
A

Absalom, Absalom! A novel by **William Faulkner**, published in 1936. The story is told by several narrators, but in the main represents the attempt of Quentin Compson to understand at once the history of a family and of the American South. Parts of the story are told to Quentin by his father and by Rosa Coldfield, parts by Quentin himself to his college roommate at Harvard, Shreve McCannon, a Canadian. Pieced together, the story that emerges is as follows:

Thomas Sutpen is born poor in the West Virginia mountains. He runs away at an early age and settles in Haiti, where he marries a planter's daughter, Eulalia Bon. They have a son, Charles, but when Sutpen discovers his wife's partially black ancestry he abandons her and the child. He eventually turns up in Jefferson, Mississippi, with a group of Haitian slaves. By dubious means he acquires a large estate in Mississippi and, unrelenting in his drive for social position, builds a mansion there. He marries the daughter of a respectable family, fathers Judith and Henry, and emerges as the biggest cotton planter in Yoknapatawpha County.

Years later, when Henry comes home from the University of Mississippi, he brings with him his friend – and Sutpen's son by his first marriage – Charles Bon, who becomes engaged to Judith. Sutpen orders Charles from the house. Refusing to believe that Charles is his half-brother, Henry renounces his birthright and follows Charles to New Orleans. They join the Confederate Army (as does their father) at the outbreak of the Civil War. After the war, still angered by Sutpen's refusal to recognize him as his son, Charles determines to marry Judith and returns to the family estate. Henry learns of Charles's mixed ancestry, and, to prevent the miscegenation

that would result from his marriage, murders him and then disappears.

Sutpen, meanwhile, wants an heir. With the war over, his plantation in ruins, his son gone, his wife dead, and his slaves dispersed, he suggests to his sister-in-law Rosa Coldfield that they try to produce a son; if they are successful he will marry her. Rosa understandably refuses, so he seduces Milly Jones, the granddaughter of a squatter on his land. She bears him not the son he needs to continue the line, but a daughter. When Sutpen repudiates mother and child, Milly's grandfather murders him. Judith Sutpen dies of yellow fever, leaving the mansion to Clytie, Sutpen's mulatto daughter by one of his slaves. Many years later Henry comes home to die. Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson (whose grandfather had once befriended Sutpen) find Henry, ill and wasted, hiding in the house. When Rosa sends for an ambulance, Clytie thinks it is a police car come to arrest Henry for Charles's murder. She sets fire to the house, killing herself and Henry, and thus bringing the Sutpen dynasty to an end.

Ada See **Nabokov, Vladimir**

Adams, Andy 1859–1935 Adams was born in Indiana but spent much of his life in the Texas cattle country and the mining centers of Colorado. He is best known for his authentic, unsentimental depictions of cowboy life in the days of the open range and of the westward expansion of the railroad. His most notable book is *The Log of a Cowboy* (1903). His other works include *The Outlet* (1905), *Cattle Brands* (1906), *Reed Anthony, Cowman* (1907), *Wells Brothers* (1911), and *The Ranch on the Beaver* (1927).

Adams, Brooks 1848–1927 Historian, born in Quincy, Massachusetts, the younger

2 Adams

brother of **Henry Brooks Adams**. His first book, *The Emancipation of Massachusetts* (1887), expresses the view that the early colonists were the victims of a repressive theocracy and traces their efforts to move beyond its confines. In *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1893), generally regarded as his most distinguished work, he argues that any established order always contains the elements of its own decline, since it will eventually be overcome by economic forces that lead to the establishment of another order. In 1919 he wrote a long preface to his brother's *A Letter to American Teachers of History* and published the whole as *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*.

Adams, Henry (Brooks) 1838–1918 Historian and man of letters, born in Boston, the grandson of John Quincy Adams, the sixth President of the United States, and the great-grandson of John Adams, the second President. Having been educated at Harvard and in Germany, he served as secretary to his father, Charles Francis Adams, when he became the US minister to England during the Civil War. The author of numerous histories and political essays, his two most important works are *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (privately printed 1904, published 1913), a study of 12th-century culture, and *The Education of Henry Adams* (privately printed 1907, published 1918), an autobiographical exploration of his heritage and a critical examination of the age in which he lived.

His first publication, an essay on Captain John Smith, appeared in 1867 while he was in England. He continued to write articles and reviews after his return to the US in 1868. From 1870 to 1877 he taught history at Harvard and edited *The North American Review*. During this period he produced *Chapters of Erie and Other Essays* (1871, with his brother Charles Francis Adams) and edited *Essays on Anglo-Saxon Law* (1876) and *Documents Relating to New England Federalism 1800–15* (1877). Discouraged by his experiences as a teacher, he left Harvard and went to Washington to observe the political scene at first hand. In 1879 he wrote *The Life of Albert Gallatin* and *The Writings of Albert Gallatin*, both of which examine the career of the *émigré* Swiss who became a controversial politician, Jefferson's

Secretary of the Treasury, and the author of a pioneering study of the North American Indian. In the following year he anonymously published *Democracy*, a novel about political life in Washington. His biographical study, *John Randolph*, appeared in 1882. In 1884 he published the novel *Esther* under the pseudonym of Frances Snow Compton. The heroine was modeled on his wife, Marian, whose subsequent suicide in 1885 apparently brought to a head the discontent that Adams had been feeling for some time with life in America. He began to travel, first in the Orient with the artist John La Farge and then in the Sierras with the geologist Clarence King.

He returned to Washington to complete his largest-scale historical study, the nine-volume *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison* (1889–91). Further travels in the Pacific and in Europe led to *Memoirs of Marau Taaroa, Last Queen of Tahiti* (1893) and *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1904). In 1910 he published *A Letter to American Teachers of History*, which was later reprinted in *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (1919) by his brother **Brooks Adams**. In *The Education of Henry Adams* he self-consciously presents himself as being representative of the American mind at a particular historical moment; he has taken his place as such in the literary and critical tradition.

Adding Machine, The A play by **Elmer Rice**, first presented by the **Theatre Guild** in 1923 at the Garrick Theatre in New York City. It was among the earliest and most successful Expressionist experiments in the American theatre. The central character, Mr Zero, is a slave to routine; he works in a department store, where he has been adding columns of figures every day for 25 years. When his boss tells him he has been fired and replaced by an adding machine, he murders the boss with a bill file. Condemned to death and executed, he goes to a pastoral heaven, but is unable to adjust until he is set to work on a giant adding machine. Finally the authorities decide to send him back to earth, where he will operate an even better and more efficient machine.

The point of the play lies not in its plot but in Rice's portrayal of Zero's over-

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn 3

mechanized, joyless existence through carefully chosen, symbolic detail: for example, the dinner party scene in which 12 guests, Mr and Mrs One, Mr and Mrs Two, etc, talk past each other in bigoted clichés while Zero calmly waits for the police to arrive. Even though Zero is not an entirely sympathetic character, the play is a clear indictment of the systematic application of commercial values to crush the soul of the individual.

Ade, George 1866–1944 Born in Kentland, Indiana, Ade began his career as a humorist while writing for the *Chicago Record*. Interested in stories of everyday characters, he achieved success with his extensive use of colloquialism in *Fables in Slang* (1899). This form of fable became his trademark and the substance of several more books, including *Forty Modern Fables* (1901), *People You Know* (1903), and *Hand-Made Fables* (1920). Ade was also a popular playwright of both musical and dramatic comedies, of which the best known are probably *The Sultan of Sulu* (1903) and *The College Widow* (1904).

Adventures of Augie March, The A novel by **Saul Bellow**, first published in book form in 1953, although portions of it had appeared previously in magazines. Augie March is one of three sons born to a feeble-minded Jewish woman on Chicago's West Side. The father has abandoned the family. Augie's older brother – ambitious for himself and for Augie – marries Charlotte Magnus and tries to arrange a match between Augie and Charlotte's sister Lucy. Georgie, Augie's younger brother, is an idiot whom the family put in a home when they can no longer care for him. Augie attends but does not finish college; becomes involved briefly in union organizing; travels to Mexico; returns to the US and joins the navy; marries; and, after leaving the service, goes to Europe to write his "memoir."

In it he records his encounters with the people who have shaped (or tried to shape) his life. The first, and perhaps most important, is his Grandma Lausch, a Machiavellian *grande dame* who lives with the Marches. There are also William Einhorn, the brilliant and wealthy cripple for whom the teenaged Augie works; the wealthy Renlings from Evanston, who want to adopt him; Mini Villar, the

tough waitress who becomes pregnant by another man and whom he helps to obtain an abortion; Thea Fenchel, the rich married woman who takes him with her to Mexico, where she plans to divorce her husband; the millionaire Robey, who hires Augie to help him write a masterwork defining the nature of man; Stella Chesney, the USO showgirl he marries; and the lunatic scientist Bateshaw, with whom he shares a lifeboat after their ship has been torpedoed.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn A novel by **Mark Twain**, published in 1884. Conceived as a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, it was begun in 1876, the year the earlier book was published, and has far exceeded its predecessor in critical acclaim (if not always in popular attention). Its often harsh satire of life on the banks of the Mississippi, especially concerning the issue of slavery, gives to *Huckleberry Finn* a moral dimension which *Tom Sawyer* generally lacks.

Huck narrates the entire work in his native Missouri dialect, the duplication of which is itself one of Twain's major achievements. The story begins with a summary of *Tom Sawyer* and explains how Huck has fared since being adopted into the home of Widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson. He is having trouble with being "civilized," but he half-heartedly aims to try. Meanwhile his blackguard father threatens his relative security by trying to claim the money that Huck and Tom had recovered from the cave of Injun Joe. Eventually Huck is kidnapped by his father and imprisoned in an isolated cabin. He frees himself by making it appear as if he has been murdered, and then flees to Jackson's Island.

While hiding out on the island Huck meets Jim, Miss Watson's goodhearted slave, who has decided to run away because he has overheard a plan to sell him. When Huck discovers that his own "death" has been blamed on Jim and that a search party may be on its way to Jackson's Island, the two runaways resolve to travel down the Mississippi on a raft. Jim plans to leave the Mississippi at Cairo (the mouth of the Ohio River) and travel up the Ohio to freedom, but they miss Cairo in a dense fog, continue floating downstream, and undergo a series of encounters with feuding clans, murderers, lawless "aristocrats," and

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-30703-1 - The Cambridge Handbook of American Literature

Edited by Jack Salzman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

numerous mobs, all of which they survive by luck, wit, and determination. The casual cruelty of the river people is often presented, in all its grotesqueness, in an almost offhand manner for satirical effect. Finally, in Arkansas, the two scoundrels who have joined Huck and Jim on their raft, thinking that Jim belongs to Huck and not knowing that there really is a reward on him, tell a local farmer that he is a runaway and offer him to the farmer for a portion of a fictitious reward. By coincidence, this farmer and his wife are Tom Sawyer's Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally Phelps. Huck discovers Jim's whereabouts and tries to free him by posing as Tom. Tom himself happens to arrive and, catching on to Huck's game, poses as his own brother Sid. Tom and Huck free Jim, but only after making him suffer through an absurdly romantic rescue devised by the unsympathetic Tom. All the time Tom knows that Jim is actually a free man, having been freed by Miss Watson (who is now dead) in her will. The rescue goes awry and Tom is shot in the leg. Huck, after fetching a doctor for the injured Tom, becomes separated from him and Jim. Jim gives up his hard-won freedom, or so he thinks, to make sure that Tom receives the attention he needs. Shortly after Jim, Tom, and the doctor return to Silas and Sally's farm, Tom's Aunt Polly arrives and sets matters straight. At the novel's end Huck decides to "light out" for the territories rather than face life with Aunt Sally, who, Huck tells the reader, plans to "civilize" him.

Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The A novel by **Mark Twain**, published in 1876. Tom is an intelligent and imaginative boy, who is nevertheless careless and mischievous. In one of the book's most famous episodes he is forced to whitewash the front-yard fence as punishment for playing truant. He evades the task by pretending it is a great privilege, and then allowing other boys to take over from him – for a considerable price.

Tom lives in the respectable home of his Aunt Polly in the Mississippi River town of St Petersburg, Missouri. His preferred world, however, is the outdoor and parentless life of his friend Huck Finn. When Tom is rebuffed by his sweetheart, Becky Thatcher, he and Huck take to the diversion of playing pirates. By coincidence, they are in the graveyard on

the night that Injun Joe murders the town doctor and frames the drunkard, Muff Potter, by placing the knife in his hands. Tom, Huck, and a third boy hide out on a river island in fear of the half-breed murderer, and are believed dead. They finally return to witness their own passionate eulogies, and with much uproar they are discovered in the funeral audience. Later Tom becomes a hero, when at the trial of Muff Potter he stands up and accuses the true murderer. Injun Joe rushes from the room and thus proves his own guilt. Subsequently Tom and Becky abandon a school picnic and get themselves lost for several days in the very cave where Injun Joe is hiding. They make good their escape, and Tom then returns to the cave with Huck. They find Injun Joe dead, and also find his buried treasure. The two boys return to town as heroic as ever, and the riches are divided between them. Their story is continued in ***Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*** (1884).

Agassiz, (Jean) Louis (Rodolphe) 1807–73 Zoologist and geologist, born in Fribourg, Switzerland, Agassiz received a PhD in 1829 from the University of Erlangen and an MD in 1830 from the University of Munich. In the following year he studied under Georges Cuvier, and in 1832 he accepted a position as Professor of Natural History at the University of Neuchâtel, where he published the two works which distinguished him as a pioneer in the classification of fossil fishes and the study of glacial deposits and movements: *Recherches sur les Poissons fossiles* (5 vols., 1833–43), and *Etudes sur les glaciers* (1840).

Agassiz became Professor of Natural History at the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard University in 1848, two years after coming to America, and founded what was to become the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. Among his colleagues and pupils, who included **William James** and Charles Lyell, he acquired a reputation as a demanding teacher and popular lecturer. When not teaching he undertook numerous and extensive research expeditions throughout North and South America, many of which informed his four-volume *Contributions to the Natural History of the United States of America* (1857–62).

Agee, James 1909–55 Born in Knoxville,

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-30703-1 - The Cambridge Handbook of American Literature

Edited by Jack Salzman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Tennessee, Agee received his BA from Harvard in 1932. He then moved to New York City, where he worked as a staff writer and eventually as a film critic for *Fortune* and *Time* (1932–58), as well as for *The Nation* (1943–8). He also wrote several filmscripts, including *The African Queen* (1951, with John Huston), *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky* (1953, based on **Stephen Crane's** short story), and *The Night of the Hunter* (1955).

He is perhaps best known for *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). The product of an eight-week collaboration with photographer Walker Evans, the work sympathetically depicts the plight of three rural Alabama families during the Depression. Agee's poems and short stories were collected and edited by Robert Fitzgerald in 1968. His two novels, *The Morning Watch* (1951) and *A Death in the Family*, which was published posthumously in 1957 and won the Pulitzer Prize the following year, are partly autobiographical, the first dealing with religious piety and the second with the effects on a family of a father's early death.

Age of Innocence, The A novel by **Edith Wharton**, published in 1920 and set in New York during the 1870s. It tells the story of Newland Archer, a lawyer, and his involvement with two women: May Welland, who becomes his wife, and her cousin Ellen Olenska, the wife of a Polish Count. Ellen, having left her husband, appears in New York, where her unconventional behavior displeases society. Newland, on behalf of the Welland family, is called upon to dissuade her from divorcing the Count. Attracted by her foreign exoticism, Newland falls in love with her, but the constraints of society and his impending marriage to May keep them apart. Nevertheless, his interest in Ellen continues after his marriage and prompts May to disclose to her cousin that she is pregnant, whereupon Ellen quickly leaves New York to live in Paris. Thirty years later, Newland, now a widower, visits Paris with his son. As they are about to call on Ellen, Newland decides not to go; he forgoes real contact with her in order to preserve his ideal memories. The novel was dramatized by Margaret Ayer Barnes in 1928.

Age of Reason, The See **Paine, Thomas Aiken, Conrad (Potter)** 1889–1973 Born

in Savannah, Georgia, Aiken was educated at Harvard, where his contemporaries included **T. S. Eliot** and **Walter Lippmann**. Both his fiction and his poetry reflect his interest in psychology, and his reading of Freud, **William James**, and the French Symbolists, as well as of **Edgar Allan Poe**, his most obvious American antecedent.

His first collection of verse, *Earth Triumphant, and Other Tales in Verse*, was published in 1914, and was followed by *Turns and Movies* and *The Jig of Forslin; A Symphony* (both 1916). His 16 subsequent volumes include *Selected Poems* (1929), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize; *And in the Human Heart* (1940), a sonnet sequence; *Collected Poems* (1952); and *Thee* (1967), a book-length poem. He also published several collections of short stories, including *Bring! Bring!* (1925), *Costumes by Eros* (1928), and *Among the Lost People* (1934); five novels, which appeared together in *The Collected Novels* (1964); and numerous critical essays, collected in *Scepticisms, Notes on Contemporary Poetry* (1919), and *A Reviewer's ABC* (1958). *Ushant*, an autobiographical piece, appeared in 1952.

Albee, Edward (Franklin) 1928– Born in Washington, DC, Albee was adopted by the owner of a chain of vaudeville theatres. He rose to prominence in the early 1960s with a series of one-act plays: *The Zoo Story* (Berlin, 1959; New York, 1960), *The Death of Bessie Smith* (Berlin, 1960; New York, 1961), *The Sandbox* (1960), and *The American Dream* (1961). All four plays were impressive formal achievements that expressed disenchantment with American middle-class values in a manner reminiscent of the British theatre's Angry Young Men of a few years earlier. In 1962 Albee had his first major success on Broadway with *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, a three-act play about a night of drunken verbal conflict between a middle-aged professor and his wife, in which a state of compassion is finally achieved after the "death" of their imaginary son.

Albee next dramatized **Carson McCullers's** novel, *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1963). This was followed by *Tiny Alice* (1964), the story of a rich woman who seduces a Catholic lay brother into marriage and then murders him. He dramatized **James Purdy's** *Malcolm* in 1966, and in the same year he won the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-30703-1 - The Cambridge Handbook of American Literature

Edited by Jack Salzman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 Alcott

Pulitzer Prize for *A Delicate Balance*, which depicts a family's vain search for happiness and purpose. *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao* were staged in 1968, both works focusing on the banality of human relationships in America. *All Over* appeared in 1971; *Seascape* (1975) won Albee a second Pulitzer Prize. His most recent work has been *Counting the Ways* (1976) and *Listening* (1977), which were both staged in New York in 1979, *The Lady from Dubuque* (1980), and a dramatization of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1981).

Alcott, (Amos) Bronson 1799–1888 Born in Connecticut, and perhaps best known as the father of **Louisa May Alcott**, Bronson Alcott was a pioneer of new educational methods in America. Although he himself had little formal schooling, he became a teacher in 1823, and in 1834 founded his own Temple School. At a time when American education consisted mostly of strict discipline, codified moral instruction, and memorization of texts, Alcott was devoted above all to instilling the joy of learning in his students. Adhering to **Transcendentalist** principles that upheld the unlimited potential of every human being, he encouraged his students to look into themselves to realize their individual intellects. After 11 years at the Temple School—during which time he helped establish **Fruitlands**—he became school superintendent of Concord, Massachusetts, in 1859. There his work initiated the Concord School of Philosophy (1879–88), which was run by his disciple William T. Harris. His books are no longer widely read, but his ideas have had a lasting influence on American education. His major works include *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction* (1830), *Record of a School* (with **Elizabeth Peabody**, 1835), *The Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture* (1836), and *Tablets* (1868). *Sonnets and Canzonets* (1882) was written in memory of his wife, Abigail May.

Alcott, Louisa May 1832–88 Daughter of **Bronson Alcott** and author of *Little Women*, she was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Boston and Concord, Massachusetts. She completed her first book, *Flower Fables*, when she was 16, though it was not published until 1855. During the Civil War she worked as an army nurse in a Union hospital (1861–3), an experience she

documented in *Hospital Sketches* (1863). She visited Europe twice, in 1865 and 1870. From 1867 she edited a children's magazine, *Merry's Museum*.

Although she produced nearly 300 titles in a variety of genres, Alcott generally is remembered as a writer of domestic novels, of which the best known is *Little Women: or, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy*. (The novel originally was published in two parts: the first part, *Little Women*, appeared in 1868; the second part, *Good Wives*, came out the following year. In 1871, the two appeared as a single volume entitled *Little Women and Good Wives*.) She drew upon her own life and family experiences in writing this and her other wholesome domestic tales: *Little Men: Life at Plumfield with Jo's Boys* (1871), *Jo's Boys and How They Turned Out* (1886), *Eight Cousins, or, The Aunt-Hill* (1875), *Rose in Bloom* (1876), and others. Under various pseudonyms, she also wrote melodramatic adventure stories. *Work: A Study of Experience* (1873) is a feminist and autobiographical novel. When, as she noted in her journal, she became "tired of providing moral pap for the young," she wrote *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877), in which an innocent young woman resists seduction by the diabolic genius with whom her poet-husband has made a Faustian pact. This novel was republished posthumously with another, *A Whisper in the Dark* (1889), which has a similar theme. Louisa May Alcott died on March 6, 1888, the day of her father's funeral.

Aldrich, Thomas Bailey 1836–1907 Born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Aldrich was a successful journalist who edited the *Illustrated News* during the Civil War. In 1866 he became editor of *Every Saturday* and from 1881 to 1890 edited *The Atlantic Monthly*. His first book, a collection of poems entitled *The Bells*, was published in 1855. His best-known work is *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1870), a novel based on his childhood. Other notable works are *Marjorie Daw and Other People* (1873), a collection of short stories, and *The Stillwater Tragedy* (1880), a detective novel.

Alger, Horatio 1832–99 A popular novelist of boys' books, Alger was born in Massachusetts into a strict Puritan family. He graduated from The Harvard Divinity School (1852) and eventually became a Unitarian minister (1864) after spending some years as a

bohemian in Paris. He left the ministry in 1866, following alleged liaisons with choir-boys, and moved to New York, where he became chaplain of the Newsboys Lodging House, a position to which he devoted most of his remaining years.

Although he wrote several novels for adults (almost all of which were unsuccessful), he is especially known as the author of well over 100 novels for boys, most of them based on a rags-to-riches theme and the moral that a boy can rise from poverty to wealth if he has a good character. The most popular of these were *Ragged Dick* (1867), *Luck and Pluck* (1869), and *Tattered Tom* (1871), all of which appeared initially in serial form. In addition to fiction, but in the same vein, he wrote several biographies of famous self-made men, under such titles as *From Canal Boy to President* (1881, about Abraham Lincoln), and *From Farm Boy to Senator* (1882, about James Garfield).

Algerine Captive, The A novel by **Royall Tyler**, published in 1797 and providing a satiric commentary on contemporary American life. In the first part, Underhill, the narrator, tells of his inappropriately classical education in New England, his own attempts to teach school, and his study and practice of medicine, exposing along the way various instances of American pretension and quackery. He then travels south, serves as a doctor on a slave ship, and sharply condemns American slavery. Abandoned by the ship in Africa, he is himself taken into slavery by the Algerians. The second part of the novel, interspersed with observations about Muslim life, comments obliquely on American culture, as Underhill recounts his first-hand experience of slavery, his resistance of attempts to convert him to Islam, and his various plans to escape. He finally gains his freedom and returns to America.

Algren, Nelson 1909–81 Algren was born in Detroit, but his work is associated with Chicago, the city where he lived and worked. He graduated from the University of Illinois School of Journalism in 1931 and spent much of the Depression as a migratory worker in the Southwest, an experience which contributed to his earliest fiction. In 1935 he returned to Chicago to a WPA Writers' Project, and in the same year published his first novel, *Somebody in Boots*. He became co-

editor of *The New Anvil Magazine* in 1939, and worked on a venereal disease program for the Chicago Board of Health from 1941 to 1942, when his second novel, *Never Come Morning*, was published. He is best known for his novel of narcotic addiction, *The Man With the Golden Arm* (1949), which won the National Book Award. Other books are *The Neon Wilderness* (1947), *Chicago: City on the Make* (1951), *A Walk on the Wild Side* (1956), *Who Lost an American?* (1963), *Notes from a Sea Diary: Hemingway All The Way* (1965), and *The Last Carousel* (1973). His last novel, *The Devil's Stocking*, was published posthumously in 1983.

Allen, James Lane 1849–1925 Allen was born in Kentucky and taught there until he moved to New York City in 1893. His first attempts at writing, mostly for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, were the short stories, descriptive articles, and critical essays collected in the volume *Flute and Violin* (1891).

In an 1886 article, "Realism and Romance," which appeared in the *New York Evening Post*, Allen attacked claims for the primacy in American letters of the realist school of **William Dean Howells**, defending the merits of an older romance tradition associated with **Nathaniel Hawthorne** and carried on to some extent by the non-urban, regional writers of his own time. He himself is best known for his romances set in the South, especially *A Kentucky Cardinal* (1894) and its sequel, *Aftermath* (1895). His other works include *Summer in Arcady* (1896), *The Choir Invisible* (1897), *The Mettle of the Pasture* (1903), *The Bride of the Mistletoe* (1909), and *The Kentucky Warbler* (1918). His last collection of short stories, *The Landmark*, was published in the year of his death.

Allen, Paula Gunn 1939– Allen was born in Cubero, New Mexico, of Laguna Pueblo, Sioux, and Chicano parentage. The recipient of an MFA and a PhD, she is currently associated with the Native American Studies program at the University of California at Berkeley. She has published five collections of poems: *The Blind Lion* (1974), *Coyote's Daylight Trip* (1978), *Starchild* (1981), *A Cannon between My Knees* (1981), and *Shadow Country* (1982). Many of her poems attempt a modern transformation of the mythic heritage of her people. She explores

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-30703-1 - The Cambridge Handbook of American Literature

Edited by Jack Salzman

Excerpt

[More information](#)8 *All My Sons*

the nature of the Native American past, the alienation of the half-breed and the trauma of biculturalism, and the influence of contemporary white consumer culture on the Native American. In particular, she focuses on the dual role of Native American women as victims and reformers of their culture. Her novel, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows: The Autobiography of Ephanie Atencio* (1983), tells the story of one woman's psychological journey toward spiritual rebirth and her attempt to adapt to a bicultural world. Allen has also written numerous critical essays and edited *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs* (1983).

All My Sons See **Miller, Arthur**

All The King's Men See **Warren, Robert Penn**

Ambassadors, The A novel by **Henry James**, first published in serial form in *The North American Review* in 1903. It was published in volume form later that year, containing two chapters which had not appeared in the magazine version. James himself considered the novel his most "perfect" work of art.

Lambert Strether is sent to Paris by Mrs Newsome, a wealthy widow, to persuade her son Chad to return to Massachusetts and his responsibilities as head of the family business. Strether's success as an ambassador will ensure his marriage to Mrs Newsome when he returns. *En route* to Paris, he meets Maria Gostrey, an expatriate American whose witty and sympathetic observations introduce him to the pleasure of European life. In Paris, he finds Chad an assured and sophisticated young man who is not eager to return to America. Strether is introduced to Madame de Vionnet, a charming French woman who has clearly been the refining influence on Chad's life.

Strether's letters to Mrs Newsome reveal his declining enthusiasm for his embassy, and she sends further ambassadors – her daughter Sarah and Sarah's husband and sister-in-law – to appeal to Chad. They receive little help from Strether, and their lack of success with Chad estranges Strether from Mrs Newsome. In the ensuing action Strether makes two discoveries: that Chad's liaison with Madame de Vionnet is an intimate one, and that his

own sympathies rest with Chad. He remains detached, however, content to observe life rather than participate in it, and ultimately returns to his life as a widower in Massachusetts.

American, The A novel by **Henry James**, published in *The Atlantic Monthly* between June 1876 and May 1877, and as a volume in 1877. Christopher Newman, a bachelor who has become wealthy through shrewd business dealings in America, travels to Paris to find a wife. Though an accomplished businessman, he is naïve about European ways. Mrs Tristram, an expatriate American, serves as a sort of guide and confidante to him, much as Maria Gostrey serves Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*.

Newman becomes engaged to Claire de Cintré, a widow, and the daughter of an aristocratic French family, the Bellegardes. But the Bellegardes decide they cannot sacrifice the family pride, even to Newman's wealth, and they terminate the engagement. Meanwhile Newman has introduced Valentin Bellegarde, Claire's brother and his own friend and ally, to Noémie Nioche, a young woman who copies great paintings for a living. Because of his involvement with Noémie, Valentin fights and dies in a duel. Just before dying, however, he provides Newman with the means of compelling the Bellegarde family to allow him to marry Claire: he sends Newman to Mrs Bread, the Dowager Marquise's maid, who reveals that the Marquise had caused her husband's death by withholding his medication. In the end, however, Newman decides not to use this information to force the marriage, and the novel closes with Claire's becoming a Carmelite nun.

American Crisis, The A series of 16 pamphlets by **Thomas Paine**, published between 1776 and 1783, the first of which begins "These are the times that try men's souls." They made an important contribution to the American Revolutionary cause and influenced the direction of the early nation's political and philosophical ideology. They discuss human nature and the individual's proper relationship to the state, tyranny, the spirit of liberty, and the future of colonialism.

American Dream, An See **Mailer, Norman**

American Mercury, The A magazine of literary criticism and social commentary founded in 1924 by **H. L. Mencken** and **George Jean Nathan**. When Nathan left the journal in 1925 Mencken assumed sole editorship, a position he retained until his own departure in 1933. Subsequent editors included Henry Hazlitt, Charles Angoff, Paul Palmer, Eugene Lyons, Lawrence Spivak, William Bradford Huie, and John A. Clements. The journal featured fiction, essays, and social and political commentary by such authors as **Vachel Lindsay**, **Theodore Dreiser**, **W. E. B. DuBois**, **Ben Hecht**, **James T. Farrell**, **Edgar Lee Masters**, **William Faulkner**, **William Saroyan**, **Lionel Trilling**, **Mark Van Doren**, **Thomas Wolfe**, **Pearl S. Buck**, **Conrad Aiken**, **Eugene O'Neill**, **Dorothy Parker**, and **Sherwood Anderson**. The journal ceased publication in 1975.

American Tragedy, An A novel by **Theodore Dreiser**, published in 1925, and based on an actual New York murder case of 1906, in which a man named Chester Gillette was convicted of the murder of a young woman, Grace Brown.

Clyde Griffiths, anxious to escape his family's dreary life, goes to work as a bellboy in a luxury hotel. He enjoys the lively society of his more sophisticated co-workers until he is involved in a car accident and found to be legally culpable. Fleeing the scene, he meets his uncle Samuel Griffiths, a successful manufacturer in New York State, who gives him a job in his Eastern factory. Clyde falls in love with Sondra Finchley, a rich girl from a nearby town, who represents the elegance and culture to which he has always aspired. Meanwhile, however, he has seduced a young factory worker, Roberta, who becomes pregnant and demands that he marry her. Seeing marriage to Sondra within his grasp, Clyde decides to dispose of the unfortunate Roberta. He takes her to a lake resort, deserted at that time of year, where he plans to murder her. He lacks the resolution to carry out his plan, but when the boat accidentally overturns he swims away and leaves Roberta to drown. He is accused of her murder, and the rest of the novel traces, in relentless detail, the investigation of the case, and Clyde's indictment, trial, conviction, and execution.

Ammons, A[rchie] R[andolph] 1926– Born in North Carolina, Ammons studied at Wake Forest College and the University of California at Berkeley. His first book of poetry, *Ommateum with Doxology*, appeared in 1955 (the title refers to the compound eye of an insect). *Expressions of Sea Level*, the volume which established him as a major poet, was published in 1964; in the same year he accepted a post at Cornell University, where he continues to teach creative writing.

Ammons's work, characterized in particular by its precise descriptions of the natural world, also includes *Corsons Inlet* (1965), *Northfield Poems* (1966), *Uplands* (1970), *Briefings* (1971), *Collected Poems: 1951–1971* (1972), *Diversifications* (1975), *The Snow Poems* (1977), *Highgate Road* (1977), *A Coast of Trees* (1981), *Worldly Hopes: Poems* (1982), and *Lake Effect Country: Poems* (1983). He has published two long poems as books, *Tape for the Turn of the Year* (1965) and *Sphere: The Form of a Motion* (1974). *The Selected Poems 1951–1977* appeared in 1977, and *Selected Longer Poems* in 1980.

Anderson, Maxwell 1888–1959 Born in Atlantic, Pennsylvania, Anderson spent much of his childhood traveling through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Iowa, and North Dakota, following the "call" of his father, a Baptist preacher. He attended the University of North Dakota, and then taught school in North Dakota and California (he was fired twice for his outspoken pacifism) and earned an MA from Stanford with a thesis on Shakespeare. Newspaper work in San Francisco led to the offer of an editorship on *The New Republic*. He moved to New York City, where he soon began writing for the theatre.

His first play, *White Desert* (1923), about struggling North Dakota miners, was a failure, but a second effort, *What Price Glory?* (1924), written in collaboration with Lawrence Stallings, won acclaim for its realistic portrayal of soldiers during wartime. The 1930s were successful years for Anderson; during that decade he wrote and saw produced *Elizabeth the Queen* (1930), a blank-verse tragedy; *Night Over Taos* (1932); *Both Your Houses* (1932); *Mary of Scotland* (1933); *Valley Forge* (1934); *Winterset* (1935), a verse tragedy based on the Sacco and Vanzetti case; *Wingless*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-30703-1 - The Cambridge Handbook of American Literature

Edited by Jack Salzman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 Anderson

Victory (1937); *High Tor* (1937), a comedy about a struggle over land rights; *The Masque of Kings* (1937); *The Star Wagon* (1937); *Knickerbocker Holiday*, a musical comedy written in collaboration with his close friend **Kurt Weill**; *Key Largo* (1939), another tragedy; and *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940), a retelling of the story of Christ's childhood.

During World War II he produced two anti-Nazi plays, *The Miracle of the Danube* (1941) and *Candle in the Wind* (1941), and two more plays about the lives of soldiers, *The Eve of St Mark* (1942) and *Storm Operation* (1944). 1946 saw the appearance of *Truckline Cafe* and *Joan of Lorraine*; in 1948 he completed his Elizabethan trilogy with *Anne of the Thousand Days*. *Lost in the Stars* (1950), another collaboration with Weill, was an adaptation of Alan Paton's novel of South Africa, *Cry The Beloved Country*. Among his last plays were *Barefoot in Athens* (1951), about the life of Socrates, and *The Bad Seed* (1954).

Anderson, Sherwood 1876–1941 A novelist and short-story writer, Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, and completed his education at the age of 14. He drifted from job to job, served in the Spanish–American War (1898–9), married, and managed a paint factory in Elyria, Ohio. Then, apparently, he left family and job and went to pursue a literary career in Chicago, where he met **Carl Sandburg**, **Ben Hecht**, **Floyd Dell**, and others.

Anderson's first book, *Windy McPherson's Son*, was published in 1916. Other early works include *Marching Men* (1917), a novel about coal miners in Pennsylvania, and *Mid-American Chants* (1918), a volume of unrhymed verse. He received his greatest recognition following the publication of *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), a collection of inter-related stories of small-town life, and the novel *Poor White* (1920), which explores the effects of technological change on American culture. His later work includes collections of short stories – *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921), *Horses and Men* (1923), and *Death in the Woods* (1933) – and the novels *Many Marriages* (1923), *Dark Laughter* (1925), *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* (1926), and *Beyond Desire* (1932). His autobiography, *A Story Teller's Story*, was published in 1924. A volume of *Letters* was issued in 1953, and a critical edition of his

Memoirs in 1973. The influence of his flat, minimalist prose style, evocative of a bleaker vision of life than had previously been characteristic of American writing, can be seen in such writers as **Ernest Hemingway** and **William Faulkner**.

Angelou, Maya 1928– Noted for her varied and international involvement in the arts, Angelou was born Marguerita Johnson in St Louis, Missouri, on April 4, 1928. She attended public schools in Arkansas and California and then studied music, dance, and drama.

Her theatrical career began when she appeared in *Porgy and Bess* on an international tour sponsored by the US State Department (1954–5). Off Broadway, she performed in *Calypso Heatwave* and *The Blacks*, and in *Cabaret for Freedom*, which she wrote and produced in 1960 in collaboration with Godfrey Cambridge. She has since written for both stage and screen: *The Least of These*, a two-act drama first produced in Los Angeles in 1966; *The Clawing Within* (1966, unproduced); *Adjoa Amissah* (1967, unproduced); *Georgia, Georgia*, filmed by Independent Cinerama in 1972; an adaptation of Sophocles' *Ajax*, first produced in 1974 at the Mark Taper Forum; *And Still I Rise*, a one-act musical first produced in 1976 under her direction at the Ensemble Theatre, Oakland, California; *All Day Long*, filmed by the American Film Institute in 1974 and directed by herself.

In 1959 and 1960, she served at the request of Martin Luther King as Northern Coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She has worked as associate editor of the *Arab Observer* in Egypt, and as assistant administrator of the School of Music and Drama at the University of Ghana. She continues to visit numerous American and European universities as a lecturer, visiting professor, and writer-in-residence.

Angelou's more recent work has confirmed her reputation as a telling commentator on black American culture. In her four autobiographical volumes she examines the challenges confronting and the potential awaiting black American women: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969); *Gather Together in My Name* (1974); *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* (1976); and *The Heart of a Woman* (1981). Two collections of poetry –