

E-kursuse „Ameerika kirjanduse ajalugu“ (P2NC.00.137), 3EAP materjalid

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HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

This e-course is a support for the course P2NC.00.137 “History of American Literature” (3 ECT). The e-course introduces the main periods and the key writers of American literature as well as provides an overview of the social processes and historic events that influenced the development of American literature. On completion of the course a student:

1. is aware of the history of American literature, the most important directions, authors and their works;
2. is able to distinguish and analyse processes in the history of American literature;
3. can distinguish main directions in American literature.

The course is divided into the following topics:

1. Native American Literature
2. American Literature, 1608-1830
3. The Romantic Period in American Literature, 1820-1860
4. American Literature, 1865-1900:the Realistic Period
5. American Modernism.

Each of the topics of the course includes the introductory information about a certain period of American literature, texts for reading and tasks based on the texts.

Assessment

Throughout the course students are assessed on the basis of:

- Completion of all text-based reading tasks (20%)
- Participation in forum discussions and completion of forum tasks (20%)
- Peer assessment (10%)
- Final examination (50%).

TOPIC I: NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE

This topic provides an overview of peculiarities and main genres of Native American literature. It also gives an insight into life on Native American before Europeans reached the continent. Upon completion the tasks of the topic a student:

- is aware of the way of life of Native Americans;
- has compared the ways of life and the level of progress of Native American and Europeans;
- is aware of peculiarities and genres of Native American literature;
- has got acquainted with examples of different genres of Native American literature;
- has analysed creation myths of Native Americans.

NATIVE AMERICANS BEFORE COLUMBUS

The history of humankind in North America began thousands of years before Europeans started undertaking discovery journeys. By 1600 the life of Native Americans was complex and diverse. It involved a complex process of growth and environmental adaptation among many distinct societies, and even crisis in some of them. In the American Southwest, for instance the ancestors of nowadays Hopi and Zuni developed carefully planned villages composed of large terraced buildings, each with many rooms. By the time the Spanish arrived in the 1540s, the indigenous Pueblo people were using irrigation canals, check dams and hillside terracing to bring water to their arid maize fields. In their agricultural techniques, their skill in ceramics, their use of woven textiles for clothing, and their village life, Pueblo society resembled that of peasant communities in many parts of Europe and Asia.

Far to the east were the mound-building societies of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys. When European settlers first crosses the Appalachian Mountains 150 years after arriving on the continent, they were amazed to find hundreds of ceremonial mounds, some of them 70 feet high, and gigantic sculptured earthworks in geometric designs or in the shapes of huge humans, birds or serpents. Believing all “Indians” to be forest primitives, the Europeans reasoned that these were remains of an ancient civilization or the Lost Tribes of Israel spoken of in European mythology.

The mound-building societies of the Ohio valley declined about 1,000 years before Europeans reached the continent. Several centuries later, another culture, based on intensive cultivation of beans, maize, and squash, began to flourish in the Mississippi valley. Its centre, a city of perhaps 40,000, stood near present-day St. Louis. Great ceremonial plazas, flanked by a temple that rose in four terraces to a height of 100 feet, marked this first metropolis in America.

Several centuries before Europeans arrived in North America, the mound-building cultures of the continental heartland began to decline. But their influence had already passes eastward to transform the woodland societies along the Atlantic coastal plain. The numerous small tribes that settled from Nova Scotia to Florida never equaled the larger societies of the midcontinent in earthwork sculpture, architectural design, or development of large-scale agriculture. But they were far from the “savages” that the first European explorers described. They had added limited agriculture to their skills in exploiting natural plants for food, medicine, dyes, and flavoring and had developed food procurement strategies that used all the resources around them – cleared land, forests, streams, shore, and the ocean.

Most of the eastern woodlands tribes lived in waterside villages. Locating their fields of maize near fishing grounds, they often migrated seasonally between inland and coastal village sites or situated themselves astride two ecological zones. In the Northeast, their birchbark canoes, light enough to be carried by a single man, have them a means of trading

and communicating over immense territories. In the Southeast, population was denser and social and political organization more elaborate.

As European exploration of the Americas approached, the continent north of the Rio Grande contained around 4 million people, of whom perhaps 500,000 lived along the eastern coastal plain and in the piedmont region accessible to the early European settlers. The colonizers were not coming to a “virgin wilderness”, as they often described it, but to a land inhabited for thousands of years by people whose village existence in many ways resembled that of the arriving Europeans.

The “Two World Views” task

In the case of each of the statement please decide, whether it reflects the world view of colonizing Europeans (CE) or Native Americans (NA).

- I. They called themselves “civilized” and tended to consider other peoples “savages” or “barbarian”.
A: CE
B: NA
- II. They considered the natural world a resource designed for man’s use.
A: NA
B: CE
- III. For them every part of the natural environment was sacred.
A: NA
B: CE
- IV. They believed that land should be privately possessed.
A: NA
B: CE
- V. For them property was the basis of not only sustenance, but also of independence, material wealth, political status, and personal identity.
A: CE
B: NA
- VI. They believed that land was invested with sacred qualities and should be held in common.
A: CE
B: NA
- VII. They stressed the group and its interests rather than individual.
A: NA
B: CE
- VIII. They had matrilineal organization in the case of many societies.
A: NA
B: CE
- IX. In their culture divorce was the woman’s prerogative.

- A: CE
B: NA
- X. In their culture women were entirely excluded from political affairs.
A: CE
B: NA
- XI. Their religious life was built around the belief in a single god.
A: CE
B: NA
- XII. Sharing no literary tradition, they expressed their religious beliefs in a less structured way.
A: CE
B: NA

NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE: MAIN PECULIARITIES AND GENRES

By the time Columbus reached the continent, Native Americans had been speaking more than 350 among them and had developed complex genre systems of verbal art within the familiar categories of speech, chant, and song. From the very beginning of it, the literature of Native Americans has had certain peculiarities:

1. There was no written literature among the different tribal languages and cultures when the first Europeans arrived (the process of recording Native American literatures did not begin until the nineteenth century). This is a very important feature, as it directly influenced the mode of presentation. Oral literatures are performed for the audience that evaluates both the manner of the presentation and its content. Evaluation is not reserved for the conclusion of the performance; it is an ongoing activity reflected in degrees of attention and overt comment. The audience apprehends the structure of a story through the slightly varied repetitions of incident, responds to characterizations highlighted in the pitch and volume of the voice, or waits in the full silence of a pause. Oral literature is less a tradition of texts than a tradition of performances. Thus, Native American stories – whether they are chants, songs, or narratives – rely upon a performance, a dramatic presentation that the written word for the most part cannot convey.
2. Native American literature is very diverse and rich in genres: different types of stories told for various purposes, chants, poems and songs.

Native American Oral Narratives

Cycles of [stories](#) told and performed relate to subsistence experiences – planting, hunting, and fishing – and to life experiences – birth, puberty, and death. Other types of stories include stories of origin and emergence, historical narratives, and trickster tales.

Origin and emergence stories represent complex tales full of symbols that dramatize the tribal explanation of the earth and its people. They were also important as they clearly established the relationship between people, the universe, prescribed gender and social roles, told about the origin of the tribe's activities.

Historical narratives explain the movements of the tribe, and thus frequently recount the colonization of the tribe by Europeans. Some of such narratives feature legendary figures (mythical characters) who move about in recognizably historic settings.

Trickster tales illustrate a testing of the limits of cultural formation and practice. Thus, such stories about trickster characters – people in the form of Coyote, raven, or Rabbit – show humorous and often scandalous attempts to violate the established customs and values of the tribe.

Native American Poetry

In the case of Native American literature, similarly to other world's oral literatures, [poetry](#) is song which consists of affectively charged, sophisticated language. Ritual poetry, created for communal expression, is widespread, while lyric poetry, articulating an individual response, is far less common.

Ritual poetry both commemorates and creates. In a variety of settings, it takes participants back to the time of origin recalling the prototypical events and persons who gave structure and meaning, life and death, to this world, or it calls them forward to believe in a new world to come. In either case, the symbolic language and narrative form of most ritual poetry aims to re-create the sacred in the present moment.

When all this was at an end,
The one who is my father
Four times sprinkled prayer meal
Where he had prepared my seat.
Following him,
Four times sprinkling prayer meal before me,
Where my father had prepared my seat,
I stood beside it.
My father took hold of me.
Presenting me to all the directions, he made me sit down.
(from *Sayatasha's Night Chant*, Zuni)

Lyric poetry, articulating a uniquely individualized response, is less common than ritual poetry. This may not have been the reality in the community, however, so much as a bias in the record: the anthropologists who recorded texts were often more interested in collecting oral literature reflecting a density of cultural beliefs, individualized works were less often recorded. Nevertheless, among a few Native peoples, for instance, the Aztecs, the Inuit (Eskimo), the creation of lyric poetry was culturally celebrated as an artistic act of the highest order.

Moved

Uvavnuk (Iglulik Eskimo)

The great sea stirs me
The great sea sets me adrift.
It sways me like a weed
On a river stone.

The sky's height stirs me.
The strong wind blows through my mind.
It carries me away
And moves my inward parts with joy.

It does not matter which genre of Native American literature is taken – stories of different types, songs, or chants – it shows the people aspiring for harmonious interaction with the earth. Native American communities continually return in prayer and ritual, story and song, to the fundamental relationships established as part of their tribal identity.

The “Creation myths” task

Please watch the videos telling the two creation stories – [Grandmother Spider Steals the Sun](#) and [Earth on Turtle's Back](#). Find a creation story in either Russian or Estonian languages and compare it with one of these or any other Native Americans' creation stories (more of them can be found [here](#)). In your forum post name the stories you compare and then describe the similarities/differences you discovered.

TOPIC II: AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1608-1830

This topic provides an overview of the development of American literature from 1608 to 1830. Upon completion of the tasks of the topic a student:

- is aware of the main period of American literature of the time and can distinguish them;
- has got acquainted with and analysed the travelogues of the first European explorers of/settlers on the continent;

- is aware of the political and social processes which influenced and predetermined the development of literature at the time;
- has got acquainted with works of the most prominent authors of the time.

The American literature of the time from 1608 – 1830 can be divided into three large periods:

- The Colonial Period (1608 – 1765)
- The Revolutionary Period (1765 – 1790)
- Early National/Federalist Period (1790 – 1830).

PERIOD TIME LINE

Historical Events		Literary Events
	1600	
1607 Settlement at Jamestown, Virginia		1608 Captain John Smyth, <i>A True Relation</i>
1620 Pilgrims land at Plymouth, Massachusetts		1616 Smith, <i>A Description of New England</i>
1636 Founding of Harvard College		1624 Smith, <i>A General History of Virginia</i>
1640 First book printed in America (Bay Psalm Book)		
1650 – 1728 Mather dynasty flourishes		1650 Anne Bradstreet, <i>The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America</i>
1692 Salem witchcraft executions		1684 Increase Mather, <i>Illustrious Providence</i>
		1693 Cotton Mather, <i>Wonders of the Invisible World</i>
	1700	
1704 First American newspaper founded (Boston News Letter)		1702 Cotton Mather, <i>Magnalia Christi Americani</i>
1732 Benjamin Franklin opens first public library (Philadelphia) and publishes first issues of Poor Richard's Almanac		1704 Sarah K. Knight, <i>Journal of a Journey</i>
1740 – 1745 religious revival – the Great Awakening		1741 Jonathan Edwards, <i>Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God</i>
		1751 John Bartram, <i>Observations on American Plants</i>
1765 Stamp Act		1754 Edwards, <i>Freedom of the Will</i>
1770 Boston Massacre		1773 Phillis Wheatley, <i>Poems</i>
1773 Boston Tea Party		1776 Thomas Paine, <i>Common Sense</i> and "The Crisis (1776-1783) Thomas Jefferson, <i>Declaration of Independence</i>

1774 First Continental Congress		
1775-1783 Revolutionary War		1786 Philip Freneau, <i>Poems</i>
1776 Declaration of Independence		1787 Royall Tyler, <i>The Contrast</i> (acted)
1781 Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown; Articles of Confederation ratified		
1789 Federal government established; Washington's First Inaugural		1789 George Washington, "First Inaugural"
	1800	
1803 Louisiana Purchase		1809 Washington Irving, <i>Knickerbockers' History</i>
1804-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition		1820 Irving, <i>Sketch Book</i>
1806 Noah Webster's first dictionary		1821 William Cullen Bryant, <i>Poems</i>
1807 Fulton's steamboat		James Fenimore Cooper, <i>The Spy</i>
1812-1814 War with England		1823 Cooper, <i>Pioneers</i>
1815 <i>North American Review</i> established		1826 Cooper, <i>Last of the Mohicans</i>
1820 Missouri Compromise		1827 Edgar Allan Poe, <i>Tamerlane and Other Poems</i>
1823 Monroe Doctrine		1828 Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>Fanshawe</i>
1829 Andrew Jackson elected President		

"TIME LINE" FORUM TASK

Please choose any historical event from the time line, describe its main features and the way it, in your opinion, influenced the society and the literature. Make sure your description is 10-15 sentences long. An event can be chosen only once!

Look at the post of your course mates and choose one to comment on. Your comment should be at least 5 sentences long.

AMERICAN LITERATURE: THE COLONIAL PERIOD 1608-1765



The very name America was given – the New World – calls it an idyllic myth, a promising beginning of a new golden age. The explorers of the continent were amazed by its beauty and its natural richness, which made the newly found home resemble a paradise even more. The New World seemed to promise that mankind could recapture its innocence, gain the joy and the eternal life, as well as freedom from duties and labour.

All early American literature echoes the illusions and disillusion of the American Dream. The colonists' home itself was both: an ideal and a disappointing reality. The vision of America as paradise gradually faded. The Spanish found the New World to be a land of cities and golden treasures, where the natives would work for the colonists who could spend a few adventurous years in America before retiring, loaded with gold, to Europe. The English colonists, however, found neither cities, nor mountains of gold, only an endless forest, inhabited by Indians who would not become their slaves. Although the earliest English attempts to found colonies failed (the Roanoke colony disappeared by 1590), the English continued to have great expectations for America.

The American literature of this period is promotion literature, generally disguised as a literature of exploration and discovery. Its peculiarity is authors' celebration of the attractions of America and their exaggeration of all the aspects of the continent: the climate, the friendliness of the native population, the abundance of food, and the opportunities promised by the New World.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD: READING TASK

The typical features of the “promotion” literature of the colonial period can be found in [A Description of New England](#) by a famous English soldier, sailor and explorer Captain John Smith (1580-1631). Please read the chapter A Description of New England and find the extracts describing:

- the pleasantness of the climate;
- the richness and diversity of plants and animals
- the native population
- the opportunities promised by the land.

AMERICAN LITERATURE: THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD 1765-1790



The Revolutionary period in the American literature is characterized by political writings, as at the time politicians played the key role. This is the period of the finest political writings in the history of the state and its literature, including not only literary works, such as Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* but also political documents of historic importance – Thomas Jefferson's [Declaration of Independence](#), the [Constitution of the United States of America](#), and the [Bill of Rights](#).

Other writers of the period also treated political themes. Philip Freneau, for instance, who was referred to as the poet of the Revolutionary War, dedicated his works to practically all the important social and political issues of the time. Phillis Wheatley, the first black poet of the American literature, addressed one of her poems to "His Excellency General Washington". Even the first American professional comedy was politicized: Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787) presented the audience a comparison between a British and an American in a rather unfavourable for the British way.

THE REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE READING TASK

Please read the poem *A Political Litany* by P.Freneau which is given below

A Political Litany

Libera Nos, Domine. —Deliver us, O Lord, not only from British dependence, but also

From a junto that labour with absolute power,
Whose schemes disappointed have made them look sour,
From the lords of the council, who fight against freedom,
Who still follow on where delusion shall lead them.

From the group at St. James's, who slight our petitions,
And fools that are waiting for further submissions—
From a nation whose manners are rough and severe,

From scoundrels and rascals,—do keep us all clear.

From pirates sent out by command of the king
To murder and plunder, but never to swing.
From Wallace and Greaves, and Vipers and Roses,
Whom, if heaven pleases, we'll give bloody noses.

From the valiant Dunmore, with his crew of banditti,
Who plunder Virginians at Williamsburg city,
From hot-headed Montague, mighty to swear,
The little fat man with his pretty white hair.

From bishops in Britain, who butchers are grown,
From slaves that would die for a smile from the throne,
From assemblies that vote against Congress proceedings,
(Who now see the fruit of their stupid misleadings.)

From Tryon the mighty, who flies from our city,
And swelled with importance disdains the committee:
(But since he is pleased to proclaim us his foes,
What the devil care we where the devil he goes.)

From the caitiff, lord North, who would bind us in chains,
From a royal king Log, with his tooth-full of brains,
Who dreams, and is certain (when taking a nap)
He has conquered our lands, as they lay on his map.

From a kingdom that bullies, and hectors, and swears,
We send up to heaven our wishes and prayers
That we, disunited, may freemen be still,
And Britain go on—to be damned if she will.

Analyse the image of Britain and the British on the basis of the following questions:

1. Which epithets are used to describe the British Empire?
2. How does the poet characterise:
 - The church of Britain
 - The King
 - The explorers of the American continent
 - The British nation on the whole
3. How does the poet describe Americans and their position?

EARLY NATIONAL/FEDERALIST PERIOD 1790-1830



The Federalist period in the American literature began with publication of bestsellers of the time which are rarely read nowadays – novels by William Hill Brown, Susanna Rowson and Charles Brown – and ended with the masterpieces of the world-wide known American authors – Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and James Fenimore Cooper who were the first great names of the American literature.

The time, which can also be considered the early American romanticism, is dedicated to the celebration of the land discovered over 100 years ago and its spirit. At the same time of authors choose to side-step from the great moral dilemmas – the problem of good and bad, black and white. For instance, James Fenimore Cooper is best known for his novels of the Leatherstocking Tales series – the exciting adventures of Natty Bumppo, variously called Leatherstocking, Hawkeye, Pathfunder, or Deerslayer.

Another growing tendency in the literature of the period is the interest in the American conscience and probing of its depth, in the deepest thoughts and the soul's mysteries. The first of the authors addressing the "powers of blackness" in his novels and stories was Nathaniel Hawthorne.

THE FEDERALIST LITERATURE READING TASK

Please read the story *Young Goodman Brown* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and answer the text analysis questions given after it

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset, into the street of Salem village, but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap, while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "pr'y thee, put off your journey until sunrise, and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is

troubled with such dreams and such thoughts, that she's afeard of herself, sometimes. Pray, tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year!"

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married!"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons, "and may you find all well, when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way, until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him, with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I, to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought, as she spoke, there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night. But, no, no, no! 'twould kill her to think it. Well; she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night, I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to Heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that, with lonely footsteps, he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him, as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose, at Goodman Brown's approach, and walked onward, side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking, as I came through Boston; and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back awhile," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still, they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner-table, or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him, that could be fixed upon as remarkable, was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought, that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown!" cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples, touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go, and if I convince thee not, thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest, yet."

"Too far, too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians, since the days of the martyrs. And shall I be the first of the name of Brown, that ever took this path and kept--"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interrupting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem. And it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's War. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you, for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters. Or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen, of divers towns, make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too--but these are state-secrets."

"Can this be so!" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion.

"Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble, both Sabbath-day and lecture-day!"

Thus far, the elder traveller had listened with due gravity, but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he, again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, pr'y thee, don't kill me with laughing!"

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own!"

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not, for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us, that Faith should come to any harm."

As he spoke, he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness, at night-fall!" said he. "But, with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods, until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with, and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly, the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road, until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words, a prayer, doubtless, as she went. The traveller put forth his staff, and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her, and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship, indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But--would your worship believe it?--my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage and cinque-foil and wolf's-bane--"

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me, there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse, but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to Egyptian Magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism!" said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly, that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor, than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple, to serve for a walking-stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them, they became strangely withered and dried up, as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree, and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil, when I thought she was going to Heaven! Is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith, and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by-and-by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself awhile; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along."

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight, as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the road-side, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister, in his morning-walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be

his, that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof-tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place; but owing, doubtless, to the depth of the gloom, at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the way-side, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky, athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tip-toe, pulling aside the branches, and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst, without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend Sir," said the voice like the deacon's, I had rather miss an ordination-dinner than tonight's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode-Island; besides several of the Indian powows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again, and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered, nor solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying, so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree, for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburthened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a Heaven above him. Yet, there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With Heaven above, and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown. While he still gazed upward, into the deep arch of the firmament, and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith, and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once, the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accent of town's-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion-table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine, at Salem village, but never, until now, from a cloud of night. There was one voice, of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain. And all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying --"Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her, all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror, was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air, and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil! for to thee is this world given."

And maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate, that he seemed to fly along the forest-path, rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier, and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward, with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds; the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while, sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church-bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown, when the wind laughed at him. "Let us hear which will laugh loudest! Think not to frighten me with your devilry! Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powow, come devil himself! and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you!"

In truth, all through the haunted forest, there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew, among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter, as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous, than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance, with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness, pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out; and his cry was lost to his own ear, by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence, he stole forward, until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage, that had overgrown the summit of the rock, was all on fire, blazing high into the night, and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company!" quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth, they were such. Among them, quivering to-and-fro, between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen, next day, at the council-board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm, that the lady of the governor was there. At least, there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and

ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light, flashing over the obscure field, bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church-members of Salem village, famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his reverend pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see, that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered, also, among their palefaced enemies, were the Indian priests, or powows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But, where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled. Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung, and still the chorus of the desert swelled between, like the deepest tone of a mighty organ. And, with the final peal of that dreadful anthem, there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconverted wilderness, were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man, in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke-wreaths, above the impious assembly. At the same moment, the fire on the rock shot redly forth, and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New-England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice, that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest. At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees, and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood, by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well nigh sworn, that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke-wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms, and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she! And there stood the proselytes, beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race! Ye have found, thus young, your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend-worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness, and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet, here are they all, in my worshipping assembly! This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds; how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widow's weeds, has given her husband a drink at bed-time, and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youth have made haste to inherit their father's wealth; and how fair damsels--

blush not, sweet ones--have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin, ye shall scent out all the places--whether in church, bed-chamber, street, field, or forest--where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood-spot. Far more than this! It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power--than my power at its utmost!--can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo! there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad, with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. "Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream! Now are ye undeceived! Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome, again, my children, to the communion of your race!"

"Welcome!" repeated the fiend-worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness, in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the Shape of Evil dip his hand, and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband. "Look up to Heaven, and resist the Wicked One!"

Whether Faith obeyed, he knew not. Hardly had he spoken, when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind, which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp, while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning, young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard, to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint, as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What God doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine, at her own lattice, catechising a little girl, who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child, as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him, that she skipt along the street, and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest, and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting? Be it so, if you will. But, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man, did he become, from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath-day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen, because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear, and drowned all the blessed strain. When the

minister spoke from the pulpit, with power and fervid eloquence, and with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith, and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled, and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave, a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grand-children, a goodly procession, besides neighbors, not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom.

Text analysis questions

I. Dream or Reality

The question of the key importance is if the forest experience of Goodman Brown was a dream or reality: if it was real, then it means that all Brown's neighbours, including his wife and the minister, are sinners. If what happened was just a fruit of his imagination, then his wife and neighbours are not sinners, but he is and he is projecting his sin onto them. Can you find any evidence proving whether the event in the forest was real nor not?

II. These statements provide interpretations of the story. What do you think of them?

1. Hawthorne is less concerned with the causes of the loss of faith in human nature than he is with the effects.
2. The main them of the story is "guilt", not "sin".
3. The moral of the story is that when the evil is done, the world can never become the same as it used to be.

III. Techniques

The changes happening to the characters of the story (the minister, Goodman's wife) start when they are at night in the forest. Please analyse what effect the night's experience had on Goodman Brown's character.

TOPIC III: THE ROMANTIC PERIOD IN AMERICAN LITERATURE 1820-1860

This topic provides an overview of the most peculiar features of the Romantic period in the American literature. Upon completion of the tasks of the topic a student:

- is aware of the peculiarities of American Romanticism;
- is aware of the distinct features of the American hero;
- has read the story Rip van Winkle by Washington Irving;

- has analysed Rip van Winkle, the main character of Irving's story as the most prominent hero of American Romanticism.

TOPIC III: THE ROMANTIC PERIOD IN AMERICAN LITERATURE 1820-1860



One of the central ideas of American Romanticism is the one of a journey away from the town/city to the world of nature. This journey is a quest for the beauties of nature, the longing for something genuine and natural. The Romantics saw imagination, spontaneity, individual feelings and the nature itself as more valuable than reason and logic. The Romantic Movement itself was a counter reaction to rationalism, which seemed to have rooted on the continent and its people too deeply.

American Romanticism is characterized by:

- ▶ Frontier: vast expanse, freedom, no geographic limitations.
- ▶ Optimism: greater than in Europe because of the presence of frontier.
- ▶ Experimentation: in science, in institutions.
- ▶ Mingling of races: immigrants in large numbers arrive to the US.
- ▶ Growth of industrialization: polarization of north and south; north becomes industrialized, south remains agricultural.
- ▶ Special attitude to nature (it is the genuine beauty, a source for the knowledge of the primitive, a refuge and the revelation of God to the individual).

The Romantic character of America is different for the exemplary romantic hero who is heroic in his deeds and attitudes. The typical character of American Romantic fiction is prone to have some or all of the following features:

- ▶ He is young or has childlike qualities
- ▶ He is innocent
- ▶ He loves nature and distrust town life

- ▶ He is usually uneasy with women who represent threatening civilization
- ▶ He feels the necessity to find the ultimate truth in the natural world.

TOPIC IV: AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1865-1900: THE REALISTIC PERIOD

The topic introduces the main social and economic reasons that influenced the emergence and development of Realism as a literary movement. It also describes peculiarities of American Realism and regionalism as its source. On completion of the tasks of the topic a student:

- is aware of the economic and social processes in the USA at the end of the 19th century;
- is aware of peculiar features of regionalism and realism in American literature;
- has got acquainted with peculiarities of realism as a genre on the example of short story *A Pair of Silk Stockings* by Kate Chopin.

TOPIC IV: AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1865-1900: THE REALISTIC PERIOD



The rise of Realism was predetermined by certain historic factors. First of all, the US Civil War (1861-1865) between the industrial North and the agricultural, slave-owning South was a watershed in American history. It changed the consciousness of America: the innocent optimism of the young democratic nation gave way, after the war, to a period of exhaustion. American idealism remained, but was rechanneled: before the war idealists championed human rights, especially the abolition of slavery; after the war, Americans increasingly idealized progress and self-made man.

The war also resulted in economic changes: the business boomed after the war as it had benefited from the enormous natural resources, and the constant influx of immigrants provided a seemingly endless supply of inexpensive labour. The development of business brought along certain population-related problems, namely those of urbanization and industrialization (by 1919 half of the population was concentrated in about 12 big cities): poor and overcrowded housing, unsanitary conditions, low pay ("wage slavery"), difficult working conditions, inadequate restraints on business.

The nation had come up with the new ideal – a millionaire whose number kept growing (in 1860 there were fewer than 100 millionaires; by 1875 – more than 1000).

The United States had been gathering strength and by the beginning of World War I it had become a major world power.

The American Realism as a literary phenomenon was rooted in regionalism – literature closely linked to a specific geographic setting which reproduced the manners and speech of people living in the region. One of the brightest examples of a regional writer is Mark Twain. The characters of his novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are put in very distinct settings that provide both the comic and a profound moral effect.

Although regional writers were precise in their depiction of the speech and behavioural patterns, they were often unrealistic in their description of character and social environment. Despite the number of regional novels and their popularity, the American Realism on the whole, as a literary movement, went far beyond regionalism and its concern for accuracy in social conditions and human motivation.

Kate Chopin (1851-1904) is a very important writer of the period. Although she was little acknowledged during her life, her works were rediscovered, understood and acclaimed long after she had died. Chopin is now considered to have been a forerunner of feminist authors of the 19th century.

Her short story *A Pair of Silk Stockings* is the tale of an unhappy woman escaping from routine and grayness of her everyday existence. The author takes a great care in depicting the details of this getaway.

A PAIR OF SILK STOCKINGS BY KATE CHOPIN

Little Mrs Sommers one day found herself the unexpected possessor of fifteen dollars. It seemed to her a very large amount of money, and the way in which it stuffed and bulged her worn old porte-monnaie gave her a feeling of importance such as she had not enjoyed for years.

The question of investment was one that occupied her greatly. For a day or two she walked about apparently in a dreamy state, but really absorbed in speculation and calculation. She did not wish to act hastily, to do anything she might afterward regret. But it was during the still hours of the night when she lay awake revolving plans in her mind that she seemed to see her way clearly toward a proper and judicious use of the money.

A dollar or two should be added to the price usually paid for Janie's shoes, which would insure their lasting an appreciable time longer than they usually did. She would buy so and so many yards of percale for new shirt waists for the boys and Janie and Mag. She had intended to make the old ones do by skilful patching. Mag should have another gown. She had seen some beautiful patterns, veritable bargains in the shop windows. And still there would be left enough for new stockings – two pairs apiece – and what darning that would save for a while! She would get caps for the boys and sailor-hats for the girls. The vision of

her little brood looking fresh and dainty and new for once in their lives excited her and made her restless and wakeful with anticipation.

The neighbors sometimes talked of certain 'better days' that little Mrs Sommers had known before she had ever thought of being Mrs Sommers. She herself indulged in no such morbid retrospection. She had no time – no second of time to devote to the past. The needs of the present absorbed her every faculty. A vision of the future like some dim, gaunt monster sometimes appalled her, but luckily to-morrow never comes.

Mrs Sommers was one who knew the value of bargains; who could stand for hours making her way inch by inch toward the desired object that was selling below cost. She could elbow her way if need be; she had learned to clutch a piece of goods and hold it and stick to it with persistence and determination till her turn came to be served, no matter when it came.

But that day she was a little faint and tired. She had swallowed a light luncheon – no! when she came to think of it, between getting the children fed and the place righted, and preparing herself for the shopping bout, she had actually forgotten to eat any luncheon at all!

She sat herself upon a revolving stool before a counter that was comparatively deserted, trying to gather strength and courage to charge through an eager multitude that was besieging breastworks of shirting and figured lawn. An all-gone limp feeling had come over her and she rested her hand aimlessly upon the counter. She wore no gloves. By degrees she grew aware that her hand had encountered something very soothing, very pleasant to touch. She looked down to see that her hand lay upon a pile of silk stockings. A placard near by announced that they had been reduced in price from two dollars and fifty cents to one dollar and ninety-eight cents; and a young girl who stood behind the counter asked her if she wished to examine their line of silk hosiery. She smiled, just as if she had been asked to inspect a tiara of diamonds with the ultimate view of purchasing it. But she went on feeling the soft, sheeny luxurious things – with both hands now, holding them up to see them glisten, and to feel them glide serpent-like through her fingers.

Two hectic blotches came suddenly into her pale cheeks. She looked up at the girl.

"Do you think there are any eights-and-a-half among these?"

There were any number of eights-and-a-half. In fact, there were more of that size than any other. Here was a light-blue pair; there were some lavender, some all black and various shades of tan and gray. Mrs Sommers selected a black pair and looked at them very long and closely. She pretended to be examining their texture, which the clerk assured her was excellent.

"A dollar and ninety-eight cents," she mused aloud. "Well, I'll take this pair." She handed the girl a five-dollar bill and waited for her change and for her parcel. What a very small parcel it was! It seemed lost in the depths of her shabby old shopping-bag.

Mrs Sommers after that did not move in the direction of the bargain counter. She took the elevator, which carried her to an upper floor into the region of the ladies' waiting-rooms. Here, in a retired corner, she exchanged her cotton stockings for the new silk ones which she had just bought. She was not going through any acute mental process or reasoning with

herself, nor was she striving to explain to her satisfaction the motive of her action. She was not thinking at all. She seemed for the time to be taking a rest from that laborious and fatiguing function and to have abandoned herself to some mechanical impulse that directed her actions and freed her of responsibility.

How good was the touch of the raw silk to her flesh! She felt like lying back in the cushioned chair and reveling for a while in the luxury of it. She did for a little while. Then she replaced her shoes, rolled the cotton stockings together and thrust them into her bag. After doing this she crossed straight over to the shoe department and took her seat to be fitted.

She was fastidious. The clerk could not make her out; he could not reconcile her shoes with her stockings, and she was not too easily pleased. She held back her skirts and turned her feet one way and her head another way as she glanced down at the polished, pointed-tipped boots. Her foot and ankle looked very pretty. She could not realize that they belonged to her and were a part of herself. She wanted an excellent and stylish fit, she told the young fellow who served her, and she did not mind the difference of a dollar or two more in the price so long as she got what she desired.

It was a long time since Mrs Sommers had been fitted with gloves. On rare occasions when she had bought a pair they were always 'bargains', so cheap that it would have been preposterous and unreasonable to have expected them to be fitted to the hand.

Now she rested her elbow on the cushion of the glove counter, and a pretty, pleasant young creature, delicate and deft of touch, drew a long-wristed 'kid' over Mrs Sommers's hand. She smoothed it down over the wrist and buttoned it neatly, and both lost themselves for a second or two in admiring contemplation of the little symmetrical gloved hand. But there were other places where money might be spent.

There were books and magazines piled up in the window of a stall a few paces down the street. Mrs Sommers bought two high-priced magazines such as she had been accustomed to read in the days when she had been accustomed to other pleasant things. She carried them without wrapping. As well as she could she lifted her skirts at the crossings. Her stockings and boots and well fitting gloves had worked marvels in her bearing – had given her a feeling of assurance, a sense of belonging to the well-dressed multitude.

She was very hungry. Another time she would have stilled the cravings for food until reaching her own home, where she would have brewed herself a cup of tea and taken a snack of anything that was available. But the impulse that was guiding her would not suffer her to entertain any such thought.

There was a restaurant at the corner. She had never entered its doors; from the outside she had sometimes caught glimpses of spotless damask and shining crystal, and soft-stepping waiters serving people of fashion.

When she entered her appearance created no surprise, no consternation, as she had half feared it might. She seated herself at a small table alone, and an attentive waiter at once approached to take her order. She did not want a profusion; she craved a nice and tasty bite – a half dozen blue-points, a plump chop with cress, a something sweet – a crème-frappée, for instance; a glass of Rhine wine, and after all a small cup of black coffee.

While waiting to be served she removed her gloves very leisurely and laid them beside her. Then she picked up a magazine and glanced through it, cutting the pages with a blunt edge of her knife. It was all very agreeable. The damask was even more spotless than it had seemed through the window, and the crystal more sparkling. There were quiet ladies and gentlemen, who did not notice her, lunching at the small tables like her own. A soft, pleasing strain of music could be heard, and a gentle breeze, was blowing through the window. She tasted a bite, and she read a word or two, and she sipped the amber wine and wiggled her toes in the silk stockings. The price of it made no difference. She counted the money out to the waiter and left an extra coin on his tray, whereupon he bowed before her as before a princess of royal blood.

There was still money in her purse, and her next temptation presented itself in the shape of a *matinée* poster.

It was a little later when she entered the theatre, the play had begun and the house seemed to her to be packed. But there were vacant seats here and there, and into one of them she was ushered, between brilliantly dressed women who had gone there to kill time and eat candy and display their gaudy attire. There were many others who were there solely for the play and acting. It is safe to say there was no one present who bore quite the attitude which Mrs Sommers did to her surroundings. She gathered in the whole – stage and players and people in one wide impression, and absorbed it and enjoyed it. She laughed at the comedy and wept – she and the gaudy woman next to her wept over the tragedy. And they talked a little together over it. And the gaudy woman wiped her eyes and sniffled on a tiny square of filmy, perfumed lace and passed little Mrs Sommers her box of candy.

The play was over, the music ceased, the crowd filed out. It was like a dream ended. People scattered in all directions. Mrs Sommers went to the corner and waited for the cable car.

A man with keen eyes, who sat opposite to her, seemed to like the study of her small, pale face. It puzzled him to decipher what he saw there. In truth, he saw nothing – unless he were wizard enough to detect a poignant wish, a powerful longing that the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go on and on with her forever.

READING TASKS

Task I. Symbols of the story

The story is full of symbols. Please complete the table below by matching the symbol with its possible meaning

1. Gloves	a) leisure, possibility to waste time
2. Silk stockings	b) forgotten luxury which does not fit into her present life
3. Magazines	c) everyday necessity from the past

4. Money	d) the key image of the story, longing for better life, careless life and luxury
5. Bargain	e) the place which gives the feeling of belonging to the “chosen circle”, the “truly rich and powerful”
6. Theatre	f) everyday compromise
7. Restaurant	g) the “entrance ticket” to the better life

Answers: 1b, 2d, 3c, 4g, 5f, 6a, 7e

Task II. Interpreting meanings in the story

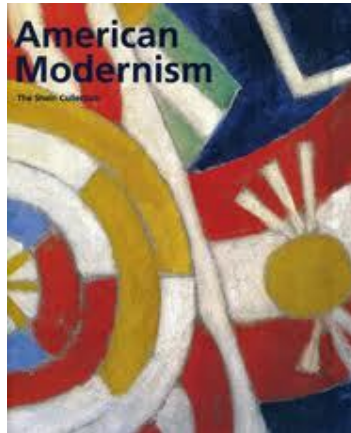
1. How do you understand Mrs Sommers’s wish at the end of the story – the cable car would go on without stopping. What do you predict will happen next in the text?
2. What detail about the character’s earlier life (obvious and those which are barely mentioned) explain her motivation for the shopping spree?
3. When Mrs Sommers feels the black stockings, they “glide serpentlike” through her fingers. What does a serpent often symbolize in culture and literature? Explain if you think the word was chosen significantly?

TOPIC V: AMERICAN MODERNISM

This topic provides a brief introduction to the Modern period in the history of American literature, pinpointing its importance and representing examples of American Modern poetry. On completion of the topic a student:

- is aware of the key figures of the period;
- has got acquainted with peculiarities of style of R. Frost and ee Cummings;
- has compared the poets’ styles and discussed them on the examples of the poems of his/her choice.

TOPIC V: AMERICAN MODERNISM



The Modern period of the American literature (the first three-four decades of the 20th century) has been one of the most fruitful in its history: it is the time of great names both in novel writing (William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Theodore Dreiser, and Jack London), in poetry (Langston Hughes, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and Robert Frost), and in drama (Eugene O’Neil).

American writers of the Modern period were, as well as their European counterparts, deeply influenced by the movement the sense of which lay in disillusionment with the traditions that seemed to have become spiritually empty, in the call for bold experimentation and in a sweeping rejection of all traditional themes and styles.

Although denial of the classic traditions, desire of the experimentation, and the search for news forms affected all the genres, their influence seemed to have been the most obvious in poetry. The period of experimentation began when American poets of the beginning of the 20th century began discovering the artistic life of Europe. The main destination of the time was Paris, where young composers, novelists and poets got inspired by the works of great artists, such as Pablo Picasso, George Braque, and Henri Matisse. These writers were exploring new ways of seeing and representing the reality.

MODERN AMERICAN POETRY READING TASK

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Robert Lee Frost frequently used themes from rural life in New England, using the setting to examine complex social and philosophical themes. A popular and often-quoted poet, Frost was honored frequently during his lifetime, receiving four Pulitzer Prizes. His popularity is easy to explain: he wrote on traditional farm life, appealing to nostalgia of old days. His subjects are universal –apple picking, stone walls, fences, country roads. Frost’s approach was lucid and accessible: he rarely employed allusions or ellipses. His frequent use of rhyme also appealed to the general audience. Frost’s work is often deceptively simple. Many poems suggest a deeper meaning.

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962) - ee cummings

Cummings' publishers and others have sometimes echoed the unconventional orthography in his poetry by writing his name in lower case and without periods. Cummings himself used both the lowercase and capitalized versions. Cummings' poetry often deals with themes of love and nature, as well as the relationship of the individual to the masses and to the world. His poems are also often rife with satire. Cummings also liked to incorporate imagery of nature and death into much of his poetry. Cummings' unorthodox typographical style: a particular idiosyncrasy of syntax, or way of arranging individual words into larger phrases and sentences. Many of his most striking poems do not involve any typographical or punctuation innovations at all, but purely syntactic ones. No titles. Intentional misspellings, and several incorporate phonetic spellings intended to represent particular dialects. Cummings also made use of inventive formations of compound words.

“since feeling is first
who pays any attention
to the syntax of things
will never wholly kiss you;

wholly to be a fool
while Spring is in the world

my blood approves,
and kisses are a far better fate
than wisdom
lady i swear by all flowers. Don't cry
--the best gesture of my brain is less than
your eyelids' flutter which says

we are for eachother: then
laugh, leaning back in my arms
for life's not a paragraph

And death i think is no parenthesis”

FORUM TASK

Please advocate for the style of one of the two poets: do you prefer Frost's more conventional forms or Cummings's energetic verses? Explain your preferences supporting them with the example from two more poems by the poet you have chosen.

EXAM VARIANT 1

Answer to the following theoretical questions:

1. How would you characterize the Native American Literature?
2. Please describe the preconditions and the obstacles for the independence of American literature.
3. Please explain Franklin's importance for the Enlightenment movement and describe his style of writing.
4. Please describe the Transcendental movement (main ideas, beliefs, principles).
5. How can you characterize the American Fiction (topics and attitudes) of the Realistic Movement?

Match the name of the author with the title of his/her work:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Washington Irving | 1. Moby-Dick |
| 2. Walt Whitman | 2. A Pair of Silk Stockings |
| 3. Herman Melville | 3. Leaves of Grass |
| 4. Kate Chopin | 4. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn |
| 5. Mark Twain | 5. In Another Country |
| 6. Ernest Hemingway | 6. Rip Van Winkle |

EXAM VARIANT 2

Answer to the following theoretical questions:

1. Could you name and briefly describe the main topics of the literature of exploration and the Puritan literature?
2. What are the main characteristics of the American Enlightenment?
3. Please describe peculiarities (in attitudes, trends and techniques) of American Romanticism.
4. Please describe the historical and economical preconditions for the Realistic Movement in American literature.

5. Please describe the historical and economical preconditions for the Modernist Movement in American literature.

Match the name of the author with the title of his/her work:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Nathaniel Hawthorne | 1. The Fall of the House of Usher |
| 2. Emily Dickinson | 2. The Minister's Black Veil |
| 3. H.W. Longfellow | 3. The Autobiography |
| 4. Benjamin Franklin | 4. The Ropewalk |
| 5. Thomas Jefferson | 5. The Autobiography |
| 6. E.A. Poe | 6. The soul selects her own Society |

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