

**English Literature:
from the Beginning of the 20th Century to Present**
**American Literature:
from the First Half of the 19th Century to Present**

English Literature at the Beginning of the 20th Century
Literary activity of Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)

1. The main meaning of English Literature

The term English literature refers to literature written in the English language, including literature composed in English by writers not necessarily from England: Joseph Conrad was Polish, Robert Burns was Scottish, James Joyce was Irish, Dylan Thomas was Welsh, Edgar Allan Poe was American, Salman Rushdie is Indian, V.S. Naipaul is Trinidadian. In other words, English literature is as diverse as the varieties and dialects of English spoken around the world.

2. Periods of English Literature (since the 19th century)

Realism (End 19th – I part 20th) – a trend the representatives of which portray characters and events as they are. Representatives: Somerset Maugham, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and Herbert George Wells.

Modernism (End 19th – 60 years 20th) – a trend focuses on breaking away from rules and conventions, searching for new perspectives and points of view, experimenting in form and style etc. Representatives: James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Aldus Huxley, Thomas Stearns Eliot.

Existentialism (1940–60s 20th) – A philosophical movement of the 19th and 20th centuries stressing individual freedom and human choice; it is based on the idea that human beings shape their own existence and give meaning to it through their own choices and actions. Representatives: John Fowles, William Golding, Iris Murdoch.

Postmodernism (60s 20th – present) – A cultural and intellectual trend of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries characterized by emphasis on the ideas of the decenteredness of meaning, the value and autonomy of the local and the particular, the infinite possibilities of the human existence, and the coexistence, in a kind of collage or pastiche, of different cultures, perspectives, time periods, and ways of thinking. Representatives: Ralph Ellison.

3. General Remarks.

20th century English literature is remarkable for a great diversity

of artistic values and artistic methods.

The trends that have had the impact on British fiction and art are:

- the philosophy of Henry Bergson;
- Sigmund Freud’s psychology and its development in the works of his disciples;
- the philosophical implications of Albert Einstein’s theories;
- the later popularity of Existentialist thought.

Fundamental political, social and economic changes on the British scene deeply affected the creative writing of the new century. There were two currents:

1. Realism

2. Modernism

1. Realism

In the early 20th century the traditions of realism that had developed in the late 19th century were continued and developed. It was caused by:

- an understanding of the artist’s duty towards society;
- an earnest desire of the artists to give expression to the feelings and thoughts of the British people.

Four names were prominent among the writers who continued the traditions of realism. They were George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy Herbert George Wells and William Somerset Maugham. All possessed remarkable individual talent and developed the trend of realism along their own individual lines. They sought for new ways and means of revealing the truth of life in their works, and their criticism of the modern society reaches considerable depth.

The narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy and stupidity are mercilessly criticized in the works of **George Bernard Shaw** (1856–1950).

John Galsworthy (1867–1933) excels in revealing the characters from a psychological point of view.

Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) is a new type of writer who thinks about the future of mankind.

2. Modernism

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century English literature was also greatly influenced by writers and poets who made persistent attempts to break away from established literary conventions. They were called modernists. Modernism is subdivided into two periods:

- early modernism* (the representatives were critics both of social

and literary conventions);

–*late modernism* (art experimentation with form became a convenient device to impart an aura of novelty to unclear ideas).

Some of the innovations introduced by modernists exercised a certain influence upon the realistic trends of the 20th century art and were accepted by progressively minded artists. Representatives are: J. Joyce, V. Woolf.

The leading genre of the above mentioned period of time was the philosophical and psychological novel.

4. Literary Activity of William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)

William Somerset Maugham is one of the best known writers of the present day. He was not only a novelist of considerable rank, but also one of the most successful dramatists and short-story writers.

William Somerset Maugham was born in Paris in 1874. His father was a solicitor for the British Embassy. His mother died when he was eight. Two years later his father followed, and the orphan child was sent to his uncle, a clergyman in Whiteable, Kent. At thirteen he was sent to Kings School, Canterbury, with an intention that he should go to Oxford and prepare to enter the church.

But he always wanted to write, and in 1890 he went abroad and studied at the University of Heidelberg, from which he returned in 1892. According to his uncle's will he had to choose a profession and he chose medicine, thus entering St. Tomas Hospital in London. In 1898 he got his medical degree, but he never practiced, except for a year in the Lambeth slums.

His experience in treating the sick in the slums gave Maugham material for his first work, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), a realistic novel characterized by a powerful photographic portraiture of life. After that he decided to devote his life to literature. Soon after the publication of his first novel Maugham went to Spain and then travelled to all parts of the world. He visited Russia, America, Asia and Polynesian Islands, and wherever he was, he always sought material for his books. He was a keen observer of life and individuals.

During World War I he enlisted with a Red Cross Ambulance Unit. Later he was transferred to the Intelligence Service (Secret Service). Early in the 1930s Maugham settled down near Paris. At the outbreak of World War II he was appointed to special work at the British Ministry of Information in Paris. The Nazi advance overtook him there; he managed, however, to reach England, leaving behind him

all his belongings and many of his unfinished manuscripts. In the following years he settled down in England.

The most mature period of Maugham's literary career began in 1915, when he published one of his most popular novels *Of Human Bondage*. It was started in 1905. The book is considered to be his masterpiece.

Cakes and Ale (1930) was named by Maugham himself to be best of his books. It represents the backstage life of literary profession.

The revolt of the individual against the accepted customs of society is a theme which has always fascinated Somerset Maugham. It inspired his novel *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919).

Other most prominent works by Somerset Maugham are the novels: *Theatre* (1937) and the *Razor's Edge* (1944). He wrote nineteen novels, twenty-four plays and a large number of short stories, in addition to travel works and an autobiography. He is primarily a short-story writer and a novelist.

The most popular stories are *Rain*, *The Unconquered*, *Gigolo and Gigolette*, *The Man with the Scar*, *The Luncheon*. A realistic portrayal of life, keen character observation, interesting plots, beautiful, expressive language and a simple style, all place Somerset Maugham on a level with the greatest English writers of the 20th century.

Novel *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919)

The novel which has rather an unusual plot is partly based on the life story of the famous French painter Gauguin who was an innovator and rebel in art.

The hero of the novel, Charles Strickland, is a prosperous stockbroker. At the age of forty he leaves his wife and children and goes to Paris, where he devotes himself to painting. Strickland is aware of all the hardships in store for him, but his desire to paint is so strong that no arguments can convince him to change his decision to devote his life to art.

Strickland's life in Paris is "a bitter struggle against every sort of difficulty". But the hardships do not affect him. He is indifferent to comfort. Canvas and paint are only things he needs.

Strickland does not care for fame. Nor does he care for wealth. He does not sell his pictures and he is almost starving. His only aim in life is to create beauty. The only person who understands Strickland's creative genius is the painter Dirk Stroeve. Trying to save Strickland from a terrible disease and starvation, Dirk Stroeve brings

him home where he sacrifices his time, his comfort and his money to Strickland. But instead of gratitude Strickland shows his inhumanity towards Dirk Stroeve. He seduces Stroeve's wife Blanche who falls in love with him. When Strickland takes no more interest in her, she commits suicide. These two men with their sharply contrasting characters are equally responsible for Blanche Stroeve's tragic death, which is caused both by her husband's kindness and by Strickland's cruelty.

Thus after years of resultless struggle in Paris Strickland moves to Marseilles. He spends about four months at Marseilles where he finds it impossible to earn the small sum he needs to keep body and soul together. He decides to go to the South Sea. By a chance of luck he boards a ship bound for Australia, where he works as a stoker thus getting to Tahiti. There he marries a Polynesian woman Ata and devotes the rest of his life to painting. Strickland dies of leprosy.

According to his will his wife burns their house, the walls of which had been covered from ceiling to floor with compositions by Strickland. Only on discovering some canvases Strickland had once put aside during his years of unrewarded work, the world art realizes it has lost a genius. Strickland is concentrated on his art. He is indifferent to love, friendship and kindness. He ruins the life of Dirk Stroeve and his wife who nursed him when he was dangerously ill. He does not care for his own wife and children and brings misfortune to all the people who come in touch with him. But on the other hand we cannot deny his talent as an artist, a creator of beauty. Strickland cannot care for anything else but art as art is the only means for him to express himself.

Society, however, is hardly ever patient with geniuses. Most often a genius has to die before he is acknowledged. Maugham shows how blind the bourgeois public is to real beauty. Later Strickland's works are bought by the public because it is fashionable to have them in one's flat.

The author shows that the public lacks imagination; therefore real art is as far for the rich as the moon is. The title serves to Maugham as a symbol for two opposing worlds - the material world which is left by Strickland, where everything is thought of in terms of money and the world of art.

English Literature of the 20th Century (the 20s-30s) Modernism. Literary Activity of James Joyce (1882-1941)

1. English Literature of the 20th Century (the 20s-30s). Modernism. General Remarks.

The 20s-30s years form the first period in English 20th century literature. At that time the world suffered greatly because of consequences of World War I: millions of victims, enormous destruction, disappointment in former ideas and authorities. Basic religious and political beliefs were questioned by more people.

The writers of this period were greatly influenced by various decadent philosophical theories which led to the creation of works marked by great pessimism.

A symbolic method of writing had already started early in the 20th century. Along with works of realism produced by Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy there were writers who refused to acknowledge reality as such. They thought reality to be superficial. They were sure that everything that happened was the irrational, the unconscious and the mystical in man. These writers called the inner psychological process "the stream of consciousness" and based a new literary technique on it which was called modernism (*see Appendix 1 (sub periods)*).

The most important author who used this new literary technique was James Joyce (1882-1941). Decadence marks his works. He influenced many writers.

Remoteness from actuality is clearly seen in the works of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941).

Mystification of contemporary society is to be traced in the works of Aldus Leonard Huxley (1894-1963).

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) belongs to the same trend of writers for whom individualism and pessimism became the most characteristic traits.

The second period in the development of English literature is the decade between 1930 and World War II.

The thirties are marked by co-existence of the writers-realists representing different generations and decadent and modernist tendencies in English literature.

2. Literary Activity of James Joyce (1882-1941)

James Joyce was born in Dublin on February 2, 1882. His family was middle-class and very large. He was educated at a Catholic School, then at a Jesuit college, and finally at University College, Dublin. His school interests were languages, poetry, Latin and philosophy.

James Joyce's first published work was a volume of poems called *Chamber Music* (music played with a small group of instruments) (1907). He wrote in many genres. In 1914 Joyce wrote *Dubliners*, a collection of fifteen short stories set in Dublin. "It is a chapter of the moral history of my country," Joyce commented. It became one of the best-known books of its time. The short story form, dating back to the middle years of the 19th century, is used by Joyce in this collection of tales to show the lives and experiences of people in Dublin. Joyce analyses Dublin as a city which cannot change, and whose people are dying. The collection starts with *Eve line*, a story of adolescence, and finishes with the story *The Dead*, the title of which signifies the conclusion both of life and of the book. Each story presents a moment of self-realization in the life of one person from Dublin. Joyce took inspiration for his short stories from Anton Chekhov.

The same theme is found in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, published in 1914-1915. This is almost an autobiography, although the hero is called Stephen Dedalus. He wants to become a writer, like Joyce himself, and finally has to leave Ireland to find his true voice as an artist.

In 1922, James Joyce's *Ulysses* was published. It was published in Paris, and immediately caused great controversy - some people saw it as the most important novel of the country, but for others, including the British authorities, it was obscene, and was banned until 1936.

And after *Ulysses* he went further. He wrote *Finnegan's Wake*, which was finally published in 1939. Joyce took the novel and language to new limits. It is a highly experimental novel and very surprising to read. The main theme is Fall and Resurrection told about Dublin settings. The novel uses dreams, play on words, invented words and jokes to make a unique text.

The novel *Ulysses* (1922)

The novel concerns the experiences of two men during one day, 16th June, 1904, in Dublin, and one of the main characters is Stephen Dedalus again. Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom are the other main figures in the novel, which follows the two men through a day, and

ends with a stream-of-consciousness monologue by Molly. There is no punctuation as thoughts, memories and reflections move into one another.

Joyce also uses a wide range of references as well as using the styles of many works of literature from *The Odyssey* of Homer, on which the structure of *Ulysses* is based, through Chaucer to the moderns. Joyce wanted to write the novel that was the climax of the traditions of English literature.

3. Literary Activity of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Virginia Woolf was born in London in 1882. She had two brothers, Toby and Adrian, and one sister, Vanessa. Her mother, Julia, died in 1895, when Virginia was thirteen years old.

Her father, Leslie Stephen, was a noted intellectual of the day, a philosopher and a critic. He was connected with many of the leading artists and writers of that period. After the death of his wife, he became depressed and suffered much.

Virginia's early life was very hard. She witnessed her father's depression and suffered a mental breakdown herself after her mother's death. She was to suffer another breakdown in 1914, when her father died, this time trying to commit suicide.

After the death of their father, Toby, Adrian, Vanessa and Virginia moved to Bloomsbury, and the two sisters began experimenting, painting and writing. Their house in Bloomsbury became the centre of literary interest among the intellectuals and artists of that time – the Bloomsbury Group.

In 1917 Virginia, now married to Leonard Woolf, started the publishing company that printed, apart from some of Virginia's own work, Thomas Stearns Eliot, Edward Moran Forster and Virginia's best friend, Katherine Mansfield (1888–1965).

Virginia Woolf's first novel was *The Voyage Out* (1915). It was followed by *Night and Day* (1919). Then in 1922, she published *Jacob's Room*. It tells a story very close to the death of the author's own brother Toby. It was the first of her novels to use the impressionistic technique which was to make her famous. She wanted to leave realism and move into a new kind of expression which would allow a more internal exploration of the described events and emotions. She continued this in her next novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). In *The Waves* (1931) which is her most experimental novel, Woolf shows six different characters, all at different points in their lives, and explores

how they are each affected by the death of someone well-known to all of them.

Orlando (1928) is a literary fantasy which takes its main character from the Elizabethan age to modern times, and through a change of sex, as he/she meets all sorts of literary and historic figures.

She spoke out for women, particularly in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She also published a lot of criticism, such as *The Common Reader* (two series, 1925 and 1932). Her final works *The Years* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941) continue her experiments, and prove her to be one of the most important and original novelists of the 20th century. Virginia Woolf committed suicide in 1941.

Post-war English Literature **Literary activity of George Orwell (1903-1950)**

1. Post-war English Literature. General Remarks. The remarkable political and social changes in Great Britain within the years following World War II had a great influence on intellectual life and on literature in particular.

The most memorable literary form which told the stories of the Second World War was the novel. The novel with a philosophical tendency was born and the traditional satirical novel flourished to the full.

The essence of all these literary phenomena was the earnest search of the writers for their place in life, for better future.

During the 1950s a new kind of drama began to reach the theatres of Europe - absurd drama.

Absurd drama began in France in the 1940s and reached Britain with *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Becket in 1955. It shows a general sense of this new literature. This kind of drama explains how meaningless life is.

Absurdist Theatre (or Theatre of the Absurd) (see *Glossary*). The playwrights Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Samuel Beckett and others are known today as contributors to the theatre of the absurd. They describe the absurd elements of the human condition. "Cut off from religious roots, man is lost: all his actions have become senseless, absurd, and useless". To underline the spiritual and physical immobility of human pauses and silences are repeated in

Absurd Drama.

2. Literary activity of Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born in Foxrock, near Dublin, in 1906. He belonged to a middle-class family. He distinguished himself at school and then went to Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied Modern Languages. After graduating in 1928, he moved to Paris and worked as a teacher of English at the University of Paris (1928-1929). In 1930, he returned to Dublin where he taught French at Trinity College, but in 1931 he left this University career and, after travelling in Germany and Italy, settled in Paris where he lived until his death, concentrating on writing.

In Paris he met many leading intellectual figures of the day including James Joyce, and dedicated himself to studying and writing.

During the war, Beckett joined the French Resistance and fought against the fascist occupation of France. He was arrested in 1942, as a result of his activities, and went into hiding, spending the rest of the war period working on the land in Provence. After the war, he visited Ireland for a short period, before returning to France as an interpreter with the Red Cross. He settled in Paris in 1946.

Beckett's literary works include prose, novels and short stories, poetry, drama and critical essays. In 1921 he published *Dante... Bruno... Vico... Joyce*, a collection of critical essays, and the monograph, *Proust* in 1931. *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) was his first experiment with the short story genre, followed in 1938 by his first novel *Murphy*. In 1944 he wrote the experimental novel *Watt* that was published in 1953. This was followed by a trilogy of novels *Molloy* (1955), *Malone Dies* (1956) and *The Unnameable* (1958). In all, Beckett wrote more than nine novels and seven volumes of shorter fiction.

The play *Waiting for Godot* was published first in French in 1952 and was translated into English in 1954. It was translated into more than twenty languages. It was immediately received with critical appraisal and met much popular interest. Some other plays are *Krapp's Last Tape* (1959), *Happy Days* (1961), *Not I* (1973) and *Breath* (1970).

Beckett found a big English-speaking public that had never read his novels. Controversy and scandal surrounded the dramatic works of Beckett, but he also benefited from the appreciation of

literary critics and directors. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. Samuel Beckett died in Paris in 1989.

3. Literary activity of George Orwell (1903-1950)

George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair in India in 1903. His family lived in British India where his father worked for the colonial Civil Service. In 1907, the Blair family returned to England where Orwell was educated, first at a private preparatory school, and then at the famous boys' school, Eton.

After leaving school in 1921, Orwell returned to India and became a policeman. His first commission, in 1922, was in Burmah.

He remained in the Police Force until 1928, when he resigned.

Orwell then began unusual literary career. In 1928, while living in Paris and working in a restaurant washing dishes, he started writing articles for the French newspaper *Le Monde*.

In 1929 he returned to London, where he lived the life of a poor person, collecting information for his book *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). It was for this book that he first adopted the pseudonym George Orwell. Then he published three novels. The first, *Burmese Days* (1934), described his experiences in the Police Force in Burmah and demonstrates his developing anti-English politics. This was followed by *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) and *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* (1936).

In 1936 he was commissioned to write about the situation and conditions of the unemployed in England.

The Road to Wigan Pier (1937) was the result of his research, and it was with this book that he established himself as an investigative writer. His political point of view, broadly left-wing, anti-capitalist and independent, was quite clear.

With the Spanish Civil War, Orwell left England to fight in Spain for the Republican, anti-fascist forces. He remained there until he was wounded and forced to return to England.

Homage to Catalonia (1938) is about his experiences in the Spanish Civil War. Orwell was suffering from tuberculosis. His next novel *Coming up for Air* was written during a period of convalescence spent in North Africa. After he returned to England, his reputation as a political free-thinker and social critic was high. He continued to write and publish an enormous variety of works, essays, criticisms, literary criticisms and political reflections. He also worked as a book reviewer for the magazine *New England Weekly*.

During the Second World War he worked for the B.B.C. and enlisted in the Home Guard, a volunteer armed body of men, usually too old or too ill to join the regular army. But his tuberculosis prevented him, however, from fulfilling this activity.

In 1944 he worked as the literary editor of the important left-wing newspaper *Tribune*. He wrote his best-known work *Animal Farm* in 1944. In 1948 his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published. It describes a future world (in 1984) when the political system has total control over people. The slogan *Big Brother is Watching You* gives an idea of the power of this system.

Animal Farm is a satire against the political system which Orwell had seen develop in the 1930s and 1940s.

There are many similarities between Orwell and George Orwell for example, in the way that they combined literature and politics and produced works of great political insight.

Injustice, oppression and the effects of totalitarian regimes in general are themes that Orwell presents in his works, together with an analysis of failing communist regimes. Orwell died at the age of 46 in 1950.

The novel *Animal Farm* (1944)

In this tragic fairy story Orwell shows that a revolution, once it has abandoned honesty, truth and clarity, results in oppression, cruelty and exploitation. Once the individual has been denied the right to knowledge and the right to understand, power can and will be abused.

Existentialism

Literary Activity of William Golding (1911-1993) and Iris Murdoch (1919-1999)

1. Existentialism. General Remarks

A great deal of contemporary English fiction and drama is dedicated to the subject of man's search for identity, and the stress is not so much on political or social issues as on moral problems, which add another dimension to the portrayal of modern English society. The problem of identity closely linked with one of the most influential philosophical trends of twentieth century thought, often evokes an existential attitude. It implies certain skepticism about ever knowing the essential nature of

any of man's various experiences, particularly when that experience is received only through individual consciousness. At the same time, man must live and make his choice, must come to some terms with his own existence and the true meaning of everything around him. Existentialist philosophy places limitations on man's knowledge and power and even on his search for identity and on the necessity for serious action or engagement. The influence of existentialist ideas left a profound impression on the work of Iris Murdoch, William Golding, John Fowles.

Preoccupation with a philosophical explanation of the nature of things is manifested in the work of **John Fowles** (1926 – 2005), a highly imaginative and innovative modern writer. Fowles probes deep into human relations, especially those between the opposite sexes, by manipulating numerous literary, historical and artistic allusions and devices to demonstrate which part of the life of his characters belongs to past, the present and to all times. His point of departure is invariably man's lack of knowledge about human nature; his male is always limited by his partial understanding of woman; and in his frustration, his necessity to operate in a world where his knowledge is only partial, he acts so as to capture (*The Collector*), desert (*The Magus*) or betray (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*) the female he can dimly comprehend. Fowles treats his constant theme with deep sight as well as with great intensity of sociological and psychological observation.

2. **Literary Activity of William Golding (1911-1993)**

William Golding was born in Cornwall, England, in 1911. He attended the famous private school, and then went to Brasenose College, Oxford, where he started to study science. After a short period he changed to study English Literature. Golding graduated from Oxford in 1935 and started a career in teaching.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Golding joined the Royal Navy and was involved in active service throughout the war. The effects of the war on Golding were enormous and helped to create his pessimistic view of human nature.

After the war he returned to teaching, a career that he continued even after achieving fame as a writer. His first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, was published in 1954 and was accepted as an immediate critical success. This was followed by *The Inheritors* (1955), a novel set in the prehistoric age.

Pincher Martin (1958) was followed by *Free Fall*, and then by *The Spire* in 1964. There was a pause in Golding's literary production, and

then in 1979 he published *Darkness Visible and Rites of Passage* in 1980. In 1983 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Golding's development of the novel form during the 1950s and 1960s led him to an interesting experimentation with genre. He used the science fiction genre and the fantasy story to provide effective narrative style for his analyses of human nature.

William Golding's novels and especially his most assured success *Lord of the Flies* are notable for their symbolic treatment of human nature. In part they constitute a pessimistic commentary on the corrupt world, based on the author's belief in the falsity of the existing morals. Golding covered several vastly different themes, not always consonant with each other, but all expressive of his concern about the influence of modern civilization. In *The Inheritors* he makes the whole civilized enterprise look like a betrayal of man's chance to exist; in *The Spire* he suggests that any great task imposed upon a community makes such heavy demands on men that they break under the strain; *The Pyramid* is a forcible appeal to kindness, mutual understanding and humanity as the only way to save world from heartless selfishness and calculated greed.

The novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954)

The novel *Lord of the Flies* touches upon some unusual themes. It received huge critical and popular acclaim on its publication and became an important novel, often studied, cited and read throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s. Now it remains one of the most important contributions to English literature made last century.

The novel is in the form of the fable. The characters exist on two levels: as individuals and as types.

In this novel a group of boys, refugees from an atomic war are on a deserted island. After an initial sense of liberty and adventure in this tropical paradise, the boys begin to organize themselves into a little democratic society, electing Ralph as their leader. The group hold meetings go on expeditions to patrol the island, start building shelters to live in, organize the supply of water, and decide to keep a fire burning constantly, with the hope of signaling to passing boats. The group is composed of "littluns" of about six years old and "biguns" of about twelve. Apart from Ralph, another of the biguns, Jack, helps lead the group, by organizing a group of choir boys into a band of hunters, whose task it is to hunt pigs. However, things begin to get out of control. The littluns are afraid by the idea of a "beastie" or "snakey-thing" that they believe lives in the forest.

At night the children suffer from nightmares, even when the rational Piggy, an unpopular but intelligent fat boy, tries to tell them that there is no beast on the Island.

The rational projects that they originally established are gradually abandoned, and under the influence of Jack, the boys return to the savage state based around hunting and the fear of the beast, which Jack develops into a kind of God, the Lord of the Flies. Ralph and Piggy try to keep control of the group, but Jack is too strong and all the boys except Ralph, Piggy and Simon, a strange, solitary boy, leave the first camp and follow Jack to live a savage life.

The boys now become hunters, painting their faces, chanting and dancing, throwing stones and spears. Maurice and Roger act as Jack's assistants. The fear of the beast grows, particularly when one night a dead man on a parachute falls onto the island. The boys think that the parachute is the beast. Jack encourages the boys to leave "sacrifices" to the beast every time they kill on a hunt.

One night, Simon discovers the true nature of the parachute/ beast, but when he goes to the camp to tell the boys, he is killed, mistaken for the beast. After Simon's death, the hunters led by Jack, Roger and Maurice kill Piggy and then decide to kill Ralph and to offer him as a human sacrifice to the Lord of the Flies. Ralph is forced to hide while they hunt him.

During the hunt, the boys set fire to the island and a passing ship sees the flames and lands to rescue them, thus saving Ralph's life.

3. Literary Activity of Iris Murdoch (1919-1999)

Iris Murdoch was born in Dublin. Her mother was Irish and her father was an English civil servant who served as a cavalry officer in the World War I. The family moved to London in her childhood and she grew up in the western suburbs of it.

Murdoch studied classics, ancient history and philosophy at Somerville College, Oxford. During World War II she was an active member of the Communist Party, but soon she became disappointed with its ideology and resigned. Some years later Murdoch took up a postgraduate studentship in philosophy. In 1948 she was elected a fellow of St. Anne's College, Oxford, working there as a tutor until 1963. Since then Murdoch devoted herself entirely to writing. Between the years 1963 and 1967 she also lectured at the Royal College of Art.

Murdoch published her first novel in 1954. This was *Under the Net*, a philosophical novel with elements of comedy. Most of her novels,

however, are more philosophical than comic. They have a wide range of themes, and show that serious novels can still become best-sellers. Among the most successful works are *The Bell* (1958), which depicts an Anglican religious community in Gloucestershire and a novel about the Irish rebellion in 1916, *The Red and the Green* (1965). Perhaps her best works from the 1970s are *Black Prince* (1973), *A World of Child* (1975) and *The Sea, the Sea*, which won the Booker Prize in 1978. It is considered her major work.

Murdoch published over twenty novels. She was a prolific and highly professional novelist. Murdoch dealt in her works with everyday ethical or moral issues. Often Murdoch used fantasy and gothic elements to create atmosphere in which characters are trying to find meaning to their lives.

The novels combine realistic characters with extraordinary situations, and many of them have a religious or philosophical theme. Among her other publications are plays and critical studies. She is always concerned with moral problems of good and bad, right and wrong, art and life, and the nature of truth. Iris Murdoch died in Oxford on February 8, 1999.

With Iris Murdoch the trend in creative writing moved to philosophical fiction. She created a series of intricate novels that essentially deal with the nature of man and his delusions. Her characters search for an understanding of the meaning of life; they try to reduce experience to the manageable and comprehensible, none of the identities or definitions provides any satisfactory solution. Though Iris Murdoch always attempts to shape her characters perception of the world's chaotic nature into significant form, her rich and highly artistic prose mocks man's efforts to formulate precise codes and laws about life.

American Literature of the First Half of the 19th Century Romanticism

1. The main meaning of American Literature

American Literature reflects many religious, historical and cultural traditions of the American people. It includes poetry, drama, fiction and not written material, such as the oral literature of the American Indians, folk tales, and legends. It also includes accounts of American written by immigrants and visitors from other countries, as well as works by American writers who spent all of their lives abroad.

2. Periods of American Literature

Colonial Period (17th – 18th) Representatives: D.Denton, T.Ashe

Revolutionary Period (End 18th century – 1820) Representatives: S.Adams

Romanticism (1820-1900) Representatives: Edgar Poe, Washington Irving

Realism (1900-1945) Representatives: Dreiser, Hemingway, Fitzgerald

Non-conformism (70s 20th century) Representatives: D. Salinger

Postmodernism (1945 to Present) Representatives: K. Keasey, J. Updike

Multiculturalism (60s 20th to Present) Representatives: T. King, Black Elk

3. American Literature of the First Half of the 19th Century. Romanticism. General Remarks

The literary current of romanticism appeared in America as the result of the Revolution of 1775-1783. It was also insured by the deep disillusionment of the democratic minded people in the results of the revolution.

The contradictions between the rich and the poor were as strong as ever. Negro slavery flourished in the country, the Indian tribes were exterminated.

Romanticism brought with it the first important works of American poetry and fiction, and the first foundations of American national literature were laid.

Romanticism in America is connected with the European romanticism though it is basically a purely national current.

Main peculiarities of romanticism:

- The life is depicted as a struggle between vice and virtue and virtue should defeat evil.
- Moral judgment on the nation as a whole, disregarding the existence of classes, or different sections of the population through created characters.
- The romantic poets and writers developed such genres as the novel (historical, social, and fantastic), the romance and the short story. They gave their readers a taste for old ballads, epics, and the folk-tales of the Indians.

- Nature is one of the major themes of the American romanticists.
- In romanticist literature a reader finds a complicated plot, dynamic development of the events and sudden changes in the fates of the heroes. Many complicated dramatic conflicts were solved with the help of chance accidents, fatal meetings or the discovery of dreadful secrets.

The writers of romanticism were true patriots. They loved their country and recognized the importance of developing national literature and national history.

Flourishing from the 1820s to the 1850s, romanticism can be divided into **early romanticism** (the 20s and 30s) and **late romanticism** (the 40s and 50s).

The early period began with the romances and short stories of Washington Irving (1783-1859). These forms were developed later by other American writers. The historical novel began in America with Fennimore Cooper (1789-1851). Romantic poetry appeared in great variety; most outstanding were the poems of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849).

The late (mature) romanticism is characterized by Cooper's later novels, Edgar Allan Poe's romances and poems written during the last eight years of his life, the works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), and the poems by Walt Whitman (1819-1892).

Early romanticists were more optimistic about the American reality than late romanticists were. Criticizing the drawbacks of American civilization, they believed that it provided vast possibilities for development.

Late romanticism developed in an atmosphere of sharp social contradictions, influenced by the development of capitalism in the country. The fiction of late romanticists was permeated with a tragic mood, sharp conflicts, confused feelings. American romanticism as a part of world romantic literature played an important role in the cultural life of America. The works of romantic writers of America are still read and admired.

4. Literary Activity of Edgar Poe (1809-1849)

Edgar Allan Poe, outstanding romantic poet and short-story writer, was one of the first professional writers of the United States. But in his lifetime he was more popular in Europe than at home.

Edgar Poe distinguished himself in three fields: in the short story, poetry and criticism. He wrote about 60 stories and 48 poems. The writer is a

great master of the short story. His prose is direct, energetic, and clear and aimed to focus the reader's attention on one particular idea. His aim in every work, he said, was to make a strong impression on the reader. Poe's stories may be divided into horror stories and detective stories.

Poe is the father of the detective story in America. He created the first of a long line of fictional master detectives Auguste Dupin. Dupin is a very attractive character in Allan Poe's stories. The reader delights in his common sense, wit and optimism. The author endows him with extraordinary powers of deduction and analysis. Dupin is the forerunner of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

Poe's best known detective stories are: *The Murder in Rue Morgue* and *The Mystery of Marie Roget*.

Poe is a poet of beauty. His constant themes are the death of a beautiful woman and the grief caused by it. Literature played an important role in the cultural life of America. The works of romantic writers of America are still read and admired.

American Literature of the 20th century

American Literature of the Second Half of the 19th Century and the Beginning of the 20th Century

Realism. Literary Activity of Mark Twain (1835-1910) and O. Henry (1862-1910)

1. Realism, main characteristics

Towards the middle of the 19th century the romantic trend in American literature gave way to new, realistic forms. Realism as a trend in American literature developed after the Civil War. The realistic literature differed greatly from that of the previous writers such as Irving, Cooper and Longfellow.

The romanticists wrote their stories about ideal individuals through which they showed their emotions. The realists understood that the people should be shown as a whole. They saw man on the background of social conflicts of the day and explained human feelings in relation to this background.

Among the most outstanding American realists in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century were Mark Twain, O. Henry and Jack London.

Mark Twain depicted common American people with great sympathy and humour. At the same time he cruelly condemned hypocrisy, bigotry and greed.

Jack London and O. Henry created typical characters of the American common people - farmers, workers, intellectuals.

American realism developed in contact with European realism. The works of Balzac, Gogol, Turgenev and Tolstoy influenced it greatly. But American realism enriched world realism by introducing such problems as social injustice and Negro and Indian questions.

2. Literary Activity of Mark Twain (1835-1910)

Mark Twain is the pen-name of the Samuel Langhorne Clemens, one of the greatest representatives of American realism of the second half of the 19th century. He is known as a great humorist and satirist. Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born on November 30, 1835 in a lawyer's family in a very small town called Florida in Missouri. Soon the family moved to Hannibal on the banks of the Mississippi River and there Samuel Clemens spent his boyhood.

When Samuel was twelve, his father died and the boy had to earn his own living. He changed several professions: he was a typesetter in a district newspaper, a printer and journalist in the office of the *Hannibal Journal*. While Samuel Clemens was a printer, he began to write for newspapers, sending travel letters to them.

In April 1857, while on the way from Cincinnati to New Orleans, Clemens apprenticed himself as a river pilot on a Mississippi steamboat board. It was one of Sam Clemens's dreams as a boy to pilot a steamboat. He was licensed two years later and continued in that profession until the Civil War closed the river (1861). At this period of his life he made his first attempt at literature having written a number of sketches based on his experiences as a pilot. He signed his articles Mark Twain, i. e. "sounding two", a term used by the sailors to show a depth of the river.

The breaking out of the Civil War stopped the traffic on the Mississippi and Clemens was out of job. His brother had been appointed as Secretary to the Governor of the State of Nevada, and Sam decided to go with him.

About this time gold had been found in Nevada, and a lot of fortune-seekers went to this area. Sam decided to try his luck too. He spent six years in Nevada, digging gold. He found nothing. On rainy days when the mines stopped working Sam wrote sketches which were published in the *Territorial Enterprise*, a daily paper of Virginia City. It was while working for the *Enterprise* that Clemens's career as a journalist really began.

In 1864 Twain went to San Francisco where he worked for the *Golden Era* and the *Californian* newspapers.

Here Mark Twain began to write sketches and stories. In 1865 Mark Twain won national fame with his story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*.

In 1866 *Alta California* proposed Mark Twain to write a series of letters, and he went to Europe for the first time. Thus a series of letters was written as Mark Twain's first important book *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) – a tale of a tour in Europe and the East made by a group of Americans on board a steamer. The work was a great success. It is very interesting because European scenes and customs are viewed through the eyes of an "innocent" American. After that Mark Twain got the reputation of the most famous American humourist. Before the book appeared Mark Twain had met Olivia Langdon, whom he married in

1870. In October 1871 Mark Twain moved to Hartford which remained his home for the happiest years of his life. The years 1874 to 1885 were very productive. He published the following works: *The Gilded Age* (1874), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885).

In 1889 Mark Twain wrote *A Connecticut Yankee in the Court of King Arthur*. It is a biting satire on the political and social system of day against the background of a fantastic plot placed in England of the 6th century.

Mark Twain went abroad several times and visited different parts of the world. Three honorary degrees were given to Mark Twain by American universities, and in 1907 Oxford University in England gave him an honorary Doctorate of Letters. His last novel *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg* was published in 1899. Mark Twain attacks the hypocrisy and corruption of contemporary society in it.

In the last years of his life Mark Twain wrote several political articles and pamphlets. Till his dying day Mark Twain did not stop his literary activities and continued working on his *Autobiography*.

Mark Twain began writing as a humorist, but later became a bitter satirist. Towards the end of his life he grew more dissatisfied with American mode of life. In his later works his satire becomes very sharp.

The novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876)

Mark Twain's famous novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* won the hearts of millions of readers, both young and old.

The plot is full of adventures of smart youngsters and is full of sparkling humour. With Tom's adventures we learn about the life on the Mississippi and that of the provincial town of the USA in the 19th century.

Tom Sawyer, a plain American boy, lives with his younger brother Sid and Aunt Polly in St Petersburg, a remote town on the banks of the Mississippi River. Sid is an obedient boy, and he is satisfied with his school and the life of the little town. Tom is quite the opposite of his brother. His close friend is Huck Finn, a boy left by his drunkard of a father. Tom does not like school because of the teachers who beat the pupils. He misses lessons, plays tricks on his teachers, fights his brother Sid. Tom is tired of Aunt Polly who wants to make a decent boy of him. From books about Robin Hood, robbers and hidden treasure Tom Sawyer has created an imaginary world which differs from the one he

lives in. The novel combines the elements of realism and romanticism. The realistic picture of the small town with its stagnant life is compared with the romantic world of Tom and his friends. The author praises humanism, friendship, courage and condemns injustice, narrow-mindedness and money worship.

The novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885)

It is a story of a little tramp. His father is a drunkard. When he becomes so violent that Huckleberry fears him, the boy runs away from him. Huck finds a canoe and gets into it and paddles to an island on the other side of the river. He thinks he is alone on the island, but he meets there a young Negro slave Jim. Huck is to see him there because he always considers him to be his friend. But when he learns that Jim has run away from his owner, he is very sad because it is a sin to help a runaway slave. But Huck promises not to tell anybody about him. Huckleberry and Jim are the main characters of the book, sail down the Mississippi, passing big and small towns, numerous villages and farms. The author and his heroes critically view everything they see. They seldom meet good people. Most of all they come across are robbers, murderers, and rogues. They do not wish to earn their living honestly.

The white boy and young Negro become very good friends; they help each other in all the troubles. Huck finds Jim to be kind, brave and good man.

Mark Twain compares the friendly relations between Huck and Jim with the corruption they see in the towns and villages on the shores.

It is to Twain's credit that he has depicted Jim as an honest, kind, sincere and selfless man at the time when the Negroes were considered inferior to the white people. From the time Jim enters the story in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* the book becomes a social novel. It is a judgment of a certain epoch in America.

In the novel Mark Twain used his wit and humour to show the social evils of his day.

3. Literary Activity of O. Henry (1862-1910)

O. Henry is one of the most popular short-story writers. His real name was William Sidney Porter. He was born in Greensboro, a little town in North Carolina.

His mother died when he was little. His father spent all his time on inventions of various kinds. His aunt had a private school and she encouraged him to read. His favourite authors were: Brontes, Walter Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and others. His schooling was short. He left

school when he was fifteen and worked in his uncle's drugstore as a clerk. At nineteen Porter went to Texas.

He changed a variety of jobs, working as a cowboy, miner, clerk and then a teller of a bank. While working at a bank Porter was falsely accused of embezzlement and he left the bank. He went to Houston where he worked for a newspaper and founded a humorous journal, which he called *The Rolling Stone*. He worked on the newspaper for nearly a year. Then William Porter had to return to the Texas capital Austin to start trial for the embezzlement at the bank. He was not guilty. However, the case was so confused that he considered it better not to go there and he went to South America.

In 1897 he returned to his dying wife to the USA and was arrested on the old charge, tried and sentenced to imprisonment. He spent five years in the Ohio State prison. While in prison he started writing stories. He used the pen-name O. Henry - from the name of the captain of prison guard, Orrin Henry.

Released from prison, O. Henry went to New York where he continued writing stories. The first of his volumes of short stories was *Cabbages and Kings* (1904). It was followed by *The Four Million* (1906), *The Trimmed lamp* (1907), *Heart of the West* (1907), *The Voice of the City* (1908), *The Gentle Graftor* (1908), *Roads of Destiny* (1909), *Options* (1909) and *Strictly Business* (1910). The years of hard work and privations had undermined the writer's health and he died in 1910. O. Henry worked out the various kinds of the short story: the monologue, the dialogue, the adventure story, the anecdote, the psychological story. O. Henry wrote about 150 stories with a New York background. His stories depict the lives of people belonging to different layers of society from businessmen to beggars. Most of his stories are romantic portrayals of the lives of shop girls, poor artists, and unhappy lovers. Social criticism in O. Henry's stories is very mild. The writer's interest is not in the social scene but in some unusual incidents in the lives of his heroes.

O. Henry's stories are based almost entirely on plot. Mood and character are of less importance. He was an entertainer; his aim was to amuse and surprise his readers rather than to analyze a human situation. Nevertheless, his stories attract the readers to this day. He is still a living author. His love for humanity, for the common people, his critical attitude towards injustice appeal readers. O. Henry's works had a great influence on American literature of the 20th century. The most popular O. Henry's stories are: *The Ransom of Red Chief* in which the two

crooks who kidnap a boy for ransom cannot stand his pranks and are forced to pay his father two hundred and fifty dollars to get rid of him; *The Gift of the Magi*, the story of Jim and Delia, a young couple, whose only treasures are Delia's beautiful long hair and Jim's gold watch. Jim sells his watch to buy Delia a comb for her hair, and she sells her hair to buy a chain for his watch; *A Service of Love*, the story about a young couple, Joe Larrabee and Delia Caruthers, who love each other very much. Each has a favourite hobby. He likes drawing, and she likes music and plays the piano. Soon they lack money to pay for their lessons, so Delia is going to give music lessons, and Joe too decides to earn money. Delia pretends to give lessons to a general's daughter and Joe pretends that he has sold a sketch. One evening Delia comes home with her right hand tied up with a rag. When Joe sees the bandage, the truth comes out that they have been working in the same laundry. O. Henry stories are related with skill, humor and feeling.

American Literature of the First Half of the 20th Century **Literary activity of Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) and Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)**

1. General Remarks

The radical economic and social changes in American life during the 20s and 30s marked a fruitful time for realists. The writers reflected the new realities of American life. New themes, plots and heroes appeared in the novels and stories of the realistic writers.

Together with the books, the only purpose of which was to entertain the reader and try to avoid social problems, there appeared books the purpose of which was to show the necessity of changing the social order (for example T. Dreiser).

The fiction of the realists is distinguished by a great interest in social conflicts, attacks on accepted values and criticism of the American way of life (criticism of American Dream).

Theodore Dreiser, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway are the most outstanding American realists who revealed in their works the truth of American life, showed the tragic fate of young Americans after World War I, reflected the struggle with fascism, exposed industrial conditions and spoke out warmly in defense of labour and depicted the spiritual emptiness of American society.

2. Literary activity of Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945)

Theodore Dreiser, novelist, was born in the little town of Terre Haute,

Indiana, in the family of a bankrupt small businessman. His childhood was a hard one, and he knew poverty. His father was a strict Catholic, narrow-minded and despotic. He made the future writer hate religion to the end of his days. At the age of 16 Theodore had to leave school and support himself by doing odd jobs. He worked as a waiter, a dishwasher, a rent-collector, a laundry-worker.

In 1888 Theodore entered the university. But after a year he had to leave the university because of money difficulties. In 1892 Dreiser turned to journalism working as a newspaper reporter and editor in Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland and Pittsburgh. Then he moved to New York, where he got work as a magazine editor.

The first significant work by Dreiser was his novel *Sister Carrie* (1900). The book describes the life of a poor country girl who goes to Chicago in search of work. Hardly had the book appeared when it was pronounced immoral and was withdrawn from print. However, in 1907, it became impossible to conceal it from the public, and it then appeared in an American edition. Only in ten years in 1911 the Dreiser's second novel *Jenny Gerhardt* was published. It is a life-story of a girl. The book roused further storm of criticism from readers and publishers who declared it immoral.

The Financier (1912) and *The Titan* (1914) together with *The Stoic* (published posthumously in 1947) form *The Trilogy of Desire*. Its purpose was to show the ways of American big business at the end of the 19th century. The chief character of all the three novels, Cowperwood, is a typical representative of that big business. *The Genius* (1915) is the tragic story of a young painter who breaks down under the cruel injustice of America.

An American Tragedy (1925) is Dreiser's best known novel. It is the story of a young American who is corrupted by the morals of American society and he becomes a criminal and murderer. The novel shows the American way of life with its contrast of poverty and wealth.

In 1927 Theodore Dreiser visited the Soviet Union. In 1928 he published the book *Dreiser Looks at Russia*. It was one of the first books of the American author about the Soviet Union.

Dreiser supported the working-class movement in America and wrote some publicist works - *Tragic America* (1931) and *America Is Worth Saving* (1941). During the last years of his life he worked at the novels - *The Bulwark* (1941) and *The Stoic* (1947). With the force of a true realist, Dreiser portrayed the world of American society but he never lost

faith in "the greatness and dignity of man".

3. Literary activity of Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

Francis Scott Fitzgerald is one of the most outstanding American writers of the lost generation¹.

Scott Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in the family of a businessman. The family inherited money from Fitzgerald's grandmother who was a wealthy grocer. Fitzgerald attended Princeton, a university for rich Americans. At that time the spirit of competition ruled at the university. Fitzgerald was influenced by it and tried to join the most fashionable clubs, enjoying their aristocratic, idle atmosphere. Money gave him independence, privileges, style and beauty. Poverty was mean and narrow. It is much later that Fitzgerald understood the falseness of his belief.

He left Princeton without a degree because of illness. His literary career began at the university. He wrote essays to the university magazine *The Tiger*. In 1917 he joined the army but he was not sent to the war in Europe. At the same he fell in love with Zelda Laue, the daughter of a wealthy lawyer from Alabama. He married two years later when his first work *The Side of Paradise* was published and was a success. Zelda did not want to marry a poor unknown man. The fact that the rich get the most beautiful girls made Fitzgerald think of social injustice. But he had no consistent world outlook. He viewed the world of the rich with a sense of admiration and contempt. His wife's demands for fashionable life abroad in Paris, the expensive hotel suites and endless parties led Fitzgerald into hack-writing for popular magazines, and this ruined his talent. However, he managed to write some serious novels and stories.

His major novels appeared from 1920 to 1934: *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender Is the Night* (1934).

Fitzgerald's best stories have been collected in the volumes: *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922), *All the Sad Young Men* (1926) and some others. The main theme of almost all Fitzgerald's works is the corrupting force of

¹ The term "lost generation" was introduced by an American writer, Gertrude Stein, who once addressed Hemingway saying: "You are the lost generation".

The lost generation was the people who suffered all the horrors of World War I. The post-war generation was disillusioned, because they realized that all the sacrifices and deaths were in vain. The ideals: freedom, brotherhood, justice, patriotism were mere words, in which nobody believed. The "lost generation" saw no purpose in life and gradually it became spiritually dead. It was the generation for whom "all the battles have been fought" and "all were dead".

money. He thought that the rich were a special race and only gradually he found out their corruption, inhumanity, spiritual emptiness and futility. He found it out together with his heroes who are largely autobiographical.

The novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Fitzgerald's best work tells the life story of Jay Gatsby the son of a poor farmer, who falls in love with a rich and beautiful girl Daisy Fay. She answers his love while his uniform conceals for a time his poverty. When war is over Daisy marries the rich Tom Buchanan.

Gatsby does everything he can to get money and social position to be worthy of Daisy. He devotes all his life to it. He can achieve it only by bootlegging and doing some other dubious things. When later Gatsby meets Daisy again, she believes the rumours of his large fortune, rich mansion and fashionable parties. She tells him she will leave Tom. But once, driving Jay back from New York to Long Island in his car, she runs over and kills Myrtle Wilson, her husband's mistress. Tom persuades Myrtle's husband that Gatsby was driving the car. He follows Jay and kills him. Daisy, having learned about Gatsby's dubious source of income, leaves him even before his death, in spite of the fact that Gatsby takes the fault of Myrtle's death on himself.

The story is told by Daisy's cousin Nick, who at the beginning despises Gatsby for his vanity, vulgar parties, ill-taste, faulty language. He gradually understands the greatness of his romantic dream and the tremendous energy with which he achieves his aim. At the same time Nick sees the shallowness of Gatsby's dream, as the society he tries to get in is cynical, vicious and violent. Gatsby is contrasted to hypocritical, disillusioned and corrupt members of upper society like Tom and Daisy. Gatsby's fanatic attempt to reach his dreams is contrasted to the disillusioned life of the cynical members of upper society who do not know what to do. Satire in the portrayal of the empty pleasures of the rich is combined with lyrical atmosphere enveloping Gatsby's romantic dream.

American Literature of the First Half of the 20th Century.

Behaviourism. Literary Activity of Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Ernest Hemingway is one of the most widely read writers of the 20th century. He is a classic of American and world literature. The writer is supposed to be the founder of "behaviourism" in American literature (see *Glossary*). So Hemingway portrayed characters describing their actions.

Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in the family of a provincial doctor. His father was fond of hunting and fishing, and he taught his son to shoot and fish, and to love sports and nature.

Ernest's mother was a religious woman, and she was wholly absorbed in church affairs. There were constant conflicts between his parents, and

that was the reason why Ernest did not feel at ease at home. Ernest's favourite place was the family's house in northern Michigan where the family usually spent their summer vacations. The boy used to accompany his father on sporting trips.

Ernest received a good education at the Oak Park High School. At school he was recognized as a very good football player, swimmer and boxer. He was also fond of fishing and hunting. At school Ernest was a gifted, energetic, successful pupil and a good sportsman. At school he began to be interested in literature, wrote to weekly news-sheet, and contributed poetry and prose to the school's literary magazines. Ernest's schooldays were not quite calm. The atmosphere created by his mother in the family oppressed him so much that he twice ran away from home, working at farms as a labourer, a dishwasher or as a waiter.

In 1917, when the United States entered the First World War, Hemingway volunteered for active service, but he was not taken because of his injured eye. Then he went to Kansas to stay with his uncle. There he began to work as a reporter on the *Kansas City Star*. The journalistic training he received there marked his style for the rest of his career. In the spring of 1918, Hemingway heard that volunteers were needed to drive Red Cross ambulances on the Italian front. He sailed for Europe. After a short stay in France, he went to Italy. Two months later he was badly wounded.

He was taken to hospital in Milan, where 227 shell fragments were removed from his body in the course of twelve operations. When he recovered, he served for two months with Italian infantry, and was awarded a silver medal by the Italian Government.

Hemingway's war experience was very important for him. It influenced on not only his life, but also all that he wrote. In 1920 Hemingway returned to America and worked as a reporter for the *Toronto Star*. In 1921 he returned to Europe and settled in Paris. To collect the material for his future stories and novels Hemingway travelled all over the world. He visited Germany, Spain, Switzerland and other countries. His first work *Three Stories and Ten Poems* (1923) was not a success. His next book, a collection of stories entitled *In Our Time* (1923) won public recognition.

Hemingway's first novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) (the second title is *Fiesta*) is his most well-known book. *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), portraying World War I and its consequences, brought great popularity to the author.

In the late 20s and the 30s Hemingway published two story collections *Men Without Women* (1927) and *Winner Take Nothing* (1933).

The most prominent novels written in the first half of the 30's are *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935). *Death in the Afternoon* describes the bullfights in Spain. *The Green Hills of Africa*, and his well-known stories *The Snow of Kilimanjaro* (1936) and *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* (1936) were written about Hemingway's hunting trip in Africa. A lover of nature, he masterfully describes African landscapes.

In 1936 the Civil War in Spain began and Hemingway hurried to Spain to take part in the war as an anti-fascist correspondent and a writer. The next three years of his life were closely connected with the struggle of the Spanish people against the fascists.

He participated in the shooting of a documentary film *The Spanish Earth* which defended the cause of the Spanish people. Hemingway wrote the film script and did the reading of the text himself. He wrote his only play *The Fifth Column* (1938) out of his Spanish war experience and a novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), which he considered his best work. Hemingway is supposed to be an author of "theory of iceberg" used in this novel. The writer seldom speaks of the feelings of his characters, much is left unsaid, but he manages to make the reader feel what his hero feels.

Deep hatred for fascism made Hemingway an active participant in World War II. He served as a war correspondent in Europe. He volunteered for service with his motor-yacht to support an anti-submarine patrol in Cuban waters. He took part in air raids over Germany. Together with the French partisans he was among the first to free Paris from the German troops.

Hemingway, who had participated in all the wars of the 20th century, summed up his war experience in the preface to *Men at War* (1924), a collection of the best war stories of all time.

World War II also made sense to him as it was a war against fascism.

After the war Hemingway settled on a farm, Finca Vigia, in Cuba, visiting Africa and Spain. He heartily supported the Cuban revolutionaries in their struggle. Simple Cuban people were his friends.

In Cuba Hemingway worked on a big novel about the land, the sea and the air. *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) is the epilogue of a novel about the sea. In 1954 Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Hemingway studied carefully both American and European literature. He admired the works of many writers, among them Flaubert, Maupassant, Stendahl, Dante, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov, Dostoevsky and many others.

During his African trip he suffered two airplane crashes. The last years of his life he was seriously ill. In November 1960, Hemingway returned to America, and on July, 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho, after a long and exhausting illness, he committed suicide. He was buried at Ketchum. His house in Cuba is a museum now.

In the novels *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* Hemingway describes the tragedy of the so-called lost generation.

In the first novel the author shows the results of World War I, and in the second - the process which created the "lost generation".

Hemingway is a great writer who was extremely honest and whose principles were:

- 1) never write if you have nothing to say;
- 2) to write only when you can't help it;
- 3) to write things you know well.

Hemingway's style of narration is laconic. He does not use the long detailed descriptions which were characteristic of his predecessors. Inner dialogues are typical for him.

One more peculiarity of Hemingway's style is the use of weather as an accompaniment to the emotional tones of different scenes. For example, the background of every tragic episode in *A Farewell to Arms* is rain.

The novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

A Farewell to Arms is one of the best novels about World War I. The book is considered to be Hemingway's masterpiece and it was translated into many languages. The novel is partly autobiographical. Like his hero, Frederick Henry, the writer himself was an American volunteer, a lieutenant in the Italian ambulance corps, was badly wounded, saw the horrors of the war and came to hate it.

There are two main themes in the novel: war and love. At first Fredric Henry is sure that he is fighting a just war, but gradually he doubts it, and at last he understands that the war is being waged for the benefit of those who profit by it. Frederic's opinion is shared by soldiers, drivers, workers and other common people. Having decided it is not his war; Frederic makes a "separate peace" and becomes a deserter.

The other theme of the novel is love. Fredric falls in love with Catherine Barkley a volunteer nurse from Great Britain. When he is wounded, she takes care of him. Then Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley escape to Switzerland. For a while they are happy, living together, but it does not last long. Catherine dies in childbirth. After her death he remains quite alone. He is very much depressed.

The author proves that private happiness is impossible in the restless world of the 20th century. Seeing misery around him, Hemingway's hero cannot be happy. It also emphasizes the fact that you cannot make a separate peace. The motifs of pessimism and despair are characteristic of the novel, as well as of other works written in the 20's, but in *A Farewell to Arms* Hemingway for the first time calls World War I a crime against humanity.

The Old Man and the Sea

The story is a realistic description of an episode from the life of a fisherman. The author himself was a fisherman, and his close friendship with Cuban fishermen helped him to describe all the details of the process.

Santiago is a poor man, a widower and he lives alone. He is very lonely and then he finds that he has a devoted friend - the boy Manolin, whom he teaches the craft of fishing. Manolin looks after the old man, takes care of the old man's food. The boy loves the old man for his kind heart, his skill, and his devotion to sea. The boy's parents have forbidden him to go fishing with the old man, because Santiago's luck has deserted him. Manolin thinks that he will bring him good luck, and he wants to go fishing with Santiago again.

The old man goes out to fish alone and hooks one of the biggest marlines. The battle with the fish is very hard and full of danger. Santiago has conquered the marline but the battle with the sea has not ended. Sharks start swimming after the skiff and the fish. Santiago kills the strongest, but the shark takes his harpoon and the rope. Santiago does not give up the fight. Almost broken physically, but spiritually undefeated, he reaches shore safely.

At the end of the story Santiago says: "...man is not made for defeat. ... A man can be destroyed but not defeated." These words are the main idea of Hemingway's story.

Santiago's character embodies all the positive features of an ordinary man. When he meets disaster, his courage, moral strength and resolution support him in the most desperate moments of his life.

**American Literature of the Post-War Period. Non-conformism.
Literary Activity of Jerome David Salinger (1919-2010)**

1. General Remarks. The USA ended World War II as the most powerful West Country. The post-war period and the onset of the Cold War began in the second half of 1940s. This was the period of political hostility between America and the Soviet Union.

It was the era of the so-called "silent generation", a generation who had stopped believing in humanist ideas. Some philosophers concluded that the Americans were becoming a nation of conformists with no fixed standards or beliefs.

Among the first to protest against the atmosphere of conformity were the writers of Beat Generation and representatives of non-conformism.

The writer who tried to explore the psychology of youth was Jerome David Salinger, whose novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) was devoted to the youth problems in the post-war period. Salinger is the representative of non-conformism (see *Glossary*).

Some other well-known American writers such as John Updike and Ken Kesey examined various aspects of American life. Both are the representatives of postmodernism.

American post-war literature managed to present a many-sided picture of the changing American reality.

2. Literary Activity of Jerome Salinger (1919-2010)

Jerome David Salinger was born in 1919 in New York in a prosperous family. His father was an importer of ham and cheese. The boy had a sister eight years older than he. Salinger did not study well at school, that's why his parents enrolled him in the Valley Forge Academy in Pennsylvania. It was a military academy. He began writing his first short stories there. When Salinger graduated from the Valley Forge Academy he told his parents that he wanted to become a writer.

But his father did not think that it was a suitable career for his son and sent him to Poland to learn the ham business. For some time he slaughtered pigs. Then he returned to America. In 1940 he published his first story the *Young Men*. During World War II Salinger spent four years in the army. In 1943, when he was in France, the American magazine *Saturday Evening Post* published his story *The Varioni Brothers*. In 1944 Salinger met Ernest Hemingway, who was a war correspondent in France then. Hemingway had read Salinger's stories and said that the young writer was talented. In 1946 Salinger

wrote some stories which brought him fame as a writer. They were published in the *New Yorker*, a very respectable literary magazine.

In 1951 Salinger wrote his novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. It is one of the best novels devoted to youth problems in the post-war period.

Jerome David Salinger became a classic because of his understanding of American youth. In his works he portrays young boys and girls who can't find their way after the war. They are honest, kind and good young people who look odd in the surroundings of modern society.

Salinger was married thrice. He died at the age of 91 on January, 2010.

The novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

It is one of the best novels devoted to youth problems in the post-war period. The book became popular with the readers. The story is told by a teenager Holden Caulfield. He is a sixteen-year-old pupil of the Pencey Preparatory School, which is a boarding school. He has been expelled from several schools, and he is about to be expelled from this school, too, as he has failed in a number of subjects. He is not sorry. He hates school and teachers. Finally, he runs away from school and goes to New York, where his parents live. Afraid to approach them, he registers at a hotel. During the few days he stays away from home, he goes to a restaurant, meets a girl-friend, his sister Phoebe and his former teacher Mr. Antolini. Holden loves Phoebe, and he tells her of his troubles. She is much younger than he is but she always listens to him and understands him.

Touched by Phoebe's wish to run away from home with him, he decides to go home with her instead.

Holden observes the hypocrisy and false values in the adult world. He is against judging people by their wealth. At school he hates insincerity. He does not like cheap, sensational films and plays shown at the Broadway theatres. He is against the American way of life. He is devoted to the few genuine people in his life.

His sister Phoebe is one of them. His deepest concern is to save other children from the pain of adapting themselves to the false adult world. His dream is to become a catcher in a rye field keeping watch on the edge of a steep cliff and saving little children from falling into the abyss. Really, Holden's dream is unreal as children cannot avoid growing up. Holden's former teacher tries to persuade him that

belonging to the adult world means maturity. But the hero refuses to compromise his false environment and this leads him to a nervous breakdown. Holden's way of talking is ungrammatical and slangy. But it produces a great impression.

Beat generation

Literary Activity of Jack Kerouac (1922-1969)

1. The national peculiarities of American Literature of the 2nd half of the 20th c.:

- Protest against the atmosphere of conformity: “Beat Generation”.
- “Melting pot” as a leading characteristic feature in American literature of the 50-70th years of the 20th century.

The period in time from the end of World War II up until, the late 1960s and early 1970s saw to the publication of some of the most popular works in American history. The last few of the more realistic Modernists along with the wildly Romantic Beatniks largely dominated the period.

From J.D. Salinger's *Nine Stories* and *The Catcher in the Rye* to Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, America's madness was placed to the forefront of the nation's literary expression. Émigré Authors such as Vladimir Nabokov, with *Lolita*, and, at almost the same time, the Beatniks took a concerted step away from their Lost Generation predecessors.

Regarding the war novel specifically, there was a literary explosion in America during the post-World War II era. Some of the most well known of the works produced included Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). *MacBird*, written by Barbara Garson, was another well-received work exposing the absurdity of war.

From roughly the early 1970s until present day, the most well known literary category, though often contested as a proper title, has been Postmodernism. Notable, intellectually well-received writers of the period have included John Updike, Ken Kesey, Thomas Pynchon, Tim O'Brien, Don DeLillo, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth and Joyce Carol Oates.

2. Beat generation

The poetry and fiction of the "Beat Generation," largely born of a circle of intellectuals formed in New York City around Columbia University and established more officially some time later in San Francisco, came of age. The term, Beat, referred, all at the same time, to the countercultural rhythm of the Jazz scene, to a sense of rebellion regarding the conservative stress of post-war society, and to an interest in new forms of spiritual experience through drugs, alcohol, philosophy, and religion, and specifically through Zen Buddhism. Allen Ginsberg set the tone of the movement in his poem *Howl* that began: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness...." At the same time, his good friend Jack Kerouac, who was the best-known figure of the "Beat" writers in prose, celebrated the Beats' rollicking, spontaneous, and vagrant life-style in, among many other works, his masterful and most popular novel *On the Road*.

3. Literary Activity of Jack Kerouac (1922-1969)

Jack Kerouac was born in Lowell, Massachusetts on March 12, 1922. His family was of French Canadian and North American Indian descent. His family was Catholic and he was educated at a Jesuit school, graduating from High School in 1939. At school he distinguished himself as a sportsman.

He left University after less than one year. Kerouac loved literature, composing poems and writing short novels from a very early age. He was particularly influenced by the work of Jack London, and determined, like London, to become a wandering poet and traveller.

During the Second World War, Kerouac joined the Merchant Navy and began to write his first novel, *The Sea Is My Brother*, which was never published. In 1944, he returned to New York where he met and started lasting friendship with the poet Allen Ginsberg and the novelist William Burroughs. Later they were called as the Beat generation. Their work and their lifestyles, characterized by drugs, alcohol and jazz music, were considered very shocking in the 1950s to the majority of middle-class Americans.

In 1944, after the accidental stabbing of a friend of Kerouac's by another friend, Kerouac was arrested and charged by the Police as a witness to murder. He left prison on bail.

In 1946 he went travelling across America, by car, train or hitch-hiking. These wild adventures on the road, filled with stories of girls, music, problems with the police formed the material for his greatest novel *On the Road*.

Kerouac constantly kept a journal during his journeys, and *On the Road*, which he wrote in seven days in 1951, was the result of his semi-autobiographical, semi-fictional experience travelling around.

This novel was followed by *The Dharma Bums* (1958), *Doctor Sax* (1959), *Big Sur* (1962), and *Desolation Angels* (1965), which are his most notable novels and the most typical of the Beat generation. He also published poetry and other biographical fragments. After the publication of *On the Road*, Kerouac became interested in Oriental spiritualism and Buddhism (see *Glossary*).

He lived a rather solitary life increasingly dependent on alcohol. He died at the tragically young age of 47.

His novel *On the Road* describes the adventures of a group of young people who refuse to be tied down to steady jobs or any social obligations and wander all over Canada and Mexico. Kerouac's characters live as simply as possible and register spontaneous impressions of people, events and things. They do not try to understand the world around them. Travel is either liberation from society or a narcotic to them.

The novel *On the Road* has had many imitators, and continues to be popular in Europe as well as in America.

Postmodernism Literary Activity of John Updike (1932-2009) and Ken Kesey (1935-2001)

1. Postmodernism, its main characteristics

Postmodernism is a term that was accepted by the mid-1970s as a comprehensive socio-cultural paradigm and it applied to a wide-ranging set of developments in critical theory, philosophy, architecture, art, literature, and culture, which are generally characterized as either emerging from, in reaction to, modernism. The term was coined in 1949 to describe dissatisfaction with modern architecture, leading to the postmodern architecture movement.

Largely influenced by the disillusionment induced by the Second World War, postmodernism tends to refer to a cultural, intellectual, or artistic state lacking a clear central hierarchy or organizing principle and embodying extreme complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, and interconnectedness.

Characteristics of postmodern fiction:

- An assault upon traditional definitions of narrative particularly those that created coherence or closure;
- The theme of suburbanization of America, the decline of the city, and apocalyptic visions of the devastated city;
- "...fascination about how the public life of the nation intersects with the private lives of its citizens;
- Questioning of any belief system that claims universality or transcendence;
- The rise of the nonfiction novel;
- The creation of ruptures, gaps, and ironies that continually remind the reader that an author is present².

Philosophical and aesthetical principles and poetics of postmodernism in American literature: multiplicity, pluralism, pastiche, irony and self-irony, parody, confluence of tragedy and farce, quotation (see *Appendix 2; Glossary*).

2. Literary Activity of John Updike (1932-2009)

John Updike was born in Shillington, a small town in Pennsylvania. In his childhood he lived on an isolated farm, from where he dreamed to escape. After high school in Shillington, where his father worked as a science teacher, Updike chose Harvard as his university. After graduating from the university he spent the academic year 1954-1955 at Raskin School of Drawing and Fine Arts in Oxford, England. In 1955 he joined *The New Yorker* staff, writing editorial poetry, stories and criticism.

In 1957 Updike left the magazine and became a fulltime writer. He moved to Ipswich, Massachusetts, where he lived for seventeen years. His first book, *The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures*, a collection of poetry, appeared in 1958. Updike's first novel *The Poorhouse Fair* was published in 1959. The first book about his famous hero, Harry Angstrom, a star athlete was *Rabbit, Run* (1960). After that the novels *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit Is Rich* (1981) and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990) followed.

After leaving *Rabbit* in 1990, Updike published in 2000 a novella called *Rabbit Remembered* in a collection of short stories. *The Centaur* (1963) used a mythological framework to explore the relationship of a schoolmaster father and his son.

² This characteristic is particularly evident in the postmodern tendency in blend memoir and fiction to show how individuals use fictional constructions to make order of real-life events.

The Coup (1979) was an exotic first-person narration by an ex-dictator of a fictitious African state. Updike has become one of the most successful American writers. As an essayist Updike is a gentle satirist. He observes the ordinary life he sees around him.

Updike received several awards. His novel *Rabbit Is Rich* and *Rabbit at Rest* won Pulitzer Prizes. John Updike is an American novelist, short-story writer and poet, internationally known for his works.

3. Literary Activity of Ken Kesey (1935-2001)

Ken Kesey was born on September 17, 1935, in La Junta, Colorado. In 1946 his family moved to Springfield, Oregon, where he spent several years on his family's farm. He was raised in a religion household. During high school and later in college, Kesey was a champion wrestler, setting long-standing state records in Oregon.

After high school Kesey attended the University of Oregon with a degree in Speech and Communications. Then he enrolled in the Creative Writing Program at Stanford.

While at Stanford, he participated in experience involving chemicals at the psychology department to earn extra money. It was the experience that fundamentally altered Kesey, personally and professionally. While working as an orderly at the psychiatric ward of the hospital, Kesey began to have hallucinations. This formed the basis of his writing project *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Kesey published it in 1962. The novel was an immediate critical and popular success. Later it was adapted into a successful stage play and then it was made a screen adaptation in 1979.

His second novel *Sometimes a Great Notion* was published in 1964. Kesey became notorious for his use of drugs, and some time later he was arrested on a marijuana charge. Upon his release from prison, Kesey moved to a farm in Pleasant Hill, Oregon. His third novel *Sailor Song* was published in 1992, and besides he wrote several shorter works.