American Literature and Arts

Objectives
- Identify the common themes in American literature and art in the 1800s.
- Describe the flowering of American literature in the 1800s.
- Discuss the development of unique American styles in art and music.

Reading Skill
Draw Logical Conclusions As you review the details and evidence in text, make sure that the conclusions you draw are logical. In other words, they should make sense with all the details and with what you know about the events and about the world. Use your own experience to test, for example, whether particular attitudes make sense in a given situation. Do they fit the historical context?

Key Terms and People
- transcendentalism
- individualism
- Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Henry David Thoreau
- Herman Melville
- Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Louisa May Alcott
- civil disobedience
- Natty Bumppo

Why It Matters
While sectionalism and slavery divided the nation, other ideas united the nation. Many Americans shared a belief in optimism and nationalism. They believed that individuals could improve themselves and society. They had pride in the United States of America.

An American Culture Develops
Before 1800, American writers and artists modeled their work on European styles. Poets used complex, formal language and filled their poems with references to Greek and Roman myths. Most artists trained in Europe and learned European approaches to painting.

American Themes
By the mid-1800s, American writers and artists had begun to develop styles that reflected American optimism and energy. Their work explored subjects that were uniquely American. Two early writers, Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, reflected this interest in American themes.

Irving drew upon the Dutch history of New York in his stories “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle.” Rip Van Winkle was a lazy farmer who slept through the American Revolution.

Cooper created the popular character Natty Bumppo, a frontiersman who kept moving westward. Uncomfortable with life in cities and towns, Bumppo criticized the destruction of nature. Cooper’s novels about Bumppo, such as The Deerslayer and The Last of the Mohicans, helped American literature gain popularity in Europe.


to make a copy

in her paintings, she tried to reproduce the beauty of the natural world.

Vocabulary Builder
Use the information below to teach students this section’s high-use words.

**High-Use Word** | **Definition and Sample Sentence**
--- | ---
emotion, p. 432 | n. strong feeling such as sadness, anger, or love. His speech about the evils of slavery stirred the emotions of the audience.
reproduce, p. 435 | v. to make a copy. In her paintings, she tried to reproduce the beauty of the natural world.
Teach

An American Culture Develops

p. 431

Instruction

- **Vocabulary Builder** Before teaching this section, preteach the High-Use Words *emotion* and *reproduce* using the strategy on p. T21.

- **Key Terms** Have students complete the See It–Remember It chart for the Key Terms in this chapter.

- Read An American Culture Develops using the Choral Reading strategy (TE, p. T22).

- Discuss with students the beginning of an American culture. Ask: *What did Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper have in common?* (They both wrote stories that reflected their interest in American themes.)

- Ask: *How did Emerson and Thoreau encourage individualism?* (Emerson wanted people to be guided by their “inner light.” Thoreau believed individuals should judge right and wrong for themselves.)

- Ask: *How are transcendentalism and individualism related?* (Possible answer: Transcendentalism is based on emotions, which are experienced by individual humans, so the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the individual are very important.)

- Discuss with students how transcendentalism might have led people to work for reforms. (Possible answer: It celebrated the value of each soul as a part of nature and highlighted the fact that people have a common humanity and responsibility for one another.)

Independent Practice

Have students begin filling in the study guide for this section.

Monitor Progress

As students fill in the Notetaking Study Guide, circulate to make sure individuals understand the development of early American art.

Answer

**Apply Information** The speaker is very emotional and talks of pain and death.

---

**Differentiated Instruction**

**English Language Learners** **Less Proficient Readers** **Special Needs**

**Study Aid** To help students remember the writers and artists in this section, have them make a two-column chart. In the first column, have them write the person’s name. In the second column, have them list works and other important or interesting information about each person.
simply. “Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind,” he wrote.

Like Emerson, Thoreau believed that individuals must judge right and wrong for themselves. He encouraged civil disobedience, the idea that people should peacefully disobey unjust laws if their consciences demand it. Thoreau spent a night in jail for refusing to pay a tax that he felt supported slavery. Thoreau’s ideas about civil disobedience and nonviolent protest influenced later leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Checkpoint** What was the goal of transcendentalism?

**Flowering of American Literature**

Irving and Cooper set a high standard for American writers. Two later novelists, Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne, began to change the tone of American literature.

**Melville and Hawthorne** Both Hawthorne and Melville were fascinated by psychology and extreme emotions. Melville’s novel *Moby-Dick* (1851) told the story of a sea captain who is obsessed with pursuing a white whale. In the end, Captain Ahab’s mad pursuit destroys himself, his ship, and his crew. *Moby-Dick* was largely ignored when it was first published. Today, however, it is considered one of the greatest American novels.

“Aye, my hearts all round; it was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that brought me to this dead stump I stand on now. Aye aye,” he shouted with a terrific, loud, animal sob, like that of a heart-stricken moose; ‘Aye, aye! it was that accursed white whale that razed me; made a poor pegging lubber for me for ever and a day!’ Then, tossing both arms, with measureless imprecations he shouted out, ‘Aye, aye! and I’ll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition’s flames before I give him up. And this is what ye have shipped for, men! To chase that white whale on both sides of land, and over all sides of the earth. . . .”

**Draw Logical Conclusions**

Draw a logical conclusion about Thoreau’s values from the information and quotation in this paragraph.

**Answers**

**Checkpoint** to explore the relationship between humans and nature through emotion rather than reason

**ReadingSkill** Possible answer: He was concerned not with material things but with making humanity better.
Art and Music
p. 435

Instruction

Read Art and Music with students. Remind them to look for answers to the reading Checkpoint question.

Ask: How did painters’ work express an American style? (Painters focused on American landscapes, people, and everyday life.)

Display the transparency Kindred Spirits to help students better understand the Hudson River School of painting. Use the questions to guide a discussion.

Color Transparencies, Kindred Spirits

Ask: What do the many American work songs show about the period? (Possible answer: Most people were workers.)

Independent Practice

Have students complete the study guide for this section.

Interactive Reading and Notetaking Study Guide, Chapter 12, Section 4 (Adapted Version also available.)

Monitor Progress

As students complete the Notetaking Study Guide, circulate to make sure individuals understand the themes of American music and art. Provide assistance as needed.

Tell students to fill in the last column of the Reading Readiness Guide. Prove for what they learned that confirms or invalidates each statement.

Ask students to go back to their Word Knowledge Rating Form. Rerate their word knowledge and complete the last column with a definition or example.

Teaching Resources, Unit 4, Reading Readiness Guide, p. 49; Word Knowledge Rating Form, p. 45

To further assess student understanding, use the Progress Monitoring Transparency.

Progress Monitoring Transparencies, Chapter 12, Section 4

Answers

Evaluate Information The people are a small part of nature.

Checkpoint by using historical themes and settings

Hawthorne was descended from the Puritans of Massachusetts. He often used historical themes to explore the dark side of the mind. In his 1850 novel The Scarlet Letter, a young minister is destroyed by secret guilt. The novel paints a grim picture of Puritan life.

Alcott Louisa May Alcott presented a gentler view of New England life. In 1868, Alcott published Little Women, a novel based on her own experiences growing up with three sisters. The main character, Jo March, was one of the first young American heroines to be presented as a believable, imperfect person rather than as a shining ideal.

Poets of Democracy Poets helped create a new national voice. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow based poems on American history, such as “Paul Revere’s Ride.” His long poem The Song of Hiawatha was one of the first works to honor Native Americans.

Walt Whitman published Leaves of Grass in 1855. This book of poems shocked many readers because it rejected formal rules. But today, Whitman is seen as the poet who best expresses the democratic American spirit. His poetry celebrated common people:

“...The policeman travels his beat—the gate-keeper marks who pass;... The clean-hair’d Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine, or in the factory or mill.” —Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

Some poets used their pens to support social reform. John Greenleaf Whittier, a Massachusetts Quaker, and Frances Watkins Harper, an African American woman from Maryland, wrote poems that described and condemned the evils of slavery.

Checkpoint How did writers explore the American past?

Differentiated Instruction

Advanced Readers

Creating an Art Exhibit Pamphlet Have students research a painter from the Hudson River School and create an informational pamphlet that would accompany an exhibit of the artist’s works. The pamphlet should include general background about the School and the artist, as well as a list of at least three works the students would include in an exhibit, with a note for each giving the title, date painted, and subject. Ask students to share their favorite work and tell what characteristics of the Hudson River School it shows.
Art and Music
After 1820, artists also began to create a unique American style. Turning away from European themes, they focused on the landscapes around them or on the daily lives of common Americans.

Painting America A group of artists painted scenes of the Hudson River valley. This group became known as the Hudson River school. Thomas Cole and the other painters of this school reflected the values of Romanticism. They sought to stir emotions by reproducing the beauty and power of nature.

Other American painters were inspired by everyday life. George Caleb Bingham created a timeless picture of life on the great rivers. George Catlin captured the ways and dignity of Native Americans.

Popular Songs Most early American songs, such as “Yankee Doodle,” had roots in English, Irish, or Scottish tunes. Over time, a wide variety of new American songs emerged. Many were work songs, chanted by men as they sailed on whaling ships, laid railroad tracks, or hauled barges along canals. The spiritual was a special type of song developed by enslaved African Americans.

The most popular American songwriter of the 1800s was Stephen Foster. Many of his tunes, such as “Camptown Races” and “Old Folks At Home,” are still familiar today.

Dick

Looking Back and Ahead American culture of the 1800s had an influence that is still felt today. People still read Moby-Dick and Little Women. Concepts like individualism and civil disobedience continue to affect people’s ideas and actions.

Comprehension and Critical Thinking
1. (a) Recall Before 1800, what models influenced American writers and painters?
   (b) Draw Conclusions How did later works like The Scarlet Letter and the paintings of the Hudson River school reflect a change in American art and literature?
2. (a) Recall What did Henry David Thoreau mean by “civil disobedience?”
   (b) Link Past and Present How did Thoreau’s ideas influence Martin Luther King, Jr.?
3. Draw Logical Conclusions In a novel by James Fenimore Cooper, Natty Bumppo watches as settlers shoot hundreds of pigeons. Based on the following quotation, what conclusion can you draw about Natty’s feelings for nature? Explain why your conclusion is logical. Quotation: “It’s much better to kill only such as you want, without wasting your powder and lead, than to be firing into God’s creatures in this wicked manner. . . . Wasn’t the woods made for the beasts and birds to harbor in?”

Vocabulary Builder reproduce (ree prah evruid) v. to make a copy of

Reading Skill
3. Draw Logical Conclusions In a novel by James Fenimore Cooper, Natty Bumppo watches as settlers shoot hundreds of pigeons. Based on the following quotation, what conclusion can you draw about Natty’s feelings for nature? Explain why your conclusion is logical. Quotation: “It’s much better to kill only such as you want, without wasting your powder and lead, than to be firing into God’s creatures in this wicked manner. . . . Wasn’t the woods made for the beasts and birds to harbor in?”

Key Terms
4. Write two definitions for the key term transcendentalism. First, write a formal definition for your teacher. Second, write a definition in everyday English for a classmate.
5. What is the relationship between artists and society? Using examples from this section, write a paragraph explaining how writers, painters, and musicians reflect the society in which they lived and how they help to influence it.

Progress Monitoring Online
Students may check their comprehension of this section by completing the Progress Monitoring Online graphic organizer and self-quiz.