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ПРАКТИКУМ ПО АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

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В практикуме по американской литературе для студентов всех форм обучения по специальности 050303 используются тексты американских авторов разных литературных жанров XVIII – XX вв.. Пособие состоит из 4 глав. Тематика каждой главы соответствует новому периоду развития американской литературы, соблюдается хронологический принцип рассмотрения материала.

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Highlights of American Literature

THE FIRST PERIOD IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

National beginnings

Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. For almost a century and a half, America was merely a group of colonies scattered along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent. Thus, American literature at first was naturally a colonial literature, by authors who were Englishmen and who thought and wrote as such. John Smith, a soldier of fortune, is credited with initiating American literature. His chief books included A True Relation of . . . Virginia . . . (1608) and The generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles (1624). These volumes were avowedly written to explain colonizing opportunities to Englishmen. In time, each colony was similarly described: Daniel Denton's Brief Description of New York (1670), William Penn's Brief Account of the Province of Pennsylvania (1682), and Thomas Ashe's Carolina (1682) were only a few of many works praising America as a land of economic promise. As a result, their travel accounts became a kind of literature to which many dissatisfied inhabitants of the Old World responded by making the hazardous crossing to America. The overwhelming majority of the immigrants was English, the rest included Dutch, Swedes, Germans, French, Spaniards, Italians, and Portuguese.

In their writings most immigrants stressed the differences of opinion that spurred the colonists to leave their homeland, argued questions of government involving the relationship between church and state. Some immigrants defended the status quo and railed at colonists who sponsored newfangled notions (e.g. Nathaniel Ward in his work The Simple Cobler of Aggawam in America (1647). A variety of counterarguments to such a conservative view were published. The Puritans which were forced to flee from
England, stressed hard work, thrift, piety and sobriety. They were mostly defenders of theocracy—a state with God at its head and with its laws based upon the Bible. These were the Puritan values that dominated much of the earliest American writing, advocating the theocratic ideal and the ideal of hard work (books and sermons by John Cotton, Cotton Mather). Roger Williams stuck to more radical views: in a series of controversial pamphlets he advocated the separation of church and state and the vesting of power in the people and the tolerance of different religious beliefs.

The utilitarian writings of the 17th century included biographies, treatises, accounts of voyages, and sermons. Poetry of the period was strongly affected by Puritan ideology – for example, Michael Wigglesworth was popular for a gloomy poem of Calvinistic belief The Day of Doom (1662). It provides a description of the day of judgment and most people will be sent to Hell.

There was some poetry of another order. Anne Bradstreet of Massachusetts wrote some lyrics published in The Tenth Muse (1650), which movingly conveyed her feelings concerning religion and her family. Ranked still higher by modern critics is a poet whose works were not discovered and published until 1939: Edward Taylor, an English-born minister and physician who lived in Boston and Westfield, Massachusetts. Less touched by gloom than the typical Puritan, Taylor wrote lyrics that showed his delight in Christian belief and experience.

On the whole, 17th-century American writings were in the manner of British writings of the same period. John Smith wrote in the tradition of geographic literature, Anne Bradstreet's poetic style was derived from a long line of British poets, including Spenser and Sidney. Edward Taylor was in the tradition of such Metaphysical poets as George Herbert and John Donne.

The beginning of the 18-th century witnessed differences that had been growing between American and British political concepts. As the colonists moved
to the belief that rebellion was inevitable, fought the bitter war, and worked to found the new nation's government, they were influenced by a number of very effective political writers, with one figure looming above all — **Benjamin Franklin.** His works appealed to the readers by easily understood language and practical arguments. The idea that common sense was a good guide was clear in his popular *Poor Richard's almanac*, which Franklin edited between 1732 and 1757 and filled with prudent and witty aphorisms purportedly written by uneducated but experienced Richard Saunders. Franklin’s *Autobiography*, written between 1771 and 1788, is a record of his rise from “rags to riches” and it offers worldly wise suggestions for future success.

Another key figure of the period was **Thomas Jefferson**, an influential political writer during and after the war. The merits of his great summary, *The Declaration of Independence*, consisted, as James Madison pointed out, “in a lucid communication of human rights . . . in a style and tone appropriate to the great occasion, and to the spirit of the American people.” In U.S. history the Declaration of Independence is document that was approved by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, and that announced the separation of 13 North American British colonies from Great Britain. It explained why the Congress on July 2 “unanimously” by the votes of 12 colonies (with New York abstaining) had resolved that “these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be Free and Independent States.” The Declaration of Independence not only announced the birth of a new nation, but also set forth a philosophy of human freedom that would become a dynamic force throughout the entire world. The Declaration draws upon French and English Enlightenment political philosophy, but one influence in particular stands out: John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government*. Locke took conceptions of the traditional rights of Englishmen and universalized them into the natural rights of all humankind. The Declarations familiar opening passage echoes Locke’s social-contract theory of government:
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

In the Declaration, Jefferson linked Locke’s principles directly to the situation in the colonies. To fight for American independence was to fight for a government based on popular consent in place of a government by a king who had “combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws...” Only a government based on popular consent could secure natural rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Thus, to fight for American independence was to fight on behalf of one’s own natural rights. If the right of revolution cannot be established on historical grounds, it nevertheless rests solidly upon ethical ones. The right of the colonists to government ultimately of their own choice is valid.

Benjamin Franklin

Task: Choose any of the sayings of Poor Richard from Poor Richard’s Almanac and develop the thought of the saying in a short essay or in a short poem or verse.

1. “Since thou art not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour.”
2. “Constant dropping wears away stones.”
3. “If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”
4. “There will be sleeping enough in the grave.”
5. “Laziness travels so slowly, that Poverty soon overtakes him.”
6. “He that lives upon hope will die fasting.”
7. “God helps them who help themselves.”
8. “Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship.”

Are the epigrams of Poor Richard universal truths, or merely guides for Franklin’s time and, therefore, not applicable to present-day life? Give your grounds.

From The Autobiography

I had begun in 1733 to study languages; I soon made myself so much a master of the French as to be able to read the books with ease. I then undertook the Italian. An acquaintance, who was also learning it, used often to tempt me to play chess with him. Finding this took up too much of the time I had to spare for study, I at length refused to play any more, unless on this condition, that the victor in every game should have a right to impose a task, either in parts of the grammar to be got by heart, or in translations, etc., which tasks the vanquished was to perform upon honor, before our next meeting. As we played pretty equally, we thus beat one another into that language. I afterwards with a little painstaking, acquired as much of the Spanish as to read their books also.

I have already mentioned that I had only one year’s instruction in a Latin school, and that when very young, after which I neglected that language entirely. But, when I had attained an acquaintance with the French, Italian, and Spanish, I was surprised to find, on looking over a Latin Testament, that I understood so much more of that language than I had imagined, which encouraged me to apply myself again to the study of it, and I met with more success, as those preceding languages had greatly smoothed my way.

From these circumstances, I have thought that there is some inconsistency in our common mode of teaching languages. We are told that it is proper to begin first with the Latin, and, having acquired that, it will be more easy to attain those modern languages which are derived from it; and yet we do not begin with the Greek, in order more easily to acquire the Latin. It is true that, if you can clamber and get to the top of a staircase without using the steps, you will
more easily gain them in descending; but certainly, if you begin with the lowest you will with more ease ascend to the top; and I would therefore offer it to the consideration of those who superintend the education of our youth, whether, since many of those who begin with the Latin quit the same after spending some years without having made any great proficiency, and what they have learned becomes almost useless, so that their time has been lost, it would not have been better to have begun with the French, proceeding to the Italian, etc.; for, though after spending the same time they should quit the study of languages and never arrive at the Latin, they would, however, have acquired another tongue or two that, being in modern use, might be serviceable to them in common life.

After ten years' absence from Boston, and having become easy in my circumstances, I made a journey thither to visit my relations, which I could not sooner well afford. In returning, I called at Newport to see my brother, then settled there with his printing house. Our former differences were forgotten, and our meeting was very cordial and affectionate. He was fast declining in his health, and requested of me that, in case of his death which he apprehended not far distant, I would take home his son, then but ten years of age, and bring him up to the printing business. This I accordingly performed, sending him a few years to school before I took him into the office. His mother carried on the business till he was grown up, when I assisted him with an assortment of new types, those of his father being in a manner worn out. Thus it was that I made my brother ample amends for the service I had deprived him of by leaving him so early.

In 1736 I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of four years old, by the smallpox, taken in the common way. I long regretted bitterly, and still regret that I had not given it to him by inoculation. This I mention for the sake of parents who omit that operation on the supposition that they should never forgive themselves if a child died under it; my example showing that the regret may be the same either way, and that, therefore, the safer should be chosen.
Our club, the Junto, was found so useful, and afforded such satisfaction to the members, that several were desirous of introducing their friends, which could not well be done without exceeding what we had settled as a convenient number, viz., twelve. We had from the beginning made it a rule to keep our institution a secret, which was pretty well observed; the intention was to avoid applications of improper persons for admittance, some of whom, perhaps, we might find it difficult to refuse. I was one of those who were against any addition to our number, but, instead of it, made in writing a proposal that every member separately should endeavor to form a subordinate club, with the same rules respecting queries, etc., and without informing them of the connection with the Junto. The advantages proposed were, the improvement of so many more young citizens by the use of our institutions; our better acquaintance with the general sentiments of the inhabitants, on any occasion, as the Junto member might propose what queries we should desire, and was to report to the Junto what passed in his separate club; the promotion of our particular interests in business by more extensive recommendation, and the increase of our influence in public affairs, and our power of doing good by spreading through the several clubs the sentiments of the Junto...

Post-reading activities:

1. What role did the game of chess play in Franklin’s study of foreign languages? What languages did Franklin learn? How did learning these languages help him?

2. What is Franklin’s idea regarding how languages should be taught?

3. In what way did Franklin repay his brother for the problem he caused him in earlier years?

4. What was Franklin’s reaction to inoculation against smallpox? Why did he feel the way he did?
5. According to Franklin, what were the advantages of forming additional clubs subordinate to the Junto?

**American Renaissance**

The authors who began to come to prominence in the 1830s and were active until about the end of the Civil War — the humorists, the classic New Englanders, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and others — did their work in a new spirit, and their achievements were of a new sort. In part, this was because they were in some way influenced by the broadening democratic concepts that in 1829 triumphed in Andrew Jackson's inauguration as president. In part, it was because, in this Romantic period of emphasis upon native scenes and characters in many literatures, they put much of America into their books.

**Topics for discussion:**

1. What historical changes did the United States go through in the period under discussion? Dwell upon major political and social events that constitute the literary background of the period.

2. Romanticism in American literature: characteristics of the trend, major representatives and their works. What were the offshoots of American romanticism? Define the role of the supernatural in American romantic literature.

3. Dwell upon literary activity and achievements of a group of New England writers associated with Harvard and Cambridge, Massachusetts—the New England Brahmins. Explain the name of the group. What was their political and artistic creed? How did they reflect these ideas in their works?

4. The Transcendentalists: their literary method, philosophy, poetic peculiarities. What problems and values did they dwell upon in their works? Name major representatives of American transcendentalism and their contribution into national literature.
Rip Van Winkle

Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains... At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant (may he rest in peace!)... In the same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived, many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple, good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor and an obedient, hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain-lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village,
too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip’s composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar’s lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody’s business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some out-door work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighborhood.
His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes, of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother’s heels, equipped in a pair of his father’s cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip’s sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master’s going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods; but what courage can withstand the ever-enduring and all-besetting terrors of a woman’s tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a
sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long, lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to he daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the
fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation...

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. “Poor Wolf,” he would say, “thy mistress leads thee a dog’s life of it, but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!” Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master’s face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind of a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel-shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and reechoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent hut majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.
As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle, Rip Van Winkle!" He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air: "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" —at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place; but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short, square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion,—a cloth jerkin strapped around the waist—several pair of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulders a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving one another, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long, rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder- showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees
shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had labored on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity. On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at ninepins. They were dressed in a quaint, outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar; one had a large beard, broad face, and small piggish eyes; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlor of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that, though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed, statue-like gaze, and such strange,
uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip’s awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when rio eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hollands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. ~ thought Rip, “I have not slept here all night.” He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woe-begone party at ninepins—the “Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!” thought Rip, “what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?”

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel encrusted with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roisters of the mountains had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him, and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to he seen.
He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape-vines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high, impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his footsteps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted
with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long! He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—everything was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been. Rip was sorely perplexed. "That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly!"

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed. "My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order, it was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame— all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and
children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn, but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there- now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes;— all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, General Washington.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about, it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. in place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens, elections, members of congress, liberty, Bunker's Hill, heroes of seventy-six, and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long, grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon
attracted the attention of the tavern-politicians. They crowded round him, eying him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired "On which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "Whether he was Federal or Democrat?" Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, "What brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels; and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?" "Gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the King, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the by-standers - "A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they?—name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too."
“Where’s Brom Dutcher?”

“Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of stony Point - others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony’s Nose. I don’t know—he never came back again.”

“Where’s Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?”

“He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in congress.”

Rip’s heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war - congress - stony Point - he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, “Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?” “Oh, Rip Van Winkle!” exclaimed two or three, “oh, to be sure! that’s Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree.”

Rip looked, and he beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain; apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name.

“God knows,” exclaimed he, at his wit’s end; “I’m not myself—I’m somebody else—that’s me yonder—no—that’s somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they’ve changed my gun, and everything’s changed, and I’m changed, and I can’t tell what’s my name, or who I am!”

The by-standers began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some
precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool; the old man won’t hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father’s name?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it’s twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since,—his dog came home without him; hut whether he shot himself; or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice: "Where is your mother?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a bloodvessel in a fit of passion at a New England peddler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he — ‘Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now!—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor. Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip’s story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks: and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed
down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head - upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Halfmoon; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at ninepins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout, cheery farmer for a husband whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor.
Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn-door, and was reverenced as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war,—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England,—and that, instead of being a subject of his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United states. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunderstorm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of ninepins; and it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hands heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.
Post-reading activities:

1. Describe the mode of life led by Rip Van Winkle. Why did he lead such an idle life? Who was his sole domestic adherent? Who did he always try to escape? How did people in the village treat him and why?

2. Give character sketches of: Rip, his wife, Derrick Van Bummel, Nicholas Vedder.

3. Where did inhabitants of the village discuss their opinions on political matters? Are these public gatherings depicted ironically? Prove Your viewpoint.

4. Retell the passage illustrating the incident once happened to Rip in the mountains paying attention to the following details: the reason he was there; his encounter with the strange creatures; their appearance; their occupation; their reaction to his coming; a beverage they treated him with; his after-sleep sensations.

5. What changed in the village in the meantime? On his return, why was he suspected of being disloyal? What has happened to Rip’s acquaintances? How long has he been absent? Who was the first person to recognize him?

6. Who was Judith Gardenier? What two explanations were offered by her for the disappearance of Rip Van Winkle? What did she tell Rip about his wife?

7. Describe his life in the village that followed his awakening.

8. What political events constitute the backdrop of the story? How are they intertwined with the plot?

9. What is your opinion of Rip Van Winkle? Is he a tragic or a comic figure? Could he symbolize man’s desire to flee from responsibility? Support Your answer.

10. If You slept for twenty years, what changes would You expect to see in the society?

Edgar Allan Poe

The Raven
Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore -
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door -
"Tis some visiter", I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door -
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; - vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow - sorrow for the lost Lenore -
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore -

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door -
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door; -

This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir", said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you" - here I opened wide the door; -

Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"
   Merely this and nothing more.
Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
   Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely", said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
   Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore -
   Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore; -
   'Tis the wind and nothing more!"
Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
   In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
   But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door -
   Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door -
   Perched, and sat, and nothing more.
Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
   By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou", I said, "art sure no craven,
   Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore -
   Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
   Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."
Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
   Though its answer little meaning - little relevancy bore;
   For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door -
   Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
   With such name as "Nevermore."
   But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.

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Nothing farther then he uttered - not a feather then he fluttered -
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before -
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."

Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless", said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore -

Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore

Of 'Never - nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore -
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

Thus I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,

She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch", I cried, "thy God hath lent thee - by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite - respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."
"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil! -
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted -
On this home by Horror haunted - tell me truly, I implore -
Is there - is there balm in Gilead? - tell me - tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us - by that God we both adore -
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore -
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting -
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! - quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted - nevermore!

Post-reading activities:

1. What are the major characters of the poem? What event constitutes the background of the poem? What are the poet's feelings at the beginning?
2. Who appears while the poet is napping? How does the Raven appear?
3. What is the poet speaking about to the Raven? How does the Raven respond to it? How does his reply fit within the framework of the narration?

4. Dwell upon the supernatural element in the poem? Why is it given so much attention to? How does it correspond to the Romantic tradition?

5. How would You define the main idea of the poem? What does it explore?

6. Learn the poem by heart.

Walt Whitman

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his
as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures
his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready
for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him
in his boat, the deck-hand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter’s song, the plowboy’s on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her
and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night
the party of young fellows, robust,
friendly,
singing with open mouths their strong
melodious songs.

Post-reading activities:
1. How many different singers does Whitman hear? What do the songs represent?
2. Does the poem have anything to say about happiness? If so, what?
3. How does this poem reflect faith in democracy and the people?
4. What other types of workers would you have to add to Whitman’s picture to bring it up to date?

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

A PSALM OF LIFE

What the Heart of the Young Man said to the Psalmist

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream! —
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each tomorrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.
In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!
Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act, — act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!
Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;
Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Post-reading activities:

1. What romantic features can a reader reveal in the poem? What does the poem proclaim?

2. On the basis of the poem give characteristics of: human life, human soul, destiny, time. Do you agree with this viewpoint?
3. Research the poem in regard of a dichotomy: eternity – ephemerality. What is eternal? What is ephemeral? What is Longfellow’s advice to step into eternity?

4. What is the philosophy of the poem? Do you consider it sounds topical in a contemporary setting?

One of the most important influences in the period was that of the Transcendentalists, centered in the village of Concord, Massachusetts, and including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, George Ripley, and Margaret Fuller. Philosophically Transcendentalism is defined as ‘the recognition in man of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining knowledge transcending the reach of the senses.’ A sharp distinction was drawn between the “Understanding” (the rational faculty) and the “Reason” (the suprarational or intuitive faculty). Thus, the “Reason” was regarded by the Transcendentalists as much more authoritative in spiritual matters than the “Understanding”. Therefore, intuition was glorified and all external religious authority was repudiated. Other influential transcendentalist concepts were that nature was ennobling, men were better for being out in the woods, commerce was degrading and a life spent in business was a wasted life. The Transcendentalists contributed to the founding of a new national culture based on native elements. They advocated an idealistic system of thought based on a belief in the essential unity of all creation, the innate goodness of man, and the supremacy of insight over logic and experience for the revelation of the deepest truths. In their religious quest, the Transcendentalists rejected the conventions of 18th-century thought which developed into a repudiation of the whole established order. They were leaders in such contemporary reform movements as anarchistic, socialistic, and communistic schemes for living; suffrage for women; better conditions for workers; temperance for all; modifications of dress and diet; the rise of free religion; educational innovation; and other humanitarian causes.

Henry David Thoreau

*From Life Without Principle*

Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives.

This world is a place of business. What an infinite bustle! I am awaked almost every night by the panting of the locomotive. It interrupts my dreams. There is no sabbath. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is
nothing but work, work, work. I cannot easily buy a blankbook to write thoughts in; they are commonly ruled for dollars and cents. An Irishman, seeing me making a minute in the fields, took it for granted that I was calculating my wages. If a man was tossed out of a window when an infant, and so made a cripple for life, or scared out of his wits by the Indians, it is regretted chiefly because he was thus incapacitated for—business! I think that there is nothing, not even crime, more opposed to poetry, to philosophy, ay, to life itself, than this incessant business.

There is a coarse and boisterous money-making fellow in the outskirts of our town, who is going to build a bankwall under the hill along the edge of his meadow. The powers have put this into his head to keep him out of mischief, and he wishes me to spend three weeks digging there with him. The result will be that he will perhaps get some more money to hoard, and leave for his heirs to spend foolishly. If I do this, most will commend me as an industrious and hard-working man; but if I choose to devote myself to certain labors which yield more real profit, though but little money, they may be inclined to look on me as an idler: Nevertheless, as I do not need the police of meaningless labor to regulate me, and do not see anything absolutely praiseworthy in this fellow’s undertaking any more than in many an enterprise of our own or foreign governments, however amusing it may be to him or them, I prefer to finish my education at a different school.

If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if a town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down!

Most men would feel insulted if it were proposed to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back, merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now... The ways by which you may get money almost without exception lead downward. To
have done anything by which you earned money merely is to have been truly idle or worse. If the laborer gets no more than the wages which his employer pays him, he is cheated, he cheats himself. If you would get money as a writer or lecturer, you must be popular, which is to go down perpendicularly. Those services which the community will most readily pay for, it is most disagreeable to render. You are paid for being something less than a man. The state does not commonly reward a genius any more wisely. Even the poet-laureate would rather not have to celebrate the accidents of royalty. He must be bribed with a pipe of wine; and perhaps another poet is called away from his muse to gauge that very pipe. As for my own business, even that kind of surveying which I could do with most satisfaction my employers do not want. They would prefer that I should do my work coarsely and not too well, ay, not well enough. When I observe that there are different ways of surveying, my employer commonly asks which will give him the most land, not which is most correct. I once invented a rule for measuring cord-wood, and tried to introduce it in Boston; but the measurer there told me that the sellers did not wish to have their wood measured correctly,—that he was already too accurate for them, and therefore they commonly got their wood measured in Charlestown before crossing the bridge.

The aim of the laborer should be, not to get his living, to get "a good job," but to perform well a certain work; and, even in a pecuniary sense, it would be economy for a town to pay its laborers so well that they would not feel that they were working for low ends, as for a livelihood merely, but for scientific, or even moral ends. Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it...

Perhaps I am more than usually jealous with respect to my freedom. I feel that my connection with and obligation to society are still very slight and transient. Those slight labors which afford me a livelihood, and by which it is allowed that I am to some extent serviceable to my contemporaries, are as yet
commonly a pleasure to me, and I am not often reminded that they are a necessity. So far I am successful. But I foresee that if my wants should be much increased, the labor required to supply them would become a drudgery. If I should sell both my forenoons and afternoons to society, as most appear to do, I am sure that for me there would be nothing left worth living for. I trust that I shall never thus sell my birthright for a mess of pottage. I wish to suggest that a man may be very industrious, and yet not spend his time well. There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living. All great enterprises are self-supporting. The poet, for instance, must sustain his body by his poetry, as a steam planing-mill feeds its boilers with the shavings it makes. You must get your living by loving. But as it is said of the merchants that ninety-seven in a hundred fail, so the life of men generally, tried by this standard, is a failure, and bankruptcy may be surely prophesied.

Merely to come into the world the heir of a fortune is not to be born, but to be still-born, rather. To be supported by the charity of friends, or a government-pension - provided you continue to breathe,- by whatever fine synonyms you describe these relations, is to go into the almshouse. On Sundays the poor debtor goes to church to take an account of stock, and finds, of course, that his outgoes have been greater than his income. In the Catholic Church, especially, they go into chancery, make a clean confession, give up all, and think to start again. Thus men will lie on their backs, talking about the fall of man, and never make an effort to get up.

As for the comparative demand which men make on life, it is an important difference between two, that the one is satisfied with a level success, that his marks can all be hit by point-blank shots, but the other, however low and unsuccessful his life may be, constantly elevates his aim, though at a very slight angle to the horizon. I should much rather be the last man,—though, as the
Orientals say, "Greatness doth not approach him who is forever looking down; and all those who are looking high are growing poor."

It is remarkable that there is little or nothing to be remembered written on the subject of getting a living; how to make getting a living not merely honest and honorable, but altogether inviting and glorious; for if getting a living is not so, then living is not. One would think, from looking at literature, that this question had never disturbed a solitary individual's musings. Is it that men are too much disgusted with their experience to speak of it? The lesson of value which money teaches, which the Author of the Universe has taken so much pains to teach us, we are inclined to skip altogether. As for the means of living, it is wonderful how indifferent men of all classes are about it, even reformers, so called, whether they inherit, or earn, or steal it. I think that Society has done nothing for us in this respect, or at least has undone what she has done. Cold and hunger seem more friendly to my nature than those methods which men have adopted and advise to ward them off.

The title wise is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better how to live than other men?—if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle? Does Wisdom work in a treadmill? or does she teach how to succeed by her example? Is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life? Is she merely the miller who grinds the finest logic? it is pertinent to ask if Plato got his living in a better way or more successfully than his contemporaries,—or did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men? Did he seem to prevail over some of them merely by indifference, or by assuming grand airs? or find it easier to live, because his aunt remembered him in her will? The ways in which most men, get their living, that is, live, are mere make-shifts, and a shirking of the real business of life,—chiefly because they do not know, but partly because they do not mean, any better.
The rush to California, for instance, and the attitude, not merely of merchants, but of philosophers and prophets, so called, in relation to it, reflect the greatest disgrace on mankind. That so many are ready to live by luck, and so get the means of commanding the labor of others less lucky, without contributing any value to society! And that is called enterprise! I know of no more startling development of the immorality of trade, and all the common modes of getting a living. The philosophy and poetry and religion of such a mankind are not worth the dust of a puff-ball. The hog that gets his living by rooting, stirring up the soil so, would be ashamed of such company. If I could command the wealth of all the worlds by lifting my finger, I would not pay such a price for it. Even Mahomet knew that God did not make this world in jest. It makes God to be a moneyed gentleman who scatters a handful of pennies in order to see mankind scramble for them. The world’s raffle! A subsistence in the domains of Nature a thing to be raffled for! What a comment, what a satire, on our institutions! The conclusion will be, that mankind will hang itself upon a tree... And have all the precepts in all the Bibles taught men only this? Did God direct us so to get our living, digging where we never planted,—and He would, perchance, reward us with lumps of gold? God gave the righteous man a certificate entitling him to food and raiment, but the unrighteous man found a facsimile of the same in God’s coffers, and appropriated it, and obtained food and raiment like the former. It is one of the most extensive systems of counterfeiting that the world has seen. I did not know that mankind was suffering for want of gold. I have seen a little of it. I know that it is very malleable, but not so malleable as wit. A grain of gold will gild a great surface, but not so much as a grain of wisdom.

The gold-digger in the ravines of the mountains is as much a gambler as his fellow in the saloons of San Francisco. What difference does it make whether you shake dirt or shake dice? If you win, society is the loser. The gold-digger is the enemy of the honest laborer, whatever checks and compensations there may
be. It is not enough to tell me that you worked hard to get your gold. So does the Devil work hard. The way of transgressors may be hard in many respects. The humblest observer who goes to the mines sees and says that gold-digging is of the character of a lottery; the gold thus obtained is not the same thing with the wages of honest toil. But, practically, he forgets what he has seen, for he has seen only the act, not the principle, and goes into trade there, that is, buys a ticket in what proves another lottery, where the fact is not so obvious.

**Post-reading activities:**

1. Thoreau was a Transcendentalist. What doctrines of Transcendentalism are observable in the excerpt?
2. According to Thoreau, in what way does business control the life and thought of people?
3. Why did Thoreau turn down a job he was offered? Where does he prefer to get his education?
4. What was the attitude toward work commonly held in Thoreau’s day?
5. In his account of the labor of the man hauling a stone, Thoreau implies that the dignity of the man’s labor was lost. Why was this so? Do you agree with Thoreau’s opinion? Why or why not?
6. Thoreau says that “to have done anything by which you earn money merely is to have been truly idle or worse.” What does he mean by this statement?
7. What kind of services is Thoreau referring to when he observes that “the services which the community will most readily pay for are the most disagreeable to render?” Do you feel the same way? Explain.
8. What should the aim of a laborer be? Do you agree that work should be pleasurable and not drudgery?
9. What does Thoreau think about making money? How, in his opinion, is the hunting of gold like gambling? What is his attitude toward gambling?
10. Put down some of Thoreau’s ideas you can agree with. Give your grounds.
LITERATURE IN THE POST-CIVIL WAR PERIOD (UP TO THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR 1865 – 1918)

Topic for discussion: Dwell upon major social, historical, political developments which form the literary background of the period. What impact did they have on literature?

The Civil War was a turning point in U.S. history and a beginning of new ways of living. Industry became increasingly important, factories rose and cities grew, and agrarian preeminence declined. The frontier, which before had always been an important factor in the economic scheme, moved steadily westward and, toward the end of the 19th century, vanished. The rise of modern America was accompanied, naturally, by important developments in literature.

The first group of fiction writers to become popular—the local colorists—took over to some extent the task of portraying sectional groups that had been abandoned by writers of the new humour. Within a brief period, books by pioneers in the movement appeared: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Oldtown Folks* (1869) and Sam Lawson’s *Oldtown Fireside Stories* (1871), delightful vignettes of New England; Bret Harte’s *Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches* (1870), humorous and sentimental tales of California mining camp life. Down into the 20th century, short stories (and a relatively small number of novels) in patterns set by these continued to appear. In time, practically every corner of the country had been portrayed in local-colour fiction: the depictions of Louisiana Creoles by George W. Cable, of Virginia blacks by Thomas Nelson Page, of Georgia blacks by Joel Chandler Harris, of Tennessee mountaineers by Mary Noailles Murfree (Charles Egbert Craddock), of people of New York City by Henry Cuyler Bunner and William Sydney Porter (“O. Henry”). The avowed aim of some of these writers was to portray realistically the lives of various sections and thus to promote understanding in a united nation. These fictional works were transitional to realism since the authors tended to winnow out less glamorous
aspects of life, to develop their stories with sentiment or humour, and to portray common folk sympathetically.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain) was allied with literary comedians and local colorists. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), his best works, which re-created the life of the Mississippi valley in the past, were closest to the work of humorists and local colorists. He had more skill than his teachers in selecting evocative details, and he had a genius for characterization.

On the way to literary realism some American writers moved toward naturalism, a more advanced stage of realism. Some of them were avowed followers of French naturalists led by Émile Zola. Theodore Dreiser, for instance, illustrated his own beliefs by his depictions of characters and unfolding of plots. Holding that men's deeds were “chemical compulsions,” he showed characters unable to direct their actions. Holding also that “the race was to the swift and the battle to the strong,” he showed characters defeated by stronger and more ruthless opponents. His major books included *Sister Carrie* (1900), *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), and—much later—*An American Tragedy* (1925). In literary work Dreiser was the scientist dissecting vast cross-sections of American society with his social observations.

The same tendencies towards critical realism were noticeable in journalism: “muckraking” literature by a group of journalists - critics of America. The typical journalistic crusaders were Ida M. Tarbell (*The History of the Standard Oil Company*) and Lincoln Steffens (*The Shame of the Cities*).

A representative of realism with distinct psychological touch was Henry James, born in New York but later an expatriate in England. Like realists and naturalists of his time, he thought that fiction should reproduce reality. He conceived of reality, however, as twice translated—first, through the author's peculiar experiencing of it and, second, through his unique depicting of it. His
most outstanding novels are *The American* (1877), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). The earliest of these were international novels wherein conflicts arose from relationships between Americans and Europeans—each group with its own characteristics and morals. As time passed, he became increasingly interested in the psychological processes of his characters and in a subtle rendering of their limited insights, their perceptions, and their emotions.

In poetry two outstanding names dominated the period: Sidney Lanier and Emily Dickinson. The former, a talented musician who utilized the rhythms of music and the thematic developments of symphonies in such fine songs as "Corn" (1875), "The Symphony" (1875), and "The Marshes of Glynn" (1878). Distressed, like many of his contemporaries, by changes in American life, he wove his doubts, fears, and suggestions into his richest poems. Another poet of distinction, Emily Dickinson, was a shy, playful, odd personality, she allowed practically none of her writings to be published during her lifetime. Her individual techniques are notable: use of imperfect, or eye, rhymes, avoidance of regular rhythms, and a tendency to pack brief stanzas with cryptic meanings. Like Lanier, she rediscovered the value of conceits for setting forth her thought and feeling. Such poems as "The Snake," "I Like to See It Lap the Miles," "The Chariot," "Farther in Summer than the Birds," and "There's a Certain Slant of Light" represented her unusual talent at its best.

**The rise of Realism**

1. Tell all you know about realism as a literary trend. What are its major characteristics? What do realistic novels of the period focus on? Name the brightest representatives of the trend in American literature and their literary achievements.
2. Dwell upon a topic: the novel as a vehicle of social protest in the post-Civil War period.


Henry James

The Portrait of a Lady

The story so far: Isabel Archer, a young American woman, is invited to England by her eccentric aunt, Mrs. Touchett. In the following passage James describes her character through a flashback.

Isabel Archer was a young person of many theories; her imagination was remarkably active. It had been her fortune to possess a finer mind than most of the persons among whom her lot was cast; to have a larger perception of surrounding fact and to care for knowledge that was tinged with the unfamiliar. It is true that among her contemporaries she passed for a young woman of extraordinary profundity; for these excellent people never withheld their admiration from a reach of intellect of which they themselves were not conscious, and spoke of Isabel as a prodigy of learning, a creature reported to have read the classic authors — in translations... It may be affirmed without delay that Isabel was probably very liable to the sin of self-esteem; she often surveyed with complacency the field of her own nature; she was in the habit of taking for granted, on scanty evidence, that she was right; she treated herself to occasions of homage. Meanwhile her errors and delusions were frequently such as a biographer interested in preserving the dignity of his subject must shrink from specifying. Her thoughts were a tangle of vague outlines which had never been corrected by the judgment of people speaking with authority. In matters of opinion she had her own way, and it had led her into a thousand ridiculous zigzags. At moments she discovered she was grotesquely wrong, and then she treated herself to a week of passionate humility. After this she held her head higher than ever again; for it was
of no use, she had an unquenchable desire to think well of herself... The girl had a
certain nobleness of imagination which rendered her a good many services and
played her a great many tricks, she spent half her time in thinking of beauty and
bravery and magnanimity; she had a fixed determination to regard the world as a
place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action: she held it must be
detestable to be afraid or ashamed. She had an infinite hope that she should never
do anything wrong. She had resented so strongly, after discovering them, her mere
errors of feeling (the discovery always made her tremble as if she had escaped
from a trap which might have caught her and smothered her) that the chance of
inflicting a sensible injury upon another person, presented only as a contingency,
caused her at moments to hold her breath. That always struck her as the worst
thing that could happen to her.

Post-reading activities:
1. What was Isabel Archer's opinion of herself? How do the contemporaries
treat her and why? Could a reader feel an irony?
2. Was Isabel really a person “of extraordinary profundity”? Give your grounds.
3. Which values did she cling to most strongly? In your opinion, what is the
author’s attitude to his heroine? Give reasons for your answer.
4. James was interested in the contrast between the innocence and idealism of
American society and the knowing sophistication of its European counterpart:
which aspects of Isabel’s character would you consider to be idealistic? Explain
why.

How the story continues: Isabel Archer, a beautiful, bright, adventurous
girl with a newly-acquired fortune, although open, honest and ‘free’, in Europe
she feels herself to be culturally inferior, wrapped in all sorts of social
conventions. Being a well-off lady, she has a great number of worthy offers of
marriage, but money for her is not the only motivator in life, it’s mostly a means
of becoming independent. In marriage, she is searching rather for a spiritual
partner than a convenient match. She is distinguished by a sense of her own
sovereignty, her “free spirit,” her refusal to be treated, in the Victorian world,
merely as a marriageable object. After she has rejected several worthy proposals, she makes her choice and marries Gilbert Osmond. Gilbert is a handsome, forty-year-old American who has lived in Europe for a number of years; he is artistic and cultured but morally trivial - a man who 'had done nothing apart from achieving a style'. But to Isabel though he is like a prince. In fact, he marries her for her money. Gradually, she begins to wake up to what sort person she has married and the prison she is in ('the shadows had begun to gather; it was as if Osmond deliberately, almost malignantly had put out the lights one by one.').

She knew of no wrong he had done; he was not violent, he was not cruel: she simply believed he hated her. That was all she accused him of, and the miserable part of it was precisely that it was not a crime, for against a crime she might have found a redress. He had discovered that she was so different, that she was not what he had believed she would prove to be. He had thought at first he could change her, and she had done her best to be what he would like. But she was, after all, herself — she couldn't help that; and now there was no use pretending, wearing a mask or a dress, for he knew her and had made up his mind.

She had effaced herself when he first knew her; she had made herself small, pretending there was less of her than there really was. It was because she had been under the extraordinary charm that he, on his side, had taken pains to put forth. He was not changed; he had not disguised himself, during the year of his courtship, any more than she. But she had seen only half his nature then, as one saw the disk of the moon when it was partly masked by the shadow of the earth. She saw the full moon now — she saw the whole man. ...

He was better than any one else: This supreme conviction had filled her life for months, and enough of it still remained to prove to her that she could not have done otherwise. The finest — in the sense of being the subtlest — manly organism she had ever known had become her property, and the recognition of her having but to put out her hands and take it had been originally a sort of act of devotion. She had not been mistaken about the beauty of his mind; she knew that organ perfectly now. She had lived with it, she had lived in it almost ——
appeared to have become her habitation. If she had been captured it had taken a firm hand to seize her; that reflexion perhaps had some worth. A mind more ingenious, more pliant, more cultivated, more trained to admirable exercises, she had not encountered; and it was this exquisite instrument she had now to reckon with. ...

He said to her one day that she had too many ideas and that she must get rid of them. He had told her that already, before their marriage; but then she had not noticed it: it had come back to her only afterwards. This time she might well have noticed it, because he had really meant it. The words had been nothing superficially; but when in the light of deepening experience she had looked into them they had then appeared portentous. He had really meant it — he would have liked her to have nothing of her own but her pretty appearance. She had known she had too many ideas; she had more even than he had supposed, many more than she had expressed to him when he had asked her to many him. Yes, she had been hypocritical; she had liked him so much. She had too many ideas for herself; but that was just what one married for, to share them with some one else. One couldn’t pluck them up by the roots, though of course one might suppress them, be careful not to utter them. It had not been this, however, his objecting to her opinions; this had been nothing. She had no opinions — none that she would not have been eager to sacrifice in the satisfaction of feeling herself loved for it. What he had meant had been the whole thing — her character, the way she felt, the way she judged. This was what she had kept in reserve; this was what he had not known until he had found himself — with the door closed behind, as it were — set down face to face with it. She had a certain way of looking at life which he took as a personal offence. ...

Hadn’t he assured her that he had no superstitions, no dull limitations, no prejudices that had lost their freshness? Hadn’t he all the appearance of a man living in the open air of the world, indifferent to small considerations, caring only
for truth and knowledge and believing that two intelligent people ought to look for them together and, whether they found them or not, find at least some happiness in the search? He had told her he loved the conventional; but there was a sense in which this seemed a noble declaration. In that sense, that of the love of harmony and order and decency and of all the stately offices of life, she went with him freely, and his warning had contained nothing ominous. But when, as the months had elapsed, she had followed him further and he had led her into the mansion of his own habitation, then, then she had seen where she really was. ...

Between those four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation. Osmond’s beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air; Osmond’s beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small high window and mock at her. Of course it had not been physical suffering; for physical suffering there might have been a remedy. she could come and go; she had her liberty; her husband was perfectly polite. He took himself so seriously; it was something appalling. Under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers. She had taken him seriously, but she had not taken him so seriously as that. How could she — especially when she had known him better? She was to think of him as he thought of himself — as the first gentleman in Europe. So it was that she had thought of him at first, and that indeed was the reason she had married him. But when she began to see what it implied she drew back; there was more in the bond than she had meant to put her name to. It implied a sovereign contempt for every one but some three or four very exalted people whom he envied, and for everything in the world but half a dozen ideas of his own...

He had his ideal, just as she had tried to have hers; only it was strange that people should seek for justice in such different quarters. His ideal was a
conception of high prosperity and propriety, of the aristocratic life, which she now saw that he deemed himself always, in essence at least, to have led. He had never lapsed from it for an hour; he would never have recovered from the shame of doing so. ... Her notion of the aristocratic life was simply the union of great knowledge with great liberty; the knowledge would give one a sense of duty and the liberty a sense of enjoyment. But for Osmond it was altogether a thing of forms, a conscious calculated attitude. He was fond of the old, the consecrated, the transmitted; so was she, but she pretended to do what she chose with it. He had an immense esteem for tradition; he had told her once that the best thing in the world was to have it, but that if one was so unfortunate as not to have it one must immediately proceed to make it. ...

Then it was that her husband's personality, touched as it never had been, stepped forth and stood erect. The things she had said were answered only by his scorn, and she could see he was ineffably ashamed of her. What did he think of her — that she was base, vulgar, ignoble? He at least knew now that she had no traditions! It had not been in his prevision of things that she should reveal such flatness; her sentiments were worthy of a radical newspaper or a Unitarian preacher. The real offence, as she ultimately perceived, was her having a mind of her own at all. Her mind was to be his — attached to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park. He would rake the soil gently and water the flowers; he would weed the beds and gather an occasional nosegay. It would be a pretty piece of property for a proprietor already far-reaching. He didn't wish her to be stupid. On the contrary, it was because she was clever that she had pleased him. But he expected her intelligence to operate altogether in his favour, and so far from desiring her mind to be a blank he had flattered himself that it would be richly receptive. He had expected his wife to feel with him and for him, to enter into his opinions, his ambitions, his preferences ...

Post-reading activities:
1. What are Isabel’s worries?

2. How do you think their relationship will develop? Give your reasons.


4. Which of the following, according to Isabel’s thoughts, are true of earlier attitudes? Prove it from the text.
   a) Gilbert thought he could change her.
   b) She never tried to hide what she was.
   c) She was charmed by him.
   d) She felt she could dominate him.
   e) He only wanted her to be pretty and not to have a mind of her own.
   f) He appeared to love only truth and knowledge.

5. Which of these, according to her thoughts, do we know to be true of present attitudes?
   a) He likes her to have a mind which is separate and independent.
   b) He is physically violent with her.
   c) He feels contempt for her.
   d) She still believes him to be a cultured person.
   e) He hates her.

   6. Find one phrase which best suggests: a) Isabel’s ‘imprisonment’; b) the European consciousness; c) the American consciousness.

   7. Gilbert’s ‘egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers’ (1.82).

   What does the ‘bank of flowers’ represent?

   **How the story continues:** In the long run Isabel is disillusioned in her marriage. Her husband, self-centred and spiteful, cold-hearted and morally corrupt person, striving for complete possessiveness over Isabel. He brings ruin not only on Isabel’s life but a life of his only daughter, Fancy, Isabel’s stepdaughter. As a result, a girl takes the veil. But Isabel feels a call of duty before a man whom she has married and thus doesn’t resolve to part with him. The novel had an ‘open’ denouement: Isabel hurries from Italy to England to a deathbed of her cousin Ralph, who has been deeply in love with her, there she
meets Caspar Goodwood, a man who also loves her dearly and implores her to stay with him. But Isabel asks him 'to wait' and returns to Rome to Gilbert.

MARK TWAIN

From Life on the Mississippi

There was no use in arguing with a person like this. I promptly put such a strain on my memory that by and by even the shoal water and the countless crossing-marks began to stay with me. But the result was just the same. I never could more than get one knotty thing learned before another presented itself. Now I had often seen pilots gazing at the water and pretending to read it as if it were a book; but it was a book that told me nothing. A time came at last, however, when Mr. Bixby seemed to think me far enough advanced to bear a lesson on water-reading. So he began:

"Do you see that long, slanting line on the face of the water? Now, that's a reef. Moreover, it's a bluff reef. There is a solid sand-bar under it that is nearly as straight up and down as the side of a house. There is plenty of water close up to it, but mighty little on top of it. If you were to hit it you would knock the boat's brains out. Do you see where the line fringes out at the upper end and begins to fade away?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that is a low place; that is the head of the reef. You can climb over there, and not hurt anything. Cross over, now, and follow along close under the reef—easy water there—not much current."

I followed the reef along till I approached the fringed end. Then Mr. Bixby said: "Now get ready. Wait till I give the word. She won't want to mount the reef; a boat hates shoal water. Stand by—wait—wait—keep her well in hand. Now cramp her down! Snatch her! Snatch her!"
He seized the other side of the wheel and helped to spin it around until it was hard down, and then we held it so. The boat resisted, and refused to answer for a while, and next she came surging to star-board, mounted the reef, and sent a long, angry ridge of water foaming away from her bows.

"Now watch her; watch her like a cat, or she'll get away from you. When she fights strong and the tiller slips a little, in a jerky, greasy sort of way, let up on her a trifle; it is the way she tells you at night that the water is too shoal; but keep edging her up, little by little, toward the point. You are well up on the bar now; there is a bar under every point, because the water that comes down around it forms an eddy and allows the sediment to sink. Do you see those fine lines on the face of the water that branch out like the ribs of a fan? Well, those are little reefs; you want to just miss the ends of them, but run them pretty close. Now look out—look out! Don't you crowd that slick, greasy-looking place; there ain't nine feet there; she won't stand it. She begins to smell it; look sharp, I tell you! Oh, blazes, there you go! stop the starboard wheel! Quick! ship up to back! Set her back!"

The engine bells jingled and the engines answered promptly, shooting white columns of steam far aloft out of the 'scape-pipes, but it was too late. The boat had "smelt" the bar in good earnest; the foamy ridges that radiated from her bows suddenly disappeared, a great dead swell came rolling forward, and swept ahead of her, she careened far over to larboard, and went tearing away toward the shore as if she were about scared to death. We were a good mile from where we ought to have been when we finally got the upper hand of her again.

During the afternoon watch the next day, Mr. Bixby asked me if I knew how to run the next few miles. I said: "Go inside the first snag above the point, outside the next one, star out from the lower end of Higgins's woodyard, make a square crossing, and—" "That's all right. I'll be back before you close up on the next point."
But he wasn’t. He was still below when I rounded it and entered upon a piece of the river which I had some misgivings about. I did not know that he was hiding behind a chimney to see how I would perform. I went gaily along, getting prouder and prouder, for he had never left the boat in my sole charge such a length of time before. I even got to ‘setting’ her and letting the wheel go entirely, while I vaingloriously turned my back and inspected the stern marks and hummed a tune, a sort of easy indifference which I had prodigiously admired in Bixby and other great pilots. Once I inspected rather long, and when I faced to the front again my heart flew into my mouth so suddenly that if I hadn’t clapped my teeth together I should have lost it. One of those frightful bluff reefs was stretching its deadly length right across our bows! My head was gone in a moment; I did not know which end I stood on; I gasped and could not get my breath; I spun the wheel down with such rapidity that it wove itself together like a spider’s web; the boat answered and turned square away from the reef, but the reef followed her! I fled, but still it followed, still it kept——right across my bows! I never looked to see where I was going, I only fled. The awful crash was imminent. Why didn’t that villain come? If I committed the crime of ringing a bell I might get thrown overboard. But better that than kill the boat. So in blind desperation, I started such a rattling “shivaree” down below as never had astounded an engineer in this world before, I fancy. Amidst the frenzy of the bells the engines began to back and fill in a curious way, and my reason forsook its throne—we were about to crash into the woods on the other side of the river. Just then Mr. Bixby stepped calmly into view on the hurricane-deck. My soul went out to him in gratitude. My distress vanished; I would have felt safe on the brink of Niagara 1 with Mr. Bixby on the hurricane-deck. He blandly and sweetly took his toothpick out of his mouth between his fingers, as if it were a cigar—we were just in the act of climbing an overhanging big tree, and the passengers were scudding astern like rats—and lifted up these commands to me ever so gently:

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“Stop the starboard! Stop the larboard! Set her back on both!”

The boat hesitated, halted, pressed her nose among the boughs a critical instant, then reluctantly began to back away. “Stop the larboard! Come ahead on it! stop the starboard! Come ahead on it! Point her for the bar!”

I sailed away as serenely as a summer’s morning. Mr. Bixby came in and said, with mock simplicity:

“When you have a hail, my boy, you ought to tap the big bell three times before you land, so that the engineers can get ready .“

I blushed under the sarcasm, and said I hadn’t had any hail.

“Au! Then it was for wood, I suppose. The officer of the watch will tell you when he wants to wood up.”

I went on consuming, and said I wasn’t after wood.

“Indeed! Why, what could you want over here in the bend, then? Did you ever know of a boat following a bend upstream at this stage of the river?”

“No, sir—and I wasn’t trying to follow it. I was getting away from a bluff reef.”

“No, it wasn’t a bluff reef; there isn’t one within three miles of where you were.”

“But I saw it. It was as bluff as that one yonder.”

“Just about. Run over it!”

“Do you give it as an order?”

“Yes. Run over it!”

“If I don’t, I wish I may die.”

“All right; I am taking the responsibility.”

I was just as anxious to kill the boat, now, as I had been to save it before. I impressed my orders upon my memory, to be used at the inquest, and made a straight break for the reef. As it disappeared under our bows I held my breath; but we slid over it like oil.
"Now, don't you see the difference? It wasn't anything but a wind reef. The wind does that."

"So I see. But it is exactly like a bluff reef. How am I ever going to tell them apart?"

It turned out to be true. The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book—a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice. And it was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story to tell every day. Throughout the long twelve hundred miles there was never a page that was void of interest, never one that you could leave unread without loss, never one that you would want to skip, thinking you could find higher enjoyment in some other thing. There never was so wonderful a book written by man; never one whose interest was so absorbing, so unflagging, so sparkingly renewed with every reperusal. The passenger who could not read it was charmed with a peculiar sort of faint dimple on its surface (on the rare occasions when he did not overlook it altogether); but to the pilot that was an italicized passage; indeed, it was more than that, it was a legend of the largest capitals, with a string of shouting exclamation points at the end of it, for it meant that a wreck or a rock was buried there that could tear the life out of the strongest vessels that ever floated. It is the faintest and simplest expression the water ever makes, and the most hideous to a pilot's eye. In truth, the passenger who could not read this book saw nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it, painted by the sun and shaded by the clouds, whereas to the trained eye these were not pictures at all, but the grimmest and most dead-earnest of reading matter.

Now when I had mastered the language of this water, and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost
something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry, had gone out of the majestic river! I still kept in mind a certain wonderful sunset which I witnessed when steamboating was new to me. A broad expanse of the river was turned to blood; in the middle distance the red hue brightened into gold, through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous; in one place a long, slanting mark lay sparkling upon the water; in another the surface was broken by boiling, tumbling rings, that were as many-tinted as an opal; where the ruddy flush was faintest, was a smooth spot that was covered with graceful circles and radiating lines, ever so delicately traced; the shore on our left was densely wooded, and the somber shadow that fell from this forest was broken in one place by a long, ruffled trail that shone like silver; and high above the forest wall a clean-stemmed dead tree waved a single leafy bough that glowed like a flame in the unobstructed splendor that was flowing from the sun. There were graceful curves, reflected images, woody heights, soft distances; and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving lights drifted steadily, enriching it every passing moment with new marvels of coloring.

I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in, in a speechless rapture. The world was new to me, and I had never seen anything like this at home. But as I have said, a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought upon the river’s face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them. Then, if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have looked upon it without rapture, and should have commented upon it inwardly after this fashion: “This sun means that we are going to have wind tomorrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody’s steamboat one of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that; those tumbling boils’ show a dissolving bar and a changing channel
there; the lines and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that that troublesome place is shoaling up dangerously; that silver streak in the shadow of the forest is the ‘break’ from a new snag, and he has located himself in the very best place he could have found to fish for steamboats; that tall dead tree, with a single living branch, is not going to last long, and then how is a body ever going to get through this blind place at night without the friendly old landmark?”

No, the romance and beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat. Since those days, I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty’s cheek mean to a doctor but a “break” that ripples above some deadly disease? Are not all her visible charms sown thick with what are to him the signs and symbols of hidden decay? Does he ever see her beauty at all, or doesn’t he simply view her professionally, and comment upon her unwholesome condition all to himself? And doesn’t he sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade?

**Post-reading activities:**

1. What is implied by “waterreading” at the beginning of the story? How can a reader realize that Mark Twain was an inexperienced water reader?

2. Do you think Mr. Bixby was a good teacher? Why or why not?

3. After Twain’s mistake with the wind reef, Mr. Bixby asked him some questions which give us insights into the routine of steamboat piloting:

   (a) How did people on shore signal to the steamboat that they wanted to come aboard?

   (b) How did the pilot let the engineer know he was planning to pick up passengers?

   (c) How did the boat get fuel for its boiler furnaces?
4. After he learned to be a pilot, Twain recounts how former “scenes of beauty” communicated in a new way to him. How were each of the following items “read” by the veteran river pilot: the sun at sunset, a floating log, the sparkling, slanting line, boiling rings in the water, a smooth spot with circles and radiating lines, a clean-stemmed dead tree rising above the forest?

5. Is the narration ironical? What does Twain’s irony mostly refer to? Give the examples from the text and explain them.

Theodore Dreiser

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

The story in brief: The novel speaks of the fate of a common American, Clyde Griffiths. His parents are Kansas City street evangelists. Clyde suffers from poverty in which he has lived from his early childhood. Sincerely believing that wealth alone makes people happy he determines to pave his way to fortune.

Clyde begins life as a bell-boy in a large hotel. One day an incident happens which greatly influences his character. When 18 years old, Clyde, together with some other boys, goes out for a good time in a motor-car that one of the boys has “borrowed” from his employer for this purpose. On their way back they run over and kill a child, and Clyde is obliged to leave Kansas City secretly. He roams about the country, works as a coachman, dish-washer, and, finally, as a messenger boy in a large hotel in Chicago. Here, by a lucky chance, he meets his uncle, Samuel Griffiths, a prosperous manufacturer in Lycurgus. Samuel Griffiths has not seen his brother, Clyde’s father, for 25 years; the wealth of one and the poverty of the other has separated them. Clyde is in need of work, and his uncle gives him a small job as an ordinary worker. One of the girls, Roberta Alden, attracts him, and after a time he falls in love with her. But Clyde’s attention is soon transferred to another girl, the wealthy and socially prominent Sondra Finchley. Clyde begins to think that marrying Sondra he will solve all his problems. At this critical moment Roberta discovers she is pregnant but Clyde refuses to marry her and doubles his attention to Sondra. At that moment he reads a news account of a boating accident in which a girl is drowned while the companion’s body is not found. Horrified at his own thoughts, he decides to free himself by killing Roberta. He plans a crime. He takes Roberta for a boat-ride on a distant lake. The boat is capsized and Roberta is drowned. Clyde does nothing to save the girl. The crime is discovered and Clyde is arrested. He is accused of her murder.
The whole of the second book deals with the court trial of Clyde's case. The judges pronounce Clyde guilty. But after he is found guilty and is waiting for his execution, Clyde begins to understand the moral meaning of his act. Encouraged by his mother, he looks upon his death as a necessary punishment for his moral cowardice. Dreiser showed that the tragic fate of the individual was an integral part of American society.

Emily Dickinson

SUCCESS

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 year
The distant strains of triumph
Break, agonized and clear.

Post-reading activities:

1. According to the poem, who (or what) best understands success? In your opinion, who wants most to succeed? Does the successful person value success? Does he recognize it for what it is?

2. Explain the meaning of the first stanza in your own words. How does the poet develop his idea further in the other two stanzas?

3. Can you draw any analogies from your own experience to illustrate the central idea of the poem?
THE THIRD PERIOD IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE. WRITING FROM 1918 TO 1945

Topics for discussion:

1. Define and characterize the following notions: the Gilded Age, Jazz age, Lost generation, muckraking literature. What relation to the social and historical situation in the USA in the period under discussion do they have?

Lost generation, in general, is the post-World War I generation, but specifically a group of U.S. writers who came of age during the war and established their literary reputations in the 1920s. The term stems from a remark made by Gertrude Stein1 to Ernest Hemingway, "You are all a lost generation." The generation was "lost" in the sense that its inherited values were no longer relevant in the postwar world and because of its spiritual alienation from the USA. World War I changed the outlook of all Americans in very significant ways: it intensified the pessimism and disenchantment with what was peculiarly American and it led to widespread expatriation. Most of what are considered them masterpieces of American writing in the 20th century were written in Europe. What the Lost Generation had lost, was its sense of being a part of American society. The term embraces Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, e.e. cummings, Archibald MacLeish, Hart Crane, and many other writers who spent long periods of their lives in Europe.

2. Why did expatriation become so widespread in the "roaring twenties"? How did it affect literary situation in the period?

3. What new trends in poetry appear during this period? Dwell upon their major poetic peculiarities. Name main representatives of imagism, modernism and their works.

4. What were the main representatives of prose writing of the period? How did they reflect the epoch specialities in their works?

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1Gertrude Stein (1874 - 1946) was an avant-garde American writer, eccentric, and self-styled genius whose Paris home was a salon for the leading artists and writers of the period between World Wars I and II.
“The Great Gatsby”

The story in brief: the compassionate and sympathetic Princeton gentleman Nick Carraway, an observer and narrator, tells the life story of Jay Gatsby, the son of a poor farmer. Jay falls in love with a rich and beautiful girl Daisy Fay who answers his love while his uniform conceals for a time his poverty. When the war is over, she marries the rich and elegant Tom Buchanan. Gatsby devotes his whole life to obtaining money and social position to make himself worthy of Daisy, though the only road open to him is bootlegging and dealing in dubious stocks.

When later he meets Daisy again, she is impressed by rumours of his incredibly large fortune, his mysterious origin, his rich mansion and his gorgeous and fashionable parties and makes him believe she would leave Tom. Yet once, driving Jay back from New York to Long Island in his car, she runs over and kills Myrtle Wilson, her husband’s mistress. Myrtle’s husband, whom Tom has persuaded that Gatsby was driving the car, follows Jay and shoots him. Daisy, having learned about Gatsby’s dubious source of income, deserts him even before his death, notwithstanding the fact that Gatsby gallantly takes the blame of Myrtle’s death upon himself.

The Great Gatsby is the most profoundly American novel of its time. Gatsby’s fanatic attempt to reach the “American Dream” is contrasted to the disillusioned drifting life of the cynical members of upper society, their moral corruption. Satire in the portrayal of the empty pleasures of the rich is combined with lyrical atmosphere enveloping Gatsby’s romantic dreams for happiness. At its conclusion, Fitzgerald connects Gatsby’s dream with the dream of the discoverers of America.

The following extract describes one of Gatsby’s fabulous parties at his expensive estate outside of New York. The person telling the story, Nick Carraway, then tells what happened at the first of the parties he attended.

From The Great Gatsby

There was music from my neighbor’s house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the sound, I drawing aquaplanes over cataracts...
of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus bearing parties to
and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight while his
station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains And on
Mondays eight servants including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and
scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the
night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in
New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a
pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could
extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was
pressed two hundred times by a butler’s thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several
hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of
Gatsby’s enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-
d’oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and
pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real
brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long
forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one another.

By seven o’clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a
whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and
piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the
beach now and are dressing up-stairs; the cars from New York are parked five
deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with
primary colors, and hair shorn in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the
dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails
permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and
casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings
between women who never knew each other’s names.
The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of the gypsies, in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco, dances out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray's understudy from the Follies. The party has begun.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited — they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform of robin's-egg blue crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from

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2 the Follies: the Ziegfeld Follies, a musical theatrical revue produced by Florenz Ziegfeld, very popular in the 1920s. Gilda Gray was one of its famous stars.
his employer: the honor would be entirely Gatsby’s, it said, if I would attend his
“little party” that night. He had seen me several times, and had intended to call on
me long before, but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it—
signed Jay Gatsby, in a majestic hand.

Dressed up in white flannels I went over to his lawn a little after seven,
and wandered around rather ill at ease among swirls and eddies of people I didn’t
know—though here and there was a face I had noticed on the commuting train. I
was immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted about; all
well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to
solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were selling something:
bonds or insurance or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the
easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the
right key.

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or
three people of whom I asked his where-abouts stared at me in such an amazed
way, and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off
in the direction of the cocktail table—the only place in the garden where a single
man could linger without looking purposeless and alone.

I was on my way to get roaring drunk from sheer embarrassment when
Jordan Baker came out of the house and stood at the head of the marble steps,
leaning a little backward and looking with contemptuous interest down into the
garden.

Welcome or not, I found it necessary to attach myself to someone before I
should begin to address cordial remarks to the passers-by.

“Hello!” I roared, advancing toward her. My voice seemed unnaturally
loud across the garden.

“I thought you might be here,” she responded absently as I came up. “I
remembered you lived next door to—”
She held my hand impersonally, as a promise that she’d take care of me in a minute, and gave ear to two girls in twin yellow dresses, who stopped at the foot of the steps. “Hello!” they cried together. “Sorry you didn’t win.”

That was for the golf tournament. She had lost in the finals the week before. “You don’t know who we are,” said one of the girls in yellow, “but we met you here about a month ago.”

“You’ve dyed your hair since then,” remarked Jordan, and I started, but the girls had moved casually on and her remark was addressed to the premature moon, produced like the supper, no doubt, out of a caterer’s basket. With Jordan’s slender golden arm resting in mine, we descended the steps and sauntered about the garden. A tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight, and we sat down at a table with the two girls in yellow and three men, each one introduced to us as Mr. Mumble.

“Do you come to these parties often?” inquired Jordan of the girl beside her. “The last one was the one I met you at,” answered the girl, in an alert confident voice, she turned to her companion: “Wasn’t it for you, Lucille?”

It was for Lucille, too.

“I like to come,” Lucille said. “I never care what I do, so I always have a good time. When I was here last I tore my gown on a chair, and he asked me my name and address—inside of a week I got a package from Croirier’s with a new evening gown in it.” “Did you keep it?” asked Jordan.

“Sure I did. I was going to wear it tonight, but it was too big in the bust and had to be altered. It was gas blue with lavender beads. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars.”

“There’s something funny about a fellow that’ll do a thing like that,” said the other girl eagerly. “He doesn’t want any trouble with anybody.”

“Who doesn’t?” I inquired. “Gatsby. Somebody told me—”

The two girls and Jordan leaned together confidentially.
“Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once.”

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr. Mumbles bent forward and listened eagerly. “I don’t think it’s so much that,” argued Lucille sceptically; “it’s more that he was a German spy during the war.”

One of the men nodded in confirmation.

“I heard that from a man who knew all about him, grew up with him in Germany,” he assured us positively.

“Oh, no,” said the first girl, “it couldn’t be that, because he was in the American army during the war.” As our credulity switched back to her she leaned forward with enthusiasm. “You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody’s looking at him. I’ll bet he killed a man.”

She narrowed her eyes and shivered. Lucille shivered. We all turned and looked around for Gatsby. It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.

The first supper—there would be another one after midnight——was now being served, and Jordan invited me to join her own party, who were spread around a table on the other side of the garden. There were three married couples and Jordan’s escort, a persistent undergraduate given to violent innuendo, and obviously under the impression that sooner or later Jordan was going to yield him up her person to a greater or lesser degree. Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the country-side.

“Let’s get out,” whispered Jordan, after a somehow wasteful and inappropriate half-hour; “this is much too polite for me.”

We got up, and she explained that we were going to find the host: I had never met him, she said, and it was making me uneasy. The undergraduate nodded in a cynical, melancholy way.
The bar, where we glanced first, was crowded, but Gatsby was not there. She couldn't find him from the top of the steps, and he wasn't on the veranda. On a chance we tried an important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic library, panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported complete from some ruin overseas.

A stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles, was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. As we entered he wheeled excitedly around and examined Jordan from head to foot.

"What do you think?" he demanded impetuously.

"About what?"

He waved his hand toward the book-shelves.

"About that. As a matter of fact you needn’t bother to ascertain. I ascertained. They’re real."

"The books?"

He nodded.

"Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they’d be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they’re absolutely real. Pages and——Here! Lemme show you."

Taking our scepticism for granted, he rushed to the book-cases and returned with Volume One of the "Stoddard Lectures."

"See!" he cried triumphantly. "It’s a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella’s a regular Belasco. It’s a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too — didn’t cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?"

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3 Belasco—David Belasco, 1853-1931, American theatrical producer, manager and writer, known for his minutely detailed and spectacular stage settings.
He snatched the book from me and replaced it hastily on its shelf, muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse.

"Who brought you?" he demanded, "Or did you just come? I was brought. Most people were brought."

Jordan looked at him alertly, cheerfully without answering.

"I was brought by a woman named Roosevelt," he continued. "Mrs. Claude Roosevelt. Do you know her? I met her somewhere last night. I’ve been drunk for about a week now, and 'thought it might sober me up to sit in a library." "Has it?"

"A little bit, I think. I can’t tell yet. I’ve only been here an hour. Did I tell you about the books? They’re real. They’re—" "You told us."

We shook hands with him gravely and went back outdoors.

There was dancing now on the canvas in the garden; old men pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably, and keeping in the corners—and a great number of single girls dancing individualistically or relieving the orchestra for a moment of the burden of the banjo or the traps. By midnight the hilarity had increased. A celebrated tenor had sung in Italian, and a notorious contralto had sung in jazz, and between the numbers people were doing "stunts" all over the garden, while happy, vacuous bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky. A pair of stage twins, who turned out to be the girls in yellow, did a baby act in costume, and champagne was served in glasses bigger than finger-bowls. The moon had risen higher, and floating in the sound was a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the stiff, tinny drip of the banjos on the lawn.

I was still with Jordan Baker. We were sitting at a table with a man of about my age and a rowdy little girl, who gave way upon the slightest provocation to uncontrollable laughter. I was enjoying myself now. I had taken two finger-
bowls of champagne, and the scene had changed before my eyes into something significant, elemental, and profound.

At a lull in the entertainment the man looked at me and smiled.

"Your face is familiar," he said, politely. "Weren't you in the Third Division during the war?" "Why, yes. I was in the ninth machine-gun battalion."

"I was in the seventh Infantry until June nineteen-eighteen. I knew I'd seen you somewhere before."

We talked for a moment about some wet, gray little villages in France. Evidently he lived in this vicinity, for he told me that he had just bought a hydroplane, and was going to try it out in the morning.

"Want to go with me, old sport? Just near the shore along the Sound."

"What time?" "Any time that suits you best."

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask his name when Jordan looked around and smiled. "Having a gay time now?" she inquired.

"Much better." I turned again to my new acquaintance. "This is an unusual party for me. I haven't even seen the host. I live over there—" I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance, and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation."

For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand.

"I'm Gatsby," he said suddenly. "What!" I exclaimed. "Oh, I beg your pardon." "I thought you knew, old sport. I'm afraid I'm not a very good host."

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to
convey. Precisely at that point it vanished—and I was looking at an elegant young roughneck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I’d got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.

Almost at the moment when Mr. Gatsby identified himself, a butler hurried toward him with the information that Chicago was calling him on the wire. He excused himself with a small bow that included each of us in turn.

“If you want anything just ask for it, old sport,” he urged me. “Excuse me. I will rejoin you later.”

Post-reading activities:

1. The description of the party is distinguished by a remarkable atmosphere of conflict and paradox. Find proof in the text that:
   - the night is beautiful but garish
   - the party is crowded and yet empty
   - the guests’ sensations are strong but insincere
2. How does the narrator find himself at the party? Why did he experience strange feelings on arriving there? What are the signs of wealth at the party?
3. What attitudes do the guests seem to have toward their host?
4. How did Nick get acquainted with the host? What impression did Gatsby produce on Nick?
5. How does the whole scene epitomize the Jazz Age: its superficiality and tawdricness and its equally powerful sweetness and charm?

Thomas Stearns Eliot

The Waste Land

The Waste Land expresses with great power the disenchantment, disillusionment, and disgust of the period after World War I. For a generation the title supplied an epithet for what seemed a sterile society, without faith of any sort and without hope of renewal. The epigraph for the poem suggests the reason
for the age’s sterility. Taken from The Satyricon by Petronius, it may be freely rendered: “I have seen with my own eyes the well-known Cumaean Sibyl hanging in a jar, and when the young men asked her what she wanted, she said she wanted to die.” The famous prophetess of classic myth was granted endless life but not lasting youth. She withered and shrunk with age and was finally exhibited in a jar as a curiosity. Here drunken and scornful youths mock her. The voices of prophecy are no longer listened to, the prophets themselves no longer respected. Thus, Madame Sosostris, from the first chapter, had bad cold, which muffled her voice.

On the whole the poem portrays a sterile world of panicky fears and barren lusts, and of human beings waiting for some sign or promise of redemption. The poem's style is highly complex, erudite, and allusive. The Waste Land consists of five sections and proceeds on a principle of “rhetorical discontinuity” that reflects the fragmented experience of the 20th-century sensibility of the great modern cities of the West. Eliot expresses the hopelessness and confusion of purpose of life in the secularized city, the decay of urbs aeterna (the “eternal city”). The Waste Land is not a simple contrast of the heroic past with the degraded present; it is rather a timeless, simultaneous awareness of moral grandeur and moral evil. The poem's original manuscript of about 800 lines was cut down to 433 at the suggestion of Ezra Pound. The Waste Land is not Eliot's greatest poem, though it is his most famous.

The title of the first section, which is given below, is taken from the Book of Common Prayer. The relation between the poem and the burial service is of course ironic. St. Paul’s analogy between man and the grain of wheat which, when put in the ground, must die as itself in order to be reborn as a new plant, is at the heart of the service. Here in the poem it is not wheat but a corpse that is “planted,” and though it may be dug up, it will not sprout. The implication is that St. Paul’s analogy is false; the promise of resurrection does not apply to man. April, the time of Easter and of the seasonal rebirth in the natural world, is therefore the cruelest month because man is excluded from its promise.

A possible reading of the poem might then be, “What I have written may seem to you, reader, nonsensical, or even mad; but if so, think again.” If we read the work primarily in moral terms, it sounds as a diagnosis and indictment of the moral values if the society.

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April is the cruelest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, Covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.

Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke’s,
My cousin’s, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock
(Conic in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
Frisch weht der Wind

Der Heimat zu

Mein Irisch Kind,

Wo weilest du?

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;

"They called me the hyacinth girl."

-Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,

Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither

Living or dead, and I knew nothing,

Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

Oed’ und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,

Had a bad cold, nevertheless

Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,

With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,

Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,

(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)

Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,

The lady of situations.

Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel

And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,

Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,

Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find

The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.

I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.

Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,

Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

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One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William street,
To where saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!"
"You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
"Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
"Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
"Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
"Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frere!"

Post-reading activities:
1. How is the idea stated in the title of the whole poem conveyed in the first section? What allusions does T.S. Eliot apply in the section? Try to decipher their meanings.
2. How does a man viewed upon in the extract? What role does he play in the society?
3. How is a society characterized in the extract? Enumerate all epithets relating to a society.
4. What way is modernistic poetry different from non-modernistic one?
5. Try to define the philosophy of the first section. Prove it from the text.
AFTER WORLD WAR II. MODERN VOICES IN PROSE AND POETRY

Major literary developments

Not only did a new generation emerge from the war, but its ethnic, regional, and social character was quite different from that of the preceding one. Among the younger writers were children of immigrants, many of them Jews; blacks, only a few generations away from slavery; and, eventually, women, who, with the rise of feminism, were to speak in a new voice. Though the social climate of the postwar years was conservative, even conformist, some of the most hotly discussed writers wrote memorable fiction; Frost, Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, e. cummings, William Carlos Williams, and Gwendolyn Brooks published important poetry. Eugene O'Neill's most distinguished play, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, appeared posthumously in 1956. Before and after World War II, Robert Penn Warren published influential fiction, poetry, and criticism. His *All the King's Men*, one of the best American political novels, won the 1947 Pulitzer Prize. Mary McCarthy became a widely read social satirist and essayist. Henry Miller's fiction, influential primarily because of its frank exploration of sexuality, first appeared in the United States in the 1960s. Still, impressive new novelists, poets, and playwrights emerged after the war.

Two distinct groups of novelists responded to the cultural impact, and especially the technological horror, of World War II. Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) and Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* (1948) were realistic war novels, though Mailer's book was also a novel of ideas, exploring fascist thinking and an obsession with power as elements of the military mind. James Jones documented the war's human cost in an ambitious trilogy (*From Here to Eternity* [1951], *The Thin Red Line* [1962], and *Whistle* [1978]) that centred on loners who resisted adapting to military discipline. Younger novelists, shaken by the bombing of Hiroshima and the real threat of human annihilation,

Men of letters of the period were searching for new methods for conveying acute complexity of life. In this respect the external influences were of great avail: Russian-born Vladimir Nabokov, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, etc.. Nabokov, who became a U.S. citizen in 1945, produced his best novels, written in English, which have a strong emotional thread running through them, including *Lolita* (1955), *Pnin* (1957), and *Pale Fire* (1962).

A significant number of contemporary novelists were reluctant to abandon Social Realism. In such novels as The Victim (1947), *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Herzog* (1964), *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), and *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), Saul Bellow tapped into the buoyant energy and structure of black humour, while proclaiming the necessity of "being human", but he also wrote darker fictions like the novella *Seize the Day* (1956), a study in failure and blocked emotion that was perhaps his best work.

The horrors of World War II, the Cold War and the atomic bomb, the bizarre feast of consumer culture, and the cultural clashes of the 1960s prompted many writers to argue that reality had grown inaccessible, undermining the traditional social role of fiction. Writers of novels and short stories therefore were under unprecedented pressure to discover, or invent, new and viable kinds of fiction. One response was the postmodern novel of William Gaddis, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, Robert Coover, Paul Auster, and Don DeLillo—technically sophisticated and highly self-conscious about the construction of fiction and the fictive nature of "reality" itself. These writers dealt
with themes such as imposture and paranoia; their novels drew attention to themselves as artifacts and often used realistic techniques ironically.

The sexual and moral confusion of the American middle class was the focus of the work of J.D. Salinger and Richard Yates, as well as John Updike's *Rabbit series* (four novels from *Rabbit, Run* [1960] to *Rabbit At Rest* [1990]), *Couples* (1968), and *Too Far to Go* (1979), a sequence of tales about the quiet disintegration of a civilized marriage.


The most influential fiction writers in a realist mode to emerge in the 1970s were Raymond Carver (collections of stories such as *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* [1981] and *Cathedral* [1983] and Robert Stone (*Dog Soldiers* [1974], *A Flag for Sunrise* [1981]). In his works Raymond Carver dealt with blue-collar life, usually in the Pacific Northwest, and his self-destructive characters were mostly life's losers. Robert Stone grimly portrayed the drugs-and-Vietnam generation of the period.

Black writers of this period focused mainly in ways to convey social protest. James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison wrote polemical essays calling for a literature that reflected the full complexity of black life in the United States. In his first and best novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), Baldwin portrayed the Harlem world and the black church through his own adolescent religious experiences. Drawing on rural folktale and absurdist humour Ralph Ellison wrote a deeply resonant comic novel *Invisible Man* (1952) that dealt with the full range of black experience: rural sharecropping, segregated education,
northward migration, ghetto hustling, and the lure of such competing ideologies as nationalism and communism. Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Beloved* (1987), and *Jazz* (1992) dealt with important phases of black history—slavery, the Harlem renaissance. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993.

Finally, the dramatic loosening of immigration restrictions in the mid-1960s set the stage for the rich multicultural writing of the 1970s and '80s. Some of the best immigrant writers, while thoroughly assimilated, nonetheless had a subtle understanding of both the old and the new culture. These included the Cuban-American writers Oscar Hijuelos (*The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* [1989]), Cristina Garcia (*Dreaming in Cuban* [1992]), etc.. Chinese-Americans found an extraordinary voice in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976) and *China Men* (1980), which blended old Chinese lore with fascinating family history. While many multicultural works were merely representative of their cultural milieu, some made remarkable contributions to a new American literature.

**J(erome) D(avid) Salinger**

**A Perfect Day for Bananafish**

There were ninety-seven New York advertising men in the hotel, and, the way they were monopolizing the long-distance lines, the girl in 507 had to wait from noon till almost two-thirty to get her call through. She used the time, though. She read an article in a women's pocket-size magazine, called "Sex Is Fun — or Hell." She washed her comb and brush. She took the spot out of the skirt of her beige suit. She moved the button on her Saks blouse. She tweezed out two freshly surfaced hairs in her mole. When the operator finally rang her room, she was sitting on the window seat and had almost finished putting lacquer on the nails of her left hand.
She was a girl who for a ringing phone dropped exactly nothing. She looked as if her phone had been ringing continually ever since she had reached puberty.

With her little lacquer brush, while the phone was ringing, she went over the nail of her little finger, accentuating the line of the moon. She then replaced the cap on the bottle of lacquer and, standing up, passed her left—the wet—hand back and forth through the air. With her dry hand, she picked up a congested ashtray from the window seat and carried it with her over to the night table, on which the phone stood. She sat down on one of the made-up twin beds and — it was the fifth or sixth ring — picked up the phone.

“Hello,” she said, keeping the fingers of her left hand outstretched and away from her white silk dressing gown, which was all that she was wearing, except mules—her rings were in the bathroom.

“I have your call to New York now, Mrs. Glass,” the operator said.

“Thank you,” said the girl, and made the room on the night table for the ashtray.

A woman’s voice came through. “Muriel? Is that you?”

The girl turned the receiver slightly away from her ear. “Yes, Mother. How are you?” she said.

“I’ve been worried to death about you. Why haven’t you phoned? Are you all right?”

“I tried to get you last night and the night before. The phone here’s been—”

“Are you all right, Muriel?”

The girl increased the angle between the receiver and her ear. “I’m fine. I’m hot. This is the hottest day they’ve had in Florida in—”

“Why haven’t you called me? I’ve been worried to—”

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“Mother, darling, don’t yell at me. I can hear you beautifully,” said the girl. “I called you twice last night. Once just after—”

“I told your father you’d probably call last night. But, no, he had to—Are you all right, Muriel? Tell me the truth.”

“I’m fine. Stop asking me that, please.”

“When did you get there?”

“I don’t know. Wednesday morning, early.”

“Who drove?”

“He did,” said the girl. “And don’t get excited. He drove very nicely. I was amazed.”

“He drove? Muriel, you gave me your word of—”

“Mother,” the girl interrupted, “I just told you. He drove very nicely. Under fifty the whole way, as a matter of fact.”

“Did he try any of that funny business with the trees?”

“I said he drove very nicely, indeed. Now, please, I asked him to stay close to the white line, and all, and he knew what I meant, and he did. He was even trying not to look at the trees—you could tell. Did Daddy get the car fixed, incidentally?”

“Not yet. They want four hundred dollars, just to—”

“Mother, Seymour told Daddy that he’d pay for it. There’s no reason for—”

“Well, we’ll see. How did he behave—in the car and all?”

“All right,” said the girl.

“Did he keep calling you that awful—”

“No. He has something new now.”

“What?”

“Oh, what’s the difference, Mother?”

“Muriel, I want to know. Your father—”
“All right, all right. He calls me Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1943,” the girl said, and giggled.

“It isn’t funny, Muriel. It isn’t funny at all. It’s horrible. It’s sad, actually. When I think how—”

“Mother,” the girl interrupted, “listen to me. You remember that book he sent me from Germany? You know—those German poems. What’d I do with it? I’ve been racking my—”

“You have it”

“Are you sure?” said the girl.

“Certainly. That is, I have it. It’s in Freddy’s room. You left it here and I didn’t have room for it in the—Why? Does he want it?”

“No. Only, he asked me about it, when we were driving down. He wanted to know if I’d read it.”

“It was in German!”

“Yes, dear. That doesn’t make any difference,” said the girl, crossing her legs. “He said that the poems happen to be written by the only great poet of the century. He said I should’ve bought a translation or something. Or learned the language, if you please.”

“Awful. Awful. It’s sad, actually, is what it is. Your father said last night—”

“Just a second, Mother,” the girl said. She went over to the window seat for her cigarettes, lit one, and returned to her seat on the bed. “Mother?” she said, exhaling smoke.

“Muriel. Now, listen to me.”

“I’m listening.”

“Your father talked to Dr. Sivetski.”

“Oh?” said the girl.
"He told him everything. At least, he said he did—you know your father. The trees. That business with the window. Those horrible things he said to Granny about her plans for passing away What he did with all those lovely pictures from Bermuda—everything?"

"Well," said the girl.

"Well. In the first place, he said it was a perfect crime the Army released hint from the hospital—my word of honor. He very definitely told your father there's a chance—a very great chance, he said—that Seymour may completely lose control of himself. My word of honor."

"There's a psychiatrist here at the hotel," said the girl.

"Who? What's his name?"

"I don't know. Rieser or something. He's supposed to be very good."

"Never heard of him."

"Well, he's supposed to be very good, anyway."

"Muriel, don't be fresh, please. We're very worried about you. Your father wanted to wire you last night to come home, as a matter of f—"

"I'm not coming home right now, Mother, so relax."

"Muriel. My word of honor. Dr. Sivetski said Seymour may completely lose contr—"

"I just got here, Mother. This is the first vacation I've had in years, and I'm not going to just pack everything and come home," said the girl. "I couldn't travel now anyway. I'm so sunburned I can hardly move."

"You're badly sunburned? Didn't you use that jar of Bronze I put in your bag? I put it right—"

"I used it. I'm burned anyway."

"That's terrible. Where are you burned?"

"All over, dear, all over."

"That's terrible."
"I’ll live."
"Tell me, did you talk to this psychiatrist?"
"Well, sort of," said the girl.
"What’d he say? Where was Seymour when you talked to him?"
"In the Ocean Room, playing the piano. He’s played the piano both nights we’ve been here."
"Well, what’d he say?"
"Oh, nothing much. He spoke to me first. I was sitting next to him at Bingo last night, and he asked me if that wasn’t my husband playing the piano in the other room. I said yes, it was, and he asked me if Seymour’s been sick or something. So I said—"
"Why’d he ask that?"
"I don’t know, Mother. I guess because he’s so pale and all," said the girl. "Anyway, after Bingo he and his wife asked me if I wouldn’t like to join them for a drink. So I did. His wife was horrible. You remember that awful dinner dress we saw in Bonwit’s window? The one you said you’d have to have a tiny, tiny—"
"The green?"
"She had it on. And all hips. She kept asking me if Seymour’s related to that Suzanne Glass that has that place on Madison Avenue—the millinery."
"What’d he say, though? The doctor."
"Oh. Well, nothing much, really. I mean we were in the bar and all. It was terribly noisy."
"Yes, but did—did you tell him what he tried to do with Granny’s chair?"
"No, Mother. I didn’t go into details very much," said the girl. "I’ll probably get a chance to talk to him again. He’s in the bar all day long."
"Did he say he thought there was a chance he might get — you know— funny or anything? Do something to you!"
“Not exactly,” said the girl. “He had to have more facts, Mother. They have to know about your childhood—all that stuff. I told you, we could hardly talk, it was so noisy in there.”

“Well. How’s your blue coat?”

“All right. I had some of the padding taken out.”

“How are the clothes this year?”

“Terrible. But out of this world. You see sequins - everything,” said the girl.

“How’s your room?”

“All right. Just all right, though. We couldn’t get the room we had before the war,” said the girl. “The people are awful this year. You should see what sits next to us in the dining room. At the next table. They look as if they drove down in a truck.”

“Well, it’s that way all over. How’s your ballerina?”

“It’s too long. I told you it was too long.”

“Muriel, I ’m only going to ask you once more—are you really all right?”

“Yes, Mother,” said the girl. “For the ninetieth time.”

“And you don’t want to come home?”

“Mother.”

“Your father said last night that he’d be more than willing to pay for it if you’d go away someplace by yourself and think things over. You could take a lovely cruise. We both thought—”

“No, thanks,” said the girl, and uncrossed her legs. “Mother, this call is costing a for—”

“When I think of how you waited for that boy all through the war—I mean when you think of all those crazy little wives who—”

“Mother,” said the girl, “we’d better hang up. Seymour may come in any minute.”
“Where is he?”

“On the beach.”

“On the beach? By himself? Does he behave himself on the beach?”

“Mother,” said the girl, “you talk about him as though he were a raving maniac—”

“I said nothing of the kind, Muriel.”

“Well, you sound that way. I mean all he does is lie there. He won’t take his bathrobe off.”

“He won’t take his bathrobe off? Why not?”

“I don’t know. I guess because he’s so pale.”

“My goodness, he needs the sun. Can’t you make him?”

“You know Seymour,” said the girl, and crossed her legs again. “He says he doesn’t want a lot of fools looking at his tattoo.”

“He doesn’t have any tattoo! Did he get one in the Army?”

“No, Mother. No, dear,” said the girl, and stood up. “Listen, I’ll call you tomorrow, maybe.”

“Muriel. Now, listen to me.”

“Yes, Mother,” said the girl, putting her weight on her right leg.

“Call me the instant he does, or says, anything at all funny — you know what I mean. Do you hear me?”

“Mother, I’m not afraid of Seymour.”

“Muriel, I want you to promise me.”

“All right, I promise. Goodbye, Mother,” said the girl. “My love to Daddy.” She hung up.

“See more glass,” said Sybil Carpenter, who was staying at the hotel with her mother. “Did you see more glass?”
“Pussycat, stop saying that. It’s driving Mommy absolutely crazy. Hold still, please.”

Mrs. Carpenter was putting sun-tan oil on Sybil’s shoulders, spreading it down over the delicate, winglike blades of her back. Sybil was sitting insecurely on a huge, inflated beach ball, facing the ocean, she was wearing a canary-yellow two-piece bathing suit, one piece of which she would not actually be needing for another nine or ten years.

“It was really just an ordinary silk handkerchief—you could see when you got up close,” said the woman in the beach chair beside Mrs. Carpenter’s. “I wish I knew how she tied it. It was really darling.”

“It sounds darling,” Mrs. Carpenter agreed. “Sybil, hold still, pussy.”

“Did you see more glass?” said Sybil.

Mrs. Carpenter sighed. “All right,” she said. She replaced the cap on the sun-tan oil bottle. “Now run and play, pussy. Mommy’s going up to the hotel and have a Martini with Mrs. Hubbel. I’ll bring you the olive.”

Set loose, Sybil immediately ran down to the flat part of the beach and began to walk in the direction of Fisherman’s Pavilion. Stopping only to sink a foot in a soggy, collapsed castle, she was soon out of the area reserved for guests of the hotel.

She walked for about a quarter of a mile and then suddenly broke into an oblique run up the soft part of the beach. She stopped short when she reached the place where a young man was lying on his back.

“Are you going in the water, see more glass?” she said.

The young man started, his right hand going to the lapels of his terry-cloth robe. He turned over on his stomach, letting a sausaged towel fall away from his eyes, and squinted up at Sybil.

“Hey. Hello, Sybil.”

“Are you going in the water?”
“I was waiting for you,” said the young man. “What’s new?”

“What?” said Sybil.

“What’s new? What’s on the program?”

“My daddy’s coming tomorrow on a nairiplane,” Sybil said, kicking sand.

“Not in my face, baby,” the young man said, putting his hand on Sybil’s ankle. “Well, it’s about time he got here, your daddy. I’ve been expecting him hourly. Hourly.”

“Where’s the lady?” Sybil said.

“The lady?” The young man brushed some sand out of his thin hair. “That’s hard to say, Sybil. She may be in any one of a thousand places. At the hairdresser’s. Having her hair dyed mink. Or making dolls for poor children, in her room.” Lying prone now, he made two fists, set one on top of the other, and rested his chin on the top one. “Ask me something else, Sybil,” he said. “That’s a fine bathing suit you have on. If there’s one thing I like, it’s a blue bathing suit.”

Sybil stared at him, then looked down at her protruding stomach. “This is a yellow,” she said. “This is a yellow.”

“It is? Come a little closer.”

Sybil took a step forward.

“You’re absolutely right. What a fool I am.”

“Are you going in the water?” Sybil said.

“I’m seriously considering it. I’m giving it plenty of thought, Sybil, you’ll be glad to know.”

Sybil prodded the rubber float that the young man sometimes used as a head-rest. “It needs air,” she said.

“All right. It needs more air than I’m willing to admit.” He took away his fists and let his chin rest on the sand. “Sybil” he said, “you’re looking fine. It’s good to see you. Tell me about yourself.” He reached in front of him and took both of Sybil’s ankles in his hands. “I’m Capricorn,” he said. “What are you?”
“Sharon Lipschutz said you let her sit on the piano seat with you,” Sybil said.

“Sharon Lipschutz said that?”

Sybil nodded vigorously.

He let go of her ankles, drew in his hands, and laid the side of his face on his right forearm. “Well,” he said, “you know how those things happen, Sybil. I was sitting there playing. And you were nowhere in sight. And Sharon Lipschutz came over and sat down next to me. I couldn’t push her off, could I?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, no. No. I couldn’t do that,” said the young man. “I’ll tell you what I did do, though.”

“What?”

“I pretended she was you.”

Sybil immediately stooped and began to dig in the sand. “Let’s go in the water,” she said.

“All right,” said the young man. “I think I can work it in.”

“Next time, push her off,” Sybil said.

“Push who off?”

“Sharon Lipschutz.”

“Ah, Sharon Lipschutz,” said the young man. “How that name comes up. Mixing memory and desire.” He suddenly got to his feet. He looked at the ocean. “Sybil,” he said, “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll see if we can catch a bananafish.”

“A what?”

“A bananafish,” he said, and undid the belt of his robe. He took off the robe. His shoulders were white and narrow, and his trunks were royal blue. He folded the robe, first lengthwise, then in thirds. He unrolled the towel he had used over his eyes, spread it out on the sand, and then laid the folded robe on top of it.
He bent over, picked up the float, and secured it under his right arm. Then, with his left hand, he took Sybil’s hand.

The two started to walk down to the ocean.

“I imagine you’ve seen quite a few bananafish in your day,” the young man said. Sybil shook her head. “You haven’t? Where do you live, anyway?”

“I don’t know,” said Sybil.

“Sure you know. You must know. Sharon Lipschutz knows where she lives and she’s only three and a half.”

Sybil stopped walking and yanked her hand away from him. She picked up an ordinary beach shell and looked at it with elaborate interest. She threw it down. “Whirly Wood, Connecticut,” she said, and resumed walking, stomach foremost.


Sybil looked at him. “That’s where I live,” she said impatiently. “I live in Whirly Wood, Connecticut.” She ran a few steps ahead of him, caught up her left foot in her left hand, and hopped two or three times.

“You have no idea how clear that makes everything,” the young man said. Sybil released her foot. “Did you read ‘Little Black Sambo’?” she said.

“It’s very funny you ask me that,” he said. “It so happens I just finished reading it last night.” He reached down and took back Sybil’s hand. “What did you think of it?” he asked her.

“Did the tigers run all around that tree?”

“I thought they’d never stop. I never saw so many tigers.”

“There were only six,” Sybil said.

“Only six?” said the young man. “Do you call that only?”

“Do you like wax?” Sybil asked.

“Do I like what?” asked the young man.
“Wax.”


“Do you like Sharon Lipschutz?” Sybil asked.

“Yes. Yes, I do,” said the young man. What I like particularly about her is that she never does anything mean to little dogs in the lobby of the hotel. That little toy bull that belongs to that lady from Canada, for instance. You probably won’t believe this, but some little girls like to poke that little dog with balloon sticks. Sharon doesn’t. She’s never mean or unkind. That’s why I like her so much.”

Sybil was silent.

“I like to chew candies,” she said finally.

“Who doesn’t?” said the young man, getting his feet wet. “Wow! It’s cold.” He dropped the rubber float on its back. “No, wait just a second, Sybil. Wait’ll we get out a little bit.”

They waded out till the water was up to Sybil’s waist. Then the young man picked her up and laid her down on her stomach on the float.

“Don’t you ever wear a bathing cap or anything?” he asked.

“Don’t let go,” Sybil ordered. “You hold me, now.”

“Miss Carpenter. Please. I know my business,” the young man said. “You just keep your eyes open for any bananafish. This is a perfect day for bananafish.”

“I don’t see any,” Sybil said.

“That’s understandable. Their habits are very peculiar.” He kept pushing the float. The water was not quite up to his chest. “They lead a very tragic life,” he said. “You know what they do, Sybil?”

She shook her head.

“Well, they swim into a hole where there’s a lot of bananas. They’re very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like
pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas.” He edged the float and its passenger a foot closer to the horizon. “Naturally, after that they’re so fat they can’t get out of the hole again. Can’t fit through the door.”

“Not too far out,” Sybil said. “What happens to them?”

“What happens to who?”

“The bananafish.”

“Oh, you mean after they eat so many bananas they can’t get out of the banana hole?” “Yes,” said Sybil.

“I hate to tell you, Sybil. They die.” “Why?” asked Sybil.

“Well, they get banana fever. It’s a terrible disease.”

“Here comes a wave,” Sybil said nervously.

“We’ll ignore it. We’ll snub it,” said the young man. “Two snobs.” He took Sybil’s ankles in his hands and pressed down and forward. The float nosed over the top of the wave. The water soaked Sybil’s blond hair, but her scream was full of pleasure.

With her hand, when the float was level again, she wiped away a flat, wet band of hair from her eyes, and reported, “I just saw one.”

“Saw what, my love?”

“A bananafish.”

“My God, no!” said the young man. “Did he have any bananas in his mouth?” “Yes,” said Sybil. “Six.”

The young man suddenly picked up one of Sybil’s wet feet, which were drooping over the end of the float, and kissed the arch.

“Hey!” said the owner of the foot, turning around.

“Hey, yourself! We’re going in now. You had enough?”

“No!”
“Sorry,” he said, and pushed the float toward shore until Sybil got off it. He carried it the rest of the way.

“Goodbye,” said Sybil, and ran without regret in the direction of the hotel.

The young man put on his robe, closed the lapels tight, and jammed his towel into his pocket. He picked up the slimy wet, cumbersome float and put it under his arm. He plodded alone through the soft, hot sand toward the hotel.

On the sub-main floor of the hotel, which the management directed bathers to use, a woman with zinc salve on her nose got into the elevator with the young man.

“I see you’re looking at my feet,” he said to her when the car was in motion.

“I beg your pardon?” said the woman.

“I said I see you’re looking at my feet.”

“I beg your pardon. I happened to be looking at the floor,” said the woman, and faced the doors of the car.

“If you want to look at my feet, say so,” said the young man. “But don’t be a God-damned sneak about it.”

“Let me out of here, please,” the woman said quickly to the girl operating the car.

The car doors opened and the woman got out without looking back.

“I have two normal feet and I can’t see the slightest God-damned reason why anybody should stare at them,” said the young man. “Five, please.” He took his room key out of his robe pocket.

He got off at the fifth floor, walked down the hall, and let himself into 507. The room smelled of new calfskin luggage and nail-lacquer remover.

He glanced at the girl lying asleep on one of the twin beds. Then he went over to one of the pieces of luggage, opened it, and from under a pile of shorts and
undershirts he took out an Ortgies calibre 7.65 automatic. He released the magazine, looked at it, then reinserted it. He cocked the piece. Then he went over and sat down on the unoccupied twin bed, looked at the girl, aimed the pistol, and fired a bullet through his right temple.

Post-reading activities:

1. Compare two major characters Muriel and Seymour Glass according to the following scheme:
   a) occupation; b) way of spending time; c) manner of speaking
   Try to give a character sketch of each of them.

2. What was Muriel’s mother so much concerned about during a phone talk with her daughter? In your opinion, did she have any grounds for it? How did Muriel set her fears at rest?

3. What was Seymour doing all that time? Who did he meet? What did they discuss? Did he manage to find common language with the girl? Were they on friendly terms with each other?

4. In your opinion, what were the relations between the husband and the wife? Provide all examples from the text which hint at it. Why were their worlds polars apart from each other?

5. Find the climax and the denouement of the story.

6. Provide your own explanation for such a tragic denouement of the story? Why did Seymour commit suicide? Was the reader prepared to it by the whole narration?

7. Characterize the style of Salinger’s narration? How does he reveal the inner self of the characters?

John Updike

The Orphaned Swimming Pool

MARRIAGES, like chemical unions, release upon dissolution packets of the energy locked up in their bonding. There is the piano no one wants, the cocker
spaniel no one can take care of. Shelves of books suddenly stand revealed as burdensomely dated and unlikely to be reread; indeed, it is difficult to remember who read them in the first place. And what of those old skis in the attic? Or the doll house waiting to be repaired in the basement? The piano goes out of tune, the dog goes mad. The summer that the Turners got their divorce, their swimming pool had neither a master nor a mistress, though the sun beat down day after day, and a state of drought was declared in Connecticut.

It was a young pool, only two years old, of the fragile type fashioned by laying a plastic liner within a carefully carved hole in the ground. The Turners' side yard looked infernal while it was being done; one bulldozer sank into the mud and had to be pulled free by another. But by mid-summer the new grass was sprouting, the encircling flagstones were in place, the blue plastic tinted the water a heavenly blue, and it had to be admitted that the Turners had scored again. They were always a little in advance of their friends. He was a tall, hairy-backed man with long arms, and a nose flattened by football, and a sullen look of too much blood; she was a fine-boned blonde with dry blue eyes and lips usually held parted and crinkled as if about to ask a worrisome, or whimsical, question. They never seemed happier, nor their marriage healthier, than those two summers. They grew brown and supple and smooth with swimming. Ted would begin his day with a swim, before dressing to catch the train, and Linda would hold court all day amid crowds of wet matrons and children, and Ted would return from work to find a poolside cocktail party in progress, and the couple would end their day at midnight, when their friends had finally left, by swimming nude, before bed. What ecstasy! In darkness the water felt mild as milk and buoyant as helium, and the swimmers became giants, gliding from side to side in a single languorous stroke.

The next May, the pool was filled as usual, and the usual after-school gangs of mothers and children gathered, but Linda, unlike her, stayed indoors. She
could be heard within the house, moving from room to room, but she no longer emerged, as in the other summers, with a cheerful tray of ice and a brace of bottles, and Triscuits and lemonade for the children. Their friends felt less comfortable about appearing, towels in hand, at the Turners’ on weekends. Though Linda had lost some weight and looked elegant, and Ted was cumbersomely jovial, they gave off the faint, sleepless, awkward-making aroma of a couple in trouble. Then, the day after school was out, Linda fled with the children to her parents in Ohio. Ted stayed nights in the city, and the pool was deserted. Though the pump that ran the water through the filter continued to mutter in the lilacs, the cerulean pool grew cloudy. The bodies of dead horseflies and wasps dotted the still surface. A speckled plastic ball drifted into a corner beside the diving board and stayed there. The grass between the flagstones grew lank. On the glass-topped poolside table, a spray can of Off! had lost its pressure and a gin-and-tonic glass held a sere mint leaf. The pool looked desolate and haunted, like a stagnant jungle spring; it looked poisonous and ashamed. The postman, stuffing overdue notices and pornography solicitations into the mailbox, averted his eyes from the side yard politely.

Some June weekends, Ted sneaked out from the city. Families driving to church glimpsed him dolefully sprinkling chemical substances into the pool. He looked pale and thin. He instructed Roscoe Chace, his neighbor on the left, how to switch on the pump and change the filter, and how much chlorine and Algitrol should be added weekly. He explained he would not be able to make it out every weekend—as if the distance that for years he had travelled twice each day, gliding in and out of New York, had become an impossibly steep climb back into the past. Linda, he confided vaguely, had left her parents in Akron and was visiting her sister in Minneapolis. As the shock of the Turners’ joint disappearance wore off, their pool seemed less haunted and forbidding. The Murtaugh children—the Murtaughs, a rowdy, numerous family, were the Turners’ right-hand neighbors—
began to use it, without supervision, so Linda’s old friends, with their children, began to show up, “to keep the Murtaughs from drowning each other.” For if anything were to happen to a Murtaugh, the poor Turners (the adjective had become automatic) would be sued for everything, right when they could least afford it. It became, then, a kind of duty, a test of loyalty, to use the pool.

July was the hottest in twenty-seven years. People brought their own lawn furniture over in station wagons and set it up. Teen-age offspring and Swiss au-pair girls were established as lifeguards. A nylon rope with flotation corks, meant to divide the wading end from the diving end of the pool, was found coiled in the garage and reinstalled. Agnes Kleefield contributed an old refrigerator, which was wired to an outlet above Ted’s basement workbench and used to store ice, quinine water, and soft drinks. An honor-system shoebox containing change appeared beside it; a little lost-and-found—an array of forgotten sunglasses, flippers, towels, lotions, paperbacks, shirts, even underwear— materialized on the Turners’ side steps. When people, that July, said, “Meet you at the pool,” they did not mean the public pool past the shopping center, or the country-club pool beside the first tee. They meant the Turners’. Restrictions on admission were difficult to enforce tactfully. A visiting Methodist bishop, two Taiwanese economists, an entire girls’ softball team from Darien, an eminent Canadian poet, the archery champion of Hartford, the six members of a black rock group called The Good Intentions, an ex-mistress of Aly Khan, the lavender-haired mother-in-law of a Nixon adviser not quite of Cabinet rank, an infant of six weeks, a man who was killed the next day on the Merritt Parkway, a Filipino who could stay on the pool bottom for eighty seconds, two Texans who kept cigars in their mouths and hats on their heads, three telephone linemen, four expatriate Czechs, a student Maoist from Wesleyan, and the postman all swam, as guests, in the Turners’ pool, though not all at once. After the daytime crowd ebbed, and the shoebox was put back in the refrigerator, and the last au-pair girl took the last goosefleshed, wrinkled child.
shivering home to supper, there was a tide of evening activity, trysts (Mrs. Kleefeld and the Nicholson boy, most notoriously) and what some called, overdramatically, orgies. True, late splashes and excited guffaws did often keep Mrs. Chace awake, and the Murtaugh children spent hours at their attic window with binoculars. And there was the evidence of the lost underwear.

One Saturday early in August, the morning arrivals found an unknown car with New York plates parked in the garage. But cars of all sorts were so common—the parking tangle frequently extended into the road—that nothing much was thought of it, even when someone noticed that the bedroom windows upstairs were open. And nothing came of it, except that around suppertime, in the lull before the evening crowd began to arrive in force, Ted and an unknown woman, of the same physical type as Linda but brunette, swiftly exited from the kitchen door, got into the car, and drove back to New York. The few lingering babysitters and beaux thus unwittingly glimpsed the root of the divorce. The two lovers had been trapped inside the house all day; Ted was fearful of the legal consequences of their being seen by anyone who might write and tell Linda. The settlement was at a ticklish stage; nothing less than terror of Linda’s lawyers would have led Ted to suppress his indignation at seeing, from behind the window screen, his private pool turned public carnival. For long thereafter, though in the end he did not marry the woman, he remembered that day when they lived together like fugitives in a cave, feeding on love and ice water, tiptoeing barefoot to the depleted cupboards, which they, arriving late last night, had hoped to stock in the morning, not foreseeing the onslaught of interlopers that would pin them in. Her hair, he remembered, had tickled his shoulders as she crouched behind him at the window, and through the angry pounding of his own blood he had felt her slim body breathless with the attempt not to giggle.

August drew in, with cloudy days. Children grew bored with swimming. Roscoe Chace went on vacation to Italy; the pump broke down, and no one
repaired it. Dead dragonflies accumulated on the surface of the pool. Small deluded toads hopped in and swam around and around hopelessly. Linda at last returned. From Minneapolis she had gone on to Idaho for six weeks, to be divorced. She and the children had burnt faces from riding and hiking; her lips looked drier and more quizzical than ever, still seeking to frame that troubling question. She stood at the window, in the house that already seemed to lack its furniture, at the same side window where the lovers had crouched, and gazed at the deserted pool. The grass around it was green from splashing, save where a long-lying towel had smothered a rectangle and left it brown. Aluminum furniture she didn’t recognize lay stewn and broken. She counted a dozen bottles beneath the glass-topped table. The nylon divider had parted, and its two halves floated independently. The blue plastic beneath the colorless water tried to make a cheerful, otherworldly statement, but Linda saw that the pool in truth had no bottom, it held bottomless loss, it was one huge blue tear. Thank God no one had drowned in it. Except her. She saw that she could never live here again. In September the place was sold, to a family with toddling infants, who for safety’s sake have not only drained the pool but have sealed it over with iron pipes and a heavy mesh, and put warning signs around, as around a chained dog.

**Post-reading activities:**

1. **What is the key idea of the story? How is the philosophy of human relations revealed in it?**

2. **What happened to a married couple – the Turners in the course of narration? How did their neighbours use it in their own interest? What subterfuge did they invent to have a free access to the swimming pool?**

3. **How did the host treat the situation? Why was he forced to tolerate it?**

4. **What happened to the pool after the house had been sold? Why?**

5. **What traits of human character does this story cast light upon? Prove it.**
E(dward) E(stlin) Cummings (1894—1962) - e.e. cummings

The verse of e.e. cummings (as Cummings always wrote his name) was influenced by Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Cubism (an art movement developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, in which forms were broken down into geometric shapes) and Dada (the nihilistic art and literature movement founded in Zurich and New York in 1916). It is now mainly known for its technical experimentation. Particularly noticeable are the split words and unusual grammar arrangements, the odd punctuation and the mixing of established poetic forms with free verse.

*my sweet old etcetera*

my sweet old etcetera

aunt lucy during the recent

war could and what

is more did tell you just

what everybody was fighting

for,

my sister

isabel created hundreds

(and

hundreds) of socks not to mention shirts fleaproof earwarmers

etcetera wristers etcetera, my

mother hoped that

i would die etcetera

bravely of course my father used
to become hoarse talking about how it was
a privilege and if only he
could meanwhile my

self etcetera lay quietly
in the deep mud et
cetera
(dreaming,
et
cetera, of
Your smile
eyes knees and of your Etcetera)

Post-reading activities:
1. What is unusual about cumming’s poetic style and poetic language?
2. What’s the reason, in your opinion, for such an out-of-the-common use of typography and punctuation?
3. What is the poet’s attitude towards his ‘family’?
4. Who do you think ‘Your smile’ belongs to?
5. How would you define the main idea and message of the poem? Be ready to explain the interrelation between the title and content of the poem.

Robert Frost

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

    And sorry I could not travel both
    And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

    Then took the other, as just as fair,
    And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
   Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
   And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
   Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way.
   I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
   Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
   I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Post-reading activities:
1. What human traits are enumerated in the poem? Prove it from the text.
2. Give a character sketch of a 'traveler' in a poem. Be ready to explain the philosophic meaning of such concepts as 'traveler', 'travel', 'road'.
3. How would you define the theme of the poem?
4. Does the poem suggest that Frost was a non-conformist? Provide your explanation.
5. Could the major idea of the poem fall within your own life philosophy or you prefer to take the roads 'much traveled by'?
6. Write a short essay as an answer to the question: Do you think that the choices we make in life ultimately turn out to be the right ones?
Recommended Literature:


Ольга Витальевна Томберг

ПРАКТИКУМ ПО АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

Учебное пособие