



Otázka: American literature – 19th and 20th century

Jazyk: Angličtina

Přidal(a): flagellum-dei

19th century:

Till the first half of the 19th century was about conditions of the settlement in the New World. While the Romantic Movement arose in Europe as an expression of revolt against political and religious authority in America romanticism was connected with nationalism.

Prose

Nathaniel Hawthorne

- had Puritan ancestors, their cruelty, intolerance and pride influenced his writing – allegoric, describes the psychology of the characters, dark part of the human mind, symbols, interpretation is difficult.
- **The Scarlet Letter** – the 1st American symbolic novel. It takes place in a Puritan village. A young woman, named Hester Prynne, comes to America to settle down. She is waiting for her husband, but she falls in love with a puritan priest. She thinks that her husband died and she gets pregnant with a priest, but she doesn't want to tell who the father of the baby is. As a punishment she has to wear a big scarlet letter on her bosom (A for Adultery) and she is ignored by the village. Her husband is killed and she marries the priest.

Edgar Allan Poe

- He was a poet and short story writer, critical essayist, the founder of science fiction and detective story.
- His father left their family and soon died, his mother died after a year. Poe was taken to the prominent family, the Allans, but he hated his new father, maybe because he gave him to the university of Virginia, where he started to drink and gamble and very quickly was in debts. He had to leave the university and find a job. He married his cousin, but she died. He started to drink again and was very depressed. He is said to be the forerunner of modern literature and French poets regarded him as a genius.
- He is famous mainly for his poem **The Raven**, which he wrote for his wife. In the poem the man who had lost his love because she died asks Raven if he will ever meet her again in some other world and other questions. But the Raven's answer is always the same: Nevermore. The raven is a symbol of depression, loneliness. Other works are mystery and horror stories:
- The Golden Bug, The Pit and Pendulum (Jáma a kyvadlo) or The Murders in the rue Morgue.

Poetry

Walt Whitman

- He was a poet of democracy, freedom and sexual love and he made American poetry independent from European poetry. His most famous collection is Leaves of Grass.

"I am satisfied ... I see, dance, laugh, sing."

"Resist much, obey little."

- "Battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won."
- **Leaves of Grass** - his only book of poetry (396 poems). The author shows his belief in the equality of all people and races, as well as believe in democracy and humanism. He uses the metaphor and free verse, which in that time has created a revolution in poetic work. In the first edition (1855) was significantly shorter in subsequent editions were added new poems.

Mark Twain

- He was a famous journalist and one of the greatest US authors. He comes from the South and he worked as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi river. He left school at the age of 12 so he hadn't got elementary education. He tried many jobs and travelled a lot. Mark Twain is pen name, his real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. "Mark twain" is a phrase meaning "two fathoms deep". He became famous as a humorist and storyteller. Many of his books were inspired by his travels.
- **The adventures of Tom Sawyer, The adventure of Huckleberry Finn or Life on the Mississippi.** (autobiographical books) In the Adventures he describes his childhood. In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Twain gives his young hero very adult problems. Huck and his friend Jim are floating down the Mississippi river on a raft. During their trip they meet people with different characters and learn a lot about evil of the world. Jim is a slave and Huck has to return him to his owner, but he doesn't want to, because he thinks that he is not a thing but a human. At the end of the book he is not a child anymore. Twain's next books are The Prince and the Pauper and A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's court.

20th century: The quick industrial development in America at the end of the 19th century gave rise to many problems. Authors try to describe the ugliness of life, where moneymaking dominates, destroys human character and put aside all human values. Realism and naturalism developed.

Ernest Hemingway

- He became a journalist after WWI. He was interested in hunting, fishing which he used in his books as: **Green hills of Africa, The Snows of Kilimanjaro**
- Experience from war he described in books **A Farewell to arms** and **For Whom the bell tolls**. He spent last years of his life in Kuba, where he wrote **The old man and the sea**.
- Hemingway is a master of short story writing.
- He was also awarded the Nobel Prize for this novel. This short novel is very sad.
- The main character of the story is poor old Cuban fisherman Santiago who used to go fishing with a boy as a helper. But he had bad luck and caught no fish. So the boy was ordered by his parents to go fishing in another boat and the old man was



forced to go out to sea alone. Finally Santiago caught a very big fish and after a long fight he killed it. He was not able to give it to boat so he sailed home with his fish tied on the side of his boat, but soon sharks appeared and attacked the killed fish. Santiago fought bravely, but when he sailed to port he had only skeleton of his fish.

- Fiesta, Death the Afternoon, Islands in the Stream.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald

- He wrote many short stories and novels, which were later collected and published in books.
- He is connected with the Jazz Age of the 20s.
- He wrote many stories about wealthy people, for whom everything is so easy because of money.
- **The Great Gatsby** is his best novel. It is about a very rich man who earns all his money by smuggling. He is doing this because he wants to be on the same level as Daisy, his former lover who has always been rich.

John Steinbeck

- He won the Nobel Prize.
- He tried to uncover the reasons of social injustice.
- His best novel is **The Grapes of Wrath**. Story about Oklahoma farmers (Joad family) who have to leave their land because of droughts, they go to California to find a better life. The journey is hard and they find out, that California is full of homeless people and there's no one to help them.
- His other works are **Of Mice and Men, Tortilla Flat, East of Eden**

William Faulkner

- was a writer and Nobel Prize laureate from Oxford, Mississippi.
- Faulkner wrote novels, short stories, a play, poetry, essays and screenplays.
- He is primarily known for his novels and short stories set in the fictional



Yoknapatawpha County, based on Lafayette County, Mississippi, where he spent most of his life.

- **The Sound and the Fury, Absalom, Absalom!, A Rose for Emily**

Tennessee Williams

- shows in his plays people's crude, selfish, violent and cruel motives of their behaviour as well as their deep desire to love and be loved.
- **A Streetcar Named Desire, Orpheus Descending, A Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.**

Ken Kesey

- American writer, who gained world fame with his novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
- In the 1960s, Kesey became a counterculture hero and a guru of psychedelic drugs with Timothy Leary.
- Kesey has been called the Pied Piper, who changed the beat generation into the hippie movement
- **Sometimes a Great Notion, Demon Box**
- **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest:** set in an Oregon psychiatric hospital, the narrative serves as a study of the institutional processes and the human mind as well as a critique of behaviorism and a celebration of humanistic principles.
- Bo Goldman adapted the novel for the 1975 film directed by Miloš Forman, which won five Academy Awards

William Styron

- novelist and essayist who won major literary awards for his work
- **Sophie's choice** Three stories are told: a young Southerner wants to become a writer; a turbulent love-hate affair between a brilliant Jew and a beautiful Polish woman; and of an awful wound in that woman's past-one that impels both Sophie and Nathan toward destruction.



Beat Generation

20th century poetry is famous for a group of poets and artists who are called "Beat Group". They practiced new ways of free life, behaviour and new use of language. They were disgusted by corrupt, commercial and conventional world around them. They were also influenced by Zen Buddhism teaching. To the best known poets of this era belong:

Jack Kerouac

- novelist and poet
- He is considered a literary iconoclast and, alongside William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, a pioneer of the Beat Generation
- Kerouac is recognized for his method of spontaneous prose
- Thematically, his work covers topics such as Catholic spirituality, jazz, promiscuity, Buddhism, drugs, poverty, and travel.
- **Mexico City Blues, The Town and the City**
- **On the Road** (the bible of the Beat Group) is a novel based on the travels of Kerouac and his friends across America. It is considered a defining work of the postwar Beat generations, with its protagonists living life against a backdrop of jazz, poetry, and drug use.

Allan Ginsberg

- was a poet and one of the leading figures of both the Beat Generation of the 1950s and the counterculture that soon would follow
- He vigorously opposed militarism, economic materialism and sexual repression.
- Ginsberg is best known for his epic poem „Howl“, in which he denounced what he saw as the destructive forces of capitalism and conformity in the United States.
- **Howl, Kaddish and other poems**