

12th Literature Text List

This course introduces students to exemplary works of great American authors, poets, thinkers, and essayists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The **literary keel** for **12th Literature** is ***the American Dream***, the hope of a happy, fulfilling life that each and every American ought to experience on the basis of self-evident, unalienable rights we have received from our Creator.

The American experiment in self-government is grounded on the dignity and value of each and every American citizen, and such dignity and value entitles individuals to make their own decisions without undue interference from others, whether the state or private individuals.

One should consider the following story from Benjamin Franklin following the Constitutional Convention of 1787. A passerby asked Franklin, “Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?” To which Franklin replied, “A republic, if you can keep it.”

Franklin’s reply invokes a longstanding tradition in political theory that a republic composed of free individuals should cultivate virtues, habits of moral excellence which otherwise include cardinal virtues like temperance and courage, and virtues that Franklin himself embodied like hard work and thrift.

Franklin’s reply is a reminder that we should strive to use our freedom responsibly and to cultivate the habits of moral excellence that would help our republic endure.

Moreover, we should heed the warnings contained in the great works of the American literary tradition, many of which offer stark warnings against misusing the unique freedoms and opportunities we have in the United States.

Integrated Thales Outcomes: Traditional American Values, Dreams and Aspirations to Change the World, Virtuous Leader, and Unfailing Integrity.

Priority Text List

1st Quarter: *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne

2nd Quarter: Survey of antebellum American poetry and Civil War era poetry

- A. Emily Dickenson (selections)
- B. Walt Whitman
- C. Herman Melville

2nd Quarter: Survey of Modern Poetry

- D. Selections from Wallace Stevens, Langston Hughes, Robert Frost
- E. T.S. Eliot, *Poems and Essays* (selection tbd, but incl. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Wasteland," "Four Quartets," and *Selected Essays*)

3rd Quarter: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

4th Quarter: *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

Preferred Text List

I. Antebellum Literature:

- F. *The Courtship of Miles Standish* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- G. *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fennimore Cooper
- H. *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau
- I. *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (selections as necessary)

II. Survey of American Short Stories

- A. 'The Fall of the House of Usher' by Edgar Allan Poe and other selected stories
- B. *Sketchbook* by Washington Irving
- C. 'Benito Cereno' or 'Billy Budd' by Herman Melville

III. 20th c. American novels

- A. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- B. *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck

C. *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner and selected short stories by William Faulkner, including “The Bear”

IV. Selected short stories of Flannery O'Connor, notably “A Good Man is Hard to Find.”

Optional Reading List

A Separate Peace by John Knowles

My Antonia by Willa Cather

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemmingway

“Parker's Back” and “Greenleaf,” by Flannery O'Connor

Herman Melville - poetry

TS Elliot - *Selected Essays*

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

The Ancient Ocean Blues by Jack Mitchell

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain

Ben Hur by Lew Wallace

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemmingway

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger¹

A Confederacy of Dunces by John Kennedy O'Toole

“Parker's Back” and “Greenleaf,” by Flannery O'Connor

¹ *The Catcher in the Rye* should most likely be avoided because of its profanity and surface-level nihilism but, all that being said, the book is still a classic and a wonderful read. It may still not be appropriate for 12th grade.