

The Romantic Period

- Distinctly American Literature
- Romanticism (which began in Europe) developed here with emphasis on our colonial past and our birth of as a new nation—our emerging **national pride**
- American Romanticism emphasized **supernaturalism** (gothic), **individuality**, **imagination**, **beauty of the exotic**, and **beauty of nature**

Romantics

- Focus now shifts from Classicism (Age of Reason) to Romanticism
 - A shift from trusting reason to trusting emotion
 - A shift from embracing the traditional to embracing the imaginative
 - A shift from taming nature to learning from & appreciating it

Writers

- **Washington Irving (1783-1859)**
 - 1st professional and popular fiction writer who gained international fame
 - Successful at depicting an escape from the constraints of civilization—magical fairytale stories
 - Rip Van Winkle (opposite of Franklin) made Irving immortal. Van Winkle had no ambition and would rather “starve on a penny” than “work for a pound.”

- **James Fenimore Cooper**

- Known for novels of the American frontier
- *Deerslayer*

- **Edgar Allen Poe**

- Short story writer with a short life who was short on money.

- **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

- Best known “Fire-side poet” and most successful poet of his age

- **Nathaniel Hawthorne**
 - Ancestor was one of the judges who condemned the “witches” of Salem; he was no Puritan. Lived with Transcendental reformers, wrote *The Scarlet Letter*
- **Herman Melville**
 - Experienced sailor, wrote *Moby-Dick*—greatest American novel?
- **William Cullen Bryant**
 - Read at 1year. 4 months
 - Ed. of NY Evening Post
 - Staunch supporter of Abe Lincoln
- **Henry David Thoreau**
 - Unconventional life, lived with Emerson, writings influenced Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - Transcendentalist

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

- Essay writer whose life was quiet and well-ordered
 - Transcendentalist: belief in the vast possibilities of the mind—unity of man & nature more important than possessions and worldly affairs

- **Walt Whitman**

- controversial in his subject matter, homosexual, a transcendentalist in NY.

- **Emily Dickinson**

- an isolated poetic genius