**A Troubled Young Nation**

**This eight-week unit, the fourth of six, examines the literature of the late nineteenth century in America, exploring in particular the themes related to the evolving young nation, such as the challenges of westward expansion, slavery, the changing role of women, regionalism, the displacement of Native Americans, the growth of cities, and immigration.**

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**Overview**

* + The range and depth of potential topics covered in this hefty unit might be tailored to suit various classroom populations. Building on the previous unit in which individualism figures as a prominent theme in American romanticism and transcendentalism, this unit explores the expanding idea of the American individual and the related idea of the pursuit of liberty in various forms. Teachers are encouraged to have students read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a classic American novel that deals with issues of racism and slavery, and raises important questions about what America promises and to whom. Beyond *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, teachers could select from among the other novels listed or ask different students to read different novels, such that the variety of their compelling themes may be shared and discussed as a class via oral presentations and seminars. Teachers are encouraged to sample heavily from the informational texts, as many are critical especially to understanding the era of the Civil War and the struggle to fulfill America’s promise.
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**Focus Standards**

* + These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.
    - **RL.11-12.3:** Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
    - **RI.11-12.3:** Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
    - **W.11-12.5:** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 11–12 on page 54.)
    - **SL.11-12.2:** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
    - **L.11-12.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

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

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**Suggested Student Objectives**

* + - Determine and analyze the development of the theme or themes in American literature of the nineteenth century (e.g., freedom, the American dream, racism, regionalism, survival, “individual vs. society,” and “civilized society” vs. the wilderness).
    - Compare the treatment of related themes in different genres (e.g., *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*).
    - Explain how characters in fictional in late nineteenth century America express the challenges facing America at the time, citing both textual evidence from both fiction and nonfiction to make the case.
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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**

**Folk Tales**

* + - “Promises of Freedom”
    - “Plantation Proverbs” (*Uncle Remus*)
    - “All God’s Children Had Wings”
    - “The Signifying Monkey”

**Short Stories**

* + - “Roman Fever” (Edith Wharton)
    - “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” (Mark Twain) (EA)
    - “What Stumped the Bluejays” (Mark Twain) (EA)

**Novels**

* + - *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain) (EA)
    - *The Awakening* (Kate Chopin)
    - *Ethan Frome* (Edith Wharton)
    - *Daisy Miller* (Henry James)
    - *The Call of the Wild* (Jack London)
    - *Sister Carrie* (Theodore Dreiser)
    - *My Ántonia* (Willa Cather)

**Informational Texts**

**Historical Nonfiction**

* + - Letter to Albert G. Hodges (Abraham Lincoln) (EA)
    - *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Frederick Douglass) (EA) (selections)
    - *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (Booker T. Washington)
    - *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Sojourner Truth and Olive Gilbert)
    - Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls Convention (1848)
    - “The Higher Education of Women” *A Voice from the South* (Anna Julia Cooper)
    - *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (James Weldon Johnson)
    - *Twenty Years at Hull House* (Jane Addams) (selections)

**Speeches**

* + - “A House Divided” (Abraham Lincoln) (EA)
    - “The Gettysburg Address” (Abraham Lincoln) (E)
    - "Ain’t I a woman?” (Sojourner Truth) (May 29, 1851)
    - “I will fight no more forever” (Chief Joseph the Younger of the Nez Perce Nation) (October 5, 1877)

**Art, Music, and Media**

**Music**

*Spirituals*

* + - “Go Down, Moses” (Traditional)
    - “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” (Traditional)
    - “I Thank God I’m Free at Las” (Traditional)
    - “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (James Weldon Johnson) (E)

**Art**

*Painters*

* + - Thomas Eakins
    - Winslow Homer

**Film**

"Unchained Memories" (HBO Documentary, in conjunction with the Library of Congress, 2003) (Readings From the Slave Narratives)

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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 and Seminar**

Write an essay in which you agree or disagree with the following statement, offering at least three pieces of evidence from the texts to support an original thesis statement: “Women in nineteenth century America could not really be free.” (RL.11-12.1, W.11-12.1)

**Essay and Seminar**

Choose two women from among the works studied and compare and contrast their life experiences, noting the ways in which they either exemplified or were an exception to the times in which they lived. Use at least three pieces of evidence from the texts to support an original thesis statement. (RL.11-12.1, RI.11-12.10, W.11-12.1, W.11-12.9)

**Essay and Seminar**

“Does Huckleberry Finn embody the values inherent in the American Dream?” Write an essay in which you use at least three pieces of evidence to support an original thesis statement. (RL.11-12.9, SL.11-12.1, W.11-12.9)

**Essay and Seminar**

How does Twain address the issue of slavery in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Use at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. (RL.11-12.6, W.11-12.2, W.11-12.9)

**Speech**

Recite “The Gettysburg Address” from memory. Include an introduction that discusses why the excerpt exemplifies America’s core conflicts and its finest values. (RI.11-12.9, SL.11-12.3)

**Oral Presentation**

Create a multimedia presentation that summarizes one of the novels you’ve read and present questions that you think the novel raises about its uniquely American themes. (RL.11-12.1, W.11-12.6, SL.11-12.5)

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

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**Additional Resources**

* + [Personal or Social Tragedy?—A Close Reading of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=725) (National Endowment for the Humanities) (RL.11-12.1, RI.11-12.2)

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

* + - Situate *Ethan Frome* within the context of American regionalist literature;
    - Gather, annotate, and analyze key quotations from *Ethan Frome;*
    - Respond to contemporary reviews of *Ethan Frome;* and
    - Use textual evidence to support their own claims about the plight of the novel’s protagonist.

[After the American Revolution: Free African Americans in the North](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=452) (National Endowment for the Humanities) (RL.11-12.6)

In this lesson, students will meet some of those African Americans and practice the techniques authors use to transform information about individuals into readable biographies.

[Critical Ways of Seeing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in Context](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=447) (National Endowment for the Humanities) (RL.11-12.6)

By studying Mark Twain's novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and its critics with a focus on cultural context, students will develop essential analytical tools for navigating this text and for exploring controversies that surround this quintessential American novel.

[The New Americans](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators.html) (PBS) (RI.11-12.7)

*The New Americans* Web site offers an online educational adventure for seventh- to twelfth-grade students. The site supplements the documentary mini-series, which explores the immigrant experience through the personal stories of immigrants to the United States.

[Melting Pot: American Fiction of Immigration](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americannovel/ideas/melting_article.html) (PBS)

This is a summary list of novels—with brief descriptions—about the American immigrant experience from different eras.

We Shall Remain <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/beyond_broadcast/teach_and_learn>

This is a website of teacher resources to accompany the PBS multimedia project, "We Shall Remain," which documents native American history.

[Africans in America (Part 4) (PBS)](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/title.html) (RL.11-12.1, RI.11-12.1, LS.11-12.1)

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**Terminology**

* + - Abolition
    - American Dream
    - assimilation
    - autobiography
    - biography
    - determinism
    - the “melting pot”
    - mood
    - naturalism
    - realism
    - regionalism
    - satire