

## SYLLABUS

### SURVEY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

#### LACKAWANNA COLLEGE/WALLENPAUPACK AREA HIGH SCHOOL

#### DUAL ENROLLMENT

This course is a study of American Literature until approximately 1900, and it will survey American poetry, fiction and drama by presenting the achievements of American writers from the late seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in their historical context. We will read and discuss several works from various writers, and students will develop greater analytic power, literary insight and a deeper understanding of the main currents of American thought.

Our texts will include Prentice Hall's [The American Experience](#) and various pdf sources.

#### **Week One:**

William Bradford – Of Plymouth Plantation: pp 76-87; [Bing Videos](#); In search of the Puritans; [Bing Videos](#);

Jonathan Edwards – *from* Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God: pp. 102-109

**Writing Assignment: Contrast the religious philosophy of the Americans about whom these works were written to the current American religious philosophy. Explain how each philosophy differs and why there is a difference. Your answer should not exceed 250 words.**

#### **Week Two:**

Thomas Jefferson – The Declaration of Independence: pp 169-174.

Benjamin Franklin – The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: pp 140-146; from Poor Richard's Almanac: pp 147-153. Who is Ben Franklin? [Bing Videos](#); 14 Facts about

Ben Franklin: [Bing Videos](#); Writing aphorisms.

**Writing Assignment: The Declaration of Independence states: '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' ([Declaration of Independence: A Transcription | National Archives](#)). In a short response, explain how one of the concepts of '*life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*' is the most important in American society today. OR...select one of Franklin's aphorisms and provide an**

explication and its relevance today. Your answer, in either prompt, should not exceed 250 words.

### **Week Three:**

Edgar Allan Poe – The Fall of the House of Usher pp 312-328.

**Writing Assignment: Poe's work is full of symbolism and extended metaphors. Select either a symbol or an extended metaphor and fully describe its relevance not only to the time in which this work was written, but also to current American society. Your answer should not exceed 250 words.**

### **EVALUATION ONE – Objective test**

### **Week Four:**

Ralph Waldo Emerson – from Nature, from Self-Reliance, Concord Hymn, The Snowstorm.

Washington Irving – The Devil and Tom Walker pp 258-276.

**Writing Assignment: Irving's work is a classic example of the proverbial 'selling one's soul to the Devil.' In a short essay, explain how the concept of 'selling one's soul to the Devil' is still prevalent in American society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Your explanation should not exceed 250 words.**

### **Week Five:**

Nathaniel Hawthorne – The Minister's Black Veil pp 340 – 356

**Writing Assignment: You are aware that while the black veil was hiding something personal to the minister, it is a symbol or even a metaphor for society that was hiding something at the time when Irving wrote the work. Explain what the symbol/metaphor's significance was during Irving's time and explain whether the same symbol/metaphor exists today. Your answer should not exceed 250 words.**

### **Week Six:**

Herman Melville – from Moby Dick pp 358-378

**Writing Assignment: Melville's work is about a human struggle in nature. In a short essay, explain an issue that is relevant to your age group today and how your (your generation) is dealing with it. Your answer should not exceed 250 words.**

### **EVALUATION TWO – Objective Test**

### **Week Seven:**

Mark Twain - [Bing Videos](#); The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County [THE CELEBRATED JUMPING FROG OF CALAVERAS COUNTY](#); [Ten Wittiest Essays of Mark Twain](#) [The 10 Wittiest Essays By Mark Twain](#). Mark Twain: The American Bard pp 572. From Life on the Mississippi pp 576-581.

**Writing Assignment: Select a short passage from one of the Twain works that we have read this week and explicate its literary relevance/importance. You must directly quote the passage and properly document it in MLA style. Your quotation will not be part of the word count for your answer which shall not exceed 250 words.**

### **Week Eight:**

Walt Whitman – [Walt Whitman - Poet, Leaves of Grass, Civil War | Britannica](#)

from Preface to the Leaves of Grass; from Song of Myself; When I heard the Learn'd Astronomer; By the Bivouac's Fitful Name; I Hear America Singing; A Noiseless Patient Spider.

Jack London – To Build a Fire pp 620 – 640.

**Writing Assignment: Whitman's works are timeless in that his points of emphasis not only were relevant in his time, but they are also relevant today. Explain, in a short work, how the main point of 'I Hear America Singing' can be applied to 21<sup>st</sup> century society. Your work shall not exceed 250 words.**

### **Week Nine:**

Emily Dickinson – Because I Could Not Stop For Death; I heard a Fly Buzz – when I died; There's a certain slant of light; My life closed twice before its close; The Soul selects her own Society; The Brain – is wider than the sky; There is a solitude of space; Water, is taught by thirst. pp 425 – 435

**Writing Assignment:** Dickinson's poetry is classic – each will live forever. For this creative writing assignment, you are to write a poem that mirrors the style and meaning of a Dickinson poem. Your rhyme scheme and meter must be reminiscent of a Dickinson poem.

### **EVALUATION THREE – Objective Test**

**Week Ten:** Nathaniel Hawthorne The Scarlett Letter

**Writing Assignment:** After reading the first third of the novel The Scarlett Letter, predict which one of the characters will have the largest impact in the work. Explain why you think that the selected character carries the most significance. Your work shall not exceed 250 words.

**Week Eleven:** The Scarlett Letter

**Research Project:** In an essay of approximately 750 words (Title Page, MLA style, in-text documentation, Works Cited page) select a theme/topic from The Scarlett Letter that applies to life in America's 21<sup>st</sup> century. This project is due by the end of week twelve.

**Week Twelve:** The Scarlett Letter and research project writing.

### **EVALUATION FOUR: Objective test**

**Week Thirteen:** Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee

The Gettysburg Address; Second Inaugural Address; Emancipation Proclamation.

Lee – Letter to His Son.

**Writing Assignment:** The Gettysburg Address is a key part of Lincoln's presidency as it briefly described the stress that a disjointed America faced in 1863. While the address was about 270 words, it was a powerful essay regarding the tragedy of the time. For this assignment, you are writing a new Gettysburg Address pertinent to American

**society in 2025. What social/political issue is foremost and how can we solve it. Your answer should not exceed 250 words.**

**Week Fourteen:** Bret Harte – The Outcasts of Poker Flat pp 592-607

**Writing Assignment: Explain how Harte’s work describes the ‘moral decline’ of the time and how similar ‘outcasts’ may be used in current American society. Your answer should not exceed 250 words.**

**Week Fifteen:** Washington Irving – The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

[Rip Van Winkle](#)

**Writing Assignment: We should be able to see how Irving thought that America was asleep at the proverbial wheel during the time when the piece was written. Update Irving’s piece by creating a fictional character who fell asleep sometime in 2005 and woke up today. What is the principal difference between the society in which he or she was living then and society today. Your answer shall not exceed 250 words.**

### **EVALUATION FIVE: Objective Test**

**Week Sixteen:** H.D. Thoreau Slavery in Massachusetts [Slavery in Massachusetts](#)  
[\[Thoreau\]](#)

**Writing Assignment: In a short work, explain whether American has recovered from the slavery that was still happening in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If slavery was not prevalent in the north, then why did Thoreau write this story? Is it real or is he ‘hinting’ at something? Your answer shall not exceed 250 words.**

**Week Seventeen:** Frederick Douglas – [Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas An American Slave.](#) [Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass](#)

**Writing Assignment: Assume the persona of a slave during the time of Douglas. Explain your outlook on your future and what you think will happen to you in your lifetime. Your answer shall not exceed 250 words.**

**Week Eighteen: Final Exam Week**

**EVALUATION SIX: Final Essay**

**Select a period/topic, from the beginning of American history until 1900, (i.e. religion, government, nature, politics) and write an essay in MLA format that justifies your point. You must use at least three of the authors that we have read during this semester. You must include a title page, your text, and a works cited page. Your text shall not exceed 500 words.**

**FINAL EXAM: Objective Test**