

American Literature

Students read the thoughts and feelings of American men and women who have helped create and articulate the unique heritage of the American people and the rich fabric of their culture. Active reading and critical evaluation is emphasized. Students refine composition and presentation skills by writing essays (expository, interpretive, contrast/compare), magazine columns, travel guides, interviews, editorials, and speeches. In addition, students explore the works of modern American poets and write a literary research paper. The following books are required for this course:

- The Oak Meadow American Literature Syllabus
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane
- *To Be a Slave* by Julius Lester

Outline of the American Literature Syllabus:

- Lesson 1:** *The Red Badge of Courage*, Chapters 1-5
- Lesson 2:** *The Red Badge of Courage*, Chapters 6-15
- Lesson 3:** *The Red Badge of Courage*, Chapters 16-24
- Lesson 4:** *The Red Badge of Courage* Essay Topic
- Lesson 5:** Composition: Sentence Combining
- Lesson 6:** Relative Clauses
- Lesson 7:** *To Be a Slave*, Chapters 1-2
- Lesson 8:** *To Be a Slave*, Chapters 3-4
- Lesson 9:** *To Be a Slave*, Chapters 5-7
- Lesson 10:** Personal Essay: Prejudice and Oppression
- Lesson 11:** Participial Phrases
- Lesson 12:** Writing a Column
- Lesson 13:** Subordination
- Lesson 14:** Dialect and Slang
- Lesson 15:** Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*
- Lesson 16:** *Self-Reliance*
- Lesson 17:** Abraham Lincoln
- Lesson 18:** Walt Whitman, *There Was a Child Went Forth* and *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*
Reading Out Loud
- Lesson 19:** Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*
- Lesson 20:** Emerson/Whitman Essay
- Lesson 21:** Wordiness and Word Economy
- Lesson 22:** Revising and Rewriting
- Lesson 23:** *The Great Gatsby*, Chapters 1-3
- Lesson 24:** *The Great Gatsby*, Chapters 4-6
- Lesson 25:** *The Great Gatsby*, Chapters 7-9
- Lesson 26:** *The Great Gatsby*
Visual Representation
- Lesson 27:** Writing a Travel Piece
- Lesson 28:** Conducting and Writing an Interview
- Lesson 29:** Writing an Editorial
- Lesson 30:** Modern American Poetry
William Carlos Williams
T.S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*
- Lesson 31:** Modern American Poetry
Elizabeth Bishop, *The Fish* and *Filling Station*
Write a Long Poem
- Lesson 32:** Writing a Speech
- Lesson 33:** Writing Smorgasbord
Stream-of-Consciousness
The Twenty-Minute Essay
Write a Letter to Yourself and Receive it in a Year
- Lesson 34:** Writing a Literary Research Paper
- Lesson 35:** Rough Draft of Research Paper
- Lesson 36:** Final Draft of Research Paper

American Literature ~~~~~ Lesson 27

Writing a Travel Piece

Can you imagine being paid to travel and to write about the places you visit? Too good to be true? Believe it or not, the travel writer does just this. In a sense, he or she reviews travel destinations just as others review books or films.

There are different types of travel writing, each of which serves a specific purpose. If you were to write a *travel guide*, for example, you would provide vacationers with information about transportation, currency, restaurants, airports, hotels, places of interest, and so forth. These guides are very detailed, so you must know the location well. *Travel articles*, which are less detailed than guides, are featured in the “travel section” of periodicals. People turn to these articles for news about vacation spots or weekend getaways. These pieces highlight the pros and cons of travel destinations.

Sometimes travel writers publish book-length accounts of their journeys. These books are reflections of a writer who is *immersed* in a culture. Unlike the guide and the article, travel books vary in style and intention. Some feature the author’s personal stories and observations. Maybe the author returns to his or her place of birth, or takes a pilgrimage to a sacred spot. Other travel books are more objective, excluding personal material.

Assignments

1. Begin by reading at least two travel articles and one long excerpt (20 pages) from a travel book. Cut out or photocopy the two articles and send them along with this Lesson.

For each article, write at least one full paragraph discussing the merits or the shortcomings of the piece. Consider the following questions:

- What were the writer’s feelings about the travel spot?
- What details did he or she highlight about the place? Was the description thorough enough? Did it entice you to visit the location?
- What was the tone of the article? Was the writer authoritative or friendly in describing the location?
- Was the writing effective? How was the piece structured?

In response to the book excerpt, write at least a page about the author's relationship to the place he or she is describing. What is the purpose of the book? What is the tone of the writing? In general, what are the descriptions like? Does the writer focus mostly on landscape? People? History? Did the writer achieve a sense of intimacy with the place?

2. Write a three page (minimum) travel article about your favorite vacation spot or your home town. If you like, include photos. Here is a suggestion of areas to cover:

- **Transportation:** Provide facts about public transportation, taxi rates, railroads, boat travel, and airports.
- **Hotels:** List quality hotels in all price ranges, including youth hostels.
- **Places of Interest:** Include any well-known locations, both in and around the area. Try to highlight some lesser-known places.
- **Weather:** Let the traveler know what to expect from the seasonal weather.
- **Customs:** Inform the traveler about local propriety. This includes practical issues, such as tipping; but it also touches upon social customs. In some cultures, for example, wearing shorts might be offensive; in another, burping at the dinner table might be acceptable!

When writing, be sure to consider your tone. If you are too enthusiastic about a place, for example, readers might be put off. Try to maintain a sense of objective praise.

The article should be either typed or handwritten neatly in ink. Write a rough draft and a final draft and be sure your writing is mechanically sound. Send both drafts to your Teacher.