Welcome to
ENG 3338
The American Novel

New to the course? Click the Getting Started link at left and progress through the Get Started materials.

Returning to the course? Click the Lessons links and resume where you left off.

*Note: Please recall, as stated in the Syllabus, you must wait to receive a graded assignment back before submitting the next assignment.*

Additionally, please note that, effective immediately, assignments will no longer be accepted via email.

Instead, please submit your assignments via the Assignments tool in the left-hand navigation menu.
Required Reading

Required Materials

You will read novels by famous authors, three of whom won the Nobel Prize for Literature and all of whom show us what it means to be human beings. In the order of the assignments, the selections are:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850
Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*, 1891
Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1884
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, 1920
Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, 1929
William Faulkner, *Light in August*, 1932
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1939
John Updike, *Rabbit, Run*, 1960

No particular versions are required. Copies are in almost every library or available in several paperback editions.

If you want to learn about a particular author’s life or other facts, you will find the American National Biography Online to be helpful, as will be biographical material in a college anthology.

Perspectives in American Literature: An ongoing research and reference guide by Paul P. Ruben is also useful.
Lesson One Objectives

Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- recognize the shift from the formal syntax and prose of Hawthorne to the informal sentence structure and use of dialogue in Twain;
- explain the growth in importance of how the environment shapes people’s lives;
- discuss how slavery demeaned even those who upheld it;
- define the concept of the law as it is applied to the upper-level of society and to the lower-level;
- discuss how authors changed in how they portrayed young people;
- explain how humor is used to enforce serious ideas;
- recognize that female characters were types, not individuals;
- assess the parallels between Christ and Billy Budd and other religious aspects/symbols in Melville’s novel.
Write a well-organized, grammatical essay of approximately 500 words in which you discuss one of the topics listed below. Refer to specific characters, scenes, and/or events to support your views.

1. Arthur Dimmesdale, Edward Vere, and Huck Finn are all raised to obey the law yet each also breaks it or is tempted to. Which character responds to this situation in a more believable manner than the other two? Why are the responses of the others not so convincing?

2. Name the most important secondary character in each novel and explain how each one helps develop the action and main theme of the book.

3. Which character has the most meaningful decision to make: Arthur Dimmesdale in confessing his sin and guilt, Edward Vere in executing an innocent man, or Huck Finn in helping an escaped slave seek freedom? Why are the decisions of the other two not so meaningful?

4. In which novel does the physical setting best support the story: the village of Salem and the wilderness, the warship and the sea, or rural South and the river? Tell how the setting underscores the principal actions and theme of the book.