**American Romanticism**

**This six-week unit, the third of six, focuses on the emerging movement of American Romanticism in the early nineteenth century and the period leading up to the Civil War.**

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**Overview**

* + Students explore this period as America’s first prolific one of literature, by examining works from Cooper and Irving to Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau. The prominent theme during this period in American literature of “manifest destiny” may be introduced by reading John O’Sullivan’s essay “Annexation.” Students will wrestle with how the romantics perceive individualism and how this focus on individualism relates to other themes in American literature. Transcendentalism is explored as an aspect of American romanticism and students should compare the “romantics” with the “transcendentalists.” Teachers are encouraged to select one novel and a variety of the other poetry and prose in order to give students maximum exposure to the various works of the period.
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**Focus Standards**

* + These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.
		- **RL.11-12.2:** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
		- **RL.11-12.9:** Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
		- **RI.11-12.5:** Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.
		- **W.11-12.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
		- **SL.11-12.4:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range or formal and informal tasks.
		- **L.11-12.4:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/CCSSI_ELA_Standards.pdf) (1.5 MB)

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**Suggested Student Objectives**

* + - Define the major characteristics of American romanticism (e.g., use of symbols, myth, and the “fantastic”; veneration of nature, celebration of the “self,” isolationism).
		- Define transcendentalism as an aspect of American romanticism and explain how it differs from it.
		- Trace characterization techniques in American romantic novels.
		- Analyze the structure and effectiveness of arguments in transcendentalist essays studied.
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**Suggested Works**

* + (E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

**Literary Texts**

**Poems**

* + - “The Old Oaken Bucket” (Samuel Woodworth)
		- “The Raven” (Edgar Allan Poe) (E 9 -10)
		- “Annabel Lee” (Edgar Allan Poe) (EA)
		- “Song of Myself” (Walt Whitman) (E)
		- “I Hear America Singing” (Walt Whitman) (EA)
		- “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (Walt Whitman) (EA)
		- “A Bird came down the Walk” (Emily Dickinson) (EA)
		- “This is my letter to the World” (Emily Dickinson) (EA)
		- “Because I could not stop for Death” (Emily Dickinson) (E)

**Short Stories**

* + - “The Fall of the House of Usher” (Edgar Allan Poe) (EA)
		- “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (Washington Irving)
		- “Rip Van Winkle” (Washington Irving)
		- “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (Nathaniel Hawthorne) (EA)
		- “The Minister’s Black Veil” (Nathaniel Hawthorne) (EA)
		- “Young Goodman Brown” (Nathaniel Hawthorne) (EA)
		- “Billy Budd” (Herman Melville) (E)
		- “The Piazza” (Herman Melville) (EA)

**Novels**

* + - *The Scarlet Letter* (Nathaniel Hawthorne) (E)
		- *The Pioneers* (James Fenimore Cooper)
		- *Moby-Dick* (Herman Melville) (EA)
		- *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Harriet Beecher Stowe)

**Informational Texts**

**Essays**

* + - “Self-Reliance” (Ralph Waldo Emerson) (EA)
		- “Society and Solitude” (Ralph Waldo Emerson) (E)
		- *Walden*; *or, Life in the Woods* (Henry David Thoreau) (E)
		- “Civil Disobedience” (Henry David Thoreau) (EA)
		- “Annexation” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review 17*, No. 1 (1845) (John O’Sullivan)

**Speeches**

* + - "Address to William Henry Harrison" (Shawnee Chief Tecumseh, 1810)

**Art, Music, and Media**

**Art**

*Paintings*

* + - Frederic Church, *Niagara* (1857)
		- George Inness, *The Lackannawa Valley* (1855)
		- Asher Durand, *Kindred Spirits* (1849)
		- Albert Bierstadt, *Looking Down Yosemite Valley* (1865)
		- John Trumbull
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**Sample Activities and Assessments**

* + ***Teachers Note:*** *After reading and discussing a work or pairing of works as a class, students prepare for seminars and essays by reflecting individually, in pairs, and/or in small groups on a given seminar/essay question. Ideas are student generated in this way. (Seminar/Essay assignments may include more than one question. Teachers may choose one or all the questions to explore in the course of the seminar; students should choose one question for the essay.) Seminars should be held before students write essays so that they may explore their ideas thoroughly and refine their thinking before writing. (Click here to see a sample seminar scoring rubric.) Page and word counts for essays are not provided, but teachers should consider the suggestions regarding the use of evidence, for example, to determine the likely length of good essays. In future iterations of these maps, links to samples of student work will be provided.*

**Collaborate**

Reflect on seminar questions, take notes on your responses, and note the page numbers of the textual evidence you will refer to in your seminar and/or essay answers. Share your notes with a partner for feedback and guidance. Have you interpreted the text correctly? Is your evidence convincing? (RL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.1)

**Essay**

Write a narrative essay in the style of *Walden*. (W.11-12.3, W.11-12.9)

**Seminar and Essay**

Agree or disagree with this Emerson quote: "What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842." Use at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. (RI.11-12.2, SL.11-12.6, W.11-12.9)

**Seminar and Essay**

Select one of the short stories and explain why you think it is a good example of American romanticism. Use at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. (RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.9, W.11-12.2, SL.11-12.1)

**Oral Commentary**

Students will be given an unseen passage from one of the other works by Hawthorne or Melville (teacher's choice) and asked to provide a ten-minute commentary on two of the following questions:

* + - What is the primary significance of this passage?
		- Identify the poetic techniques used in this poem (or extract from a poem). Relate them to the content.
		- Which poetic techniques in this poem or extract from a poem are typical of the writer?
		- What are the effects of the dominant images used in this extract?
		- What do you think the important themes in this extract are? (RL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.4, 6)

[Scoring Rubric](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/Socratic_Seminar_Rubric_SP.doc)

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**Additional Resources**

* + [Walt Whitman's Notebooks and Poetry: the Sweep of the Universe](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=427) (National Endowment for the Humanities) (RL.11-12.4)

Clues to Walt Whitman's effort to create a new and distinctly American form of verse may be found in his Notebooks, now available online from the American Memory Collection. In an entry to be examined in this lesson, Whitman indicated that he wanted his poetry to explore important ideas of a universal scope (as in the European tradition), but in authentic American situations and settings using specific details with direct appeal to the senses.

[The American Renaissance and Transcendentalism](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/icon/transcend.html) (PBS) (RL.11-12.9)

This overview of the movement with lists of authors and artists provides links to more information about each.

[Africans in America (Part 3)](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/title.html)(PBS) (RL.11-12.1, RI.11-12.1, LS.11-12.1)

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**Terminology**

* + - alliteration
		- anaphora
		- assonance
		- consonance
		- individualism
		- lyric poetry
		- manifest destiny
		- metonymy
		- noble savage
		- paradox
		- romanticism
		- synecdoche
		- transcendentalism
		- verbal irony