

DOMAIN I

LITERATURE

PERSONALIZED STUDY PLAN

PAGE	COMPETENCY AND SKILL	KNOWN MATERIAL/ SKIP IT
3	1: Literature and Understanding Text	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1.1: Identifying major works and authors	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1.2: Paraphrasing, comparing, and interpreting	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1.3: Identifying figurative language and other literary elements	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1.4: Understand how literary forms and genres may influence meaning	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1.5: Situating authors and texts within historical, cultural, and critical contexts	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1.6: Recognizing instructional approaches to teaching reading and textual interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMPETENCY 1

LITERATURE AND UNDERSTANDING TEXT

SKILL 1.1 Identifying major works and authors of American, British, World (including non-Western), and young adult literature from various cultures, genres, and periods

American Literature

When compared to other countries, America has a relatively brief history and thus a comparatively smaller canon of literature. Nevertheless, its fiction and nonfiction have the depth and breadth to tell the story of its people. To study American literature is to study American history. Students will discover the importance of writing as a reflection of the historical, social, ethnic, political, and economic environment of the times.

American literature is defined by a number of clearly identifiable periods.

Native American works from various tribes

These works were originally part of a vast oral tradition that spanned most of continental America, dating as far back as before the fifteenth century.

Characteristics of Native American literature include:

- Reverence for and awe of nature
- The interconnectedness of the elements in the life cycle

Themes of Native American literature include:

- The hardiness of the native body and soul
- Remorse for the destruction of the native way of life
- The genocide of many tribes by the encroaching settlement and Manifest Destiny policies of the U.S. government

The Colonial period

Stylistically, early colonists' writings were neoclassical, emphasizing order, balance, clarity, and reason. Because the colonists had been schooled in England, their writing and speaking remained decidedly British, even as their thinking became entirely American.

Early American literature reveals the lives and experiences of the New England expatriates who left England to find religious freedom. William Bradford's excerpts from *The Mayflower Compact* relate vividly the hardships of crossing the Atlantic in a tiny vessel, the misery and suffering of the first winter, the approaches of the American Indians, the decimation of the colonists' ranks, and the establishment of the Bay Colony of Massachusetts.

"If ever two were one,
then surely we.
If ever man were loved by
wife, then thee."

Read more about
Anne Bradstreet:

<http://www.annebradstreet.com/Default.htm>

Anne Bradstreet's poetry describes colonial New England life. From her journals, modern readers learn about the everyday life of the early settlers, the hardships of travel, and the responsibilities of different groups and individuals in the community. Early American literature also reveals the commercial and political adventures of the Cavaliers, who came to the New World with King George's blessing.

William Byrd's journal *A History of the Dividing Line*, concerning his trek into the Dismal Swamp separating the Carolinian territories from Virginia and Maryland, makes quite lively reading. A privileged insider to the English Royal Court, Byrd, like other Southern Cavaliers, was given grants to pursue business ventures.

The Revolutionary period

The **Revolutionary period** of American literature contains nonfiction genres: essay, pamphlet, speech, famous document, and epistle. There are many important writers and works of the Revolutionary Period.

Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*, though written by a recently transplanted Englishman, spoke to the American patriots' common sense in dealing with issues in the cause of freedom.

Other contributions to Revolutionary literature are Benjamin Franklin's essays from *Poor Richard's Almanac* and satires such as "How to Reduce a Great Empire to a Small One" and "A Letter to Madame Gout."

The Revolutionary period produced great orations such as Patrick Henry's "Speech to the Virginia House of Burgesses" (the "Give me liberty or give me death" speech) and George Washington's "Farewell to the Army of the Potomac." Less memorable are Washington's inaugural addresses, which often strike modern readers as lacking sufficient focus.

The *Declaration of Independence*, the brainchild predominantly of Thomas Jefferson (along with some prudent editing by Ben Franklin), is a prime example of neoclassical writing—balanced, well crafted, and focused.

Epistles include the exquisitely written, moving correspondence between John Adams and Abigail Adams. The poignancy of their separation—she in Boston, he in Philadelphia—is palpable and real.

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The Romantic period

Early American folk tales and the emergence of a distinctly American style of writing constitute the next period, called the Romantic period.

Washington Irving's characters Ichabod Crane and Rip Van Winkle represent a uniquely American folklore devoid of English influences. The characters are indelibly marked by their environment and the superstitions of the New Englander. The early writings of James Fenimore Cooper, including his *Leatherstocking Tales*, provide readers a window into their uniquely American world through stirring accounts of drums along the Mohawk Trail, the French and Indian Wars, the futile British defense of Fort William Henry, and the brutalities of this period. Natty Bumppo, Chingachgook, Uncas, and Magua are unforgettable characters who reflect the American spirit in thought and action.

The poetry of the "Fireside Poets"—James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and John Greenleaf Whittier—was recited by American families and read during the long New England winters. In "The Courtin'," Lowell used Yankee dialect to tell a story. Spellbinding epics by Longfellow (such as *Hiawatha*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, and *Evangeline*) told of adversity, sorrow, and ultimate happiness in a uniquely American fashion. The poem "Snowbound" by Whittier relates the story of a captive family isolated by a blizzard and stresses family closeness.

Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville are the preeminent early American novelists, writing on subjects definitely regional, specific, and American, yet sharing insights about human foibles, fears, loves, doubts, and triumphs.

Hawthorne's writings range from children's stories, such as *The Cricket on the Hearth* series, to adult fare that includes dark, brooding short stories such as "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," "The Devil and Tom Walker," and "Rapunzini's Daughter." Hawthorne's masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter* criticizes the society of hypocritical Puritan New Englanders, who ostensibly left England to establish religious freedom but who became entrenched in judgmental finger-wagging. The Puritans in the novel ostracize Hester Prynne and condemn her child, Pearl, as a child of Satan. Great love, sacrifice, loyalty, suffering, and related epiphanies add universality to this tale. *The House of the Seven Gables* deals with kept secrets, loneliness, societal pariahs, and the triumph of love over horrible wrongs.

Herman Melville's great opus *Moby Dick* follows a crazed Captain Ahab on his Homeric odyssey to conquer the great white whale that has outwitted him and his whaling crews time and again. The whale has even taken Ahab's leg and, according to Ahab, wants all of him. Melville paints in painstaking detail and with insider knowledge the harsh life of a whaler out of New Bedford by way of Nantucket.

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Read about the life and works of Herman Melville:

<http://www.melville.org/>

For those readers who don't want to learn about every detail of the whaler's rigging, Melville offers up the succinct tale of *Billy Budd* and his Christ-like sacrifice to the black-and-white maritime laws on the high seas. In *Billy Budd*, an accident results in the death of one of the ship's officers, a slug of a fellow who had taken a dislike to the young, affable, shy Billy. Captain Vere must hang Billy for the death of Claggert but knows that his punishment is not just. However, an example must be given to the rest of the crew so that discipline can be maintained.

Edgar Allan Poe creates a distinctly American version of romanticism with his 16-syllable lines in "The Raven," the classical "To Helen," and his Gothic "Annabelle Lee." The horror short story can be said to originate from Poe's pen. "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Masque of the Red Death" are exemplary short stories. In addition, the genre of detective story emerges with Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue."

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Emerson's elegantly-crafted essays and war poetry still validate several important universal truths. Probably most remembered for his address to Thoreau's Harvard graduating class, "The American Scholar," Emerson defined the qualities of hard work and intellectual spirit required of Americans in their growing nation.

The transition between Romanticism and Realism

The Civil War period ushered in the poignant poetry of Walt Whitman and his homage to all who suffered from the ripple effects of war and presidential assassination. His "Come Up from the Fields, Father," about a Civil War soldier's death and his family's reaction, and "When Lilacs Last in the Courtyard Bloom'd," about the effects of Abraham Lincoln's death on the poet and the nation, should be required reading in any American literature course. Further, his *Leaves of Grass* gave America its first truly unique poetry form.

Emily Dickinson, like Walt Whitman, left her literary fingerprints on a vast array of poems, all but three of which were never published in her lifetime. Her themes of introspection and attention to nature's details and wonders are, by any measurement, world-class works. Her posthumous recognition reveals the timeliness of her work. American writing had most certainly arrived!

Find more sites about American literature:

<http://www.wsu.edu/~campbell/amlit/sites.htm>

Mark Twain also left giant footprints on the American literary landscape with his unique blend of tall tale and fable. “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” and “The Man who Stole Hadleyburg” are epitomes of short story writing. With regard to the novel, Twain again rose above others by his bold, still-disputed, oft-banned *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which examines such taboo subjects as a white person’s love of a slave, the issue of leaving children with abusive parents, and the outcomes of family feuds. Written partly in dialect and southern vernacular, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is touted by some as the greatest American novel.

The Realistic period

The late nineteenth century saw a reaction against the tendency of Romantic writers to look at the world through rose-colored glasses. Writers like Frank Norris (*The Pit*) and Upton Sinclair (*The Jungle*) used their novels to decry deplorable working conditions in slaughterhouses and wheat mills.

In *The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane wrote of the daily sufferings of the common soldier in the Civil War. **Realistic writers** wrote of common, ordinary people and events using realistic detail to reveal the harsh realities of life. They broached taboos by creating protagonists whose environments often destroyed them. In contrast, **Romantic writers** created protagonists whose indomitable wills helped them rise above adversity. Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* deals with a young woman forced into prostitution to survive. In “The Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” Ambrose Bierce relates the unfortunate hanging of a Confederate soldier.

Short stories such as Bret Harte’s “The Outcasts of Poker Flat” and Jack London’s “To Build a Fire” deal with unfortunate people whose luck in life has run out. Many writers, subclassified as **naturalists**, believed that man was subject to a fate over which he had no control.

Contemporary American literature

Twentieth-century American writing can be divided into the following three genres: drama, fiction, and poetry.

American drama

The greatest and most prolific of American playwrights include the following:

- Eugene O’Neill, who wrote *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and *Desire Under the Elms*
- Arthur Miller, author of *The Crucible*, *All My Sons*, and *Death of a Salesman*

Read more about Upton Sinclair:

http://www.online-literature.com/upton_sinclair/

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- Tennessee Williams, author of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- Edward Albee, who wrote *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Three Tall Women*, and *A Delicate Balance*

American fiction

The renowned American novelists include the following authors, who wrote the works listed:

- Eudora Welty, *The Optimist's Daughter*
- John Updike, *Rabbit Run* and *Rabbit Redux*
- Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* and *Elmer Gantry*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night*
- Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
- William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*
- Bernard Malamud, *The Fixer* and *The Natural*

American poetry

The poetry of the twentieth century is multifaceted, as represented by Edna St. Vincent Millay, Marianne Moore, Richard Wilbur, Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, and Rita Dove. One of the most well-loved twentieth-century American poets is Robert Frost. His New England motifs of snowy evenings, birches, apple picking, stone-wall mending, hired hands, and nature relate universal truths through exquisite diction, polysyllabic words, and rare allusions to either mythology or the Bible.

Review a timeline of British literature:

http://www.studyguide.org/brit_lit_timeline.htm

British Literature

Anglo-Saxon period

The Anglo-Saxon period spans six centuries but produced only a smattering of literature. The first British epic is *Beowulf*, anonymously written by Christian monks many years after the events in the narrative supposedly occurred. This Teutonic saga relates the triumph over monsters by the hero, Beowulf. A shorter poem titled “The Seafarer,” along with some history and riddles, comprises the rest of the Anglo-Saxon canon.

Medieval period

The medieval period introduced Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English literature, whose *Canterbury Tales* are written in the vernacular, or street language, of

England rather than in Latin. Thus the tales are said to be the first true work of British literature.

Next, Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* brought together extant tales from Europe concerning the legendary King Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere, and the Knights of the Round Table. This work is the generative work that gave rise to the many Arthurian legends that stir the chivalric imagination.

Renaissance and Elizabethan periods

The Renaissance period, synonymous with William Shakespeare, begins with the introduction of the Petrarchan or Italian sonnet into England. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Philip Sydney wrote English versions of this form. Next, Sir Edmund Spenser invented a variation of the Italian sonnet form, aptly called the Spenserian sonnet. His masterpiece is the epic *The Faerie Queene*, honoring Queen Elizabeth I's reign. He also wrote books on the Red Cross Knight and St. George and the Dragon and wrote a series of Arthurian adventures. Spenser was dubbed the "poet's poet." He created a nine-line stanza—eight lines iambic pentameter and an extra-footed ninth line—called an *alexandrine*.

William Shakespeare, often called the Bard of Avon, wrote 154 sonnets, 39 plays, and two long narrative poems. The sonnets are justifiably called the greatest sonnet sequence in all of literature. Shakespeare dispensed with the octave/sestet format of the Italian sonnet and invented his three quatrains, one heroic couplet format.

Shakespeare's plays are divided into comedies, history plays, and tragedies. Great lines from these plays are more often quoted than those of any other author. The Big Four tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*—are acknowledged to be the most brilliant examples of this genre.

Seventeenth century

John Milton's devout Puritanism was the wellspring of his creative genius, which marked the close of the remarkable productivity of the English Renaissance. His social commentary in such works as *Aereopagitica* and *Samson Agonistes*, along with his elegant sonnets, would be enough to solidify his stature as a great writer. But it is his masterpiece *Paradise Lost*, based in part on the Book of Genesis, that places Milton in the company of a handful of the most renowned writers of all time. Many feel that *Paradise Lost*, written in balanced, elegant neoclassic form, truly does justify the ways of God to man.

The greatest allegory about man's journey to the Celestial City (Heaven) is found in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written at the end of the English Renaissance by John Bunyan. *The Pilgrim's Progress* describes virtues and vices personified. This work was for a long time second only to the Bible in numbers of copies printed and sold.

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The Jacobean Age gave us the marvelously witty and cleverly constructed conceits of John Donne's metaphysical sonnets as well as his insightful meditations and his version of sermons or homilies. "Ask not for whom the bell tolls" and "No man is an island unto himself" are famous epigrams from Donne's *Meditations*. His most famous conceit is that which compares lovers to a footed compass, traveling seemingly separately but always leaning toward one another and conjoined, in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."

Eighteenth century

The Restoration and Enlightenment periods of the eighteenth century reflected the political turmoil brought about by the regicide of Charles I, the Interregnum Puritan government of Oliver Cromwell, and the restoration of the monarchy to England by the coronation of Charles II, who had been given refuge by the French King Louis XIV. During this time Neoclassicism became the preferred writing style, especially for Alexander Pope. New genres, evidenced in works such as *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, the novels of Daniel Defoe, the periodical essays and editorials of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, and Alexander Pope's mock epic *The Rape of the Lock*, demonstrate the diversity of expression during this time.

Writers who followed were contemporaries of Dr. Samuel Johnson, the lexicographer of *The Dictionary of the English Language*. Fittingly, this Age of Johnson, which encompasses James Boswell's biography of Dr. Johnson, Robert Burns' Scottish dialect and regionalism in his evocative poetry, and the mystical pre-Romantic poetry of William Blake, ushered in the Romantic age and its revolution against neoclassicism.

Romantic period

The Romantic age encompasses what is known as the First Generation Romantics, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who collaborated on *Lyrical Ballads*, which defines and exemplifies the tenets of the Romantic style of writing. The Second Generation includes George Gordon, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. These poets wrote sonnets, odes, epics, and narrative poems, most dealing with homage to nature.

Other famous works by Wordsworth include "Intimations on Immortality" and "The Prelude." Byron's satirical epic *Don Juan* and his autobiographical *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are irreverent, witty, self-deprecating, and cuttingly critical of other writers and critics.

Shelley's odes and sonnets are remarkable for their sensory imagery. Keats' sonnets, odes, and longer narrative poem *The Eve of St. Agnes* are remarkable for their

Read more about the Romantic period:

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/welcome.htm>

introspection considering the tender age of the poet, who died when he was only twenty-five. In fact, all of the Second Generation writers died before their time. Wordsworth, who lived to be eighty, outlived them all, including Coleridge, his friend and collaborator.

Others who wrote during the Romantic age are the essayist Charles Lamb and the novelist Jane Austen. The Brontë sisters, Charlotte and Emily, wrote one novel each. Their two novels are noted as two of the finest ever written: *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Mary Anne Evans, also known as George Eliot, wrote several important novels: her masterpiece *Middlemarch*, *Silas Marner*, *Adam Bede*, and *Mill on the Floss*.

Nineteenth century

The Victorian period is remarkable for the diversity and proliferation of work. Poets who are typified as Victorians include Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who wrote *Idylls of the King*, twelve narrative poems about the Arthurian legend; and Robert Browning, who wrote chilling, dramatic monologues such as “My Last Duchess” as well as long poetic narratives such as *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Browning’s wife Elizabeth wrote two major works, the epic feminist poem *Aurora Leigh* and the deeply moving and provocative *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, in which she details her deep love for Robert and his startling, to her, reciprocation.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Catholic priest, wrote poetry using sprung rhythm. A.E. Housmann, Matthew Arnold, and the Pre-Raphaelites, especially the brother-and-sister duo Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Rossetti, contributed much to the Victorian era poetic scene. The Pre-Raphaelites, a group of nineteenth-century English painters, poets, and critics, reacted against Victorian materialism and the neoclassical conventions of academic art by producing earnest, quasi-religious works. Medieval and early Renaissance painters up to the time of the Italian painter Raphael inspired the group.

During the Victorian Period, Robert Louis Stevenson, the great Scottish novelist, wrote his adventure/history lessons for young adults. Victorian prose ranges from the incomparable, keenly woven plot structures of Charles Dickens to the deeply moving Dorset/Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy, in which women are repressed and life is more struggle than euphoria. Rudyard Kipling wrote about colonialism in India in works such as *Kim* and *The Jungle Book*, which recreate exotic locales and dissect the Raj, the British colonial government during Queen Victoria’s reign. Victorian drama is a product mainly of Oscar Wilde, whose satirical masterpiece *The Importance of Being Earnest* farcically details and lampoons Victorian social mores.

Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, and George Eliot are important writers from the Romantic Age.

Read more about the Victorian era:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/>

During the Victorian period, Robert Louis Stevenson, the great Scottish novelist, wrote his adventure/history lessons for young adults.

Twentieth century

The early twentieth century is represented mainly by the towering achievements of George Bernard Shaw's dramas: *St. Joan*, *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, and *Arms and the Man*, to name a few. Twentieth-century novelists are too numerous to list, but some of the greatest include Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Nadine Gordimer, Graham Greene, George Orwell, and D.H. Lawrence.

Twentieth-century poets of renown and merit include W. H. Auden, Robert Graves, T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, Stephen Spender, Dylan Thomas, Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, and Hugh MacDiarmid. This list is by no means complete.

World Literature

North American literature

North American literature is divided among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Canadian writers of note include feminist Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid's Tale*); Alice Munro, a remarkable short story writer; and W. P. Kinsella, another short story writer whose two major subjects are North American Indians and baseball.

Mexican writers include the 1990 Nobel Prize winning poet Octavio Paz (*The Labyrinth of Solitude*) and feminist Rosario Castellanos (*The Nine Guardians*).

Central American/Caribbean literature

The Caribbean and Central America encompass a vast area and diverse cultures that reflect oppression and colonialism by England, Spain, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands. The Caribbean writers include Samuel Selvon of Trinidad and Armando Valladares of Cuba. Central American authors include dramatist Carlos Solorzano, from Guatemala, whose plays include *Dona Beatriz*, *The Hapless*, *The Magician*, and *The Hands of God*.

South American Literature

Chilean Gabriela Mistral was the first Latin American writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. She is best known for her collection of poetry, *Desolation and Feeling*.

Chile was also home to Pablo Neruda, who in 1971 won the Nobel Prize in Literature for his poetry. His twenty-nine volumes of poetry have been translated into more than 60 languages, attesting to his universal appeal. *Twenty Love Poems* and *Song of Despair* are justly famous. Isabel Allende is carrying on the Chilean literary standards with her acclaimed novel *House of Spirits*. Argentine Jorge Luis

*The Norton Anthology
of World Literature:*

[http://www.wwnorton.com/
college/english/nawol/](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nawol/)

Borges is considered by many literary critics to be the most important writer of his century from South America. His collection of short stories, *Ficciones*, brought him universal recognition. Also from Argentina, Silvina Ocampo, a collaborator with Borges on a collection of poetry, is famed for her poetry and short story collections, which include *The Fury* and *The Days of the Night*.

Horacio Quiroga represents Uruguay, and Brazil's Joao Guimaraes Rosa wrote the novel *The Devil to Pay*, considered by many to be first-rank world literature.

Continental European literature

Continental European literature expands the worlds of students and broadens their exposure to different cultures and values. This category as discussed below excludes British literature, which was covered previously.

Germany

German poet and playwright Friedrich von Schiller is best known for his history plays *William Tell* and *The Maid of Orleans*. He is a leading literary figure in Germany's Golden Age of Literature. Also from Germany, Rainer Maria Rilke, the great lyric poet, is one of the poets of the unconscious or stream of consciousness style. Other famous German authors include Herman Hesse (*Siddhartha*), Gunter Grass (*The Tin Drum*), and the great German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Scandinavia

Scandinavian literature includes the works of Hans Christian Andersen of Denmark, who advanced the fairy tale genre with such wistful tales as "The Little Mermaid" and "Thumbelina."

The social commentary of Henrik Ibsen of Norway startled the world through drama, exploring such issues as feminism (*The Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*) and the effects of sexually-transmitted diseases (*The Wild Duck* and *Ghosts*).

Sweden's Selma Lagerlof was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her novels include *Gosta Berling's Saga* and the world-renowned *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, a children's work.

Russia

Russian literature is vast and monumental. Who has not heard of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* or of Count Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*? These novels are examples of psychological realism. Dostoyevsky's influence on modern writers cannot be overstressed.

Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is a sweeping account of the invasion of Russia and Napoleon's taking of Moscow. This novel is called the national novel of Russia. Further advancing Tolstoy's greatness is his ability to create realistic and unforgettable female characters, especially Natasha in *War and Peace* and Anna in *Anna*

Read more about
Henrik Ibsen:

http://www.theatredatabase.com/19th-century/henrik_ibsen_001.html

Karenina. The Russian Alexander Pushkin is famous for great short stories; Anton Chekhov for drama (*Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*); and Yevgeny Yevtushenko for poetry (*Babi Yar*). Boris Pasternak won the Nobel Prize (*Dr. Zhivago*). Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (*The Gulag Archipelago*) returned to Russia after years of expatriation in Vermont. Ilya Varshavsky, who creates fictional societies that are dystopias, or the opposite of utopias, represents the genre of science fiction.

France

France boasts a multifaceted canon of great literature that is universal in scope and that almost always champions some social cause. Examples include the poignant short stories of Guy de Maupassant; the fantastic poetry of Charles Baudelaire (*Fleurs du Mal*); the groundbreaking lyrical poetry of Rimbaud and Verlaine; and the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre (*No Exit*, *The Flies*, and *Nausea*), Andre Malraux (*The Fall*), and Albert Camus's (*The Stranger* and *The Plague*), the recipient of the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Drama in France is best represented by Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* and the neoclassical dramas of Racine and Corneille. Feminist writers include Simone de Beauvoir and Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette, known for her short stories and novels. The great French novelists include André Gide, Honoré de Balzac (*Cousin Bette*), Stendel (*The Red and the Black*), and Alexandre Dumas (*The Three Musketeers* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*). Victor Hugo is the Charles Dickens of French literature, having penned the masterpieces *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Misérables*. The stream of consciousness of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and the Absurdist theatre of Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco (*The Rhinoceros*) attest to the groundbreaking genius of the French writers.

Slavic nations

Austrian writer Franz Kafka (*The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle*) is considered by many to be the literary voice of the first half of the twentieth century. Poet Vaclav Havel represents the Czech Republic. Slovakia produced dramatist Karel Capek (*R.U.R.*), and Romania is represented by Elie Wiesel (*Night*), a Nobel Prize winner.

Spain

Spain's great writers include Miguel de Cervantes (*Don Quixote*) and Juan Ramon Jimenez. The anonymous national epic *El Cid* has been translated into many languages.

Italy

Italy's greatest writers include Virgil (*The Aeneid*), Giovanni Boccaccio (*The Decameron*), Dante Alighieri (*The Divine Comedy*), and the more contemporary Alberto Moravia.

Read more about Jean Paul Sartre:

http://www.users.muohio.edu/shermalw/honors_2001_fall/honors_papers_2001/detwilerj_Sartre.htm

Ancient Greece

Greece will always be foremost in literary stature because of Homer's epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. No one except Shakespeare is more often cited. The works of Plato and Aristotle in philosophy; of Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles in tragedy; and of Aristophanes in comedy further solidify Greece's preeminence. Greece is the cradle not only of democracy but of literature as well.

African literature

African literary greats include South Africans Nadine Gordimer (winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature) and Peter Abrahams (author of *Tell Freedom: Memories of Africa*, an autobiography of life in Johannesburg). Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*) and the poet Wole Soyinka hail from Nigeria. Mark Mathabane wrote an autobiography titled *Kaffir Boy* about growing up in South Africa. Naguib Mahfouz of Egypt and Doris Lessing of Rhodesia—now Zimbabwe—write about race relations in their respective countries. Lessing won the 2007 Nobel Prize for literature. Because of her radical politics, Lessing was once banned from her homeland and the Union of South Africa. Also banned was Alan Paton, whose seemingly simple story *Cry, the Beloved Country* brought the plight of blacks and whites living under apartheid to the rest of the world.

Far East literature

The works of many modern Asian writers are now being translated for the Western reading public. India's Krishan Chandar has authored more than 300 stories. Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 (*Song Offerings*). R. K. Narayan, India's most famous writer (*The Guide*), is interested in mythology and the legends of India. Santha Rama Rau's work *Gifts of Passage* is the true story of her life in a British school, where she tries to preserve her Indian culture and traditional home life.

Revered as Japan's most famous female author, Fumiko Hayashi (*Drifting Clouds*) by the time of her death had written more than 270 literary works.

In 1968, the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Yasunari Kawabata (*The Sound of the Mountain, The Snow Country*). His *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories* take the essentials of haiku poetry and transform them into the short story genre.

Katai Tayama (*The Quilt*) is touted as the father of the Japanese confessional novel. His works, characterized as naturalism, are definitely not for the squeamish. The "slice of life" psychological writings of Ryunosuke Akutagawa gained him acclaim in the Western world. His short stories, especially "Rashamon" and "In a Grove," are greatly praised for style as well as content.

China, too, has given much to the literary world. Li Po, the T'ang dynasty poet from the Chinese Golden Age, shared his interest in folklore by preserving the

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