LTHS English III: American Literature

Course Introduction

Warning: these texts can and will change your life.

And, uh, if they don't change your life, they'll at least help you understand the life you're living. Really. Let us ask you some questions:

- Are you an individual, someone who's not about to go conform simply for the sake of conforming?
- Can hard work and self-reliance improve your life?
- Do you ever find yourself browsing through the "Self Help" section at your local Barnes & Noble?
- Are you middle class?
- Are you or your ancestors originally from a part of the world other than England?
- Are you a Southerner who takes pride in your hospitality, or a Westerner who takes pride in your independence, or a New Englander who takes pride in your self-reliance?

You probably didn’t answer yes to every single question, but we bet you answered yes to at least some. That’s because these traits are American. Ideals of individuality and self-improvement go way back to early Puritan writings; the rejection of hereditary class systems is written into our founding documents; the idea of America as a nation of immigrants is as old as, well, the first immigrants who settled here.

And it’s all here in this course. You'll be reading some of the first self-help literature ever written with Ben Franklin's Autobiography, and seeing how generations of writers have imagined their own autobiographies in similar terms. You’ll be reading stories about the ideals of perfectibility—the idea that we can all, if we just work hard enough, become the best versions of ourselves. You’ll be reading essays about nonconformity and individuality as the hallmarks of the American spirit. And, of course, you’ll be reading about some of America's less idealistic legacies: responses to slavery and war that nevertheless draw from the same ideals of freedom and self-reliance that the early Puritans and merchants brought with them.

In terms of human history, English-speaking settlers have been on the North American continent for the blink of an eye. Some of their early preoccupations seem pretty foreign (witchcraft, devilry). But others—the right way to learn, the right way to parent, the right way to be—are as American as apple pie.
Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to

- identify the major movements of American literature.
- recognize iconic works, styles, and authors.
- analyze social, historical, and political factors that impacted literature and nonfiction.
- analyze passages to draw text evidence.
- break down a writing prompt and address it with arguments, counterarguments, and evidence.
- create narrative poetry, short stories, memoir, and art in response to a variety of themes and ideas.
- plan, research, draft, and workshop an academic paper.
- differentiate between types of primary and secondary sources, and identify reliable and biased sources of information.
- decipher figurative language for both its meaning and purpose.
- analyze both canonical and unconventional American works of literature.
Syllabus

**Semester One**

Survey of American Literature:

- Unit 1: Colonialism and Exploration 1400 – 1700
- Unit 2: Rationalism and Independence: 1700 – 1800
- Unit 3: American Gothic 1800 – 1855
- Unit 4: Transcendentalism 1830 – 1850
- Unit 5: Abolition and Women’s Rights 1820 – 1920
- Unit 6: Realism 1855 – 1870

Writing: Argumentative Strategies

**Semester Two**

Survey of American Literature:

- Unit 7: Regional Pride 1870 – Present
- Unit 8: Jazz and American Change 1910 – 1950
- Unit 9: Novel Study: Choice of Teacher selections
- Unit 10: The Greatest Generation 1910 – 1960
- Unit 11: Civil Rights and Multiculturalism in Literature 1960 – Present
- Unit 12: Contemporary Literature 1980 – Present

Writing: Logic and Rhetorical Strategies