

American Literature

● Before 1700

- John Smith
- William Bradford
- John Winthrop
- Anne Bradstreet
- Edward Taylor

● 1700-1820

- Jonathan Edwards
- Benjamin Franklin
- Thomas Paine
- Thomas Jefferson
- and other writers



John Smith



John Smith's Life

- (1580–1631). The story of the life of Captain John Smith, as told by himself, reads more like an adventure novel than like a true autobiography. He was baptized on Jan. 6, 1580, in Willoughby, Lincolnshire, England.
- In about 1600 he ran away from home and, traveling through France and at sea, survived some fantastic adventures.
- Then he fought in the war against the Turks in Hungary. After being captured and sold into slavery, he escaped to Russia.

Captain Smith

- In 1605 Smith joined an expedition that was preparing to go to America to found the colony of Virginia. During the voyage he was accused of conspiracy and he faced hanging. He was kept under restraint until after the expedition reached the James River. Then it was discovered that he was one of the councillors appointed by the Virginia Company in England to govern the colony, and the conspiracy charges were dropped.
- Soon the incompetence of others forced him to take charge of the Jamestown settlement, and he issued the famous order, “**He who will not work shall not eat.**” He traded with the Indians to supply the colonists with corn.

Pocahontas

- While in Jamestown Smith was captured by hostile Indians and brought before their chief, Powhatan. As a warrior stood ready to club Smith to death, the chief's daughter Pocahontas embraced him and persuaded her father to spare his life.
- The truth of Smith's account of his rescue, however, is in doubt.

Smith died in London in June 1631

- In 1609 Smith went back to England. In 1614 he charted the coast of southern Canada and the area he named New England. On a return voyage the next year he was captured by pirates, and he returned to England penniless.
- He spent much time in writing, and, though his works are not fully reliable, they provide much information about the Jamestown settlement. Smith died in London in June 1631.

Pocahontas saving Captain

John Smith from death in 1607 while watched by her father, Powhatan, mural painting by Paul Cadmus, 1939.



Generall Historie of Virginia

- In 1608 English explorer and colonizer John Smith became president of the Jamestown settlement, located in what is now Virginia. Smith organized trade with the Native Americans and began explorations to map the area. Smith said that on one trip, he was captured by the Powhatan people.
- In his historical narrative *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), Smith writes that the Powhatan were about to execute him when chief Powhatan's daughter Matoaka, nicknamed Pocahontas, saved him. However, Smith did not tell of this in his earlier reports, and many historians doubt this story.

General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles

- Read Page 46-47: History or Fiction?
- In this excerpt from Smith's 1624 book, he tells of his rescue by Pocahontas and of the antagonistic relationship between the colonists and the Native Americans.



Page 51: Pocahontas

- Pocahontas, the daughter of Native American Chief Powhatan, helped maintain peace between the Native Americans and English colonists in early America. She was temporarily held captive by the English in 1613, and during this time she and Jamestown colonist **John Rolfe** fell in love.
- Pocahontas converted to **Christianity** and married Rolfe in 1614. She received a royal welcome from the English upon her trip to London in 1616. While waiting to sail back to America, she became ill with **smallpox** and died.

William Bradford

- The Pilgrims, shown here celebrating their first Thanksgiving, were a group of Puritans who landed at Plymouth Rock, in what is now Massachusetts, United States, in 1620. In 1621 Governor William Bradford of New England proclaimed a day of “thanksgiving” and prayer to celebrate the Pilgrims’ first harvest in America.
- United States president Abraham Lincoln, following the precedent of a number of states, designated a national Thanksgiving Day in 1863.
- Now Thanksgiving Day falls annually on the fourth Thursday of November.

First Thanksgiving in America



● Page 89: 1621

John Winthrop

- American colonist John Winthrop served as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (part of what is now the state of Massachusetts) for 12 terms.
- Along with the colony's other Puritan leaders, Winthrop strongly opposed religious dissenters, as it was his belief that any dissent could subvert the effective governing of the colony.



"A City Upon a Hill"

- In 1629 English attorney and Puritan John Winthrop was chosen by the Massachusetts Bay Company, an English trading firm, to govern its colony in New England. Winthrop and 700 Puritan settlers set sail from Yarmouth, England, in March 1630 and landed at what is now Salem, Massachusetts, on June 12.
- While bound for New England on board the *Arabella*, Winthrop delivered a speech setting forth a moral code and religious goals for the new colony.

The eyes of all people are upon us.

- We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when he shall make us a praise and a glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantations, 'The Lord make it likely that of New England.' For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us.

A Model of Christian Charity

- Page 95-96: Divine Love
- Page 103: persons, work, end, means



1700: Tobacco Farm

Chesapeake tobacco planters relied on imported labor to work the land. Indentured servants from England were the first to arrive, but stopped coming by 1700. Planters then turned to African slaves for labor.



Anne Bradstreet

- Bradstreet was the first poet in America to publish a volume of poetry. *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* was published in England in 1650. Bradstreet had lived in England until 1630, when at the age of 18 she arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where she spent the rest of her life.
- Although Bradstreet wrote many poems on familiar British themes and produced skilled imitations of British forms, her most remarkable works responded directly to her experiences in colonial New England.
- They reveal her attraction to her new world, even as the discomforts of life in the wilderness sickened her. Her poetry contains a muted declaration of independence from the past and a challenge to authority.

Conceit

- In the 17th century, metaphysical poets, who are called this for their intellectual poetry about truths beyond the physical world, favored extended metaphors, or conceits, that act as links in a descriptive chain.
- For example, American poet Anne Bradstreet's conceit below makes many comparisons between a book and a child.

“The Author to Her Book”

1678

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth didst by my side remain,
Till snatched from thence by friends, less wise than true,
Who thee abroad, exposed to public view,
Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,
Where errors were not lessened (all may judge),
At thy return my blushing was not small,
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,
I cast thee by as one unfit for light.
The visage was so irksome in my sight;
Yet being mine own, at length affection would
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could.

Norton: p 124

P 127: Burning of Our House

- Il 1-5: Personal Voice: feelings, vivid words
- Il 6-10: Puritan thoughts: Turn to God on every occasion
- Il 14-17: Puritan attitude: God's ways are not to be understood so much as simply accepted.
- Il 21-24: a lyric poem expressing her thought and feelings

P 127

- II 30---: Puritan Plain Style: clear, precise
Making her point directly
- II 43---: a Puritan lesson: One's true home is with God not here on earth.
- P 128
 - II 51--- Not to be attached to earthly things but to live by spiritual ideals



Edward Taylor

- Most of Taylor's poetry is in the metaphysical tradition, and he often used extravagant rhetorical devices.
- Taylor's poetry was one of the major literary discoveries of the 20th century, and since the publication of his work Taylor's reputation has steadily increased.



Revolution

- “Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Death”

- **Patrick Henry**, a self-educated lawyer and passionate Virginian patriot, was one of the more radical activists in the conflict over British rule of the American colonies. After the British Parliament’s Intolerable Acts of 1774 forced the colonists to provide lodging for British soldiers, the colonists organized local militia units to prevent what they saw as further violations of their rights.

- In March 1775 Henry called for independence at the revolutionary convention of Virginia, inflaming already high anti-British sentiment and contributing to the opening of armed hostilities the following month at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts.

- Henry’s closing words became the **watchword** of the revolutionaries.

Give me liberty, or give me death

- There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!
- It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

● Page 180-81 Timeline

● Jonathan Edwards

- pp 207----219 "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God"
- Most famous paragraph on page 214 *Norton Anthology of Am Lit, 6th shorter ed.*
- *O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in...*

● Benjamin Franklin

● Thomas Paine

- At twenty years of age, the will reigns; at thirty, the wit; and at forty, the judgment.
- We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.
- He that lives upon hope will die fasting.
- **Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards.**
- **Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of.**
- Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.

