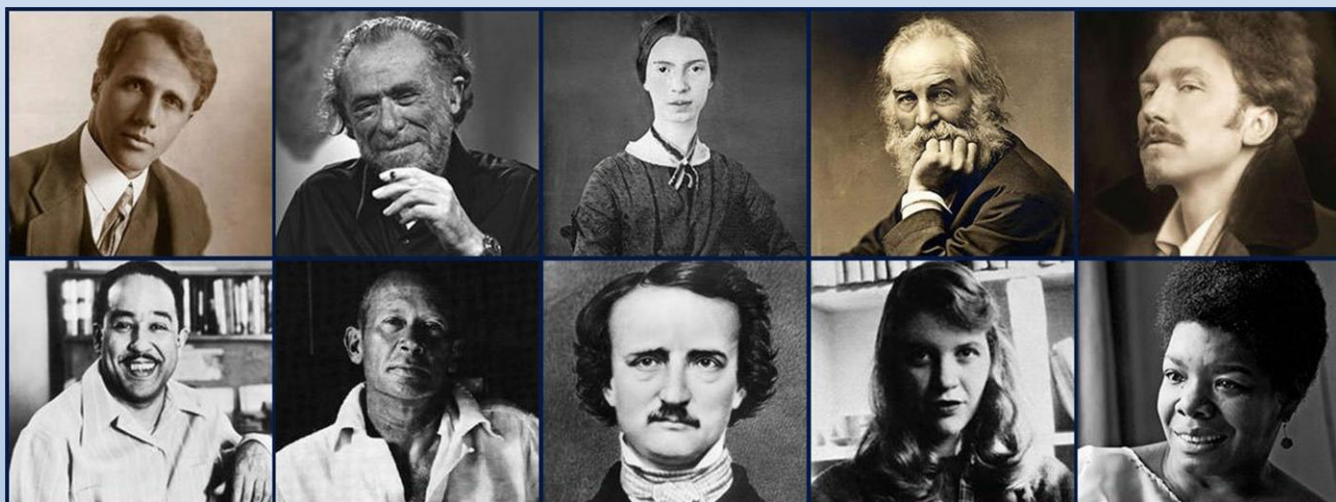


Марија Крстева

АМЕРИКАНСКА ПОЕЗИЈА



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УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ“ – ШТИП
ФИЛОЛОШКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ



Доц.д-р Марија Крстева

АМЕРИКАНСКА ПОЕЗИЈА
Рецензирана скрипта

Штип, 2025

PREFACE

The present textbook, *American poetry* (Textbook), is aimed at students studying English language and literature, particularly those following a one-semester course in American poetry. The book is structured to follow the course's curricula giving insight into the background of the various literary periods and poetic expressions in the American literature. There are eighteen poets and twenty poems presented in the book alongside the main characteristics of the various literary periods. In this respect, the students gain access to a clearly structured poetic argumentation following the timeline of the American poetic tradition.

This material serves to broaden their horizons into the artistic and poetic values of the American poets while inciting new ideas and understandings about the past, the present and the future.

The periods covered in this book are as follows: Colonial period and Puritan New England, 19th century American poetry, the traditionalists, the modernists, Beat poetry, confessional and idiosyncratic poetry, and contemporary American poetry.

By the end of the course, the students will have acquired a substantial understanding of the American poetic development by drawing parallels between the different periods and across various themes and ideas. In this way, the students are prepared to access the broad poetic material of the USA.

The author

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COLONIAL PERIOD AND PURITAN NEW ENGLAND

The first period that is covered within this course is the colonial period. There was a rich and varied literary tradition already existing on the American soil before the arrival of the European colonists. The distinctive nature of the Native American tribes involved diverse artistic and literary expressions kept for centuries and passed from one generation to another, but they were not recorded in writing. Their songs, lyrics, legends, myths and stories were orally transferred across the generations. They played a significant role in their lives and daily activities, and the Native Americans couldn't imagine their lives without them. Their philosophy was that they were one with nature, like that of the later transcendentalists' views and philosophy of the "oversoul" or being one with the universe. Consequently, their songs were all about their inextricable bond with nature, the landscape and its role in their lives and culture.

With the arrival of the first colonists (mainly Englishmen) the first attempts at creating literature on the American soil were made. The first group formed the Jamestown colony of Virginia in 1607 as represented by John Smith, and his fellow settlers attempted to chronicle their lives, adventures and hardships in the New World. The latter group that arrived representing the Puritans or the Pilgrims from 1620 aimed at a more permanent and settled way of life following their religious convictions to purify the Church and its sermons from unnecessary ornaments and to organize their new life on the newly settled lands across the Atlantic Ocean. Largely influenced by the literary tradition of their land of origin, the Puritan writings developed their distinct character of almost exclusive themes and allusions that reflected their new environment. The Puritans of New England formed the Boston colony of Massachusetts and began a new life following their religious rules and convictions. They believed in hard work, worshiping God and following the rules of a disciplined life while avoiding worldly distractions such as alcohol, gambling and adultery. They also believed that failure on Earth would mean eternal damnation, which is why they were success-oriented and disciplined workers aiming to improve their lives and their community.

The Puritans were self-educated people whose interpretations of the Bible shaped their way of life. They were also the most literate people of that time considering the limited access of education in their homeland. Most of them later attended Harvard University when was established in 1636 where they studied the Bible and the classical languages such Greek, Latin and Hebrew.

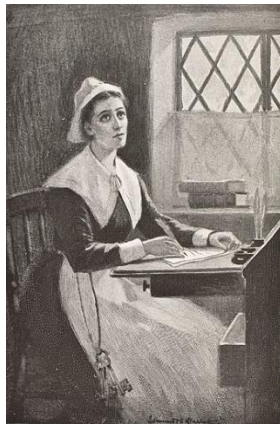
The early American poetry of New England set the path for the development of the future poetic voices on American soil shaped and reaffirmed by the transforming events in the history and civilization of the USA. We begin our poetic journey with one of the most celebrated early American poetesses, Anne Bradstreet.

Born in England, Anne Bradstreet married her husband Simon Bradstreet at the age of sixteen. The couple, together with Anne's parents arrived in New England in 1630 with the early Puritan group led by John Winthrop. The family quickly embraced the new life in Massachusetts Bay Colony with Anne's husband eventually becoming a governor. Anne wholeheartedly dedicated herself to her family, her husband and eight children. Her dedication is visible in her many poems reflecting the beauty of the early life of Puritan New England. The poems particularly show the novelty of the place and the excitement of starting a new life there, their daily life, nature and the seasons. Because there were no printing presses in New England at the time, her book *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* was published in England in 1650.

Her poetry is a unique combination of the puritan moralistic outlook and the worldly affairs of everyday life, the family matters, life, love, happiness and sadness. She is the embodiment of the colonial wife and mother as portrayed in her poetry.

The poem "To My Dear and Loving Husband" is an emblematic and unexpected celebration of the love of the wife for her husband in Puritan New England. The poem exhibits stimulating vitality of the beginnings of colonial life. The metaphors, symbols and imagery are tight units painting the emotional picture of her marital life. Alongside this, there are subtle religious undertones which makes the poem a starting poem for comparison and contrast with further poetic development and changes that reflect family matters, marriage and love life in the USA today.

Anne Bradstreet (c.1612-1672)



Picture 1. Anne Bradstreet – ([Category:Anne Bradstreet - Wikimedia Commons](#))

To My Dear and Loving Husband
By Anne Bradstreet

If ever two were one, then surely, we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.
Thy love is such I can no way repay;
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so preserve,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

Poem 1. To My Dear and Loving Husband by Anne Bradstreet – Source: [To My Dear and Loving Husband | The Poetry Foundation](#)

Edward Taylor (c.1644-1672)

The writings of Edward Taylor were not discovered until mid 20th century and since then he has been considered one of the greatest and most talented American poets

of all times. Like Bradstreet's poem above, Edward's "Meditation 1" also celebrates love but in a different sense. It is an enchanting lyric of the love of God and God's mercy. In addition to his intense Puritan and religious overtones, Taylor experimented both with themes and styles, conventional but also intimate and congregational. Dipping into the wilderness, people and nature his poetry keeps the impulse of the colonial life alive.

Born in England, like all of New England's early writers, Edward Taylor was markedly one of the most important literary and educational figures of the time. He arrived in New England in 1668 and became a Harvard-trained minister who put his knowledge to practice dedicating his whole life to leading the people as a minister and doctor at the frontier town of Westfield, Massachusetts, 160 km into the wilderness (Van Spanckeren, 1994, pp.7-8).

Taylor's poetry was discovered only in the 1930s. and since then it has stood out as some of the greatest examples of Puritan poetic imprint in American literature.

Meditation 1

What Love is this of yours, that cannot be
in your infinity, O Lord, confined
unless it in your very person see
infinity and finite conjoined?
What has your Godhead, as not satisfied
married our manhood, making it its bride?

O matchless Love, filling heaven to the brim,
o'er-running it; all running o'er beside
this world – nay, overflowing hell, wherein
for your elect there rose a mighty tide,
that there our veins might through your person bleed
to quench those flames that else would on us feed!

Oh, that your Love might overflow my heart,
to fire the same with love, for love I would
but oh! My straitened breast – my lifeless spark –
my fireless flame! What, chilly love, and cold?
In measure small, in manner chilly! See –
Lord, blow the coal: your Love enflame in me!

Poem 2. Meditation 1 by Edward Taylot - Source: [Edward Taylor: Meditation 1](#)

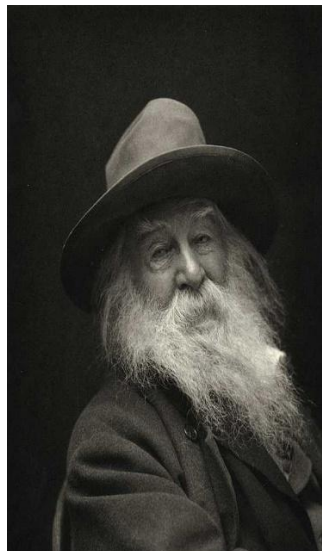
19TH CENTURY AMERICAN POETRY

Following the spread of the Romantic movement from Germany across England, France and beyond, in America it gained a specific poetic voice around the 1820s. The American romantic poetry was shaped by all of the major events that built up the USA in the nineteenth century. The consolidation of the American territory resulting in the American identity, self-expression and self-reliance, meant a most diverse, inspirational and deep-rooted American poetry. The poetic voices were both individual and that of the land and community as represented by the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. The two stalwart poets of the nineteenth century were unified in their distinctions. They both embraced the rapid changes of great proportions in the American society and their effect on the human soul including the territorial expansion, the Civil War, the growing cities and industry. Dickinson's extremely introspective voices reached all the nooks and crannies of the American landscape while Whitman's poems grew and morphed like the landscape of the American existence. They both showed originality and expressed the voice of the masses at the same time.

Another timeless example of the nineteenth century American poetry is certainly Edgar Allan Poe. His life was as varied, unexpected and mysterious as his persona and poetry. Developing the genre of the American gothic with literary and stylistic innovations and inventing new genres such as the detective story and the science fiction, Poe also crafted uniquely dark and mysterious lyrics easily taken as songs. His life dedication was the portrayal of the death of a beautiful and beloved woman and the inescapable horror of it.

Another contemporary of Poe's, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was quite the opposite from Poe in his poetic preoccupation, and their differences often caused frictions and attacks between the two of them, especially on the part of Poe. Longfellow belonged to the group of worldly educated poets of the Brahmin group both distinctly American and cosmopolitan. He wrote about the daily scenes of life and, for the most part, his poetry was reflexive and didactic.

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)



Picture 2. Walt Whitman – ([File:Walt Whitman.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Born in 1819 on Long Island, New York, Walt Whitman's life and work spanned most of the nineteenth century, a period of growth and changes eternally recorded in his poetry.

Whitman attended Brooklyn public schools, when at the age of twelve he took on a printing job which sparked his interest in the written word. He was a man of the masses and largely self-educated, reading widely the classics such as Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and the Bible. In this sense, his education and interests were much like that of Mark Twain. Whitman's life events coincided with all the major nineteenth century events in American history. Whitman was severely affected by the Civil War, his brother being wounded. Eventually Whitman suffered a stroke in 1873. He recovered to publish his lifelong work *Leaves of Grass*. It encompasses the complete notion of the vast nature of the American continent, its impulse and energy. *Leaves of Grass* "contains 'Song of Myself', the most original poetic accomplishment in America at the time. The poem is a reflection of the American landscape and the American history and culture. The poem's creation coincided with the building of the cultural and literary landscape of America and the idea of the poet and the poem developed by the transcendentalists and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Whitman gave voice to all American experience in growing, learning and developing. It is extremely sensitive in its 19th century American echoes with the voice of one standing for the whole. It offers a defense and explanation of the American spirit in free verse, impartiality and undivided focus on delivering the American originality.

Other important works of Whitman include "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," a moving elegy on the death of Abraham Lincoln.

Another important work is his long essay "Democratic Vistas" (1871), written during the unrestrained materialism of industrialist's "Gilded Age" (Van Spanckeren, 1994, pp.31).

Song of Myself

Walt Whitman

Part 6

6

A child said What is the grass? Fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and
say Whose?

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the
same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them, I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their mothers'
laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their
laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there, was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceased the moment life appeared.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

Poem 3. Song of Myself by Walt Whitman - Source: [Song of Myself \(1892 version\) | The Poetry Foundation](#)

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)



Picture 3. Emily Dickinson –([Category:Emily Dickinson - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Emily Dickinson led an outwardly dull but inwardly intense and extremely introspective life. She was considered a recluse, especially in the latter part of her life, never getting married, staying at her home in Amherst, Massachusetts where she was born in 1830. Dickinson's writing is both terse and delicate, with elaborate symbols and stylistic devices. She spent most of her time in her father's home, helping him in his work as a statesman serving in Congress for one term. Still, she was a diligent writer, writing one poem a day for a long time. She painted the New England landscape and all the little details of the natural world. She could equally mock and bring to the forefront the worldly affairs. Dickinson's diverse themes form a conceptual framework of both historical and literary significance.

Although she was hardly known as a poetess in her life, she set the trajectory of American poetic expression in an unparalleled mastery. She wrapped up the natural world in metaphors of sentiments and the human condition into a body of timeless inscriptions accentuating both the positive and negative traits of human action.

Success is counted sweetest (112)

By Emily Dickinson

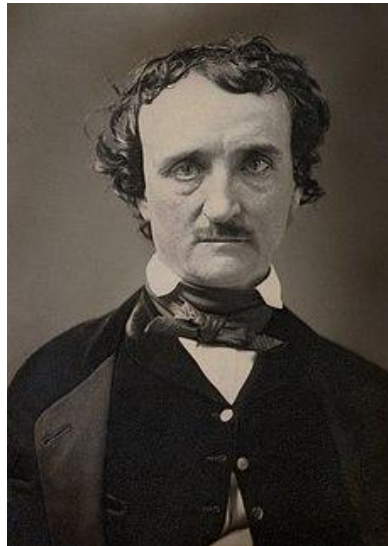
Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host
Who took the Flag today
Can tell the definition
So clear of victory

As he defeated – dying –
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Burst agonized and clear!

Poem 4. Success is Counted Sweetest by Emily Dickinson - Source: [Success is counted sweetest \(112\) | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)



Picture 4. Edgar Allan Poe – ([Category:Edgar Allan Poe - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Edgar Allan Poe's legacy is one of the most remarkable in the American literature and indeed, in world literature in general. He was born in Boston in 1809 to a family of actors. He was left an orphan before he was three years old when his father left the family in 1810 and his mother died the following year. Poe was then adopted by the prosperous family of John and Francis Allan in Richmond, Virginia. His upbringing was southern, but he always considered himself a Bostonian. Poe attended boarding schools in America but also in Scotland and England from 1815-1820 where the Allans briefly moved. After that, Poe was admitted to the University of Virginia dropping out in less than a year due to misunderstandings with his adopted father over gambling and other debts. Poe was eventually admitted to the US Army in Boston in 1827. There he published his first collection of poems, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Following that, he joined the US Military Academy but was honorably discharged if he promised to reconcile with John Allan.

His life then took another turn. In 1836, when he was 27, he married his 13-year-old cousin, Virginia Clemm in Baltimore. They remained married until her death caused by tuberculosis in 1847. The death of some of the most important women in his life would strongly affect Poe and become his lifelong writing inspiration. The death of a beautiful woman, the southern gothic, not of the typical gothic castles but the horrific, mysterious and macabre experiences of the inward world in the realm of exotic undetermined and undefined lands was his major preoccupation. His "gloomy characters never seem to work or socialize; instead, they bury themselves in dark, moldering castles symbolically decorated with bizarre rugs and draperies that hide the real world of sun, windows, walls, and floors. The hidden rooms reveal ancient libraries, strange art works, and eclectic oriental objects. The aristocrats play musical instruments or read ancient books while they brood on tragedies, often the deaths of loved ones. Themes of death-in-life, especially being buried alive or returning like a vampire from the grave, appear in many of his works, including "The Premature Burial," "Ligeia," "The Cask of Amontillado," and "The Fall of the House of Usher." (Van Spanckeren 1994: 71). His work always involved the psyche and the inward experience of emotions. His characters show that their way of reasoning eventually

led to Poe's creation of the detective as a literary character and the detective story as a genre. All further literary detectives have been molded upon Poe's detective Auguste Dupin.

Poe addresses the nineteenth century industrialization as a burden and ailment of society. He cherished old aristocratic ways but aimed to bring forward the grotesque and the hidden corners of people's rich experiences. Poe's paintings of the dark, suppressed and the hideous is one single delivery of the American gothic version.

As a poet, Poe presented a unique melodic sound, a singing and instrumental ring to accustom to the largely elegiac themes and tones. He dedicated his life to starting his own magazine where he could pursue his desired career as a writer and critic of a particular character and virtue. His role and place in world literature mark him as a forerunner of the "art for art's sake" and the French symbolists like Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire.

A Dream Within a Dream
By Edgar Allan Poe

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus, much let me avow —
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream?

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand —
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep — while I weep!
O God! Can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

Poem 5. A Dream within a Dream – Edgar Alan Poe - Source - [A Dream Within a Dream | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

Annabel Lee
By Edgar Allan Poe

It was many and many a year ago,

In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
I and my Annabel Lee—
With a love that the winged seraphs of Heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulcher
In this kingdom by the sea.

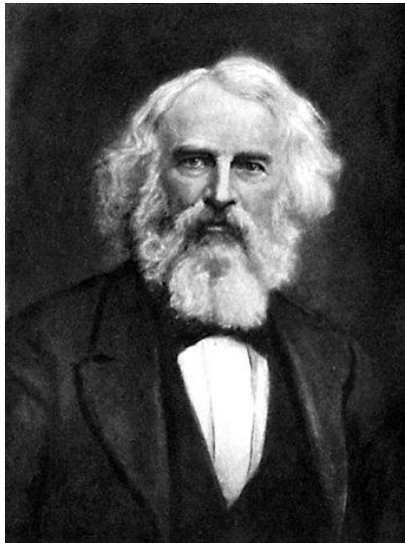
The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
Went envying her and me—
Yes!— that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we—
Of many far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in Heaven above
Nor the demons down under the sea
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In her sepulcher there by the sea—
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

Poem 6. Anabel Lee by Edgar Alan Poe Source: [Annabel Lee | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)



Picture 5. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow – ([Category:Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - Wikimedia Commons. 2025](#))

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the alleged antipode of Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1807 in Portland, Maine into a family of revolutionary heroes and a congressman father.

He was a Bowdoin College graduate when he went to Europe to study modern languages. He married his former classmate Mary Storer Potter in 1831 and wrote about his travels and foreign legends in a book called *Outre Mer* (Overseas). However, the tragedy of his wife dying in Europe during a miscarriage left him devastated. As a young Harvard professor, he spent a lamenting year in Germany and Switzerland.

His focus was on finding a way to combine the cultural past of diverse countries and civilizations, particularly those of America and Europe. Some of his most noteworthy works involve popular native American stories and legends such as “Evangeline” (1847), “The Song of Hiawatha” (1855), and “The Courtship of Miles Standish” (1858)” (Van Spanckeren, 1994, pp. 71). Some of his most remarkable poems include “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport” (1854), “My Lost Youth” (1855), and “The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls” (1880).

The Arrow and the Song
By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak

I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

Poem 7. The Arrow and the Song by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow – Source: [The Arrow and the Song | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

THE TRADITIONALISTS

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935)



Picture 6. Edwin Arlington Robinson – ([Category:Edwin Arlington Robinson - Wikimedia Commons,2025](#))

The next poet on our timeline, Edwin Arlington Robinson is considered the best American poet of the late 19th century. He masterfully depicts the individual and societal troubles by bringing to focus the individual ailments of people and the role and place of the individual on the complex American scene often by using dramatic monologues and the setting of an imaginary and mysterious place called “Tilbury Town”.

He was born in 1869 in Head Tide, Maine, but the next year the family moved to Gardiner, Maine, which served as the inspiration for his imaginary town. His uneasy childhood significantly influenced his character and his poetic themes and ideas.

Some of his poems include: “‘Luke Havergal’ (1896), about a forsaken lover; ‘Miniver Chevy’ (1910), a portrait of a romantic dreamer; and ‘Richard Cory’ (1896), a somber portrait of a wealthy man who commits suicide” (Van Spanckeren, 1994, pp. 57).

His characters are precursors to some of the most noteworthy literary works in the following period. Later works such as *Martin Eden*, *An American Tragedy*, and *The Great Gatsby* mold their torn characters after Robinson’s troubled characters and their inner conflicts such “Richard Cory”. The idea is extended to respond to the new dangers posed by the break with old values and the onset of the seemingly ever more accessible American dream at the beginning of the 20th century.

Luke Havergal

By Edwin Arlington Robinson

Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There where the vines cling crimson on the wall,
And in the twilight wait for what will come.
The leaves will whisper there of her, and some,
Like flying words, will strike you as they fall;
But go, and if you listen she will call.
Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies
To rift the fiery night that's in your eyes;
But there, where western glooms are gathering,
The dark will end the dark, if anything:
God slays Himself with every leaf that flies,
And hell is more than half of paradise.
No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies—
In eastern skies.

Out of a grave I come to tell you this,
Out of a grave I come to quench the kiss
That flames upon your forehead with a glow
That blinds you to the way that you must go.
Yes, there is yet one way to where she is,
Bitter, but one that faith may never miss.
Out of a grave I come to tell you this—
To tell you this.

There is the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There are the crimson leaves upon the wall.
Go, for the winds are tearing them away, —
Nor think to riddle the dead words they say,
Nor any more to feel them as they fall;
But go, and if you trust her she will call.
There is the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

Poem 8. Luke Havergal by Edwin Arlington Robinson - Source: [Luke Havergal | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

THE MODERNISTS

The large surge of the cultural and artistic wave of Modernism which gradually emerged in Europe and the United States in the early 20th century, expressed a sense of modern life marking a break from the past as well as from Western civilization's classical traditions. Modern life radically differed from traditional life - more scientific, faster, more technological and more mechanized. Literary modernism embraced these changes. Literature reflected them in the thematic concerns and structural preoccupations. American modernist poets celebrated liberty and experimentation that came with that freedom to address the possible follies and threats of the new time.

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)



Picture 7. Wallace Stevens –([Category:Wallace Stevens - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Born in Reading, Pennsylvania in 1879, Wallace Stevens was a Harvard student from 1897 until 1900. His plans were to be a writer in Paris, but after taking on a journalism job for the *New York Herald Times*, he turned to the study of law. After graduating from the New York Law School in 1903 he practiced law in New York City until 1916. Then he moved to Connecticut to work in insurance.

It is interesting that alongside his work he developed a unique poetic identity that not even his associates were aware of. Some of his most notable works include: "*Harmonium* (enlarged edition 1931), *Ideas of Order* (1935), and *Parts of a World* (1942). Some of his best-known poems are 'Sunday Morning,' 'Peter Quince at the Clavier,' 'The Emperor of Ice-Cream,' 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,' and 'The Idea of Order at Key West.'" (Van Spanckeren, 1994, pp. 65-6).

The poetry of Stevens is wrapped up in topics of imaginative worlds, artistic inscription and human cleverness. He packs this diversity into a clear and concise imprint of scenes and effects achieving a particular natural and human landscape.

The Snow Man

By Wallace Stevens

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs

Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Poem 9. Source: The Snow Man by Wallace Stevens - The Snow Man | The Poetry Foundation

Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962)



Picture 8. Edward Estlin Cummings- ([Category: E. E. Cummings - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Edward Estlin Cummings was born in 1894 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He started writing poetry at an early age. While in high school studied Latin and Greek. He obtained his BA in 1915 and MA in 1916 from Harvard University. There he became familiar with the work of some of the leading writers of the day such as Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound.

He is better known as E.E. Cummings and is recognized for his innovative and humoristic poetic voice while experimenting with punctuation and the format of the poems. Due to his background as a painter, Cummings aimed to make poetry a visual art, an artistic work where words and thoughts merge into a picture. To achieve this effect, he used lower case letters and irregular patterns of the stanzas.

[little tree]
By E. E. Cummings

little tree
little silent Christmas tree
you are so little
you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest
and were you very sorry to come away?
See, I will comfort you
because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark
and hug you safe and tight
just as your mother would,
only don't be afraid

look the spangles
that sleep all the year in a dark box
dreaming of being taken out and allowed to shine,
the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy threads,

put up your little arms
and I'll give them all to you to hold
every finger shall have its ring
and there won't be a single place dark or unhappy

then when you're quite dressed
you'll stand in the window for everyone to see
and how they'll stare!
oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands
and looking up at our beautiful tree
we'll dance and sing
"Noel Noel"

Poem 10. [little tree] by E.E. Cummings - Source: [\[little tree\] | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

T.S Eliot (1888-1965)



Picture 9. T.S. Eliot – ([Category:T.S. Eliot - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

A major modernist figure, Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri. He graduated from Harvard in three years where he published several poems for the *Harvard Advocate*. He went on to study at the Sorbonne from 1910-11 and then returned for a doctorate at Harvard. After graduating he moved to Europe and stayed in England in 1914. He married Vivienne Heigh-Wood and took on jobs as a teacher and later as a bank clerk.

He was largely inspired by the English metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century and the French nineteenth century symbolists and thereby developed his innovations in poetic techniques and thematic subjects. T.S. Eliot was mostly concerned with the disillusionment and spiritual bereavement following WWI at the backdrop of the earlier Victorian and realist values. His major publications include: “*Four Quartets* and *Ash Wednesday*. He directed a prominent line of literary and social criticism in his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, *After Strange Gods*, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* and *The Sacred Wood*. Eliot’s opus as a playwright includes the comedy *The Cocktail Party*, *The Family Reunion*, a drama influenced by Greek tragedy written in experimental verse, and *Murder in the Cathedral*. Eliot became a British citizen in 1927. In 1948, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

By T. S. Eliot

S’io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma percioche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s’i’odo il vero,
Senza tema d’infamia ti rispondo.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats

Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...

Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball

To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

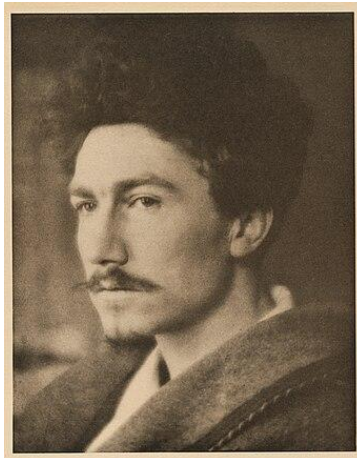
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

Poem 11. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T.S. Eliot - Source: [The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock | The Poetry Foundation, 2025](#)

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)



Picture 10. Ezra Pound –([Category:Ezra Pound - Wikimedia Commons](#), 2025)

The other leading modernist figure represented here alongside T.S. Eliot is Ezra Pound.

He was born in 1885 in Hailey, Idaho. For two years he studied at the College of the University of Pennsylvania, eventually obtaining a degree from Hamilton College in 1905. He spent two years as a teacher at the Wabash College. He then moved to Europe, traveling to Spain, Italy and London. There he became interested in Japanese and Chinese poetry. In 1914 he married Dorothy Shakespear and edited the *Little Review* in London in 1917. During his stay in Europe, he was also caught up by Fascist ideas.

His modernist innovations also transformed the modernist aesthetic of poetry. He was the creator of the new poetic school known as *Imagism*. The conceptual framework of the movement involved a poetic delivery of an image to represent emotional and intellectual input. His major works include *Des Imagistes* (1914), an anthology of 10 poets, and his life work *The Cantos* which he kept writing and publishing all his life. He widely translated from cultures from all over the world which served as the basis for many of the literary, historical and cultural allusions in his poetry.

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley [Part I]

By Ezra Pound

“Vocat aestus in umbram”

Nemesianus Ec. IV.

E. P. ODE POUR L'ÉLECTION DE SON SÉPULCHRE

For three years, out of key with his time,
He strove to resuscitate the dead art
Of poetry; to maintain “the sublime”
In the old sense. Wrong from the start—

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born

In a half savage country, out of date;
Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;
Capaneus; trout for factitious bait:

“Idmen gar toi panth, os eni Troie
Caught in the unstopped ear;
Giving the rocks small lee-way
The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.

His true Penelope was Flaubert,
He fished by obstinate isles;
Observed the elegance of Circe’s hair
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.

Unaffected by “the march of events,”
He passed from men’s memory in l’an trentiesme
De son eage; the case presents
No adjunct to the Muses’ diadem.

II

The age demanded an image
Of its accelerated grimace,
Something for the modern stage,
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries
Of the inward gaze;
Better mendacities
Than the classics in paraphrase!

The “age demanded” chiefly a mold in plaster,
Made with no loss of time,
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster
Or the “sculpture” of rhyme.

III

The tea-rose, tea-gown, etc.
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,
The pianola “replaces”
Sappho’s barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,
Phallic and ambrosial
Made way for macerations;
Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing,
Sage Heracleitus says;
But a tawdry cheapness
Shall reign throughout our days.

Even the Christian beauty
Defects—after Samothrace;
We see to kalon
Decreed in the market place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,
Nor the saint's vision.
We have the press for wafer;
Franchise for circumcision.

All men, in law, are equals.
Free of Peisistratus,
We choose a knave or an eunuch
To rule over us.

A bright Apollo,

tin andra, tin eroa, tina theon,
What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon?

IV
These fought, in any case,
and some believing, pro domo, in any case ...

Some quick to arm,
some for adventure,
some from fear of weakness,
some from fear of censure,
some for love of slaughter, in imagination,
learning later ...

some in fear, learning love of slaughter;
Died some pro patria, non dulce non et decor" ...

walked eye-deep in hell
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old lies and new infamy;

usury age-old and age-thick
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.
Young blood and high blood,
Fair cheeks, and fine bodies;

fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,
disillusions as never told in the old days,
hysterias, trench confessions,
laughter out of dead bellies.

V

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization.

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.

YEUX GLAUQUES

Gladstone was still respected,
When John Ruskin produced
"Kings Treasuries"; Swinburne
And Rossetti still abused.

Foetid Buchanan lifted up his voice
When that faun's head of hers
Became a pastime for
Painters and adulterers.

The Burne-Jones cartons
Have preserved her eyes;
Still, at the Tate, they teach
Cophetua to rhapsodize;

Thin like brook-water,
With a vacant gaze.
The English Rubaiyat was still-born
In those days.

The thin, clear gaze, the same
Still darts out faun-like from the half-ruin'd face,
Questing and passive
"Ah, poor Jenny's case" ...

Bewildered that a world
Shows no surprise
At her last maquero's
Adulteries.

“SIENA MI FE’, DISFECEMI MAREMMA”

Among the pickled fetuses and bottled bones,
Engaged in perfecting the catalogue,
I found the last scion of the
Senatorial families of Strasbourg, Monsieur Verog.

For two hours he talked of Gallifet;
Of Dowson; of the Rhymers’ Club;
Told me how Johnson (Lionel) died
By falling from a high stool in a pub ...

But showed no trace of alcohol
At the autopsy, privately performed—
Tissue preserved—the pure mind
Arose toward Newman as the whiskey warmed.

Dowson found harlots cheaper than hotels;
Headlam for uplift; Image impartially imbued
With raptures for Bacchus, Terpsichore and the Church.
So spoke the author of “The Dorian Mood,”

M. Verog, out of step with the decade,
Detached from his contemporaries,
Neglected by the young,
Because of these reveries.

BRENNBAUM

The sky-like limpid eyes,
The circular infant’s face,
The stiffness from spats to collar
Never relaxing into grace;

The heavy memories of Horeb, Sinai and the forty years,
Showed only when the daylight fell
Level across the face
Of Brennbaum “The Impeccable.”

MR. NIXON

In the cream gilded cabin of his steam yacht
Mr. Nixon advised me kindly, to advance with fewer
Dangers of delay. “Consider
Carefully the reviewer.

“I was as poor as you are;
“When I began I got, of course,
“Advance on royalties, fifty at first,” said Mr. Nixon,
“Follow me, and take a column,
“Even if you have to work free.

“Butter reviewers. From fifty to three hundred
“I rose in eighteen months;
“The hardest nut I had to crack
“Was Dr. Dundas.

“I never mentioned a man but with the view
“Of selling my own works.
“The tip’s a good one, as for literature
“It gives no man a sinecure.”

And no one knows, at sight a masterpiece.
And give up verse, my boy,
There’s nothing in it.”

* * * *

Likewise a friend of Bloughram’s once advised me:
Don’t kick against the pricks,
Accept opinion. The “Nineties” tried your game
And died, there’s nothing in it.

X
Beneath the sagging roof
The stylist has taken shelter,
Unpaid, uncelebrated,
At last from the world’s welter

Nature receives him,
With a placid and uneducated mistress
He exercises his talents
And the soil meets his distress.

The haven from sophistications and contentions
Leaks through its thatch;
He offers succulent cooking;
The door has a creaking latch.

XI
“Conservatrix of Milésien”
Habits of mind and feeling,
Possibly. But in Ealing
With the most bank-clerkly of Englishmen?

No, “Milésian” is an exaggeration.

No instinct has survived in her
Older than those her grandmother
Told her would fit her station.

XII

“Daphne with her thighs in bark
Stretches toward me her leafy hands,”—
Subjectively. In the stuffed-satin drawing-room
I await The Lady Valentine’s commands,

Knowing my coat has never been
Of precisely the fashion
To stimulate, in her,
A durable passion;

Doubtful, somewhat, of the value
Of well-gowned approbation
Of literary effort,
But never of The Lady Valentine’s vocation:

Poetry, her border of ideas,
The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending
With other strata
Where the lower and higher have ending;

A hook to catch the Lady Jane’s attention,
A modulation toward the theatre,
Also, in the case of revolution,
A possible friend and comforter.

* * * *

Conduct, on the other hand, the soul
“Which the highest cultures have nourished”
To Fleet St. where
Dr. Johnson flourished;

Beside this thoroughfare
The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses.

Envoi (1919)

Go, dumb-born book,

*Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:
Hadst thou but song
As thou hast subjects known,*

*Then were there cause in thee that should condone
Even my faults that heavy upon me lie
And build her glories their longevity.*

*Tell her that sheds
Such treasure in the air,
Recking naught else but that her graces give
Life to the moment,
I would bid them live
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one color
Braving time.*

*Tell her that goes
With song upon her lips
But sings not out the song, nor knows
The maker of it, some other mouth,
May be as fair as hers,
Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers,
When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,
Siftings on siftings in oblivion,
Till change hath broken down
All things save Beauty alone.*

Poem 12. Hugh Selwyn Mauberley by Ezra Pound Source: [Hugh Selwyn Mauberley \[Part I\] | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

AFRICAN AMERICAN POETS

As slaves, being stripped of the right of education, of learning to read and write, the African-Americans developed literature mainly in the oral tradition. Therefore, the early genres of the African-American literature involved the so called slave narratives which became a strong influence for the abolitionist movement. After the abolition of slavery, the number of educated African Americans increased and so grew the number of their published works. One of the most striking literary developments of the post-Civil War era was the literary achievement of the African-Americans and culminating eventually in the cultural movement called the Harlem Renaissance. It provided a lasting stimulus for all the generations of African Americans, the American literature in general, the fight against segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement. Among others, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Charles Wendel Chestnutt, Paul Lawrence Dunbar set the roots of black American writing. Their unique expression comprised the forms of autobiography, essays, protest literature, social commentary, sermons, poetry and songs.

Booker T. Washington (1856 – 1915)



Picture 11. Booker T. Washington – ([Category:Booker T. Washington - Wikimedia Commons](#), 2025)

One of the most prominent black American leaders of his time, Booker T. Washington was born in 1856 in Franklin County, Virginia to a slave mother and a white slave-holder father. He dedicated his whole life and work to improving the lives of the African Americans and his idea for that was known as “the policy of accommodation with the whites” as a way for the recently freed African Americans to get involved in the general American society, as he stated in his well-known Atlanta Exposition Address (1895). His noteworthy autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901) testifies to his views and his successful work on his own improvement (VanSpanckeren, 1994, pp. 58-9).

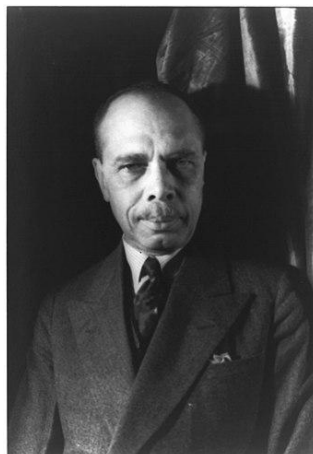
W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)



Picture 12. W.E.B Du Bois – ([Category:W.E.B. Du Bois - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

W.E.B Du Bois was a New England born and Harvard educated African-American author and leader. He also studied at the University of Berlin in Germany. He had different views from Washington as presented in his essay called “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others”, later part of his well-known book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (VanSpanckeren, 1994, pp. 59). There he carefully discusses the ideas on fighting for and achieving racial equality purported by other of his fellow writers and activists, pointing out that segregation would not lead to equality but rather to further inferiority especially stemming from segregation in education. Du Bois lifelong accomplishment was the foundation the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), He was diligent in showing and bringing to the forefront the rich African-American creative spirit, music, tales and songs.

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)



Picture 13. James Weldon Johnson – ([Category:James Weldon Johnson - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

James Weldon Johnson was another African-American poet who found the greatest inspiration in the African-American spirituals. Like Washington, he was also of mixed black and white origin, and he was also dedicated to the exploration of the racial issues in his fictional *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) “about a mixed-race man who ‘passes’ (is accepted) for white. The book’s main contribution is the exploration the African-American identity in the USA (VanSpanckeren, 1994, pp. 59).

Charles Weddel Chesnutt



Picture 14. Charles Waddell Chesnutt – ([Category:Charles Waddell Chesnutt - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Charles Waddell Chesnutt was a prolific author producing two collections of stories, *The Conjure Woman* (1899) and *The Wife of His Youth* (1899), several novels, including *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), and a remarkable biography of Frederick Douglass. His stories dwell on racial themes, abound in complex inscriptions of characters, attitudes and a wide range of racial distress and solidarity in the African-American community.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)



Picture 15. Langston Hughes – ([Langston Hughes 1936.jpg \(935×1350\), 2025](#))

One of the most significant representatives of the Harlem Renaissance and its legacy is the author Langston Hughes. His distinctive poetical output carefully examines the struggles of the African-American cry for equality and recognition. He invariably used jazz and blues rhythms, spiritual, folk tales and colloquial speech in his writing.

Hughes was born in 1901 in Joplin, Missouri. When he was very young his parents divorced, and his father moved to Mexico. Hughes was raised by his maternal grandmother until he was thirteen. He then moved to Lincoln, Illinois with his mother and her husband. It is there that he started writing poetry. After high school he went to Mexico, then to Columbia University for one year. He later traveled to Europe and Africa as a seaman. In 1929 he completed his college education at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. ([About Langston Hughes | Academy of American Poets](#), 2025).

In an effort to speak loudly and effectively against racial segregation and injustice, Hughes authored a number of African – American anthologies. To that effect he created the character of Jesse B. Semple ('simple) and gained prominence. He was a cultural leader, journalist and social commentator and successfully led theater groups in Chicago, the New York City and Los Angeles.

The essence of his poetry dwells on the unbreakable spirit of the African-Americans, their endurance and everlasting creative spirit as presented in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "I See the World".

The Negro Speaks of Rivers By Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Poem 13. The Negro Speaks of Rivers by Langston Hughes - Source: [The Negro Speaks of Rivers | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

I look at the world

By Langston Hughes

I look at the world

From awakening eyes in a black face—

And this is what I see:
This fenced-off narrow space
Assigned to me.

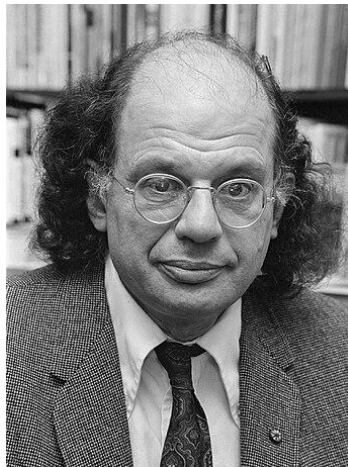
I look then at the silly walls
Through dark eyes in a dark face—
And this is what I know:
That all these walls oppression builds
Will have to go!

I look at my own body
With eyes no longer blind—
And I see that my own hands can make
The world that's in my mind.
Then let us hurry, comrades,
The road to find.

Poem 14. I look at the world by Langston Hughes - Source: [I look at the world | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

BEAT POETRY

(Allen Ginsberg)



Picture 16. Allen Ginsberg – ([Category:Allen Ginsberg - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

The mid 1950s gave birth to the unique and revolutionary activity and expression of a group of young writers celebrating their bohemian lifestyle and were mainly centered in San Francisco and New York. This is the group of the Beat poets or the Beat generation. They felt a strong urge to address the consequences of the post-war period on the individual, the transitions, and rapid changes. The second half of the 20th century called for new forms and ideas. The post WWII scene required handling the aftermath and the rebuilding of society, politically and culturally. Every single action of this generation was unprecedented in their treatment and use of themes and ideas to voice their concerns. It was a worldly and extremely private fight of their own selves. The loudest example of this was Ginsberg's poem *Howl* which underwent an obscenity trial in 1957, but its strong literary and social outcry turned into a hymn of the movement.

These voices expressed the alienation of their generation through the lenses of alcohol, drugs, jazz, Eastern philosophy and eccentric lifestyle. The Beats significantly revolutionized traditional American poetry while also influenced by earlier American poets such as Walt Whitman. Similarly, they painted the landscape of the 20th century USA.

The poet Allen Ginsberg was born in 1926 in Newark, New Jersey to Jewish parents, part of the New York 1920s counterculture. During his childhood he was exposed to various political and cultural perspectives, his mother's communist views being one of them. His poetic inclinations were largely the result of his adoration of Edgar Allan Poe in high school and Whitman throughout his adolescence. Ginsberg was admitted to Columbia University during the 1940s. As a student he met and became friends with what would become the key figures of the Beat Movement, William S. Burroughs, Neal Cassady and Jack Kerouac, which is when the whole idea of a counterculture expression gained momentum.

This exquisite group of unprecedented focus and activity aimed to refract the societal and personal concerns in a society of growing subcultures by producing original literary inscriptions to testify of their time.

America
By Allen Ginsberg

America I've given you all and now I'm nothing.
America two dollars and twenty seven cents January 17, 1956.
I can't stand my own mind.
America when will we end the human war?
Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb.
I don't feel good don't bother me.
I won't write my poem till I'm in my right mind.
America when will you be angelic?
When will you take off your clothes?
When will you look at yourself through the grave?
When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?
America why are your libraries full of tears?
America when will you send your eggs to India?
I'm sick of your insane demands.
When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks?
America after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world.
Your machinery is too much for me.
You made me want to be a saint.
There must be some other way to settle this argument.
Burroughs is in Tangiers I don't think he'll come back it's sinister.
Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke?
I'm trying to come to the point.
I refuse to give up my obsession.
America stop pushing I know what I'm doing.
America the plum blossoms are falling.
I haven't read the newspapers for months, everyday somebody goes on trial for murder.
America I feel sentimental about the Wobblies.
America I used to be a communist when I was a kid I'm not sorry.
I smoke marijuana every chance I get.
I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the closet.
When I go to Chinatown I get drunk and never get laid.
My mind is made up there's going to be trouble.
You should have seen me reading Marx.
My psychoanalyst thinks I'm perfectly right.
I won't say the Lord's Prayer.
I have mystical visions and cosmic vibrations.
America I still haven't told you what you did to Uncle Max after he came over from Russia.
I'm addressing you.
Are you going to let your emotional life be run by Time Magazine?
I'm obsessed by Time Magazine.
I read it every week.
Its cover stares at me every time I slink past the corner candystore.
I read it in the basement of the Berkeley Public Library.
It's always telling me about responsibility. Businessmen are serious. Movie producers are serious. Everybody's serious but me.
It occurs to me that I am America.
I am talking to myself again.

Asia is rising against me.
I haven't got a chainman's chance.
I'd better consider my national resources.
My national resources consist of two joints of marijuana millions of genitals an unpublishable private literature that jet planes 1400 miles an hour and twenty five-thousand mental institutions.
I say nothing about my prisons nor the millions of underprivileged who live in my flowerpots under the light of five hundred suns.
I have abolished the whorehouses of France, Tangiers is the next to go.
My ambition is to be President despite the fact that I'm a Catholic.

America how can I write a holy litany in your silly mood?
I will continue like Henry Ford my strophes are as individual as his automobiles more so they're all different sexes.
America I will sell you strophes \$2500 apiece \$500 down on your old strophe
America free Tom Mooney
America save the Spanish Loyalists
America Sacco & Vanzetti must not die
America I am the Scottsboro boys.
America when I was seven momma took me to Communist Cell meetings they sold us garbanzos a handful per ticket a ticket costs a nickel and the speeches were free everybody was angelic and sentimental about the workers it was all so sincere you have no idea what a good thing the party was in 1835 Scott Nearing was a grand old man a real mensch Mother Bloor the Silk-strikers' Ewig-Weidliches made me cry I once saw the Yiddish orator Israel Amter plain. Everybody must have been a spy.
America you don't really want to go to war.
America its them bad Russians.
Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen. And them Russians.
The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia's power mad. She wants to take our cars from out our garages.
Her wants to grab Chicago. Her needs a Red Reader's Digest. Her wants our auto plants in Siberia. Him big bureaucracy running our filling stations.
That no good. Ugh. Him make Indians learn read. Him need big black niggers. Hah.
Her make us all work sixteen hours a day. Help.
America this is quite serious.
America this is the impression I get from looking in the television set.
America is this correct?
I'd better get right down to the job.
It's true I don't want to join the Army or turn lathes in precision parts factories, I'm nearsighted and psychopathic anyway.
America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.

Berkeley, January 17, 1956

Poem 15. America by Allen Ginsberg - Source: [America | The Poetry Foundation, 2025](#)

CONFESSIONAL AND IDIOSYNCRATIC POETS

The confessional and idiosyncratic poets developed a unique style of poetry drawing on the individualistic lifestyle, the ailments and societal changes in the prosperous mid-20th century America. The term idiosyncrasy entails a peculiarity of constitution or temperament, an individualizing characteristic or quality. Among the others the group includes Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, John Berryman, Theodore Roethke, Richard Hugo, Philip Levine, James Dickey, Elizabeth Bishop and Adrienne Rich.

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)



Picture 17. Sylvia Plath – ([Category:Sylvia Plath - Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Born in 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts, Sylvia Plath has become one of the most celebrated American poetesses.

The death of her father when she was eight, significantly influenced her following relationships and her poetry, as seen in her elegiacal poem “Daddy”. Upon graduation, Plath went to Cambridge on a Fulbright Scholarship. There she met and married the English poet Ted Hughes in 1956. She published her first collection of poems *Colossus* in 1960 in England and the USA. In England she gave birth to her two children, Frieda in 1960 and Nicholas in 1962. She was left by Hughes in 1962 following his affair with Assia Gutmann Wevill. After that, Plath created most of her poems that would become her book, *Ariel*. Plath also published her semi-autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar* before committing suicide in 1963.

The poem “The Applicant” tackles the role and place of the woman in the 20th century. It can be compared with the woman in Puritan New England, represented by Anne Bradstreet, as much as with the woman in the 21st century.

The Applicant
By Sylvia Plath

Toggle annotations
First, are you our sort of a person?
Do you wear
A glass eye, false teeth or a crutch,
A brace or a hook,

Rubber breasts or a rubber crotch,

Stitches to show something's missing? No, no? Then

How can we give you a thing?

Stop crying.

Open your hand.

Empty? Empty. Here is a hand

To fill it and willing

To bring teacups and roll away headaches

And do whatever you tell it.

Will you marry it?

It is guaranteed

To thumb shut your eyes at the end

And dissolve of sorrow.

We make new stock from the salt.

I notice you are stark naked.

How about this suit——

Black and stiff, but not a bad fit.

Will you marry it?

It is waterproof, shatterproof, proof

Against fire and bombs through the roof.

Believe me, they'll bury you in it.

Now your head, excuse me, is empty.

I have the ticket for that.

Come here, sweetie, out of the closet.

Well, what do you think of that?

Naked as paper to start

But in twenty-five years she'll be silver,

In fifty, gold.

A living doll, everywhere you look.

It can sew, it can cook,

It can talk, talk, talk.

It works, there is nothing wrong with it.

You have a hole, it's a poultice.

You have an eye, it's an image.

My boy, it's your last resort.

Will you marry it, marry it, marry it.

Poem 16. The Applicant by Sylvia Plath - Source: [The Applicant | The Poetry Foundation, 2025](#)

Anne Sexton (1928-1974)



Picture 18. Anne Sexton – ([Anne Sexton - Morrissey-solo Wiki](#), 2025)

Anne Sexton was Plath's contemporary and colleague.

She was born in 1928 in Newton, Massachusetts. She first started writing poetry while at the boarding school at Rogers Hall Lowell. Before she married Alfred Muller at the age of nineteen, Sexton attended Garland Junior College for one year. Their first daughter was born in 1953 upon their return to Massachusetts from San Francisco. Like Plath, Sexton also had her personal mental health struggles in her attempts to live the life of a wife, mother and poetess.

Sexton became a fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1965. She won a number of prestigious prizes and awards: the 1967 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for her third collection, *Live or Die*. Sexton is the author of nine volumes of poetry, including *The Awful Rowing Toward God* (Houghton Mifflin, 1975); *The Book of Folly* (Houghton Mifflin, 1973). Sexton died by suicide on October 4, 1974, in Weston, Massachusetts. Like Plath she also wrote confessional and autobiographical poetry throughout her lifetime.

Her Kind
By Anne Sexton

I have gone out, a possessed witch,
haunting the black air, braver at night;
dreaming evil, I have done my hitch
over the plain houses, light by light:
lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.
A woman like that is not a woman, quite.
I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,
filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,
closets, silks, innumerable goods;
fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:
whining, rearranging the misaligned.

A woman like that is misunderstood.
I have been her kind.

I have ridden in your cart, driver,
waved my nude arms at villages going by,
learning the last bright routes, survivor
where your flames still bite my thigh
and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.
A woman like that is not ashamed to die.
I have been her kind.

Poem 17. Her Kind by Anne Sextone Source: [Her Kind | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)



Picture 19. Theodore Roethke – ([Theodore Roethke in the family greenhouse, Saginaw, Michigan, ca 1920 \(PORTRAITS 689\) - Category: Theodore Roethke – Wikimedia Commons, 2025](#))

Theodore Roethke is particularly acclaimed poet for his poetic celebration of natural imagery, the natural world and the human soul.

Born in 1908 in Saginaw, Michigan, he was extensively involved in the work at his family's greenhouse. This in turn served as the major inspiration for his verse. In 1929, Roethke graduated with accolades from the University of Michigan. It took him ten years to write his critically acclaimed first book, *Open House* (1941). He continued his literary career writing and publishing, eventually receiving the Pulitzer Prize in 1954 for his collection *The Waking*.

The Waking
By Theodore Roethke

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,

And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.
What falls away is always. And is near.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I learn by going where I have to go.

Poem 18. The Waking by Theodore Roethke - Source: [The Waking | The Poetry Foundation](#), 2025

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETS

Contemporary American poetry saw the emergence and development of various trends and movements. It boasts a large spectrum of poetic expressions reflecting and refracting the major developments in society. Past and current events brought about vociferous movements and a distinct individual imprint. Interesting developments include Native American poetry, African American poetry, Asian American poetry and multiethnic poetry in general.

Well-defined schools dominated the scene, and critical discussions tended to the binary: formalism versus free verse, academic versus experimental. Several directions in poetry can be traced from this time: the poetry of self (direct address or monologue), the poetry of voice (poetry of various voices of fictive selves, fragments and characters), the poetry of place (inspiration in specific landscapes), the poetry of family (the matrix of belonging), the poetry of the beautiful (celebrating beauty despite the modern life's confusion and suffering), the poetry of the spirit (the relationship between the individual and the timeless essence beyond), the poetry of nature, the poetry of history, the poetry of the wit (poetry of the world, wit and humor), the poetry of the world and cyber poetry (poetry secondary to the computer monitor where a spoken human language comes after exposure to binary codes) (VanSpanckeren, 1994, pp. 121-155).

The American poetry and world poetic expression had taken on new forms and media placement at the backdrop of the digital world and digital communication. Multimedia presentations have influenced both the perception and production of old and new poetry. Furthermore, poetic events are organized, shared and recorded online which significantly changed the place and role of poetry today. In this way users of all generations get a new and refreshed look into the world of Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson or some haiku 21st poem written by the digital user.

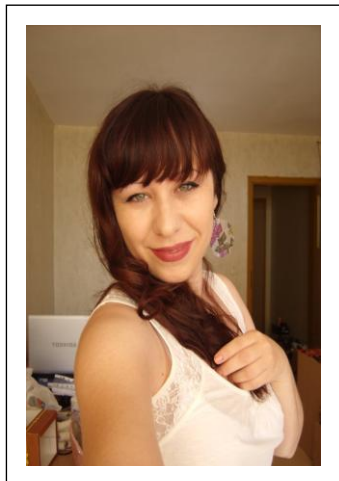
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БИОГРАФСКИ ПОДАТОЦИ

Доц. д-р Марија Крстева е родена на 07. јуни 1986г. во Кочани. Во 2009г. ги завршува додипломските студии по Англиски јазик и книжевност на факултетот „Блаже Конески“ во Скопје. Истата година се запишува на постдипломски студии по Американски студии на Универзитетот „Св. Климент Охридски“ во Софија, Бугарија. Докторски студии по Американска литература завршува на иститот универзитет во Бугарија во 2022г. Крстева работи на Филолошкиот факултет при Универзитетот „Гоце Делчев“ во Штип од 2012г. Има учествувало на многубројни конференции, семинари и симпозиуми како и публикувано во научни списанија и зборници во земјата и странство. Преведувач е и автор на книги за деца. Автор е на научната книга *Towards a Theory of Life-Writing Genre Blending*, Routledge, 2023.

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