

Course Information Course: English II A 2021 Unit: 3. THE AMERICAN NOVEL Assignment: 6. Twentieth Century Novelists	Originating Course Information Course: English III Unit: 8. THE AMERICAN NOVEL Assignment: 5. Twentieth Century Novelists
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TWENTIETH CENTURY NOVELISTS

Twentieth and twenty-first century novelists further developed the realistic novel. They also developed the naturalistic novel and experimented with combined modes. The American novel has reached a higher stage of development in these centuries. The novel to be studied is a twentieth-century American novel. The greatness of the twentieth and twenty-first century novels, especially those of the last fifty years, will be better judged by the critics of the this century.

Here is your goal for this lesson:

- Identify American authors, novels, and novel types and subjects.

VOCABULARY

chicanery	low trickery; unfair practice
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Robert Herrick, the idealist novelist of the early 1900's, thought that an author who confined himself to a realistic method could only touch the surface. He dealt with spiritual themes and his characters and action are generally symbolic types. The novels that Herrick himself claimed as his best were *The Real World* (1901), *A Life for a Life* (1910), *The Healer* (1911), and *Clark's Field* (1914). Critics have objected, however, that he never solves the problems he presents.

Booth Tarkington achieved a romantic treatment of realistic material that made him successful. Many boys have at some time read the Penrod books (1914- 1916, 1929). He catches the American rhythm particularly in a trilogy, *Growth* composed of three novels: *The Turmoil* (1915), *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1918), and *The Midlander* (1923).

Edith Wharton began writing fiction in 1889. *Ethan Frome* (1911) is often referred to as her masterpiece. The story is a tragedy of a sensitive New England farmer married to a shrewish, hypochondriac woman. Wharton's first interest was a realistic dramatic fiction of the soul. In that she follows the French masters who provide the density that fiction needs. She surveyed a world that she found growing progressively worse and that needs again to obey the command of reasons.



Edith Wharton

Ellen Glasgow, who published between 1902 and 1941, brought social history into fiction. She wrote of Virginia, the South, the Civil War, the rise of the middle class, and so forth. She pictured the world as cruel and stunted in development. The most popular of her books is *They Stood to Folly* (1924), which studies woman in three stages of life. In her last novel, *In This Our Life* (1939), she studied the decaying standards of civilization and the ever-present need of a basis for living. She saw cruelty as the great sin, the real sin.

Theodore Dreiser was the finest of the writers of the naturalist school of novelists. His best example is *The American Tragedy* (1925). Realism returned again with Dorothy Canfield in such works as *The Brimming Cup* (1921) and *The Deepening Stream* (1930).

Willa Cather approached life as the artist. She felt that she could not write if she were detached from the roots of her experience, and for her the roots were in Nebraska. She finds herself as a novelist in *O Pioneers!* (1913). The works in which she returns to the past are her best. *Death Comes to the Archbishop* (1927) is such a work.



Willa Cather

The writing of Sinclair Lewis resembles both Edith Wharton and Booth Tarkington. In 1920 he wrote *Main Street*. In that work he begins to recognize things that were not right in society. *Babbitt* (1922) studies frustration. *Arrowsmith* (1925) is his closest use of the realistic method to sort out all the medical *chicanery* in existence.

John Dos Passos' most important work is *U.S.A.* (1937), which contains *The 42nd Parallel*, *Nineteen-Nineteen*, and *The Big Money*. He wrote what is termed a collectivist novel, using disconnected fragments to describe the lives of rather aimless characters. In such works as *He Sent Forth a Raven* (1935), Elizabeth Madox Roberts uses her poetic insight and method of presenting the inner lives of her characters. The works of Elinor Wylie, Robert Nathan, and Thornton Wilder resurrect romance and fantasy. Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (C 1927) attempts to plumb the mystery of evil much as Job did with his contemporaries.

Thomas Wolfe was the giant of the 1930's. He wrote four huge novels and two lesser ones. They are greatly edited down from the original manuscripts. He wanted to record everything, but Wolfe never learned to control his gifts. His most famous novel is *Of Time and the River* (1935).

William Faulkner is a most imaginative novelist. He created a world that may give something of the Deep South. His famous Yoknapatawpha County and Snopes family have the character of legend and myth. The historical novel made a return with Harvey Allen's *Anthony Adverse* (1933) and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936).

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Critics are still wondering whether to take much of Steinbeck's fiction literally or allegorically. Works such as *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Wayward Bus* are the most puzzling of his output. *The Grapes of Wrath* is so full of rhythmical and repetitive elements that classification of the novel is impossible. The novel also makes use of symbolism, folklore, oral tradition, popular stories, and songs. Steinbeck was never a popular author. He was capable of writing a deep, religious work demonstrated by his retelling in clear and beautiful prose of a medieval Mexican folktale of great religious devotion entitled *The Pearl* (1947).



John Steinbeck

Robert Penn Warren, who reached fame as a novelist with *All the King's Men* (1946), is a political novelist. Warren's writings provide only a sample of the manner in which the novel has taken upon itself to speak out on any subject. Each has to be considered on merit of subject, theme, method, and technique. To do a creditable job of talking about a novel, one must read it first.

Many authors now alive are only beginning to enter the critical arena. Such writers as Norman Mailer, Irwin Shaw, Gore Vidal, and Truman Capote, are only few that are important. New names appear every day.

Question #1 FillInBlank

Show Answer

Complete the sentence below.

Trickery and unfair practices are referred to as _____¹⁰.

Question #2 Matching

Show Answer

Match the work to the author.

1. <i>The Real World</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Booth Tarkington
2. <i>Growth</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Sinclair Lewis
3. <i>Ethan Frome</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Willa Cather
4. <i>They Stood to Folly</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Thornton Wilder
5. <i>The American Tragedy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> John Steinbeck
6. <i>Death Comes to the Archbishop</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Edith Wharton
7. <i>Babbitt</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Theodore Dreiser
8. <i>The Bridge of San Luis Rey</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Wolfe
9. <i>Of Time and the River</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Robert Herrick
10. <i>The Pearl</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ellen Glasgow

