



LIFE·PAC®

Language Arts

Mark Twain

Ernest Hemingway



Robert Frost



Alpha Omega Publications®

LANGUAGE ARTS 1108
STUDIES IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL

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Author:

Bernard J. Quint, M. Th., Ph.D.

Editor:

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

Illustrator:

Alpha Omega Graphics



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STUDIES IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL

The American novel began to develop at the same time as the English novel. The American novel, however, drew from the English developments as well as from the varied types of literature that led to a novel form.

In this LIFEPAK® you will study briefly the history of the American novel and some of the American novelists who contributed to this history. You will read an American novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*, by Ernest Hemingway. This novel will be purchased by you or provided by your teacher. You will study figures of speech, imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and so forth and their application to the novel.

You will also write a critical essay on the novel in which you will display your understanding of the novel, the principles of criticism, and the methods of evaluating literature according to God's standards.

OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAAC.

When you have finished this LIFEPAAC, you should be able to:

1. Outline the history of the American novel.
2. Name some of the major American novelists.
3. Identify some types of novels written by American novelists.
4. Identify images and figures of speech and their function in *The Old Man and the Sea*.
5. Define a critical essay.
6. Explain interpretation as a critical approach.
7. Evaluate a particular interpretation of *The Old Man and the Sea* according to God's Word.

Survey the LIFEPAAC. Ask yourself some questions about this study. Write your questions here.

I. THE AMERICAN NOVEL

The history of the American novel is not as clear cut as that of the English novel. No one novel holds sole claim to being the first as did Richardson's *Pamela*. As with the English novel, several types of novels were tried. The eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries formed a period of development with few memorable works among the many that were written.

The nineteenth century brought the first great American novelists and prepared the way for the twentieth-century novelists.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Outline the history of the American novel.
2. Name some of the major American novelists.
3. Identify some types of novels written by American novelists.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to increase your learning success in this section.

allusive

chicanery

picaresque

burlesqued

gothic

romancer

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The novel form was first used by American writers in the eighteenth century. Dispute continues over which novel was the *first*. Several forms were tried at this time, many paralleling developments in English. The epistolary novel, historical novel, sentimental novel, **gothic** novel, and others were written in this early period of development.

The first American novel. The argument still continues about which novel has the honor of being the first American novel. Some award the honor to Gilbert Imlay's *The Emigrants* (1793) and reach that conclusion by simply denying the novelistic writing which preceded it. A variety of novels have lost their claim to that title for one reason or another. In 1751 Charlotte Lennox used American scenes and characters in *The Life of Harriot Stuart*, but her literary training and home were in England. A book called *The Female American: or, The Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield* was thought to have been written by an American and published in London in 1767. In 1775 *Adventures of Alonso*, probably by Thomas Atwood Digges, was claimed to be by a native of Maryland. The book, however, was not published in America and deals with nothing American. An Indian story, *The History of Maria Kittle*, was written in 1781 but did not appear as a book until 1793. *Miss McRae* by Hilliard d'Auberteuil in 1784 lost its claim because it was written in French by a Frenchman.

The History of the Kingdom of Basaruah, thought to be by Joseph Morgan, was written in 1715. It was a chronicle-history of an imaginary kingdom used as an allegorical form to explain Calvinist covenant theology, but the mood and method of the work simply did not fit the understanding of the novel techniques.

A book, first attributed to Sarah Wentworth Morton and then to William Hill Brown, was written in 1789 and titled *The Power of Sympathy*. It is generally conceded to be the first American novel. All critics, and people of sense, agree that *The Power of Sympathy* is a morbid and nasty book. Murder, suicide, and sin seemed to be the pattern in these early novels. Although all of the wrongs were presented from a harsh moral point of view, such treatment still did not prevent some of these novels from being banned.

Another aspect of these early works was that they claimed to be based on "fact." In some cases actual parallels were drawn with real families. *The Power of Sympathy* is written in the epistolary style, that is, a series of letters, following the example of Samuel Richardson in *Pamela*. This style gave immediacy to the reading of "real" parallels between the fictional characters and the persons of the real world.

Novels of sentiment. Many of the early American novels were sentimental and dealt with domestic situations. *Charlotte Temple* by Susanna Rawson has gone through 160 editions. The work appeals to women and to critics. It asks that women stay virtuous and that mercy be shown to the sinner.

Hannah Foster wrote *The Coquette* late in the eighteenth century. As literature it surpasses *The Power of Sympathy* especially in its forceful and sudden presentation of the ruin of the heroine Eliza Wharton.

Novels of the sentimental variety were not all novels of domestic life. Enos Hitchcock's *Memoir's of the Bloomergrove Family* is a novel about "education." *Julia and the Illuminated Baron* (1800) by Sally Wood over uses the gothic elements of horror and terror. Tabitha Tenney satirized and **burlesqued** the gothic tradition in a book called *Female Quixotism* in 1801.

Alonzo and Melissa by Anne Radcliffe leans toward the melodramatic. In the story the father imprisons the daughter to save her from marrying a poor man. The prison, of course, is a gothic castle on Long Island built by ancestors for protection against Indians. The place is a pile of rubble with the exception of the cemetery. The heroine is in a "state of distraction" from ugly sights and sounds that, as it is later discovered, were produced by a band of smugglers. Mark Twain testifies to the popularity of *Alonzo and Melissa* when he mentions it in his *Life on the Mississippi*.

➤ **Answer true or false.**

- 1.1 _____ *Pamela* was the first American novel.
- 1.2 _____ Many early American novels dealt with sentimental domestic situations.
- 1.3 _____ Critics cannot agree on the very first American novel.
- 1.4 _____ The novel *Charlotte Temple* was not popular.
- 1.5 _____ *The Power of Sympathy* was an epistolary novel form.

Historical novels. American history, brief though it was at the time, was used by eighteenth century American writers. *The Female American* used colonial Virginia as a setting; *The Foresters* made an allegory out of the English adventure in the new world; *Maria Kittle* used the French and Indian War and the Revolution; *Constantius and Pulchra*, *The Female Review*, and *Amelia* were all set at the time of the Revolution; *The Champions of Freedom* was set during the War of 1812. These efforts anticipated Brockden Brown and James Fenimore Cooper.

Other early novels. *The Algerine Captives* by Royall Tyler was filled with social, educational, and political satire. *The Emigrants* by Gilbert Imlay compared English and American civilizations by picturing an English family in the New World. America had the decided advantage. Through this book readers first began to realize that much of America lay west of the Allegheny Mountains. Imlay found Illinois remarkable. H.H. Brackenridge finished *Modern Chivalry* in 1815 and its 800 pages comprised the closest American approach to the **picaresque** novels of Europe. The book was full of common sense and reflective passages, and the style was quite realistic. Captain Farrago and his rascal of a servant, Teague O'Regan, fall into escapades that are not only personal scrapes but that also cast light on political faults. The locale is backwoods and the frontier of America during the eighteenth century.