Fanny's Port-folio. Cincinnati: Henry Derby, 1853. 351.

THE MODEL LADY

Puts her children out to nurse and tends lap-dogs; --
lies in bed till noon; -- wears paper-soled shoes, and
pinches her waist; -- gives the piano fits, and forgets to
pay her milliner; -- cuts her poor relations, and goes to
church when she has a new bonnet; -- turns the cold
shoulder to her husband , and flirts with his "friend"; --
never saw a thimble; -- don't know a darning-needle
from a crow-bar; -- wonders where puddings grow; --
eats ham and eggs in private, and dines on a pigeon's
leg in public; -- runs mad after the last new fashion; --
doats on Byron; -- adores any man who grins behind a
moustache; -- and when asked the age of her youngest
child, replies, "Don't know, indeed; ask Betty!"

Children's Rights

Fern Leaves from Fanny's Port-folio. Cincinnati: Henry Derby, 1853. 188-91.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Men's rights! Women's rights! I throw down the gauntlet for children's right! Yes, little pets, Fanny Fern's about "takin' notes," and she'll "print 'em," too, if you don't get your dues. She has seen you seated by a pleasant window, in a railroad car, with your bright eyes dancing with delight, at the prospect of all the pretty things you were going to see, forcibly ejected by some overgrown Napoleon, who fancied your place, and thought, in his wisdom, that children had no taste for anything but sugar-candy. Fanny Fern knew better. She knew that the pretty trees and flowers, and bright blue sky, gave your little souls a thrill of delight, though you could not tell why; and she knew that great big man's soul was a great deal smaller than yours, to sit there and read a stupid political paper, when such a glowing landscape was before him, that he might have feasted hi eyes upon. And she longed to wipe away the big tear that you didn't dare to let fall; and she understood how a little girl or boy, that didn't get a ride every day in the year, should not be quite able to swallow that great big lump in the throat, as he or she sat jammed down in a dark, crowded corner of the car, instead of sitting by that pleasant window.

Yes; and Fanny has seen you sometimes, when you've been muffed up to the tip of your nose in

woolen wrappers, in a close, crowded church, nodding your little drowsy heads, and keeping time to the sixth-lie and seventh-lie of some pompous theologian, whose preaching would have been high Dutch to you, had you been wide awake.

And she has seen you sitting, like little automatons, in a badly-ventilated school-room, with your nervous little toes at just such an angle, for hours; under the tuition of Miss Nancy Nipper, who didn't care a rush-light whether your spine was as crooked as the letter S or not, if the Great Mogul Committee, who marched in once a month to make the "grand tour," voted her a "model school-marm."

Yes, and that ain't all. She has seen you sent of to bed, just at the witching hour of candle-light, when some entertaining guest was in the middle of a delightful story, that you, poor, miserable "little pitcher," was doomed never to hear the end of! Yes, and she has seen "the line and plummet" laid to you so rigidly, that you were driven to deceit and evasion; and then seen you punished for they very sin your tormentors helped you to commit. And she has seen your ears boxed just as hard for tearing a hole in your best pinafore, or breaking a China cup, as for telling as big a lie as Ananias and Sapphira did.

And when, by patient labor, you had reared an edifice of tiny blocks, --fairer in its architectural proportion, to your infantile eye, than any palace in ancient Rome, --she has seen it ruthlessly kicked into a shattered ruin, by somebody in the house, whose dinner hadn't digested!

Never mind. I wish I was mother to the whole of you! Such glorious times we'd have! Reading pretty books, that had no big words in 'em; going to school where you could sneeze without getting a rap on the head for not asking leave first; and going to church on the quiet, blessed Sabbath, where the minister --like our dear Saviour --sometimes remembered to "take little children in his arms, and bless them."

Then, if you asked me a question, I wouldn't pretend not to hear; or lazily tell you I "didn't know," or turn off with some fabulous evasion, for your memory to chew for a cud till you were old enough to see how you had been fooled. And I'd never wear such a fashionable gown that you couldn't climb on my lap whenever the fit took you; or refuse to kiss you, for fear you'd ruffle my curls, or my collar, or my temper, --not a bit of it; and then you should pay me with your merry laugh, and your little confiding hand slid ever trustingly in mine.

O, I tell you, my little pets, Fanny is sick of the din, and strife, and envy, and uncharitableness! --and she'd rather, by ten thousand, live in a little world full of fresh, guileless, loving little children, than in this great museum full of such dry, dusty, withered hearts.

Excerpt from Zitkala Sa

Excerpt from "The School Days of an Indian Girl." *The Atlantic Monthly* 85 (February 1900): 185-194.

"The Snow Episode" THE SNOW EPISODE

A short time after our arrival we three Dakotas were playing in the snowdrifts. We were all still deaf to the English language, excepting Judewin, who always heard such puzzling things. One morning we learned through her ears that we were forbidden to fall length-wise in the snow, as we had been doing, to see our own impressions. However, before many hours we had forgotten the order, and were having a great sport in the snow, when a shrill voice called us. Looking up, we saw an imperative hand

beckoning us into the house. We shook the snow off ourselves, and started toward the woman as slowly as we dared.

Judewin said: "Now the paleface is angry with us. She is going to punish us for falling into the snow. If she looks straight into your eyes and talks loudly, you must wait until she stops. Then after a tiny pause say 'No.'" The rest of the way we practiced upon the little word "no."

As it happened, Thowin was summoned to judgment first. The door shut behind her with a click.

Judewin and I stood silently listening at the keyhole. The paleface woman talked in very severe tones. Her words fell from her lips like crackling embers, and her inflection ran up like the small end of a switch. I understood her voice better than the things she was saying. I was certain we had made her very impatient with us. Judewin heard enough of the words to realize all too late that she had taught us the wrong reply.

"Oh, poor Thowi!" she gasped, as she put both hands over her ears.

Just then I heard Thowin's tremulous answer, "No."

With an angry exclamation, the woman gave her a hard spanking. Then she stopped to say something. Judewin said it was this: "Are you going to obey my the next time?"

Thowin answered again with the only word at her command, "No."

This time the woman meant her blows to smart, for the poor frightened girl shrieked at the top of her voice. In the midst of the whipping the blows ceased abruptly, and the woman asked another question: "Are you going to fall in the snow again?"

Thowin gave her bad password another trial. We heard her say feebly, "No! No!"

With this the woman hid away her half-worn slipper, and led the child out, stroking her black shorn head. Perhaps it occurred to her that brute force is not the solution for such a problem. She did nothing to Judewin nor to me. She only returned to us our unhappy comrade, and left us alone in the room.

During the first two or three seasons misunderstandings as ridiculous as this one of the snow episode frequently took place, bringing unjustifiable frights and punishments into our little lives.

Within a year I was able to express myself somewhat in broken English. As soon as I comprehended a part of what was said and done, a mischievous spirit of revenge possessed me. One day I was called in from my play for some misconduct. I had disregarded a rule which seemed to me very needlessly binding. I was sent into the kitchen to mash the turnips for dinner. It was noon, and steaming dishes were hastily carried into the dining room. I hated turnips, and their odor which came from the brown jar was offensive to me. With fire in my heart, I took the wooden tool that the paleface woman held out to me. I stood upon a step, and, grasping the handle with both hands, I bent in a hot rage over the turnips. I worked my vengeance upon them. All were so busily occupied that no one noticed me. I saw that the turnips were in a pulp, and that further beating could not improve them; but the order was, "Mash these turnips," and mash them I would! I renewed my energy; and as I sent the masher into the bottom of the jar, I felt a satisfying sensation that the weight of my body had gone into it.

Just here a paleface woman came up to my table. As she looked into the jar, she shoved my

hands roughly aside. I stood fearless and angry. She placed her red hands upon the rim of the jar. Then she gave one lift and a stride away from the table. But lo! The pulpy contents fell through the crumbled bottom to the floor! She spared me no scolding phrases that I had earned. I did not heed them. I felt triumphant in my revenge, though deep within me I was a wee bit sorry to have broken the jar.

As I sat eating my dinner, and saw that no turnips were served, I whooped in my heart for having once asserted the rebellion within me.

Homestead and its Perilous Trades- Impressions of a Visit

Excerpt from an essay by Hamlin Garland

McClure's Magazine, June, 1894

<http://www.cohums.ohio->

[state.edu/history/projects/HomesteadStrike1892/GarlandHomestead/GarlandHomestead.htm](http://www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/history/projects/HomesteadStrike1892/GarlandHomestead/GarlandHomestead.htm)

A COLD, thin October rain was falling as I took the little ferry-boat and crossed the Monongahela River to see Homestead and its iron-mills. The town, infamously historic already, sprawled over the irregular hillside, circled by the cold gray river. On the flats close to the water's edge there severe masses of great sheds, out of which grim smoke-stacks rose with a desolate effect, like the black stumps of a burned forest of great trees. Above them dense clouds of sticky smoke rolled heavily away.

Higher up the tenement-houses stood in dingy rows, alternating with vacant lots. Higher still stood some Queen Anne cottages, toward which slender sidewalks climbed like goat paths.

The streets of the town were horrible; the buildings were poor; the sidewalks were sunken, swaying, and full of holes, and the crossings were sharp-edged stones set like rocks in a river bed. Everywhere the yellow mud of the street lay kneaded into a sticky mass, through which groups of pale, lean men slouched in faded garments, grimy with the soot and grease of the mills.

The town was as squalid and unlovely as could well be imagined, and the people were mainly of the discouraged and sullen type to be found everywhere where labor passes into the brutalizing stage of severity. It had the disorganized and incoherent effect of a town- which has feeble public spirit. Big industries at differing eras have produced squads of squalid tenement-houses far from the central portion of the town, each plant bringing its gangs of foreign laborers in raw masses to camp down like an army around its shops.

Such towns are sown thickly over the hill-lands of Pennsylvania, but this was my first descent into one of them. They are American only in the sense in which they represent the American idea of business.

The Carnegie mills stood down near the river at some distance from the ferry landing, and thither I took my way through the sticky yellow mud and the gray falling rain. I had secured for my guide a young man whose life had been passed in Homestead and who was quite familiar with the mills and workmen. I do not think he over-stated the hardships of the workmen, whose duties he thoroughly understood. He spoke frankly and without undue prejudice of the management and the work.

We entered the yard through the fence which was aggrandized into a stockade during the riots of a year ago. We were in the yard of the " finished beams." On every side lay thousands of tons of iron. There came toward us a group of men pushing a cart laden with girders for building. They were lean men, pale and grimy. The rain was falling upon them. They wore a look of stoical indifference, though one or two of the younger fellows were scuffling as they pushed behind the car.

Farther on was heard the crashing thunder of falling iron plates, the hoarse coughing of great engines, and the hissing of steam. Suddenly through the gloom I caught sight of the mighty up-soaring of saffron and sapphire flame, which marked the draught of the furnace of the Bessemer steel plant far down toward the water. It was a magnificent contrast to the dusky purple of the great smoky roofs below.



The ferry-boat and its captain.

The great building which we entered first was a beam mill, "one of the finest in the world," my guide said. It was an immense shed, open at the sides, and filled with a mixed and intricate mass of huge machinery. On every side tumultuous action seemed to make every inch of ground dangerous. Savage little engines went rattling about among piles of great beams. Dimly on my left were huge engines, moving with thunderous pounding.



Crossing the Monongahela.

"Come to the starting point", said my guide. I followed him timidly far up toward the other end, my eyes fixed on the beautiful glow of a redhot bloom of metal saving high in the air. It lighted the interior with a glorious light.

I was looking at this beautiful light whey my guide pulled me suddenly behind some shelter. The furious scream of a saw broke forth, the monstrous exaggeration of a circular wood-saw—a saw that melted its way through a beam of solid iron with deafening outcry, producing a gigantic glowing wheel of spattering sparks of golden fire. While it lasted all else was hid from sight.

"That's the saw which cuts the beams of iron into lengths as ordered," my guide said, and we hurried past.



Up the street from the ferry landing.

Everywhere in this pandemoniac shed was the thunder of reversing engines, the crash of falling iron, the rumbling growl of rollers, the howl of horrible saws, the deafening hiss of escaping steam, the wild vague shouts of workmen.

Excerpts from “The Lady Who Does Her Own Work”

By Harriet Beecher Stowe

Household Papers and Stories. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1896. 85-101.

Note: This material is in the public domain and may be duplicated.

“My dear Chris,” said my wife, “isn’t it time to be writing the next ‘House and Home Paper’?”

I was lying back in my study-chair, with my heels luxuriously propped on an ottoman, reading for the two-hundredth time Hawthorne’s “Mosses from an Old Manse,” or his “Twice-Told Tales,” I forget which,—I only know that these books constitute my cloud-land, where I love to sail away in dreamy quietude, forgetting the war, the price of coal and flour, the rates of exchange, and the rise and fall of gold. What

do all these things matter, as seen from those enchanted gardens in Padua where the weird Rappaccini tends his enchanted plants, and his gorgeous daughter fills us with the light and magic of her presence, and saddens us with the shadowy allegoric mystery of her preternatural destiny? But my wife represents the positive forces of time, place, and number in our family, and, having also a chronological head, she knows the day of the month, and therefore gently reminded me that by inevitable dates the time drew near for preparing my—which is it, now, May or June number?

“Well, my dear, you are right,” I said, as by an exertion I came head-uppermost, and laid down the fascinating volume. “Let me see, what was I to write about?”

“Why, you remember you were to answer that letter from the lady who does her own work.”

“Enough!” said I, seizing the pen with alacrity; “you have hit the exact phrase:—“

“The *lady who does her own work.*”

America is the only country where such a title is possible,—the only country where there is a class of women who may be described as ladies who do their own work. By a lady we mean a woman of education, cultivation, and refinement, of liberal tastes and ideas, who, without any very material additions or changes, would be recognized as a lady in any circle of the Old World or the New.

What I have said is, that the existence of such a class is a fact peculiar to American society, a clear, plain result of the new principles involved in the doctrine of universal equality.

When the colonists first came to this country of however mixed ingredients their ranks might have been composed, and however imbued with the spirit of feudal and aristocratic ideas, the discipline of the wilderness soon brought them to a democratic level; the gentleman felled the wood for his log-cabin side by side with the ploughman, and thews and sinews rose in the market. “A man was deemed honorable in proportion as he lifted his hand upon the high trees of the forest.” So in the interior domestic circle, Mistress and maid, living in a log-cabin together, became companions, and sometimes the maid, as the more accomplished and stronger, took precedence of the mistress. It became natural and unavoidable that children should begin to work as early as they were capable of it. The result was a generation of intelligent people brought up to labor from necessity, but turning on the problem of labor the acuteness of a disciplined brain. The mistress, outdone in sinews and muscles by her maid, kept her superiority by skill and contrivance. If she could not lift a pail of water she could invent methods which made lifting the pail unnecessary; if she could not take a hundred steps without weariness, she could make twenty answer the purpose of a hundred.

Slavery, it is true, was to some extent introduced into New England, but it never suited the genius of the people, never struck deep root, or spread so as to choke the good seed of self-helpfulness. Many were opposed to it from conscientious principle,—many from far-sighted thrift, and from a love of thoroughness and well-doing which despised the rude, unskilled work of barbarians. People, having once felt the thorough neatness and beauty of execution which came of free, educated, and thoughtful labor, could not tolerate the clumsiness of slavery. Thus, it came to pass that for many years the rural population of New England, as a general rule, did their own work, both out doors and in. If there were a black man or black woman or bound girl, they were emphatically only the *helps*, following humbly the steps of master or mistress, and used by them as instruments of lightening certain portions of their toil. The master and mistress with their children were the head workers.

Great merriment has been excited in the Old Country because years ago the first English travelers found that the class of persons by them denominated servants were in America denominated help or helpers. But the term was the very best exponent of the state of society. There were few servants in the European sense of the word; there was a society of educated workers, where all were practically equal, and where, if there was a deficiency in one family and an excess in another, a helper, not a servant, was hired. Mrs. Brown, who has six sons and no daughters, enters into agreement with Mrs. Jones, who has six daughters and no sons. She borrows a daughter, and pays her good wages to help in her domestic toil. And sends a son to help the labors of Mr. Jones. These two young people go into the families in which they are to be employed in all respects as equals and companions, and so the work of the community is equalized. Hence arose, and for many years continued, a state of society more nearly solving than any other ever did the problem of combining the highest culture of the mind with the highest culture of the muscles and the physical faculties.

. . . .

I will venture to say that there are at least, to speak very moderately, a hundred houses where these humble lines will be read and discussed, where there are no servants except the ladies of the household. I will venture to say, also, that these households, many of them, are not inferior in the air of cultivation and refined elegance to many which are conducted by the ministration of domestics. I will venture to assert furthermore that these same ladies who live thus find quite as much time for reading, letter-writing, drawing, embroidery, and fancy work as the women of families otherwise arranged. I am quite certain that they would be found on an average to be in the enjoyment of better health, and more of that sense of capability and vitality which gives one confidence in one's ability to look into life and meet it with cheerful courage, than three quarters of the women who keep servants; and that, on the whole, their domestic establishment is regulated more exactly to their mind, their food prepared and served more to their taste. And yet, with all this, I will *not* venture to assert that they are satisfied with this way of living, and that they would not change it forthwith if they could. They have a secret feeling all the while that they are being abused, that they are working harder than they ought to, and that women who live in houses like boarders, who have only to speak and it is done, are the truly enviable ones. One after another of their associates, as opportunity offers and means increase, deserts the ranks, and commits her domestic affairs to the hands of hired servants. Self-respect takes the alarm. Is it altogether genteel to live as we do? To be sure, we are accustomed to it; we have it all systematized and arranged; the work of our own hands suits us better than any we can hire; in fact, when we do hire, we are discontented and uncomfortable, for who will do for us what we will do for ourselves? But when we have company! There's the rub, to get out all our best things and put them back, --to cook the meals and wash the dishes ingloriously, --and to make all appear as if we didn't do it, and had servants like other people.

There, after all, is the rub.

An American Literature Bibliography for Secondary Schoolteachers

By Sarah Robbins

- I. African American Literature
- II. Caribbean American Literature
- III. Multi-ethnic American Literature
- IV. Native American Literature
- V. Memoirs, Regional and “Ecological” Narratives
- VI. American Women Writers: Useful editions
- VII. Anthologies of American Literature
- VIII. Visual American Literature

Criteria for inclusion:

- This bibliography emphasizes relatively recent editions (i.e., material recently published—or “recovered” for the first time—and new editions of familiar texts).
- Only paperback editions are listed.
- The bibliography editor or a colleague has successfully taught each book, either to middle/high school students or to preservice teachers/teachers who plan to use the selection in their classrooms.
- All texts are in English.
- Texts intended for young children (i.e., picture books) or from the Young Adult juvenile market have been included, both to address the needs of reluctant secondary school readers and to recognize the rise of interest in children’s literature as an important genre in American literature.
- Since the anthologies in this bibliography include substantial collections of poetry and representative drama texts, the rest of the bibliography is devoted to fiction and nonfiction prose.

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I. African American Literature

Chesnutt, Charles W. *Collected Stories of Charles Chesnutt*. Ed. William L.

Andrews. New York: Mentor, 1992.

Combining stories from Chesnutt's two major anthologies—*The Conjure Woman and The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*—this edition also offers an insightful introduction by William Andrews, who situates Chesnutt's career in a larger context including the work of Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories, the highbrow magazine culture of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and Chesnutt's own later novels (e.g., *The House Behind the Cedars* and *The Marrow of Tradition*).

Du Bois, W.E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ed. Randall Kenan. New York: Signet, 1995.

This affordable edition of Du Bois' groundbreaking essays positions the text as a precursor to writing by authors ranging from Richard Wright to Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin to Toni Morrison. Imagining *The Souls of Black Folk* as both powerful personal writing and a cultural document, Kenan also provides a helpful discussion of the complex relationship between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.

Gaines, Ernest. *A Lesson Before Dying*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1993.

Winning accolades from both the National Book Critics Circle Award and Oprah Winfrey (who made the novel a book club selection), *A Lesson Before Dying* has proven to be an especially engaging reading for secondary school students, in part because of its links between literacy development and moral maturation. Set in rural Louisiana during the 1940s, Gaines' narrative focuses on Jefferson, a young black who has been sentenced to death for his part in a robbery shootout, and Grant Wiggins, who has recently become a schoolteacher and who is seeking to define his role in the community.

Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *The Classic Slave Narratives. The Life of Olaudah Equiano; The History of Mary Prince; Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass; Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. New York: Mentor, 1987.

This volume brings together, in an inexpensive paperback, several of the most important slave narratives with an introduction by eminent scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Grooms, Tony. *Bombingham*. New York: One World, 2002.

Conjuring up the past for its central character Walter Burke, Tony Grooms' first novel revisits the 1960s in Birmingham, Alabama, dubbed "Bombingham" by the city's local black residents after the infamous attack on a Baptist Church and other KKK-led assaults on African Americans. Contrasting the many loving memories of Walter's

youth and his early encounters with racism, Grooms interweaves scenes from the Civil Rights era events with a story about a family facing its own crises during a challenging time for the whole nation. Combining its Birmingham focus with scenes in Viet Nam later in Walter's life, *Bombingham* can give mature adolescent readers a powerful introduction to '60s U. S. culture through a regional and racial lens.

Harper, Frances E. W. *Minnie's Sacrifice, Sowing and Reaping, Trial and Triumph:*

Three Rediscovered Novels by Frances E. W. Harper. Ed. Frances Foster.

Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

Frances Foster's discovery of three previously unknown novels by Frances E. W. Harper has changed the landscape of African American women's literature—indeed, even of American literature. All three novels were published originally, at approximately ten- year intervals beginning in 1869, as serials in the *Christian Recorder*, a church-sponsored periodical aimed at the African American middle classes. Ranging from the era of Reconstruction toward the turn into the next century, these novels set the stage for Harper's masterpiece, *Iola Leroy*, but they also stand on their own as fascinating stories with engaging characters.

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Written by Herself. Ed. Jean

Fagan Yellin. Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 1987.

One of the true pioneers in the recovery of women's and African American literature, Yellin provides a model edition of Harriet Jacob's slave narrative. Writing as Linda Brent, Jacobs traced her personal history from North Carolina slavery to authorship supported by northern friends like Lydia Maria Child. By including a wide array of archival material with Jacobs' personal story, Yellin both sets the work in a rich cultural context and authenticates Jacobs herself as author of the narrative.

Larsen, Nella. *Quicksand and Passing.* Ed. Deborah E. McDowell. New Brunswick:

Rutgers U Press, 1986.

These two 1920s novels are interesting not only for their examination of the "passing" theme, but also for their depiction of black middle-class society and their emphasis on psychological and sociological forces at work among the characters. A number of teachers have found that pairing Larsen's work with Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* can make for rich classroom discussions.

Paul, Susan. *Memoir of James Jackson: The Attentive and Obedient Scholar, Who*

Died in Boston. October 31, 1833. Ed. Lois Brown. Cambridge: Harvard U

Press, 2000.

Lois Brown's edition joins pioneering work by Frances Foster to expand the canon of African American literature by adding new texts. Brown's introduction provides a helpful window into experiences among Boston's antebellum African American community and situates Paul's memoir within several important literary traditions (e.g., writings on education, abolitionist narratives).

Taylor, Susie King. *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs: Reminiscences of my Life in Camp with the 33rd U. S. Colored Troops, Late 1st South Carolina Volunteers*. Ed. Patricia W. Romero and Willie Lee Rose. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997.

Taylor's memoir provides an unusual perspective on the Civil War. Born as a slave, Taylor was freed relatively early in the war, when she joined a regiment to work in a variety of roles (e.g., nurse, laundress, and teacher). King published her own story in 1901, when she could write from a retrospective stance to reflect on her own experience and on its position in history.

Wells, Ida B. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997.

Brilliantly edited by Royster, this handy paperback from the Bedford Series in History and Culture makes available to teachers the tools they will need to plan instruction on Wells' anti-lynching writing. Photographs and other artifacts as well as brief biographies of key figures from the period help establish a clear context for reading Well's pamphlets: *Southern Horrors*, *A Red Record* and *Mob Rule in New Orleans*. A useful appendix offers a chronology of Wells' life, a bibliography, and discussion questions.

II. Caribbean American Literature

Condé, Maryse. *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Ballantine, 1992.

A creative re-telling of the story familiar to generations of readers of American literature, this novel's action migrates from the Caribbean to New England along with

the title character, a slave from Barbados who is a minor figure in Arthur Miller's well-known play (*The Crucible*) about the Salem witch trials. By changing the point of view for this narrative to Tituba's, Condé challenges readers' views on cross-cultural relationships, literary representation, and history-writing. Using postmodern techniques to connect her writing with other familiar literary sources (e.g., *The Scarlet Letter*), Condé invites readers to reconsider canonical texts while re-viewing history.

Dandicat, Edwidge. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Reprint. New York: Random House, 1998.

Set in Haiti and New York, this novel marks numerous challenging transitions for its central character, Sophie, some of whose experiences recall those of the author, an immigrant who moved to the U.S. at age 12. Although Oprah Winfrey enthusiastically touted the novel as a book club choice, some readers have complained that the narrative loses clarity midway through the novel, when the focus shifts from Sophie's efforts to adjust to her new home to a painful turn in her relationship with her mother. In fact, details associated with her mother's obsessions over Sophie's sexual purity (e.g., traumatic mutilation scenes) may make the novel a difficult choice for school-sponsored reading. For mature readers, though, the novel can be a worthwhile introduction to a writer receiving increased attention in university literature courses.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John*. New York: Penguin Plume, 1983.

Set on Kincaid's home island of Antigua, this story about a young girl growing up in a (post)colonial culture addresses universal themes such as mother-daughter relationships, but does so in the striking context of Caribbean culture.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Penguin/Plume, 1981.

Invoking and simultaneously attacking the conventions of Caribbean travel literature, Jamaica Kincaid's slim volume presents a passionate (and at times even angry) picture of the colonized British West Indies island of Antigua, where she grew up. Contrasting the island's sunny beauty with its corrupt government, Kincaid's extended essay conveys a compelling example of post-colonial writing at its most pointed and passionate.

Marshall, Paule. *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. New York: Feminist Press, 1996.

Marshall's impressive first novel first appeared in 1959 but has gained increased attention more recently by way of this Feminist Press edition. Set in Brooklyn in the 1930s and '40s, the autobiographical story follows the experiences of Selina Boyce. While Selina's parents have contrasting reactions to having immigrated from Barbados to the U.S., the heroine tries to find her own place in American society. Notable for its striking use of dialogue, the novel also examines important issues associated with racism directed toward black immigrants.

Santiago, Esmeralda. *When I Was Puerto Rican*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

A story of geographic and cultural migration, Santiago's narrative takes its appealing young central character from her native Puerto Rico to New York City, where language is only one of the many differences she encounters. As a growing-up story, the memoir gives an inspiring account of an American Dream, moving from rural poverty in Puerto Rico to Harvard, by way of New York's High School of Performing Arts.

Walcott, Derek. *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*. New York: Noonday Press, 1993.

Setting up a striking counterpoint between Caribbean and Homeric elements, Nobel prize winner Derek Walcott's book recalls his epic poem *Omeros* but takes the form of a play originally written for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Familiar characters from Homer's *Odyssey* (e.g., the Cyclops, Circe) take on a new life in the Caribbean setting.

III. Multi-ethnic (affectionately called “hyphenated”) American Literature

Note: Certainly African American and Native American literature is “ethnic” too, as is literature by white authors. These texts are often studied as “ethnic” literature.

Cisneros, Sandra. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Although Cisneros' earlier volume of narrative vignettes, *The House on Mango Street*, has become a favorite for use in secondary school literature anthologies, *Woman Hollering Creek* offers similarly vibrant material for classroom discussion, but with the added interest of a focus on the increasingly important theme of American borderlands. Setting her collection on both sides of the Mexican border through characters who have experienced both places, Cisneros writes here with a stronger feminist edge than in the *Mango Street* anthology. While her earlier book continues to stand as an accessible avenue for discussions of urban Mexican-American community life, the *Woman Hollering Creek* collection serves up a closer look at Mexican culture and its border-crossing interactions with the U.S.

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. *An Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio*. New York: Puffin Books, 1995.

This short, accessible collection of stories introduces readers to a range of memorable adolescent characters living in a Puerto Rican barrio of New Jersey. With humor, candor, and energy, Ortiz paints an insightful portrait of a neighborhood blending cultures.

Hesse, Karen. *Letters from Rifka*. New York: Puffin, 1992.

Winner of multiple awards (including the National Jewish Book Award and ALA citations), Hesse's young adult novel tackles themes addressed to older readers by authors like Anzia Yezierska (*Bread Givers*) and Henry Roth (*Call It Sleep*).

Jimenez, Francisco. *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of an Immigrant Child*.

Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Winner of multiple awards, Jimenez's narrative tells a simple but powerful story of a Mexican family struggling to survive as migrant workers in the U.S. Writing in the voice of young Panchito, Jimenez has produced a book that has special appeal for young readers interested in cross-cultural experiences, but that is also worthy of careful analysis of its literary structure, use of historical allusions, voice, and characterizations.

Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan*. New York: Anchor Books, 1992.

Canadian author Joy Kogawa draws on her Japanese family heritage to tell the haunting if little-known story of internment camps set up north of the U.S. border during World War II. In an imagistic style, Kogawa's child-narrator struggles to understand how her Canadian homeland can suddenly turn on loyal citizens, depriving them of their rights and even of their families. A challenging read due to its complex structure, the novel nonetheless offers clear rewards, both in literary and social terms. Kogawa's challenging narrative might effectively be paired with the more accessible *Farewell to Manzanar* (by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston), a memoir of Japanese internment camp life in the U.S.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

This Pulitzer prize-winning collection of short stories tends to focus more on character than plot in narratives growing out of the author's experiences as an immigrant from India to the U.S. by way of London. The stories often depict feelings of displacement and spiritual loss associated with immigration and efforts to assimilate. Teachers report that international students who have been quiet and unengaged initially in their classes often open up enthusiastically to discussions of Lahiri's stories.

Ng, Fae Myenne. *Bone*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993.

A favorite of many West coast high school teachers, Ng's first novel explores San Francisco's Chinatown as a cultural space by depicting two generations in the lives of the Leong family. With a narrative structure foregrounding the power of memory, *Bone* is also worthy of study for its author's careful attention to craft.

Rodriguez, Richard. *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*. New York: Viking, 2002.

This new book by the acclaimed yet controversial author of *Hunger for Memory* will be out in paperback soon. Here Rodriguez questions American assumptions about and beliefs in race-based identity. Casting the color “brown” of his title as a controlling metaphor, Rodriguez uses figures from popular and high culture to argue that American conceptions of race may often be damaging to individuals and to the nation as a whole. Suggesting that Hispanics are becoming Americanized even as they are “Latinizing” American communities, Rodriguez urges that we replace false black/white dichotomies with a view of America as a “brown” culture.

Yeziarska, Anzia. *Arrogant Beggar*. Ed. Katherine Stubbs. Durham: Duke U Press, 1996.

Yeziarska’s biting assault on “benevolent” do-gooders, *Arrogant Beggar* traces the personal growth of Adele Lindner, who begins the novel trying to escape the Lower East Side of New York but ends it by reconnecting to her origins in the Jewish ghetto as she establishes her own new model for shared community-building. Underscoring the class tensions between well-to-do German American Jews and less affluent Russian American Jews, the novel offers a forceful social critique clarified by Katherine Stubbs’ introduction to this recent edition.

IV. Native American Literature

Black Elk and John Gneisenau Neihardt. *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2000.

This classic text, dictated by Black Elk to John G. Neihardt, has become a classic in Native American literature studies. Ranging from its firsthand account of an attack on Black Elk’s home village during his childhood, through poignant reflections on the decline of the buffalo, to meditations on learning in a society emphasizing acculturation through observation and imitation, *Black Elk Speaks* has been dubbed both an historical and a spiritual masterpiece. Interesting also as a complex text based on collaborative composition practices used by the two authors, this edition is especially useful in that regard because it reprints the various introductions that Neihardt wrote for the text at different points in his career and because it includes art by Lakota painter Standing Bear.

Callahan, S. Alice. *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*. Ed. A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1997.

First published in 1891, this is the earliest known novel by a Native American woman. The novel actually depicts the lifelong connections between two women—the Muscogee Indian Wynema and Genevieve Weir, a white woman who has come west to work as a mission teacher. Callahan herself was a mixed-blood Muscogee who became a teacher for her tribe in Oklahoma after studying at a church-run school in Virginia. Ruoff’s introduction to the short novel provides important historical

context, including analysis of bicultural issues and cross-class relationships key to reading the narrative.

Conley, Robert J. *Mountain Windsong: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1986.

This novel interweaves three narrative strands to depict the Cherokee Removal from the Eastern U.S. to Indian Territory, 1835-1838, and to consider the lingering impact of that community experience. One strand focuses on a young couple separated by the Removal (as some Cherokee remained in North Carolina), a second on historical documents related to the Trail of Tears, and a third on a contemporary relationship between a grandfather and a young Cherokee boy who learns about his heritage.

Dorris, Michael. *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*. New York: Time Warner, 1998 (reissue).

Moving among several narrative voices and across time, Dorris's novel follows the experiences of three women: the adolescent Rayona (whose blending of African American and Native American parentage forms one focus of the book), Christine (Rayona's Native American mother) and Rayona's grandmother Ida. With one of its many dimensions being a coming-of-age story, this novel is also a story of cross-generational relationships and of several very different Native American women seeking to define their identities in contemporary U. S. culture.

Glancy, Diane. *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1996.

Glancy's novel takes the reader on the arduous journey of the Trail of Tears through the voices of a wide array of characters who respond to the ordeal in diverse ways. In vivid and powerful vignettes, Glancy juggles characters and themes to convey the pain and the moral victories associated with the Removal.

Zitkala-Sa. *American Indian Stories*. Ed. Dexter Fisher. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

This affordable edition combines Zitkala-Sa's often-anthologized 1900 essays from *The Atlantic Monthly* ("Impressions of an Indian Childhood," "The School Days of an Indian Girl" and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians") with less well known prose pieces such as "America's Indian Problem" and "A Dream of Her Grandfather." Fisher's introduction tracks Zitkala-Sa's extended writing career and positions it within the larger tradition of oral and written texts by Native American authors.

Zitkala-Sa. *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems, and The Sun Dance Opera*. Ed. P. Jane Hafen. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2000.

This new edition of key works unavailable until now will be out in paperback soon.

V. Memoirs, Regional, and “Ecological” Narratives

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life’s Greatest Lesson*. New York: Broadway Books, 2002.

While some critics have complained about the didactic strain evident in this memoir’s aphorisms, teachers report that their high school students are often touched by the relationship revitalized between Albom and Morrie Schwartz, a former teacher with whom the sportswriter reconnects for a series of visits in the months before Schwartz’s death of Lou Gehrig’s disease. The book has also been recommended as an effective entry point into studying earlier American essayists like Emerson and Thoreau. Seeking a balance between charm and emotion, the text can be instructive for writing lessons on tone.

Carter, Jimmy. *An Hour Before Daylight*. New York: Touchstone Books, 2001.

Carter’s memoir of his youth in Depression-era south Georgia is an understated yet moving account of experiences that shaped the man, the rural south, and the nation. Carter’s accounts of his constant interactions with black playmates help illuminate the complex race relations operating in an earlier era while suggesting that much of his personal commitment to community-building was derived from his relationships with those very neighbors. Honoring the land as well as his family and community members, Carter’s book can give students an appreciation for pre-WWII rural history as well as a model for memoir-writing.

Hamper, Ben. *Rivthead: Tales from the Assembly Line*. New York: Warner Books, 1992.

Hamper’s working-class narrative takes readers inside the enormous auto plants of General Motors’ major factory town—Flint, Michigan. Painting a grim but funny portrait consistent with Michael Moore’s *Roger and Me* film from the same period, Hamper’s essays appeared in earlier form in periodicals ranging from *Mother Jones* to *Esquire* and *Harper’s*. An assault on corporate America written in a striking working-class voice, Hamper’s book is also a celebration of the spirit of American labor. The essays do contain some coarse language reminiscent of conversations on the factory floor.

Hickman, Homer. *October Sky: A Memoir*. New York: Dell Books, 1999.

Like the movie based on this memoir, *October Sky* is an inspiring story with great appeal for students, who identify with young Homer Hickman and his 1950s team of

would-be rocket men seeking to escape their West Virginia coal-mining town by way of a science fair and a career with NASA. Candid and humorous, but also deftly sentimental, Hickman's memoir is an involving narrative about growing up, but also about learning to capitalize on and celebrate a community's strengths.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried: A Work of Fiction*. Reprint of 1990

Houghton Mifflin edition. New York: Broadway Books, 1999.

Despite O'Brien's subtitle, many critics are referring to his latest Vietnam book as a memoir, while others have characterized it as a hybrid, neither novel nor memoir. Whatever the genre, the collection of narratives is unified by the theme signaled in the title—all the heavy kinds of baggage (emotional as well as physical) carried by the soldiers O'Brien characterizes so forcefully. Students unfamiliar with the history of the Vietnam conflict find the book an accessible entry point into historical study. Its raw language may be difficult for some classrooms, but teachers report a powerful payoff in student discussion and writing promoted by these memorable stories.

White, Bailey. *Mama Makes Up Her Mind: And Other Dangers of Southern Living*.

Reprint edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

This hilarious memoir focuses on White's own remarkable family but also explores the familiar theme of Southern eccentric behavior with a deft and original touch. Set in south Georgia, White's sketches evoke small-town regional life in a tone that is primarily humorous but occasionally poignant, and never dull. White's writing is a good model for students seeking to develop a distinctive voice.

VI. (White) Women Writers

(Note: Obviously these women belong to ethnic groups as well. Here I've listed mainly white women writers, who are frequently studied as women writers rather than as "white" writers or as white women writers. Note that several of the lists above also include women writers who tend to appear in women's literature courses or units in schools.)

Child, Lydia Maria. *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*. Ed. Carolyn L.

Karcher. New Brunswick: Rutgers U Press, 1986.

One text in the American Women Writers Series, Child's novel and shorter prose pieces signal both the author's enlightened attitudes (for her own day) and the limits of her vision of the relationship between whites and Native Americans. Originally published in 1824, *Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times* depicts a white woman's decision to marry an Indian chief and bear his son, but also her eventual choice to leave her spouse for a white man.

Davis, Rebecca Harding. *Life in the Iron-Mills*. Ed. Cecelia Tichi. Boston: Bedford Books, 1998.

This edition of Davis' narrative, originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1861, is especially helpful for teachers wanting to emphasize historical and cultural studies of literature. Part of the Bedford Cultural Editions series, this edition includes a detailed introduction and documents from the time period to illuminate the text.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo and Margaret Fuller. *Selected Works—Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller: Essays, Poems, and Dispatches with Introduction*. Eds.

John Carlos Rowe and Paul Lauter. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Like much recent scholarship in American literature, this text brings together Emerson and Fuller as major authors whose work benefits from comparative study. Since Fuller has tended, more and more, to be studied alongside Thoreau and Emerson as a crucial figure in American literary history, interest in the wide range of her writing has increased. Here, for example, students can be introduced to her travel writing from Italy as well as to texts on education, women's place in history, and other cultural issues.

Fern, Fanny. *Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time*. Ed. Susan Belasco

Smith. Reprint edition. New York: Penguin USA, 1997.

Teachers report that students easily identify with the title character of this 1850s autobiographical novel written by Sara Parton, who was better known by the pen name of Fanny Fern, which she used in her popular newspaper columns. Ruth's experiences as a single mother trying to manage her finances, as an author gaining experience and power, and as a woman seeking acceptance from her family all resonate with today's young readers. While this edition is attractive for its low cost, teachers who would like to introduce students to Fern's satirical and sentimental essays as well as to her novel should choose Joyce W. Warren's groundbreaking Rutgers University Press edition, which includes other writing by Fern along with the novel.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "*The Yellow Wallpaper*." Ed. and introduced by Thomas

L. Erskine and Connie L. Richards. Women Writers Texts and Contexts

Series. New Brunswick: Rutgers U Press, 1993.

Like other editions in this series, “*The Yellow Wallpaper*” presents a key text from American women’s literature along with a series of critical essays, a chronology of the writer’s career, and other related writing by the author. In this case, the inclusion of a important essays from feminist scholars such as Judith Fetterley, Annette Kolodny, and Elizabeth Ammons allows this volume to do a double duty, introducing readers to a touchstone narrative from women’s literature and critical perspectives important to the field. Teachers might want to consider purchasing one copy of this edition for themselves while using less expensive ones for students.

Kirkland, Caroline. *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* Ed. Sandra Zagarell. New Brunswick: Rutgers U Press, 1990.

In the 1830s, Michigan was considered “the West,” and Caroline Kirkland was one of a number of pioneers mixing with long-time residents around the village of Montacute. Kirkland satirizes both her neighbors and her own group of recent arrivals from the East. Zagarell’s insightful introduction relates Kirkland’s writing to other experiences crucial to women writers of the time—e.g., working as a schoolteacher and writing for magazines.

Paterson, Katherine. *Lyddie*. New York: Puffin, 1991.

Brilliantly researched and carefully crafted to appeal to young readers, Paterson’s short narrative captures the experience of young Lowell mill workers in the antebellum era. Introducing issues of social class through the personal experiences of her main character (Lyddie), Paterson draws on her own careful reading of Lucy Larcom’s *A New England Girlhood*, factory tract literature, and texts from *The Lowell Offering* to create a “YA” story praised by the American Library Association, *Parents* magazine, and *Booklist*.

Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*. New Brunswick: Penguin, 1998.

By now a long-time favorite among those who teach courses on American women’s writing, *Hope Leslie* takes readers to two different eras in U.S. history—the 17th-century New England settlement period that Sedgwick employs as her setting and the 1820s period when American women writers were beginning to establish themselves in the marketplace. Fascinating as much for its portrayal of interactions between Puritan and Native American culture as for its two energetic heroines, *Hope Leslie* has become a staple of university American literature programs. Carolyn Karcher’s thoughtful introduction clarifies Sedgwick’s place in American literary history as one of the most important writers of the antebellum era.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contents, Criticism*. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: Norton, 1994.

Elizabeth Ammons’ 1994 Norton edition of Stowe’s novel is especially notable for its inclusion of documents and literary criticism that provide a helpful context for today’s

readers. While these additional materials make the edition more expensive than those which only reprint the novel itself, this text has the advantage of introducing students to critical perspectives which are typically brought to bear on the novel in university courses. Teachers might want to consider using this edition as a planning resource and having students read the inexpensive 2001 Modern Library edition with an introduction by Jane Smiley. (Using Smiley's edition has the added attraction of potentially interesting readers in her controversial 1996 Harper's magazine essay, where Smiley exalted *Uncle Tom's Cabin* over *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as great American literature.)

VII. Anthologies of American Literature

The Harper American Literature. Ed. Donald McQuade and others. 2nd edition.

Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

While perhaps not as popular among college instructors as the Heath, the Harper anthologies offer a comparable assembly of traditional and "new" texts. Besides the two-volume general survey set, Harper also publishes "specialty" anthologies of Native American, Asian American and African American literature.

The Heath Anthology of American Literature. Paul Lauter, general editor. 2nd edition.

Vols. 1 and 2. Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1994.

The impact of "the Heath" and other expanded anthologies on American literature may be incalculable. As more and more schoolteachers have entered their own classrooms after studying American literature in survey courses where this capacious anthology was the textbook, secondary school courses have expanded the range of texts studied and adopted a approaches to instruction including cultural critique rather than focusing solely on close reading.

Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets: An Anthology. Ed. Paula Bennett.

London: Blackwell, 1997.

Bennett's groundbreaking collection is based on her years researching women's poetry in a wide range of venues, especially periodicals. A particular favorite of Bennett's is Sarah Piatt, who published poems in magazines from the 1860s through the early twentieth century. Bennett's readings of the poetry are insightful and entertaining. This anthology is a helpful resource for teachers unfamiliar with women's poetry from earlier eras or eager to study periodical poetry as serious literature.

Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers: An Anthology. Ed. Karen L. Kilcup.

A collection drawing from multiple genres, this anthology also emphasizes ethnic diversity in the range of authors included. Since the nineteenth century was the era when American women writers became a major force in the national literature, this anthology is a solid resource for teachers. Kilcup's collection is notable for its use of periodical publications—an important venue for women writers throughout the 1800s. Genres highlighted help stretch readers' conceptions of "the literary" beyond familiar forms like novels and dramas to include advice books, children's literature, journalistic writing, religious texts, travel reports, and even stitched samplers.

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. General editors Henry Louis

Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997.

This anthology includes works by well over 100 major authors, with over a dozen complete major works (e.g., Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Toni Morrison's *Sula*). Collaborating with key leaders in the field of African American literature (e.g., William Andrews, Houston Baker, Frances Foster, Richard Yarborough), Gates and McKay assembled a discipline-shaping collection, which has quickly become the standard anthology for African American literature.

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter Fifth Edition. Ed. Nina Baym.

New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

The latest edition of the Norton anthology condenses the longer earlier versions for convenience but maintains a broad scope nonetheless. Like the earlier editions, this one begins with literature before the New England settlements (e.g., with Native American trickster stories) and closes with texts published after 1945. New material in this edition includes improved coverage of women writers (Susanna Rowson, Lydia Maria Child, Catharine Sedgwick, and Fanny Fern), expanded selections for some authors (e.g., Black Elk, W. E. B. Du Bois) and new poetry (e.g., by poet laureate Robert Pinsky).

The Oxford Companion to African American Literature. Eds. William Andrews,

Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris. Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2001.

This vital sourcebook is a helpful supplement to collections like the *Norton Anthology* (listed above). Besides short biographies of hundreds of African American authors, this up-to-date reference text also provides discussion of key topics relevant to the field and background information on important texts from a range of genres. Especially helpful in its treatment of genres crucial to studying African American literature (e.g., oratorical texts, slave narratives, folktales), this resource book is also fun to read for its polished and engaging style.

VIII. Visual American Literature: Teacher-Recommended Films and Picture-books

Amistad. Dir. Stephen Spielberg. Perf. Morgan Freeman, Anthony Hopkins,

Matthew McConaughey. Universal. 1997.

While teachers report pairing this film with Melville's *Benito Cereno* works well, the film may also be worth examining on its own for the diversity of responses it evoked from critics and the general public. The customer reviews on amazon.com make for fascinating reading and could provide a worthwhile source of data for a student research project on reception to a "literary" film text.

Anaya, Rudolfo A. *My Land Sings: Stories from the Rio Grande*. Ill. Amy Cordova.

New York: Harper Trophy, 2001.

This collection of ten stories offers an appealing way to study folklore. Creating narratives based on tales passed down through oral tradition (including song), Anaya situates these tales in a vibrant New Mexico culture. While some of the stories are humorous accounts of animal experiences, others include riddles, rogue adventures, and myths. Though pitched primarily to very young children, the collection is also appropriate for analyzing connections between visual and print elements in text.

The Innocents. Dir. Jack Clayton. Perf. Deborah Kerr, Peter Wyngarde.

Twentieth Century Fox. 1961.

Truman Capote's and William Archibald's screenplay helps make this film, the first psychologically-oriented movie adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, an accessible introduction to James. Still regarded as one of the best "ghost story" films ever made, *The Innocents*' strong cinematography (by Freddie Francis) remains an evident strength even in our own time of polished special effects.

Morrison, Toni and Slade Morrison. *The Big Box*. Ill. Giselle Porter. New York:

Jump at the Sun, 2002.

A children's picture book conceived collaboratively by Morrison and her son Slade, *The Big Box* celebrates diversity and freedom. Potter's beautiful illustrations complement the message, which may be a bit heavy-handed. Interesting partly by virtue of being Morrison's first publication in the children's literature genre, this attractive little book is also worth attention for its interplay of art and verbal text.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale and My Father Bleeds History/Here My*

Troubles Began. Boxed, two-volume edition. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.

Maus, the first graphic novel in Spiegelman's highly acclaimed two-part narrative, originally appeared in 1987. Based upon interviews with Spiegelman's father Vladek,

who was a Holocaust survivor, *Maus* represented the author's creative and compelling approach for using comic-book-like design to tell a story perhaps too painful to record otherwise. By transposing the historical events into a visual allegory where the Germans become cats and the Jews mice, Spiegelman enabled readers to confront the Holocaust in a new art form. This edition combines the first volume in the serial with the sequel, which explores Valdek's life in America as a survivor. Teachers who prefer to teach only one of the two volumes typically choose the first, which can be purchased separately.

Smoke Signals. Dir. Chris Eyre. Perf. Adam Beach, Evan Adams. Miramax. 1998.

Teachers offer enthusiastic recommendations of this film as an engaging way to introduce students to author Sherman Alexie and his creative explorations of Native American life today. The film combines material from short stories in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* collection. The first major movie to be made by a Native American creative team, *Smoke Signals* went from an enthusiastic response at the Sundance festival, to a build-up of box office success, to frequent use in university courses studying literature and film history.