

Core X

The American Literary Renaissance

Course Objectives

- This course aims to focus on the era of American (specifically United States) literature which literary critics often refer to as the American Renaissance. It marks the beginning of a period of remarkable change and growth in American literary sophistication and ambition.
- The course will explore how this period begins with the growing influence of Romanticism, which had swept through Europe since its beginnings in Germany in the late 18th century and inspired two generations of English writers in the decades since.
- The students will know how the era of the American Renaissance is identical with the era of American Romanticism; the terms are nearly interchangeable. Romanticism in this country took the form of American Transcendentalism, whose key thinker is Ralph Waldo Emerson. The decades that followed brought a succession of major writers — including but not limited to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Emily Dickinson — who engaged with this philosophical movement in various ways.

Unit-1

Genesis and evolution, and the defining myths of American Literature—city on a hill, the frontier spirit, the American Dream, manifest destiny, *e pluribus unum*
Edgar Allan Poe: “The Raven” “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Emily Dickinson: “Because I could not stop for death”, “The Soul selects her own Society”, “I Died for Beauty”, “I Dwell in Possibility”

Unit-2

Nathaniel Hawthorne: “The Birth-mark”

Herman Melville: “Bartleby, the Scrivener”

Unit-3

Read Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature* (First twenty pages of the text)

Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

Unit-4

Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden* (First twenty pages of the text)

Sojourner Truth, “Speech to the Women’s Rights Convention”

Prescribed Texts:

- ✓ The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition, Volumes A and B.

- ✓ The Annotated Emerson, edited by David Mikics (Belknap-Harvard)
- ✓ The Scarlet Letter and Other Writings by Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Leland Person (Norton)
- ✓ Leaves of Grass: First and Death-Bed Editions, by Walt Whitman, edited by Karen Karbiener (Barnes & Noble Classics)
- ✓ The Poems of Emily Dickinson, edited by R. W. Franklin (Belknap-Harvard)

Suggested Readings

- ✓ *Pelican Guide to English Literature. Vol. 9. American Literature. Ed. Boris Ford*
- ✓ *Highlights of American Literature. Dr. Carl Bode (USIS)*
- ✓ *A Short History of American Literature, Krishna Sen and Ashok Sengupta. Orient Black Swan, 2017*
- ✓ *Moby-Dick; Or, The Whale by Herman Melville, edited by Hershel Parker (Norton)*
- ✓ *The Story of American Literature. By Ludwig Lewisohn*
- ✓ *Norton Anthology of American Literature. (Head notes on authors and periods to be read)*