

# 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY LITERATURE

## Course Description

Nineteenth Century Literature covers primarily Western literature from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. Students will analyze primary texts covering the genres of poetry, drama, fiction, and the essay. Questions will engage various perspectives and address textual, thematic, historical, and cultural issues of the period. The course is directed to graduate students with previous experience in analyzing literary texts.

## Instructors

Paul Davis, Emeritus Professor of English from the University of New Mexico, has developed and taught several courses in world literature, led a curriculum development project in world literature sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and edited several texts in world literature, including *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, the text for this course. A specialist in the literature of the nineteenth century with a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, he has written many articles on Victorian literature and several books on the works of Charles Dickens.

David Johnson, Emeritus Professor of English from the University of New Mexico, developed and taught courses in creative writing, mythology, and world literature. In addition to publishing books of poetry and a book on writing poetry, he was a co-editor of *Western Literature in a World Context* and a co-editor of the six-volume *Bedford Anthology of World Literature* (2003), the text for this course. He has published articles on mythology, comparative religion, and travels in Mexico. He has lectured and conducted workshops throughout New Mexico. His most recent book is *Rebirth of Wonder: Poems of the Common Life* (2007). He presently teaches short courses in autobiography and comparative religion in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of New Mexico.

## Course Content

### Unit 1: Romantic Poetry—Nature, Society, and the Supernatural

- Blake
- Wordsworth
- Coleridge
- Keats
- Heine

### Unit 2: The Romantic Hero

- In the World: Heroes and Heroines
- Goethe
- Hoffmann
- Pushkin
- Mary Shelley

### Unit 3: Science, Realism, and Religion

- Darwin
- In the World: Science and Creation
- Pardo Bazán, "The Oldest Story"
- Machado de Assis

### Unit 4: Realism

- In the World: Society and Its Discontents
- Flaubert
- Dostoevsky
- Tolstoy
- Chekhov

### Unit 5: The Situation of Women

- In the World: Emancipation, Stanton/Mott, Mill
- Ibsen
- Pardo Bazán, "The Revolver"
- Chopin
- Gilman

### Unit 6: Emancipation

- In the World: Emancipation, Douglass, Prince
- Jacobs
- Whitman
- Dickinson
- Melville

## **Course Overview**

The nineteenth century includes two important periods in literary history: the Romantic Period and the Realistic Period. At the beginning of the century the Romantics rebelled against the classicism of the eighteenth century and also against the rationalism of the Enlightenment. They celebrated nature and the supernatural, feeling, and the common man. In the second half of the century the Realists took a more objective view and a more scientific approach to literature, concentrating their attention on the urban bourgeoisie and the emerging industrial proletariat. The six units in the course focus on these two literary movements and on some of the major thematic issues in the literature of the period: the nature of the hero, the role of science, the position of women, and the movement toward emancipation. Students will consider major primary texts from the period and write critical papers for each of the six units.

### **Readings**

- *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5  
-- Introduction, pp.2-21.

### **Texts for the Course**

Most of the reading assignments listed for each of the authors included in the course are from the following text:

*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature: The Nineteenth Century, 1800-1900*, Book 5, edited by Paul Davis, Gary Harrison, David M Johnson, Patricia Clark Smith, and John F. Crawford. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.

A few supplementary readings are indicated for particular units and are available on the internet.

## Course Papers

Students will write a critical paper (1500-2500 words) for each of the six units in the course on the topics listed below.

### Unit 1

In Wordsworth's Preface to *The Prelude* he describes a literary project: "Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was reasonable that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers." In this description, Wordsworth mentions several characteristics of the Romantic poet: nature, the individual mind, solitude, autobiography, and the role of poetry. Choose one or more poets from this unit and discuss how he fulfills these characteristics of Romanticism.

### Unit 2

The writers in this section use various criteria to identify heroes or heroines. For some, heroes exhibit internal qualities, like extreme intelligence or imagination. For others, heroes exhibit exemplary physical prowess or courage. In both cases, the Romantic hero is a kind of rebel who goes against the status quo. Choose one of the pieces in this section, and explain how the figure (or set of figures) is heroic.

### Unit 3

At the forefront of radical change in the nineteenth century was the influence of modern science on all aspects of society. At the basis of science was rational inquiry and the systematic examination of all aspects of life. Darwin made a huge contribution to the influence of science on writers of the period. Choose one or more pieces in this section and explain how science or scientific inquiry was an influence on the work.

### Unit 4

All of the authors in this section are dealing with some form of discontent. It might be the failure of individuals to keep up with the rapid transformation of society. It might involve the dissolution of antiquated, social structures. The focus might be on the difficulties of coping with everyday life. The core ingredient of realistic writing is not on some idyllic version of the possible; instead, the focus is on how people actually cope with ordinary life. Choose one of the works in this section, and discuss how this work reflects a concern with the complexity of modern life and the search for meaning.

### Unit 5

There were a number of issues involved with the emergence of women writers in the nineteenth century and the change of consciousness regarding the nature of women and their abilities. After centuries of subjugation by men—what we call the Patriarchy—women began to emerge with a separate identity, acknowledging their distinct needs, abilities, desires, and visions. Then there was the confrontation with a male-dominated society, which often sought to keep women in a subservient role. Writers, both male and female, made a huge contribution to the feminist revolution. Choose one of the pieces in this section and explain how it contributes to a new or fresh view of women and their struggle to establish a unique identity.

### Unit 6

Although the idea of emancipation is usually associated with the Abolitionist movement and the emancipation of African-Americans from slavery, the term can also be used with any

individual or group that seeks freedom from various kinds of bondage: women, religious groups, writers, and trapped individuals. The writings in this section provide an opportunity to sample various kinds of slavery and emancipation: from the bondage of African-Americans to the more subtle kinds of mental entrapment, the prisons of consciousness. The assignment in this section is to choose at least two examples of bondage and emancipation from the selections; discuss their differences and how the meanings of "bondage" and "emancipation" change from one situation or condition to another.

## Unit 1: Romantic Poetry: Nature, Society, and the Supernatural

A common characteristic of Romantic writers throughout Europe was their objection to the Enlightenment, the dominant philosophical and cultural movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Men like Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Locke (1632-1704), and Isaac Newton (1642-1727), referred to by Blake as the "triad of evil," promoted the broad application of reason to all aspects of society. One of the essential insights into Blake's role as a self-styled prophet is his antagonism towards the Enlightenment. Blake believed that the use of reason to create an "abstract philosophy" formed a barrier between humans and nature, a hindrance for someone who sought to see "the infinite in all things."

It was Newton whose laws of motion conceived of the world as a "machine," a clockwork universe. Instead of something merely material and mechanical, Romantic writers insisted that nature is an organic whole, rather than an assemblage of atoms. For Wordsworth, nature is not only animated, pastoral and alive, but a source of inspiration. As an expression of the divine, contact with nature prompted moral conduct. In addition, nature provides a compendium of myth, image and symbol. With Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Keats' odes, nature reveals the deep wellspring of spirituality, the moral lessons requisite for becoming human. Nature is a refuge from city life.

Related to nature, was the admiration for childhood; a child communes instinctually with nature, and hence with God. If not corrupted by society and urban blight, childhood is a blessed time of life. In the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*, Blake focuses on the experiences of childhood and the potential for both blessedness and corruption.

In contrast to the elevation of reason during the Enlightenment, Romantic writers believed in the imagination. Imagination is not only the agent of perception, but is the bridge to one's environment, to nature. Imagination is the key to artistic expression. "Perception," Blake believed, is immediate, direct experience; "knowing" is indirect, abstracted activity. It should be noted, however, that Blake is not searching for mystical insights or a particular social philosophy; his poems are modes of seeing, creating new relationships between humans and the world. In that sense, Blake is a *visionary* poet. For several poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, imagination was the basis for morality; through it we identify with others; we experience a sympathy for human suffering.

Although there is certainly a romantic treatment of nature in Heinrich Heine's early lyrics, he later turns his attention to the kinds of social reforms that were initiated by the French Revolution. In the beginning the revolutions in America (1776) and France (1789) held out promise for radical, social change: for liberating the working class from bondage and opening up the prospects for democracy, freedom, and happiness. The revolution in France gave way to bloodshed and the despotism of Napoleon.

### Readings

-*Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.  
-Introduction, "Romanticism," pp. 17-19.

## William Blake

Blake's *Songs of Innocence* depict the innocence of childhood, which is largely ignorant of dangers of experience; the child assumes that the world has a human shape and meaning. The poems in the *Songs of Experience* reveal human cruelties and stupidities; the child's innocence is driven into the subconscious, suppressed and smoldering. "The Chimney Sweeper" in *The Songs of Innocence* sees the wretchedness of his situation, but is comforted, perhaps naively, by his belief in the ultimate rewards of doing his duty. In contrast, the *Songs of Experience* focus on the rationalizations provided by parents and church as they turn a blind eye to the plight of the chimney sweeper trapped in a wretched kind of slavery. Blake describes a cruel, oppressive world in "London"; at that time London was the largest city in the world, the center of civilization in the West, and yet it was a place of oppression. The central theme of "London" is carried in the phrase, "The mind-forg'd manacles": manacles forged *for* the mind and manacles forged *by* the mind. In other words, the "marks of woe" are not solely caused by social institutions, but blame lies also with the individual. One of his most famous poems is "The Tyger" which pictures a creature of energy, mysterious and fearful. The answer to the question in the first and last stanzas is that humans frame both the lamb and the tyger, but that Blake resides above the poem assuring us that all is well and under control.

Blake uses various kinds of literature in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as a response to Emanuel Swedenborg's dualism in *Heaven and Hell*, in which Swedenborg accepts the separation of body and soul and the traditional view that evil must be eliminated and good must be glorified. While traditional religion attempted to destroy one in the name of the other, Blake wanted to use imagination to reconcile the two. Blake reminds the reader: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern." Blake's use of aphorisms and an aphoristic style, are reminiscent of the pithy sayings in the Bible and the fact they provide a catchy immediacy, a flashing insight.

Blake was trained as an engraver and he used this talent to combine his written texts with visual images. Because he produced his engravings by hand, the differences between various plates provide various interpretations of his works. It is important to view samples of his art in order to appreciate Blake's larger vision of his ideas about the role and importance of the imagination. One example is the image of the tiger in the poem "The Tyger." There seems to be a decided difference between the art work and the poem, and it is interesting to consider what might account for this difference.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.

--Introduction and poems, pp. 208-235

### Questions

1. In the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, Blake deliberately created contrasting pairs: lamb and tiger, the chimney sweeper, Holy Thursday, and the two introductions to the collections. How would you characterize the two points of view in these pairs?
2. What cultural institutions is Blake criticizing or satirizing in the *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience*?
3. In the poem, "London," how do the images of repression and imprisonment suggest the meaning of the poem? What do we learn about child labor in London during Blake's time? What does Blake find disturbing about the treatment of poor children?
4. What particular practices of the church does Blake highlight?
5. How does secrecy lead to sickness in "The Sick Rose"?

6. What does Blake mean by phrase, "Without Contraries is no progression" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*?
7. In what ways does *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* mimic and even satirize traditional religious texts? According to Blake, what are the characteristics of the fallen world that humans live in?
8. Why does Blake object to the dualism of body and soul, body and mind?



## William Wordsworth

During a walking tour, two friends, William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge, decided to collaborate on a volume of poetry. The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 is thought to have initiated the British Romantic movement. In the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth provides a preface in which he attempts to explain the truly revolutionary nature of the poems in this collection. A basic principle involved the subject matter of the poems: his idea was to select "incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination. . . ."

A central theme for these early poems is that nature is the place where the best spiritual values of goodness and honor are learned, as contrasted to life in the city or ideas learned in books. This theme is explored in "The Tables Turned," with the famous stanza:

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man;  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Living close to nature, living a good, simple country life meant living in closer contact with the moral lessons of nature. Nature itself was not divine, but certainly was a gateway to spiritual harmony and peace.

Nature for Wordsworth was not simply a poetic setting; it was also a repository of images which become vehicles for spiritual experiences. In one of Wordsworth's most famous and anthologized poems, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," the poet writes about revisiting a place which holds a kind of deep resonance for him. He notes the changes in the landscape and then describes the very process whereby the imagination recreates the spiritual realities of those earlier visits and their influences on his imagination, which now has a more mature appreciation of the setting and its memories, as he contemplates "the still, sad music of humanity." Wordsworth believed that the poem did not add to our intellectual knowledge of the world, but was in itself an experience that brought us closer to life in the world.

In Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode," the poet describes a crisis of imagination, the aging of a poet when he loses inspiration and the resulting bliss: "Whither has fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" In an almost Platonic reverie, Wordsworth relates how we are born, "trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home." But as we age we lose track of those divine origins. The last three stanzas remind us that there are intimations of immortality which are carried through memory and through the existence of sympathy for other humans. Imagination bridges the separateness and creates a relation to others, a kind of primal sympathy that is a compensation for our awareness of mortality.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5  
-Introduction and poems, pp. 236-254

### Questions

1. In his poetry, Wordsworth does not merely describe nature as a pleasant setting for walks or observation, he suggests that nature is a bridge to a special kind of experience. How does Wordsworth treat nature in *Lyrical Ballads* and his "Intimations Ode"?
2. What appears to be the relationship between nature and mind in "Tintern Abbey"?
3. What is the relation between nature and the growth of consciousness?

4. What is Wordsworth's view of the child? What happens to the child as he adapts to society's expectations in the *Ode*?
5. One of the important themes of Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" is how memory becomes a compensation for the aging of the imagination. How does Wordsworth develop the poignant reality of growing older?
6. How do memories compensate for the loss of the youthful energy and sensuality?

## Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Coleridge's reputation is based not only on his poetry, but also on his literary criticism and his analysis of the importance of the imagination. The use of reason, as argued by eighteenth century thinkers of the Enlightenment, allowed the individual to observe reality and use logic to accurately describe and evaluate reality. But the imagination, according to Romantic writers, provided the bridge between humans and reality—it allowed us to participate in our world and discover its truths from the inside of experience. And what was the characteristic of this world? Was it Newton's mechanical, mathematical nature operating according to fixed laws? No, according to Coleridge and other Romantics, nature was organic and alive, forever changing and inspiring. Nature is imbued with a spiritual dimension that is accessible only through imagination. This almost mystical dimension can only be portrayed with deep imagery and symbol. Coleridge's most successful poems are those which evoke the supernatural, that which lies behind ordinary, rational, reality: "Kubla Khan," and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

An important tool for appreciating these two poems by Coleridge is a dictionary of symbols. There are several dictionaries available, as well as the internet. In other words, part of the process of reading these poems and appreciating their meanings is the willingness to take detours into resource materials, to search for the underlying meanings of symbols and mythic references.

Although "Kubla Khan" is a visionary poem using rather exotic non-Western imagery, it can also be read as an exploration of the sources of art and the power of creativity. The poem can be read as an exploration of creativity in the unconscious, with a link to sexuality. A full reading of the poem involves paying attention to sounds, the alliteration at ends of lines, and the careful, end rhymes throughout the poem. Reading the poem out loud might reveal the expert uses of sound in the poem.

There are three important layers of meaning in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": the story background involving the old mariner who stops a wedding guest to tell him about his voyage. The spiritual layer involves actual spirits who influence the journey of the ship and the transformation of the mariner. A third layer involves morality: the mariner commits a crime against nature, which has fatal consequences and necessitates penance and a change of consciousness by the mariner. The combination of these elements in a ballad form resulted in one of the masterpieces in English literature.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5

-Introduction and poems, pp. 255-280

### Questions

1. In a preface to "Kubla Khan," Coleridge explains how he took opium for his health and then fell asleep; he wrote down the poem when he awoke. The suggestion is that the poem represents a kind of personal vision. What images or symbols suggest this "visionary" dimension to the poem?
2. It is commonplace today for movies to mix fantasy with ordinary reality, with the suggestion that fantasy is akin to dreams or extreme projections of the imagination. What images or symbols in "Kubla Khan" are dream-like or supernatural? Symbols are typically multi-layered; investigate the symbols in the poem that seem to carry several layers of meaning.
3. How is music appropriate to the creation of the pleasure dome?
4. The images suggest that there is an underground or unconscious source of energy, akin to sexual energy; what role does this energy play in the poem? Why does the poem depict artists as dangerous? How do some artists threaten our ordinary ways of handling reality?

5. Central to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is the Christian paradigm: sin--guilt--penance--redemption. How is this pattern used in the poem? Why does the mariner choose the wedding-guest for his story? Why is it necessary for the mariner to tell his story to anyone?
6. How does the killing of the albatross initiate this pattern? Why is the killing of this particular bird a sin?
7. Are there elements in the poem that might be considered pagan or from a non-Christian, religious tradition? When is there a change in the mariner's attitudes towards nature? What might account for this change?
8. What is the effect of the mariner's story on the wedding-guest? Do you think his life was changed by elements in the story?

## John Keats

Of all the British romantic poets, John Keats seems the most accessible. His poems are not complicated or particularly profound in subject matter. His themes certainly link him to the Romantic period: the importance of the imagination, the transience of beauty and youth, a deep sadness about the suffering and corruptions of ordinary life, and the poet as a person almost too sensitive to survive in an imperfect world. These are the themes of a young poet, who would die almost before he established himself as a poet.

In "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," Keats announces that he is willing to learn from Classical poets such as Homer, who can open up new worlds to explore. The woman in "La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad," a *femme fatale*, becomes part of a fantasy leading to betrayal; it's a romance based in one's imagination. Occasionally Keats' poems are a gallery of luxurious moments, reminiscent of the infatuations of a teenager, with whom every moment is intense, where every experience is ecstatic, but potentially short-lived.

Keats had faith in the powers of the imagination to transform the imperfections of everyday reality into the sublime and ideal. The emotion in "Ode to a Nightingale," moves from a desire to transcend the limitations of ordinary consciousness to a flirtation with intoxication and death in stanza 6; the narrator would rather remain permanently in ecstasy than return to the pain of everyday life. The narrator in stanza 2 of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," claims that the music conceived in one's imagination is superior to music actually performed: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter".

Keats' poems are rightly praised for the sensuousness of their imagery and the enticing music of their phrases. The exceeding ripeness of Autumn is amply portrayed in Keats' "Ode to Autumn": the first stanza is a display of the harvest, which is personified in stanza two. The third stanza reveals the music that surrounds the harvest and hints of the approach of winter and death.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5  
-Introduction and poems, pp. 281-294

### Questions

1. Does the knight in "La Belle Dame" somehow deserve the grief that results from his experience with the woman? Does the knight's dream at the end of the poem suggest that many-- if not all--immature men experience a fantasy romance that inevitably ends in sorrow?
2. How can the uses of alcohol intensify the emotional experiences created by the imagination in the early stanzas of "Ode to a Nightingale"? What is the role of death in "Ode to a Nightingale"?
3. The last two lines of "Ode on a Grecian Urn" are probably two of the most famous and debated lines in English poetry. Considering the role of imagination in the perception of reality, how can "beauty" be a kind of "truth"? Is there a sense in which the art of the Grecian urn is superior to the transient phenomena of ordinary life?
4. Study the sounds in the first stanza of "Ode to Autumn." How does the use of vowels contribute to the picture of autumn?
5. What kind of a person is autumn in stanza 2? How would you characterize the music in stanza 3? Is it happy or sad? Joyful or mournful?

## Heinrich Heine

Early in Heine's career he was a follower of Romanticism in his writing; the lonely spruce, for example, in "A Spruce is Standing Lonely," is like the young poet dreaming about a palm in an eastern locale. Heine later became more consciously political and an outspoken promoter of liberty and freedom. His *Book of Songs* (*Buch der Lieder*, 1827) established Heine as a skilled, lyric poet. After extensive travels in England, Holland, and Italy, he settled in France in 1831, believing the French to be "the chosen people of this new religion," the revolutionary religion of freedom for the common people.

Heine, who was Jewish, admired the social reforms instituted by Napoleon, allowing, for example, more personal, civil rights for Jews. His poem, "The Granadiers," portrays some of the idealism surrounding Napoleon's campaigns. Heine was critical of Napoleon, however, when he replaced the old monarchy in France with a new one.

His poems are romantic, even sentimental, but usually with an ironic twist; often a line or two turns the meaning upside down. This irony reflects the complexity of modern life.

"The Lorelei," perhaps Heine's most famous poem, was turned into a popular song in Germany. It draws upon the tradition of the siren, which shows up in the mythologies of several countries. By tradition, the siren was part bird and part woman; her sensuous singing seduced sailors to their deaths on rocky coasts.

"The Silesian Weavers" is clearly a political poem, whose message inspired revolts in Germany and other parts of Europe in 1848. "The Slave Ship" is uniquely sympathetic to black slaves being transported to South America.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5

-Introduction and poems, pp. 316-333

### Questions

1. What is symbolized by the palm tree in "A Spruce is Standing Lonely?"
2. The first stanza of "The Lorelei" indicates that the speaker in the poem is reporting his own experience with the Lorelei; why is he unhappy? What is the attraction of the Lorelei?
3. Compare "The Lorelei" with Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci." How is the attraction of the fatal woman similar and different?
4. The first stanza of the "Silesian Weavers" speaks about a "threefold doom." Why does Heine include "God" as a doomed entity in stanza 2? What are the mythological connections to weavers and weaving? Do these mythological echoes contribute to the meaning of the poem?
5. How does Heine create sympathy for the slaves in "The Slave Ship?" How do the portraits of the ship's captain and doctor reveal their inhumanity? What makes the concluding dance on the slave ship so strange and sad?
6. The focus in "The Asra" is on the impossible love between the bondsman (slave) and the Sultan's daughter; is Heine critical of a society that tolerates such social inequity?
7. How do the details in "Morphine" suggest that Heine himself might have been dealing with debilitating pain?

## Unit 2: The Romantic Hero

The nineteenth century was the age of social and ideological revolution and change, but it was also the age of the hero who carries some kind of banner which will indicate pathways to survival amidst the cultural upheavals. There were particular events and trends that elevated the importance of figures who faced the turbulence: the American and French revolutions; the rise of the middle class and the decline of the aristocracy in Europe; the increase of rationalism and secularism which threatened traditional values and the church. Some of the heroes were like Goethe's Faust who pushed against the limits of knowledge and experience. Other heroes like Elis in Hoffmann's "The Mines of Falun" explore what might be called the underbelly of human experience, the dark regions of the unconscious. Still other heroes climbed the solitary register of warfare and politics—figures like Napoleon and Peter the Great of Russia.

The section, *In the World: Heroes and Heroines*, provides a selection of brief readings that reflect the importance of hero worship in the literature and thought of the nineteenth century. The sources for heroes were varied: myth and legend, politics and the military, literature and society.

Gerard de Nerval highlights the importance of Faust, the figure drawn from legend who trades his soul for ultimate knowledge. In this quest, Faust represents attention to the matters of this world rather than to the sacred prescriptions of the church and Christianity. Knowledge is opening up the countries of the world to understanding and conquest. Lord Byron recognizes the ascendancy of Napoleon in European politics, who exemplifies a hero rising from conflict. Byron also sees the shadow side of Napoleon, a hero who undermines his own grandeur through excessive pride.

John Greenleaf Whittier celebrates a different kind of hero, a man of color and a one-time slave, who becomes a hero of the Haitian revolution fighting for dignity and freedom. Harriet Beecher Stowe describes a spiritual hero, who exemplifies righteousness and forgiveness, refusing to reveal the whereabouts of two fugitive slaves to his master, thus risking torture and death. George Eliot found the spiritual life of St. Theresa in the sixteenth-century so very admirable. She writes: "Theresa's passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life."

Writers like Nietzsche and Inazo Nitobé were not interested in particular men—most heroes were men—but in admiral qualities, which would, if embodied in particular individuals, lead contemporary society in new and exciting directions. Nietzsche was critical of any set of values like Christianity that distracted attention away from one's contemporary situation to rewards or punishments in the future. He wanted his fellow human beings to "live dangerously," to prepare the way for a new kind of human, the "overman". The German *übermensch* is sometimes translated as the "superman," and was the inspiration later for the Aryan hero of the Nazis. Honor was at the center of the Bushido philosophy—the traditional ethical system of the samurai in which Nitobé found a response to Western materialism and decadence.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5  
-*In the World: Heroes and Heroines*, pp. 179-207

### Questions

1. What are the various criteria that the writers in this section use to identify heroes or heroines?
2. What roles did heroes play in the nineteenth century? What roles do they play today?
3. Nietzsche thought that Christianity with its concern with love and forgiveness promoted weakness and passivity. Do you agree with Nietzsche that the kind of hero that changes society needs to be a strong rebel, independent and fearless?

4. Do any of these heroes or heroines depend upon their religion for strength and principles?



## Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Goethe's life and work spanned three major periods of European thought. From the Enlightenment period in the eighteenth century, which stressed objectivity and reason, Goethe came to symbolize the Romantic era with its values of feeling, subjectivity and imagination. With the aftermath of the French Revolution, Goethe's work entered a third period; it became more classical with his interest in science and philosophy. It is said that Goethe was a true Renaissance man, who not only was an exemplary poet, playwright and critic, but also a painter, scientist, bureaucrat, educator and journalist.

Goethe worked on *Faust*, considered his masterpiece, for most of his life. The figure of Faust is based upon a legendary figure from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one Doctor Johann or Georg Faust, who was said to have sold his soul to devil in exchange for knowledge. The search for knowledge as a means of transcending ordinary, human limitations is an idea that is much older, consistent with the evolution of human consciousness. The Greek story of Prometheus who stole the secret of fire from the gods and gave it to humans indicates that there might be consequences for radical advances in human culture.

The structure of *Faust* reflects the lengthy process involved with Goethe's own evolution as a thinker and poet; events are introduced which are explored from various angles in lengthy discussions.

The play opens with the *Prologue in Heaven* where God and Mephistopheles debate about the soul of man. Mephistopheles is convinced that he can lead man to serve the Devil. God assures Mephistopheles that man although likely to yield to temptation cannot be forever misled: "A good man harried in his dark distraction / Can still perceive the ways of righteousness." God therefore challenges Mephistopheles to test man and discover his true nature.

In *The First Part of the Tragedy*, we find a Faust, who, despite complete knowledge, is disappointed with life. The wager between Faust and Mephistopheles rests on the condition that Mephistopheles cannot provide knowledge or experience that will excite Faust; Faust says that he will lose the bet if he should say to the moment, "Linger on! You are so fair!" (l. 1700) In other words, Faust is wagering that Mephistopheles cannot provide anything that will satisfy him and erase his disappointment with life. If Mephistopheles does provide a moment of fulfillment, he will win the wager and capture Faust's soul.

The figure of Margaret (Gretchen) is multi-layered: she represents a conflict between what seems to be innocent romance complicated by social mores and the judgment of society about such affairs. She is involved with several deaths—her mother's, her baby's, and her brother's—yet she ends by saving Faust.

The conclusion of *Faust* In Part II involves the redemptive image of human, creative work—an ending appropriate to the Industrial Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The reclamation of land from the sea reminds one of the Netherlands, which gradually built a system of dikes to protect its arable lands. Unfortunately, the old couple, Baucis and Philemon, stand in the way of the excavation and are sacrificed to the ongoing march of progress.

At the end of Part II, Faust does find a moment that might satisfy the original condition for the wager, a moment to "Linger on.!" (l. 11581), but Mephistopheles cannot take credit for it because he did not arrange for it.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5

–Introduction, pp. 23-29

–From *Faust*

----*Prologue in Heaven*, pp. 30-33

----*The First Part of the Tragedy*, pp. 33-126, 138-146

----From *The Second Part of the Tragedy*, pp. 146-178

### Questions

1. It is not difficult to conceive of the Faustian desire for knowledge and power in a modern setting. Can you think of twentieth-century examples of scientists or political leaders who seem to have metaphorically sold their souls to the devil in order to procure demonic weapons of destruction?
2. Do you know of political leaders who—again metaphorically—crossed boundaries into inhumane treatments of the enemy, and, therefore metaphorically, sold their souls for personal power?
3. In Faust's wager (ll. 1692ff.), what does Faust seek to gain? What are the consequences if Faust loses his wager?
4. Describe how Margaret becomes a heroine; what leads to the fact that she is saved? How do her actions save Faust? What is her relation to her brother Valentine? What are the implications of Valentine's death?
5. Part II deals with Faust's project and the redemptive quality of work; how does work provide meaning for Faust? Do you find this conclusion about work believable?
6. In the conclusion of the play, there is the indication that Faust' immortal soul is being transported to heaven; should this action be understood as a literal conclusion to the play?

## **E.T.A. Hoffmann**

Several themes place Hoffmann within the Romantic tradition: the tension between childhood and adulthood, between idealism and realism, and between love and fame. Hoffmann depicts a world in which the innocence of childhood inevitably confronts the temptations of experience, and loses. Hoffmann then adds the powerful effects of fate, as if the downward spiral of the hero is inevitable. Part of the excitement for the reader is realizing that the hero's decisions, however well intended, will probably involve danger, and possibly death.

"The Mines of Falun" is based on a tale about a miner found decades after his death in a state of preservation. We are then introduced to story of Elis where we learn about the events that led Elis into the depths of the mine and to a certain disaster. Early in the story we are introduced to the miner who tempts Elis with his advice and sets up the events that follow. Elis' yearning for memories of his mother leads to his love for Ulla above ground, and to the eventual infatuation with a darker feminine figure, the Metal Queen. Like a number of other Romantic writers, Hoffmann creates the woman as a fearful figure, often leading the hero astray.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5  
-Introduction and "The Mines of Falun," pp. 294-315

### Questions

1. Is the miner a voice of wisdom? Are there any indications he might be leading Elis astray?
2. How does Elis' dream fit into the plot of the story? Is the dream an anticipation of reality and the future?
3. Why is Elis the only miner who discovers the deeper, rich veins in the mine?
4. How does Hoffmann use the Metal Queen to suggest that there really is a supernatural dimension to life, that there are figures and events that transcend the ability of reason to explain them? How does Hoffmann make the supernatural believable?
5. Is the discovery of Elis' petrified body at the end of story a natural or a supernatural event?
6. How do you understand Ulla's statement in her last speech that seeing Elis' body was "a blessed meeting"?

## Alexander Pushkin

This beautifully written narrative poem is layered with meaning. At the center of the poem is an apparent opposition between Tsar Peter the Great, the figurehead of Russian aristocracy, and Yevgeni, the symbol of the struggling, working class. The great flood of St. Petersburg in 1824 raises questions about the wisdom of Peter the Great's plans for the location of the city; it was his vision to bring Russia from its backward culture into the modern, European world of commerce and trade.

The poem begins with a tribute to Peter the Great who fashions a magnificent city out of the swamps near the Baltic coast. But Pushkin switches his attention to Yevgeni, who suffers from the devastation of the flood and apparently loses his reason for living—the dream of a marriage and family. While the rest of the state machinery rolls on after the flood, Yevgeni, suffering from a huge shock to his being, becomes a wandering misfit.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5

–Introduction and “The Bronze Horseman,” pp. 334-348

### Questions

1. Do Pushkin's sympathies lie with the aristocracy and Peter the Great or with Yevgeni, the symbol of the ever-suffering working class? What details in the poem might suggest how Pushkin feels about Yevgeni's suffering?
2. What details about the flood serve to create the powerful image of nature in the poem? What does the poem suggest about the relationship between humans and nature?
3. How does the strength and beauty of the statue symbolize the power of the state? Why does the Bronze Horseman chase Yevgeni?
4. Does Yevgeni lose his mind? Is he a hero or an antihero?
5. Who triumphs in the end of the poem, Peter the Great or Yevgeni? What is the significance of the island in the final stanza?

## Mary Shelley

Dr. Victor Frankenstein, a Faustian hero in Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, is a man of science, who achieves the ultimate leap in biology by creating a living creature, and thereby violating natural laws and the prerogatives of God. The core of the novel examines the nature of this creation and whether Victor Frankenstein has satisfied his moral obligations to the creature, who longs for human communion.

A turning point in the novel takes place when Victor chooses not to provide a companion for his creature. In anger, the creature takes revenge with a series of murders. When Victor decides that he must kill what he now calls the "monster" or "fiend," there is a kind of punishment or penance that Victor must undergo to pay for his neglect. The excerpt from the *Bedford Anthology* (p. 393ff.) is from chapter 10, about halfway through the novel. The reader begins to understand the complexity of the situation: the creature has feelings, is intelligent, and has legitimate complaints against his creator.

In the final confrontation between Victor and the creature on a ship in the Arctic wastes, in the last chapter of the book, Victor dies, but the creature has the final speeches. He explains how he was twisted by fate: "My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy; and when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change. . ." The reader then becomes more sympathetic to the creature and critical of the outcome of the scientific experiment.

With the conclusion to her novel, Mary Shelley captured the modern existential, secular dilemma: with the creator dead, humans are lonely and bereft of ultimate meaning. Why is it not clear why humans were created and how they might find a purpose for existence? The complex issues underlying her novel help to explain its continued popularity with contemporary audiences.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.

-From *Frankenstein*, pp. 393-396

-The complete text of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is available online:

[www.literature.org/authors/shelley-mary/frankenstein](http://www.literature.org/authors/shelley-mary/frankenstein)

### Questions

1. Where does Victor Frankenstein go wrong? What were the series of mistakes that led to such destruction? Is Victor the reluctant romantic hero who sticks his neck out and then withdraws?
2. Shelley uses an interesting narrative technique by introducing Walton, to whom Frankenstein tells his story. What advantages does this technique provide the novelist?
3. How does Mary Shelley create mixed feelings for the creature? Sympathy as well as contempt?
4. Does the novel say anything about the extreme hubris of science that is willing to advance any realm of knowledge without consideration of moral consequences? What current scientific endeavors might be seen as similar to Frankenstein's creation? Is the present genetic modification of food a potential example of this hubris?

### Unit 3: Science, Realism, and Religion

The age of science and technology began earlier than the nineteenth century. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the father of experimental science, based his conclusions about the nature of reality on observed facts; he drove an initial wedge between scientific truth and religious truth. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) ushered in the Age of Enlightenment; his laws of physics laid the foundation for the laws of mechanics, which became the theoretical foundation for the Industrial Revolution. This dramatic reorganization transformed Europe from an agricultural society to an urban, factory, business economy. The world itself was thought to be a machine.

The question became: was God really necessary for explaining the mechanisms of the universe? Just like the early Greeks, who replaced the anthropomorphic Zeus with concepts like "change" or "justice," the stage was set for replacing Father-God in the sky with physics. This possibility led to Deism, the belief that God was a celestial clockmaker, who initially wound up the clock and set it ticking--the spiritual belief of several of the Founding Fathers of the United States.

The Enlightenment led to the broad application of reason to all aspects of society. Men like Voltaire and Rousseau in France, and Thomas Paine in America publicly espoused their confidence in human reason to solve life's problems, and arrive at "truth" for nature and society. It was inevitable that reason would also be applied to government, the ruling classes, God, religion, and the Bible. It was Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) that provided a scientific explanation for the biological world and thereby created an intellectual revolution that challenged basic, Christian ideas about the origins of life that reverberates down to the present day.

Darwin was primarily concerned with evolution in nature, but it was a short step to apply evolution to politics and society. This application spawned "social Darwinism," which was quickly linked to "rugged individualism," *laissez faire* economics, and capitalism. Even as reality was analyzed into smaller and smaller bits, and eventually into an atomic model of reality, so industrial capitalism promoted the concept of the individual, who, like the atom, became the basic particle of society.

The importance of science influenced the literature of the period and what has become known as "realism," the concern with the details and events of everyday life. "Realism" is to be differentiated from "naturalism," which promoted the idea the natural forces determined and shaped the actions of individuals: human beings are simply products of their chemistry and environments.

By the nineteenth century, religion was on the defensive from an array of powerful forces. Darwin, physics, Biblical scholarship, a growing middle class, and an emerging feminist movement--all challenged the theistic, male-centered view of the world which had dominated Western culture for several thousand years.

## Charles Darwin

A number of scientists around the year 1800 were contributing to evolutionary theory. Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), Charles' grandfather, believed that the earth was "millions of ages" old. The French scientist, Jean Lamarck (1744-1829), speculated that man might have derived from the orangutan. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) sparked the geological revolution by insisting that the present condition of earth could only have arisen by gradual changes over millions and millions of years.

Although Charles Darwin inherited the idea that various species in nature evolve over long periods of time, his *Origin of Species* (1859) popularized the idea of evolution and provided an explanation for how accidental variations within a particular species favored survival and are then passed on to the next generation. Darwin called this survival mechanism "natural selection," an idea which, in effect, was thought to replace purpose (that is, God's plan) in the natural world.

Darwin applies his evolutionary ideas to human beings in *The Descent of Man* (1871). Since human beings are a part of nature, we are also subject to natural laws—a totally different picture from the one that Genesis described for God's special creatures. With evolutionary theory, a totally different picture of time and the age of the earth was emerging. Figures like "thousands" and "millions" of years were used to describe the evolutionary patterns of life on earth. Humans began to trace their ancestry to primates, a totally shocking concept for many intellectuals in the nineteenth century—and even to some people in our own time.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5
- From *The Origin of Species*, pp. 349-371
- From *The Descent of Man*, pp. 372-379

### Questions

1. Read the famous paragraph starting at the bottom of page 355 on "the great tree" of life. How does this metaphor help to clarify what Darwin wants to explain about evolution?
2. The idea of "natural selection" is the key that unlocks the evolution of particular species; are you able to explain "natural selection" in your own words?
3. Darwin maintains on page 365 that "I see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of any one." Do you think he is sincere in this statement?
4. Why does the theory of evolution continue to upset the religious views of many people today? Can someone believe in God's creativity and evolutionary theory at the same time?

## In the World: Science and Creation

For many scholars, scientific explanations for nature and the universe replaced Christianity and religion in general. Scientists and philosophers questioned whether there was a need for religion at all. Like the idea of the universe as a well-designed machine, the idea of the survival of the fittest was easily applied to the struggle for existence and used as a rationalization for greed and selfishness. This was absolutely contrary to the teachings of the Bible and most world religions, which emphasized Divine creation, the Golden Rule, and compassion for our fellow human beings. Critics of Darwin and social Darwinism from the 19th century to the present have pointed out that nature also depends on *cooperation*—communal or group support—but this idea was drowned out by the idea of struggle and competition as models for human behaviour and the relations between nations..

Samuel Wilberforce's review of the *Origin of Species* is typical of the defensive postures that would try to defend religion against evolutionary theory. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* stretched the creative evolution of the earth far beyond the accepted theory of the time promulgated by James Usher, an Anglican bishop, who, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, declared the creation of the world took place in 4004 B.C.E.—a date indicated by the Hebrew Scriptures. Some religious people today still hold to his date. Tennyson's famous poem, *In Memoriam* explores some of the implications of evolutionary theory and the possibility that since God does not attend to each individual creature it is possible that the deaths of individuals have no purpose or meaning: "Are God and Nature then at strife, / That Nature lends such evil dreams? / So careful of the type she seems, / So careless of the single life." Edgar Allan Poe's sonnet describes the possible, demythologizing effects of science on the poet's imagination. In the Preface to *Thérèse Raquin*, Emile Zola clearly spells out the basic principles of the naturalists, writers who attempt to utilize the recent findings of science: "I have chosen people completely dominated by their nerves and blood, without free will, drawn into each action of their lives by the inexorable laws of their physical nature."

Thomas Jefferson, in the early 1800s, began a trend among critics of the Bible: he created what is called *The Jefferson Bible*, in which he cut out the virgin birth and all the miracles (including the Resurrection) and pasted together what was left, emphasizing the ethical teachings in the New Testament. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, along with several other women, produced *The Woman's Bible* in two parts (published in 1895 and 1898), which challenged the orthodox idea, largely found in the Old Testament and the writings of St. Paul, that women should be subservient to men.

In a remarkable example for its time of comparative religion, Hirata Atsutane of Japan maintains that the creator god of the Shinto religion has validity because a similar figure is found in other religious traditions. In a similar time in Europe, scholars compared the basic motifs of Christianity with other world religions and primitive myth, and discovered many similarities. After all, Christianity arose in the earlier age of myth and magic—a time when God spoke out loud to humans, a time when men parted oceans, walked on water, and rose from the dead.

Syed Ahmed Khan withdraws Islam and the Qur'an from the science versus religion debate by asserting that the Qur'an does not deal with the kind of knowledge about nature that might be subject to scientific debate. Hu Shi, a Chinese scholar, promotes the new ideas about time and space; because of them, ". . .there is no need for the concept of a supernatural Ruler or Creator."

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5

-*In the World: Science and Creation*, pp. 380-411.

### Questions

1. Do you think that Wilberforce understands Darwin's arguments? Why or why not?



2. Can you think of examples of free will that might challenge Zola's naturalism?
3. Try to imagine how Stanton's *The Women's Bible* affected various Christians, especially men; what does this say about the courage that was needed to advocate for women's abilities and rights?
4. What are the basic ingredients of Hirata Atsutane's argument in *The Creator God*? Would they apply to Western religions as well? How convincing is he?
5. All of the excerpts in this section are indications of the great revolution in thought and society that was a consequence of science, especially evolutionary science; which part of this revolution do you feel had the most consequences for the twentieth century and the present age?

## Emilia Pardo Bazán

"The Oldest Story" is a retelling of the oldest story in the Bible, the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall. Pardo Bazán certainly recognized that the version in the Bible accounted for centuries of prejudice against women, who were blamed for the first sin and the expulsion from Paradise. In the original version it was Eve who first ate from the apple and then persuaded Adam to eat. We therefore have woman as the temptress who leads man astray; this model then served as a rationalization for oppressing women and minimizing their roles in the religious structures of Christianity.

Early in Pardo Bazán's version, she mentions that her version will not be Darwinian. Nevertheless, it was the rise of modern science in the nineteenth century that set a context for criticizing the Bible and entertaining versions of creation different from the stories in Genesis. Pardo Bazán uses humor to make her retelling more palatable; Adam found Paradise to be boring. But the real twist came with the creation of Eve from "the very best bits" of Adam—not from his rib. The account of the Fall is turned upside down: Eve doesn't tempt Adam with the apple. Adam forces Eve to let him eat the apple, which accounts for his change of attitude towards Eve. Furthermore, Eve then begins to believe in her guilt.

### Readings

- *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- Introduction, pp. 691-95,
- "The Oldest Story," pp. 699-703

### Questions

1. Pardo Bazán creates a clever narrator for her story. She calls him a March Hare; what is a March Hare and how does his character make the story more acceptable?
2. How does the inclusion of Father Scio shape the story of Adam and Eve?
3. How does the mention of Darwin give the story more credibility?
4. How is Adam pictured? Why does he find Paradise to be boring? Do you think you would find the Garden of Eden boring? Does the existence of sin make life more interesting for human beings?
5. Even today this "feminist" version of the Adam and Eve story might cause upset for some Christians; why might this be true? Compare this version of Adam and Eve with the excerpt from *The Women's Bible* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (pp. 400-405); why were early feminists concerned with revising the Bible?

## Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis

Although Machado de Assis had very little formal education, he nevertheless taught himself about history and culture, and became over time Brazil's greatest writer. He was very interested in the influence of European culture on the emerging consciousness of Brazil's middle class. He began his writing career with romantic love stories, but his experiences as a government bureaucrat and his on-going physical issues seemed to influence a major change in his writing style and his choice of subject matter. He entered what has been called a "realistic" phase in which he focused on the serious, social problems of contemporary life.

The date of the publication of "Adam and Eve," 1885, suggests a period when the various stories in the Old Testament were being held up to scholarly criticism. Intellectuals questioned whether the writings in the Old Testament, especially Genesis and Exodus, should be understood literally, or whether the stories might be best understood metaphorically or symbolically. There was also a growing understanding of how Bible stories influenced contemporary morality and the attitudes of men and women towards each other. Machado de Assis provides a rather distant setting for his retelling of the Adam and Eve story. The date of the story allows for some distancing of the subject matter. The choice of a judge for narrating the story provides some authority for a new version of the Fall. The attention of the audience is seized when the judge says, "This is how it really happened." It is a bit strange to make the serpent a female, but she provides an enticing catalogue of famous heroines in history, culminating with Mary of Nazareth. Then the judge rather undercuts the impact of his story by having Adam and Eve enter Heaven, rather than succumbing to the serpent's temptation and the first sin. The meaning lies in the fact that the judge could spin such a strange story and yet hold the attention of his thoughtful listeners until the very end.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.  
-Introduction and "Adam and Eve," pp. 918-926

### Questions

1. Why does Machado de Assis set his story in the 1700s?
2. How does the judge hold the attention of his listeners? Why does his audience listen as though he is telling them something serious? Does it contribute to the seriousness of the situation by having Father Bento present?
3. Compare Machado de Assis's retelling of the Adam and Eve story to the version by the Spanish writer, Pardo Bazán (p. 699ff.) How do you account for the popularity of the Adam and Eve story and the desire to revise it?
4. The theory that there were two creators at the beginning, God and Satan (or the Evil One), has some advantages when it is necessary to explain the existence of evil in the world. Do you believe that the existence of evil necessitates the existence of an evil source like the Devil?

## Unit 4: Realism

Industrialization and the growth of cities in the first half of the nineteenth century produced a growing sense of disillusionment and despair among artists and writers. The healing power of nature celebrated by the Romantics was no longer seen as sufficient to counter the degradation of the common people and the vacuousness of the urban bourgeoisie. The realistic writers of the second half of the century abandoned the poetic idealism of their romantic predecessors and turned to a more prosaic endeavor, attempting to describe accurately and objectively the devalued urban world in which they found themselves. In its most extreme form, Realism became "Naturalism," the attempt by writers to describe life in biological and scientific terms, reducing humans to animals driven by physical desires and survival instincts. In the excerpt from the Preface to *Thérèse Raquin*, Émile Zola makes the case for naturalism.

The section on "Society and Its Discontents" catalogues several sources of discontent identified by the nineteenth century writers. Wordsworth laments the loss of connections with Nature brought on by materialism. Dickens satirizes the shallow inanity of the bourgeoisie and the oppression of the urban poor. Kierkegaard diagnoses the spiritual despair, the "sickness unto death," at the heart of his times. Marx and Engels analyze history economically as a series of class conflicts resulting in the inevitable antagonism between the bourgeoisie, the owners of the means of production, and the proletariat, the wage slaves manning the new factories of the industrial revolution. Many European writers, Ibsen and Chekhov for example, saw the roots of discontent in the decline of the aristocracy and the traditional values associated with aristocratic culture. Inazo Nitobé discovers a similar dislocation in Japan where the samurai have been unable to adapt to the commercial culture that has replaced the feudalism of the past.

The realistic literature produced during the last six decades of the century constitutes the great age of the classic novel. Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot in Britain; Balzac, Stendhal, and Flaubert in France; Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in Russia were the leading figures in this classic age of prose fiction. Their works created the 'mythologies' of Dickens' London, Balzac's Paris, and Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg, as they catalogued the struggles of the common city dwellers. The last units in this course do not include any of the great novels of the period—works like Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861), Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869), or Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851). Shorter works by these great novelists and other realists form the basis for the three final units in this course. Flaubert's *A Simple Heart* (1877) explains in his dispassionate, objective style the life of a common servant woman, ironically placing it in the context of a traditional saint's life. Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864) gives voice to an alienated urban dweller and his disillusionment with his situation. Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886) depicts the illness and death of an average man, a mid-level bureaucrat who searches for the meaning of his life as he faces death. Chekhov's drama, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), presents a household in dissolution as an outmoded way of life is displaced by the growing power of the commercial bourgeoisie.

In the two final units in the course, realistic writers address particular thematic issues. Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen joins three women realists, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Kate Chopin, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, to analyze the position of women in society. In the final unit several American realists--Harriet Jacobs, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Herman Melville--consider the distinctively American dimensions of personal and social emancipation in a century that might be described globally as the century of emancipation.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.

--Introduction, "Realism," pp. 19-21

--Émile Zola. From "Preface to *Thérèse Raquin*," pp. 398-99.

--"In the World: Society and Its Discontents," pp. 663-690.

### Questions

1. What does Zola mean when he describes his characters as “human animals, nothing more”? What was disturbing to his critics in this view? Do you think Darwin, Dickens, and Marx would accept this view of human beings? Why or why not? Zola described his approach as “scientific.” What does he mean by this?
2. What characteristics of the bourgeoisie does Dickens focus on in his satirical portrait of Podsnap?
3. How do Marx and Engels see the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class? Who did the bourgeoisie challenge to achieve dominance? Who will challenge them?
4. How would Dickens, Marx, and Nitobé define “bourgeois”? In what ways would their definitions differ?
5. Are there evolutionary assumptions operating in the passages from Marx and Zola? How would you characterize these assumptions? Could any of them be described as “Darwinian”?
6. Nitobé opposes traditional “Bushido ethics to business methods.” Characterize each. How is this conflict similar to that over bourgeois values in Western culture?

## Gustave Flaubert

Gustave Flaubert is celebrated not only as a realistic novelist whose masterpiece *Madame Bovary* (1856) is a model of realistic narrative, but he is also regarded, along with American Henry James, as one of the two most important theorists of the canons of realism. Flaubert employed an absolutely objective style, based on precisely detailed description that nowhere revealed the author's attitude or judgment. He sought stylistic precision and a language that chose the "one right word" to describe its subject. Such objectivity allowed the writer to sympathetically inhabit the mind of his characters while withholding judgment of them. He could assert, "I am Madame Bovary," even though he did not share her shallow materialistic values.

In *A Simple Heart* Flaubert shows a similar ability to understand Félicité and her world view while not himself sharing her limitations. His objective presentation enables the reader to evaluate Madame Aubain, to see both the integrity and the limitations of Félicité's "simplicity," and to appreciate the rich ambiguity in the role of the parrot in the story.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- A Simple Heart*, pp. 435-467.

### Questions

1. In what ways is Félicité simple? Trace the various uses of the word *simple* in the story. What variety of meanings does it take on?
2. How is Félicité different from Madame Aubain? How do the reactions of the two women to the same events help to develop Flaubert's portrait of Félicité? How does the relationship of the two women change in the course of the story?
3. Characterize Félicité's religion as it is described at the beginning of Part 3. How do the details in the description of Félicité's room at the end of the story recall details in the description of the church? What do these echoes contribute to the story? What is the significance of the parrot? How does it become linked to the Holy Ghost? Do you think Flaubert is being ironic and suggesting that Félicité is ridiculous by believing in a stuffed parrot as the Holy Ghost?
4. Is Félicité courageous in the confrontation with the bull? Is Madame Aubain? Does Madame Aubain view Félicité's fronting of the bull as heroic? Does Félicité? Does Flaubert?
5. Discuss the significance of the details that Flaubert gives when Victor leaves from Honfleur. What does the laundry episode contribute to the account of Félicité's reaction to Victor's death?
6. Why is Félicité whipped by the coach driver? How does this scene affect your attitude toward her?
7. Both Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* and Flaubert's *A Simple Heart* are about common people, but Pushkin's is a Romantic story, Flaubert's a realistic one. Pushkin places Yevgeni in extraordinary circumstances. Flaubert describes the everyday life of Félicité. How do these two approaches affect the reader's attitude toward the protagonists? Are the authors' opinions of their characters apparent?

## Fyodor Dostoevsky

One of the major realistic novelists of the century, Fyodor Dostoevsky turned inward the realistic accounts of the lives of common people. He sought to explain the spiritual despair of those caught in the materialistic times in which he lived with painstaking descriptions of the inner lives of his subjects. *Notes from Underground* is a fictional memoir of a man who cut himself off from society and retreated "underground." His bitter confessions reveal his anger and his regret for his solipsism. The pathos of his missed opportunities comes with the reader's realization that he is telling of events many years earlier in a life that has been a kind of living death.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- Notes from Underground*, pp. 462-540.

### Questions

1. Who does the underground man consider as the audience for his *Notes*? Who does he address as "gentlemen"? What does he expect to achieve by his writings?
2. Is the narrator reliable? Can we accept at face value his account of the episodes he describes? Does he exaggerate? Does he lie? Where does he seem to be most truthful?
3. He describes himself repeatedly as a "spiteful man." What does he mean by this? What is he angry about? How is his spitefulness connected with what he calls his "hyperconsciousness"? How would you characterize hyperconsciousness?
4. The narrator says he is a sick man? What is his sickness? Does he suffer from the illness that Kierkegaard calls "the sickness unto death"? Illness is a factor in many of the works of the late nineteenth century. Compare the underground man's illness to those of Ivan Ilych, *Bartleby*, and the women in "The Revolver" and *The Yellow Wallpaper*.
5. The underground man contrasts the state of being underground with that of being engaged in "real life." What characterizes each of these states of being? When is the narrator most underground? When does he engage in "real life"?
6. Why is the narrator so spiteful with his former schoolmates? How does he consider himself different from them? Why does he apologize for his behavior at the dinner? Is his apology genuine?
7. What does Liza represent in the story? Are the "fine words" that the narrator addresses to her sincere and honest? Why does he later regret and dismiss them? The narrator describes himself as appearing to be a "hero" in Liza's eyes, but he later confesses that he is really an "antihero." What does he consider to be the qualities of a hero? What makes someone an antihero? Consider these concepts in some of the other works in this course, especially *Faust*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, and *Bartleby*.

## Leo Tolstoy

Tolstoy is often paired with Dostoevsky as the other great Russian novelist of the nineteenth century, but unlike Dostoevsky, who explored the psychological depths of characters from the margins of Russian society, Tolstoy's characters occupy central roles in the social and historical events of the time. *War and Peace* (1869) develops a panoramic vision of Russia at the time of the Napoleonic invasion. *Anna Karenina* (1877) tells the tragic story of an aristocratic socialite whose infidelity leads to her social isolation and ultimate suicide. The novella, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), similarly places its subject in a fully developed social context. Ivan Ilych, whose name is the Russian equivalent of John Smith, is an average man of his time. Caught up in chasing material accumulation and social status, Ivan is unprepared to face death. After the "absurd" accident that leads to a lingering illness and impending death, he is forced to confront the existential question of the meaning of his life and of his relationships with family, co-workers, and servants. The story details the stages of his growing self-awareness and his ultimate redemption as he faces his mortality.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5,

--*The Death of Ivan Ilych*, pp. 617-662.

### Questions

1. Who tells Ivan's story? What kind of person is this narrator? What tone does he use in telling the story? Why is Ivan's death announced at the beginning of the story?
2. List the episodes of the story in chronological order. Why does the story begin and end where it does chronologically? Why does the narration move about so much in the chronology of events?
3. Does it make any sense to say that *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is not about death, but about dying? Why or why not? Does Ivan's life have a focus or meaning before his illness? If not, why not?
4. What are some of the literary and psychological devices Tolstoy uses to make Ivan's death a premonition of our own?
5. How does Tolstoy develop sympathy (or even empathy) for Ivan? Is he a man for whom we would usually have sympathy? Is he a typical representative of his class? How does his illness gradually lead to relative isolation?
6. What is the effect of the two scenes in which Ivan recollects his early childhood? How important are these memories? Do they have any saving qualities to them?
7. The injury that leads to Ivan's death is described almost as an aside, in the middle of a paragraph: "Once when mounting a step ladder to show the upholsterer who did not understand how he wanted the hangings draped, he made a false step and slipped . . ." Why is it described this way? What is the effect?
8. What is the role of Gerasim, the servant boy? Why might a servant connect more readily to a dying person than a member of the upper classes would?
9. What is the role of love and compassion at the end of the story? Does Christianity provide consolation to Ivan? How does Ivan's son assist him in coming to terms with his life and death?
10. Compare the death of Ivan to that of Félicité in Flaubert's *A Simple Heart*. What do these two realists have in common in their approach to death and its meaning? Do you think Tolstoy and Flaubert held similar views on the meaning of life and death?
11. In realist works physical illness is often symptomatic of social deficiencies. Consider the illnesses of Ivan Ilych and one or more of the following: Bartleby the Scrivener, the woman in "The Revolver," Dostoevsky's underground man, the woman in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. In what ways can each illness be seen as symptomatic of cultural issues?



## Anton Chekhov

Many of the realists saw European culture in the late nineteenth century as diseased. Illness defines the lives of such characters as Ivan Ilych, Dostoevsky's underground man, and others. Trained as a doctor, Anton Chekhov observed Russian society in the years just before the Bolshevik revolution with a physician's eye. He diagnosed the dissolution of aristocratic Russia, the suffering of the rural peasants even after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, and the rise of the commercial bourgeoisie. He found a paralyzing incapacity in all classes to adapt to the forces of social change. In *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), the orchard becomes a symbol of Russia caught in social transformation. The orchard embodies the beauty of the Russian past, the neglect of the present, and the threat of materialistic exploitation to come. It is not so much what happens in the play that constitutes its subject as what doesn't happen. The paralytic atmosphere of the time is represented in characters who cannot communicate with each other and are incapable of confronting the loss of the orchard with any definitive action.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- The Cherry Orchard*, pp. 703-747.

### Questions

1. What does the orchard represent culturally and historically to Lyuba and Gayev? Which parent does it make each of them think about? Why?
2. In cultural terms what does Lopakhin think about the orchard? Does he think the orchard will be a productive or unproductive piece of real estate? What does he want to do with the orchard? Why?
3. Why does Trofimov consider the orchard a symbol of oppression? With what does he want to replace the orchard? How does Trofimov affect Anya's perception of the orchard?
4. Why does Yepikhodov consider the orchard further proof of his misfortune?
5. What does the orchard represent culturally for Yasha? Why is he not surprised that the cherries are now inedible and unmarketable?
6. *The Cherry Orchard* begins in May with the orchard in bloom and ends in October with the sound of axes. How do these two seasons frame the action of the play and contribute to its meaning?
7. What aspect of Russian culture does Firs represent? What is significant about Firs's abandonment at the end of the play?
8. Why are Madame Ranevsky, Gaev, and Simeonov-Pishchik so ineffectual? Are we given any indications that they will change?
9. How does Lopakhin serve as a foil for Lyuba and her family?
10. What keeps the owners of the orchard from decisive action to save the orchard? In what kinds of moments are their personalities revealed?
11. Discuss the scene between Lopakhin and Varya at the end of Act IV. What is the unspoken communication in this scene? How does it go awry? What is the meaning of the broken thermometer?
12. In a letter to the director of this play, Chekhov once indicated that he believed Lopakhin to be "a very decent person in every sense . . . an educated man, with no petty ways or tricks of any sort." Chekhov goes on to say that Lopakhin is "the central [character] in the play." Explain how Lopakhin plays the central character. What evidence exists to show he is the person around whom all situations revolve? Why does Chekhov choose Lopakhin to be the principal figure? Does Lopakhin do anything to indicate that he is not a "decent" person?
13. Tolstoy and Chekhov both write about characters who lead vacuous lives, empty of true meaning or deep personal satisfaction. Yet these writers treat their characters and their

introspections differently. Compare Ivan Ilych and Madame Ranevsky. What motivates these characters? How do they handle challenges? What do they learn from their life experiences?

14. Although Chekhov consistently called *The Cherry Orchard* a comedy, many others have considered the decline of Madame Ranevsky and the demolition of the cherry orchard a tragedy. Consider the traditional definitions of comedy and tragedy and explain why the play fits into one or the other of these two categories.

## Unit 5: The Situation of Women

One result of the industrial revolution was the expansion of economic, educational and cultural opportunities for women. A greatly enlarged literate population, created in part by the introduction of the steam printing press and its deluge of popular literature, magazines, and novels, made the nineteenth century the great age of the novel. Many of the novels were written by such popular women writers as Jane Austen and George Eliot in Britain, George Sand in France, and Emilia Pardo Bazán in Spain. A growing body of literature, especially in the second half of the century, dealt with the plight of women and presented such unforgettable characters as Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Eliot's Dorothea Brooke, and Flaubert's Madame Bovary.

A systematic critique of patriarchy, begun in the late eighteenth century by such writers as Mary Wollstonecraft, continued into the nineteenth century. In one of the most influential analyses of the period, *The Subjection of Women* (1869), John Stuart Mill, with the unacknowledged collaboration of Harriet Taylor, examined the political and social consequences of women's subordinate status.

In this section we include several works by both male and female writers exploring aspects of this emerging feminist consciousness. Even though Henrik Ibsen denied conscious feminist intent, several of his social dramas famously treat feminist issues, especially *A Doll's House* (1889) and *Hedda Gabler* (1890), the play we include here. Emilia Pardo Bazán, Kate Chopin, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman bring a consciously feminist perspective to the presentation of marriage.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.

--Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," pp. 827-830.

--John Stuart Mill, From *On Liberty*, pp. 834-839.

--John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*, Chapter 2 (available for free download on the internet) on the institution of marriage.

### Questions

1. Stanton and Mott's "Declaration" is in part a recasting of the American Declaration of Independence. Compare the two documents. How do Stanton and Mott apply or extend the arguments of the earlier manifesto?

2. How are Mill's general principles in *On Liberty* applied in his analysis of marriage?

## Henrik Ibsen

Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's social dramas explore the hypocrisies and contradictions in the middle-class culture of nineteenth-century Europe and the ways in which social conventions and institutions frustrate individual fulfillment. In such plays as *The Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *The Wild Duck*, and *The Master Builder*, Ibsen consistently raised questions about the situation of women in the patriarchal, male dominated culture of Europe, an analysis that won him recognition from feminist organizations of the time. In *Hedda Gabler* he focuses on the tragic life of a woman from the dying aristocracy. The daughter of a general and a product of the military elite from the aristocratic culture of the past, Hedda is trapped in a marriage to a boring bourgeois professor. Reduced to ineffectual inactivity as a bourgeois wife in a patriarchal marriage, Hedda longs for the excitement and engagement of past times when military honor and artistic intensity were life and death concerns. Her attempts to find a more active role prove destructive and lead to the tragic conclusion of the play.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- Hedda Gabler*, pp. 556-617.

### Questions

1. Ibsen said that Hedda wanted "to have the whole life of a man." What did Ibsen mean? How could Hedda's life been more like that of a man? Which of Hedda's behaviors might indicate her desire to live like a man? How does this apparently unfulfilled desire contribute to her death?
2. How does Thea disrupt Hedda's life? Do Thea's actions contribute in any way to Hedda's final decision?
3. Where in the play does Hedda seem to be acting maliciously and with ill intent? Why does Hedda act the way she does?
4. Like *Faust*, *Hedda Gabler* is concerned with the way social conventions and institutions frustrate individual fulfillment. Both Faust's Margaret and Ibsen's Hedda are victims of male domination, and both die as a result of their predicament. Despite its celebration of the eternal feminine, *Faust* is firmly grounded in a male consciousness. The feminine is useful in defining Faust's incompleteness, but the play does not get inside a feminine point of view. In what ways are Margaret and Hedda oppressed? What marks *Faust* a man's story and *Hedda Gabler* as a woman's story? Does Ibsen get inside a feminine point of view?
5. Like *The Cherry Orchard*, *Hedda Gabler* contrasts the dying aristocratic culture of Europe with the emerging bourgeois culture. Which characters in each play represent the old and the new? What does this historical change contribute to the analysis of women's situation?
6. Analyze the marriages in *Hedda Gabler* in light of Mill's discussion of marriage in *The Subjection of Women*. What does Mrs. Elvsted contribute to this discussion in the play?
7. Compare the dialogue in *Hedda Gabler* with that in *The Cherry Orchard*. In which play do the characters speak past each other? Which play would you consider more realistic? Why?
8. Why does Hedda commit suicide? Does her act surprise you or does it seem inevitable? Does Hedda have the stature of a tragic hero? Is her death tragic? Why or why not?

## Emilia Pardo Bazán

Spain's foremost practitioner of the short story, Emilia Pardo Bazán has been described as Spain's Maupassant. Her concise and ironic stories often employed the surprise ending that is associated with the tales of her French master and her novels detailed the lives of common working people. She was a literary realist, but not a political radical. She remained a monarchist politically and in her critical writings she challenged scientific materialism. Nevertheless, "The Revolver" is a feminist story, told from a woman's point of view and employing symbolism and skilful narrative strategies to depict with layers of ambiguity and irony the debilitating position of women.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5,  
--"The Revolver," x pp. 691-699.

### Questions

1. "The Revolver" uses the device of a frame narrative that encloses the core story. Characterize the narrator of the frame narrative. Does the age and gender of the frame narrator matter? How sympathetic is the narrator to the main character in the story? What does the frame narrative contribute to the irony of the story?
2. Characterize the marriage described in the story. What purposes does the revolver serve in determining the character of the marriage? What is the significance of the fact that the gun is not loaded?
3. Illness is often employed in literature as a metaphor for social discontent or psychological maladjustment. Consider the heart condition of the young widow in "The Revolver" in light of Kierkegaard's discussion of "the sickness unto death." What might the widow's condition symbolize? Is her disease related to that of Mrs. Mallard in Chopin's "Story of an Hour"? To that of the woman in Gilman's *Yellow Wallpaper*?
4. Chekhov is said to have laid it down as a rule of narrative that if a loaded gun appears in act I of a play, it has to go off by act 5. Why do you think the gun doesn't go off in "The Revolver"? What is the point of that irony? Does the gun in *Hedda Gabler* carry the same symbolism as the revolver in this story?

## Kate Chopin

A native of Louisiana, Kate Chopin is often thought of as a "local colorist" who wrote about the places and people of her home territory. She is best known for the novel *The Awakening* (1899) which has sometimes been described as "a creole *Bovary*." Its controversial story of a young wife and mother whose self-realization leads to marital infidelity and eventual suicide caused the book to be banned as "French realism." "The Story of an Hour" also describes an awakening, using skillful narrative technique and manipulation of point of view to depict the enlightenment of its protagonist.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.

--"The Story of an Hour." pp. 927-932.

### Questions

1. Separate the roles of the narrator, the author, and the protagonist in "The Story of an Hour." Which parts of the story can be attributed to each of these three? Are these people reliable or unreliable?
2. A very short story, similar to "The Revolver," "The Story of an Hour" does not use the device of the frame narrative. Could Chopin have told her story with a frame narrator? Why or why not?
3. Chopin is often described as a "local colorist," a writer who detailed the particular physical location and cultural setting of her narrative. Can you identify the place or the time of "The Story of an Hour"? What are the most important elements in the setting? Are they symbolic? What is conveyed by the open window in the bedroom?
4. Louise Mallard's face is described as representing "repression and a certain strength." Is this repression external (society, marriage) or internal (desire for control over one's feelings)?
5. How is Louise Mallard's husband described in the story? How does Louise characterize her love for him? Explain the discrepancy between these two points of view?
6. What is the surprise at the end of this story? How is it ironic? What ironies do you find in the final sentence of the story?

## Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Although not strictly autobiographical, *The Yellow Wallpaper* draws on Gilman's experience of being treated for depression with a regimen similar to that prescribed for the protagonist of this story. She was treated for post-partum depression by forced isolation and inactivity, denied even opportunities to read and write. She intended her story as a warning to other women of the dangers in the kind of treatment she received. *The Yellow Wallpaper*, however, transformed this personal experience into a broadly symbolic account of women's situation. She catalogues the stages of her protagonist's "illness" in much the same way that Tolstoy traces Ivan's illness in *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. In doing so she extends many motifs and themes found in the feminist writing of the end of the nineteenth century: captivity, marital inequality, illness.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- The Yellow Wallpaper*, pp. 937-953.

### Questions

1. Consider the house where the story is set. How is it described? What is the significance of "colonial mansion" and "hereditary estate" in its description? Why would the narrator wish it to be a "haunted house"?
2. What are the important elements in the attic room in this story? Why are there bars on the window? Why is the bed nailed down? Characterize the wallpaper. Could you sketch its pattern? The narrator describes its pattern as "dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions." What else besides the wallpaper might the narrator be describing?
3. Describe the heroine's ailment. How does Gilman's story elaborate and extend the illness motif in the stories by Pardo Bazán and Chopin? What are the stages of her illness as marked by the several sections of the story? Is it significant that her husband is a doctor? How does he perceive her illness? How does she?
4. What part does marriage play in the heroine's "situation"? How does her husband see her? How does he treat her? Does she blame him or hold him responsible for her situation?
5. Feminism is often characterized as a radical or revolutionary point of view, particularly during the time that this story was written. Yet Charlotte Perkins Gilman, like Emilia Pardo Bazán, was both a feminist and a political conservative. How do you think they would have reconciled these apparently contradictory positions?

## Unit 6: Emancipation

The nineteenth century might be called the century of emancipation. Derived from a term used in Roman times to describe the breaking of parental control over children, emancipation, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was primarily associated with freeing slaves from bondage. The Abolitionist Movement in Europe and the Americas successfully abolished slavery in the British colonies in 1833, in the southern United States in 1863 with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and in many other countries and colonies during the course of the century. Frederick Douglass's reaction to Lincoln's Proclamation indicates its impact and importance at the time. The excerpt from Mary Prince's narrative, an example of a slave narrative from the British colonies, indicates the global reach of the abolition movement, which would end slavery in Latin America and even free the serfs in Russia.

As the tale of a "slave girl," Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) also connects with the feminist texts included in Unit 5. Jacobs' slave narrative represents a genre that recorded the emerging voices of African slaves, from both the European colonies and the Americas, who sought to escape bondage. These narratives played an influential role in the Abolitionist Movement. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were denied full participation in an anti-slavery convention in London because they were women, they sought to extend the ideal of emancipation to apply to women as well as to slaves, and by the end of the century a vital feminist movement had produced a new phenomenon, often referred to as "the emancipated woman." The "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" approved at the conference on women's rights at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, can be taken as the founding document of a movement that would inspire literary works like those in Unit 5. Rassundari Devi's journal suggests the global impact of that movement.

Several other works in the "In the World: Emancipation" section consider the ideal of emancipation philosophically from varying cultural perspectives. The passage from Mill's *On Liberty* comes from a classic analysis in Western rationalistic and individualistic terms, and provides a context for Mill's analysis of the situation of women. The pieces by Swami Vivikananda, Muhammad Iqbal, and Rabindranath Tagore present views of the ideal of freedom and emancipation.

Finally, in an even broader sense, emancipation also describes the emergence of a distinctly American culture during the century, as American writers and artists freed themselves from domination by European traditions. Even though the United States liberated itself from European colonialism in the late eighteenth century, American literature and culture continued to be dominated by European conventions until the mid-nineteenth century when Walt Whitman wrote poetry that forcefully freed itself from European models to celebrate America and its people. Another distinctly American poet, Emily Dickinson, represents another dimension of American individualism and expresses a feminism less politically assertive than that of Charlotte Perkins Gilman or Kate Chopin. Finally, Herman Melville's *Bartleby* (1853) offers an ironic treatment of American individualism and the ideal of liberation from societal conventions and oppressive traditions. If *Bartleby* is an "emancipated" man, free to choose his life and do only what he prefers to do, he is nonetheless bound by the limitations of human mortality and becomes for the narrator and the reader an object lesson in the limits of the human condition.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.

--"In the World: Emancipation," pp. 814-845.

--President Abraham Lincoln, "The Emancipation Proclamation," 1862. Available on-line.



## Harriet Jacobs

The slave narrative, represented in this section by Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, is a literary form from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that is now recognized as a major influence on contemporary African-American literature. Adapting the conventions of fictional narrative, slave writers constructed accounts of their bondage, maltreatment, and eventual escape that served to bolster the aims of the Abolitionist Movement and garner support for the anti-slavery cause. To the usual accounts of extreme cruelty and physical abuse by harsh masters, Jacobs adds a frank account of the sexual harassment she suffered as a female slave. Her story also tells how she attained literacy, a common motif in these tales, and praises those who aided in her journey to freedom in the North.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, pp. 754-802.

### Questions

1. Who are Jacobs' readers? Identify places in the text where Jacobs indicates who she is writing to? How does she connect with this audience? What type of language does she use? How does she write in such a way as to tell the truth without offending her readers?
2. How does Jacobs attain literacy? How does her ability to read and write subvert the belief that slaves are subhuman and help to promote her cause and effect her escape? Why would slave owners want to prevent their slaves from learning to read and write?
3. Jacobs reports that apologists for slavery describe it as "a beautiful patriarchal institution." In what sense can "patriarchal" be understood as a positive term? Can any of these meanings be applied to the patriarchal institution of marriage challenged in the works of Pardo Bazán, Ibsen, and Gilman? In what ways do these fictional stories depict a kind of servitude or slavery? How does Jacobs' situation compare to theirs?
4. Compare Jacobs' story with that told by Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (see *Bedford Anthology*, p. 194). What are the major differences between the two writers? What are the differences in their responses to the cruelty that the slaves must endure? How does Stowe's piety affect her message? Whose message is more poignant for a contemporary reader? Why?

## Walt Whitman

In *Leaves of Grass* (1855), a work that Whitman rewrote, revised, added to, and reconstructed throughout his life, he developed a distinctively non-literary American voice that used the idiomatic and colloquial language of the common man. His travels throughout North America gave him a language in which to celebrate common American people with a distinctly American tongue. Beginning with his own experience and his own body in a "Song of Myself," Whitman engaged in a lifelong project of fashioning himself. As he discovered the many aspects of himself, he expanded his personal experience into the experience of mankind generally, an early version of what we now think of as American diversity. This new American perspective symbolically turned its back on Europe and stood on the Pacific coast to gaze westward and reconnect with the ancient cultures of the East.

### Readings

-*The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.  
--Selections, pp. 877-906.

### Questions

1. How does Whitman characterize his "self" in the *Song of Myself*? How does he identify himself with other people and with aspects of the natural world? Find examples where the narrator seems to adopt different personalities. What is significant about this multiplication of selves in the poem? What does it suggest about Whitman's idea of the self or of the individual?
2. In lines 32 and 33 of *Song of Myself* the narrator questions his readers' strategies for reading and interpreting poems. How do you respond as a reader to these questions? Is the narrator's tone serious or sarcastic here? The narrator follows this questioning with the claim that "you [the reader] shall possess the origin of all poems." What might the narrator mean by "possess the origin"? Is he/she being mystical or just ironic? Does this statement turn the apparent sarcasm into praise for the reader as collaborator in the production of meaning in the poem?
3. What does grass mean for Whitman? How might it be a democratic image? How does he develop the symbol of grass in Section 6? In section 52 the narrator says, "I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love." What does this line mean? How does it relate to the overall meaning of the poem? Find and discuss other examples of this regenerative sentiment in the poem.
4. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" is an autobiographical poem describing an actual experience and its formative influence upon the formation of identity for the narrator. John Keats famously noted that Wordsworth wrote what he called the "egotistical sublime," meaning that his poetry was always in one way or another exploring facets of his own identity. Whitman's *Song of Myself*, of course, is also involved in an ongoing process of fashioning the self. How does Wordsworth's notion of self and identity differ from Whitman's? Compare Wordsworth's and Whitman's treatment of common working people. What do the differences in their approach suggest about differences in the cultures of England and America?
5. Whitman uses lists or catalogs in several parts of *Song of Myself*. Discuss the ways these lists function to underscore Whitman's democratic perspective in the poem. How do the catalogs reinforce the expansive tone and scope of the poem?
6. All of the poems in this selection of Whitman's work describe life experience in terms of a journey. Where does the narrator travel in *Song of Myself*? Where does he start? Where does he end up? Does he travel backward and/or forward in time? What is the end result of all this traveling? In line 3 of "Facing West from California's Shores," the narrator paradoxically claims that he is "a child, very old." What does he mean by this statement? How does this image affect your interpretation of the rest of the poem? In the final line of

"Facing West" the narrator claims that what he is looking for is "yet unfound." What is yet unfound? Why has it not been discovered? How does this failure affect the tone of the poem?

## Emily Dickinson

Although Emily Dickinson wrote over 1800 poems, she published only ten during her lifetime. She lived a very private, even secretive and reclusive life. The poems she left behind after her death, modeled on the verses from children's poetry, hymns, and greeting cards, are deceptively simple. They address everyday concerns in everyday language, but the imagery is often puzzling and the metaphors surprising. Beneath the simplicity on the surface of the poem is the lingering presence of danger, threat, and death. The poems suggest multiple, even contradictory, meanings. Yet through all these ambiguities, certain things remain constant: her appreciation for the natural world, including its threats and dangers; her challenges to conventional thinking; her resistance to the constraints placed upon women.

### Readings

- *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.  
-- Selections, , pp. 906-918.

### Questions

1. Characterize the ways in which Dickinson's narrator articulates the attitudes associated with the romantic hero.
2. Catalog the instances in the poems where Dickinson seems to be directly treating the situation of women. What do you think are the literal events in women's lives that are being symbolically envisioned in "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—," "In Winter in my Room," and "The Soul has Bandaged moments—"? Compare Dickinson's visions of repression, servitude, confinement, deprivation, and assault to those of Harriet Jacobs, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.
3. Trace the images of captivity, imprisonment, enclosure, and isolation in Dickinson's poetry. What does she see as the reasons for such treatment? How does she transcend it?
4. In "Success is counted sweetest" Dickinson challenges the conventional notion that "to the victor goes the spoils." What other challenges to conventional ideas do you find in Dickinson's poems? Also cite examples of Dickinson's challenges to the conventions of punctuation and language usage.
5. Where does Dickinson discuss death in her poems? What does her attitude toward death seem to be? How does it compare with Melville's in *Bartleby*? With Whitman's?
6. Compare Dickinson's descriptions of nature with those offered by Whitman. For example, compare Dickinson's references to nature in "A narrow Fellow in the Grass," with lines 54-65 of section six of Whitman's *Song of Myself*. How do these descriptions differ in tone and content? Who is more sentimental and dramatic? How and why?

## Herman Melville

The dark despair of Melville's *Bartleby* is sometimes ascribed to the author's disappointment over his lack of commercial success. Published anonymously in a magazine in the mid-1850s, the story appeared after *Moby Dick* sold only thirty copies in its initial publication in 1851. The story of a scrivener, a writer who prefers not to write, *Bartleby* transcends its origins in Melville's life to become an enigmatic parable of the human condition. A relative of the existential antiheroes in modern literature, Bartleby's passivity evokes sympathy from both the narrator and the reader, while Melville's ambiguous narrative technique ironically implies that the narrator, rather than Bartleby, may be the true subject of the story. The final paragraphs of the story may complicate that suggestion with the implication that the reader of the story—indeed, all humanity—is finally the subject of the tale.

### Readings

- The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Book 5.
- Bartleby the Scrivener*, pp. 846-876.

### Questions

1. Is there significance to the fact that Bartleby is a scrivener, a writer? Besides the possible connections to Melville's state of mind as a writer, how might the story be seen as one about writing?
2. Melville called *Bartleby* a story about Wall Street. Actual walls, inside the office and outside its windows and at the prison, are significant aspects in the setting of the story. What suggestions are there in the story as to the significance of these walls? Is Wall Street to be taken literally?
3. Consider Bartleby as the hero of this story. What characteristics does he share with romantic heroes like Faust? Does he have any similarities to the narrator of *Notes from Underground*? How does his passivity affect your evaluation of his heroic qualities? Is he a sympathetic character?
4. Some critics suggest that the story is not really about Bartleby at all, but rather about the narrator. Characterize the narrator. How does he treat Bartleby and his other employees? Are there any similarities between Bartleby and the narrator? In what ways might they be seen as doubles—or copies—of each other?
5. What is the effect of the final few paragraphs of the story that report the rumor that Bartleby had been dismissed from a job in the dead letter office?
6. Captivity or imprisonment is an important theme in many works in this course, from Marguerite's imprisonment in *Faust* to the captivity of the women in Pardo Bazan's "Revolver" and Gilman's *Yellow Wallpaper*. How does captivity figure in each of these works? Would Bartleby consider himself a captive or a prisoner?
7. Broadly speaking, nineteenth century literature tends to emphasize societal issues which affect people's lives and cause them to act as they do. It sees individuals as products or victims of social forces. Twentieth century literature, on the other hand, tends to place more emphasis on the psychological aspects of character, exploring inner reasons for a character's actions. Does *Bartleby* seem more social or psychological in its presentation? What aspects of each approach are present in the story?