

AMERICAN LITERATURE

America has been home to many famous writers in history, from Jack London, Francis Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway to John Irving.

- The beginnings

The beginnings of modern American literature/ **the first BOOKS are CONNECTED TO Spanish and Portuguese** [porčugís] *landing in America* in the 16th century and **EXPLORING NEW PLACES**. *The Native Americans were the first people to live on this land, but they farmed and hunted and didn't have much written work. Their stories and beliefs were told and handed down generation by generation.*



- Colonization and independence

In the 17th century a lot of **books about THE NATIVE AMERICANS/ THE AMERICAN INDIANS** were written. They were describing the indians' language, habits, life, the weather in America, calendar etc. (and so on). *The colonists were taking their land. It resulted in [rýzaltýd] (vedlo k) conflicts with the Native Americans.* At the end of the 18th century colonists started a *revolution* against



the British army because of the rise of tax on tea, (it was called (*Boston Tea Party*)). On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence, was written, one of the main authors was **Thomas Jefferson**. He said „*I cannot live without books.*“ Jefferson wrote numerous *letters, notes, kept records* about the Native Americans, he wrote his own *autobiography and many books*.

The Revolutionary *War ended and America became an independent country.*

- 19th century literature [litryč]

The country went through **CIVIL WAR**, ending with *the abolition of slavery*.

The most famous writers in the 19th century include:

Edgar Allan Poe, the father of horror, with stories like the Fall of the House of Usher.

Herman Melville, who used his experience as a sailor to write novels like Moby Dick, about a hunt for a white whale.

Mark Twain wrote about life along the Mississippi Rive with stories like The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Jack London became popular with his adventurous books, sometimes based on his experiences from the gold rush (zlatá horečka).



- BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS [w@ld wórs]

Francis Scott Fitzgerald wrote a novel called The Great Gatsby, describing people trying to *follow the „American dream to become rich* and respected in society.

The term **The Lost Generation** is used for authors influenced by World War I (the first world war). The writers lost their illusions, they didn't see any future.

Ernest Hemingway was the first who used this term in his book.

- Post World War II literature (Post second world war period - literature **AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR**)

Some writers *used their war experience* in their novels. They wrote about the war.

William Styron [stajron] described devastating [devastejtýng] influence (vliv) of war in Sophie's Choice [čóis](čois)



- CONTEMPORARY (current/ PRESENT) WRITER

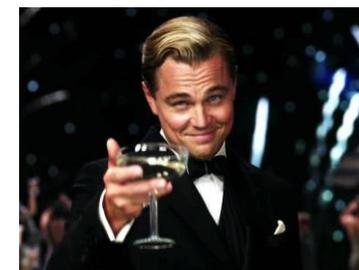
There are many current American writers.

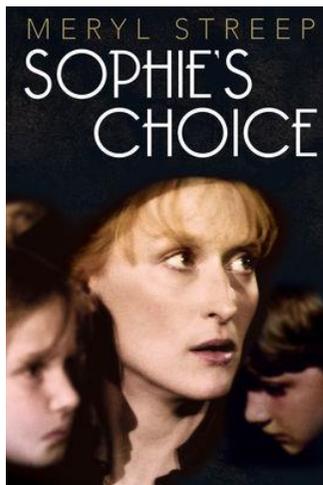
One of them is for example **John Irving**, who writes original novels about unusual characters. He became famous with his novel The World According to Garp. Garp is kind and loving and too good for the real world. He grows up with his eccentric mother and tries to save his family from the modern chaos. In the end, Garp is murdered by a crazy girl.

FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD

The Great Gatsby is classics, *the book was made into* a film. It is an American romantic drama, *released in 2013*. The film stars Leonardo DiCaprio. The film *follows the life and times of a billionaire Jay Gatsby* and his neighbour Nick.

The film has won many awards for acting, soundtrack, visual affects and directing. The story takes place in New York. **Nick** Carraway, **Gatsby's neighbour** lives and works in New York. *A poor man falls in love with a rich girl and spends the rest of his life getting rich to impress her*. He is invited to Gatsby's expensive party in his huge house. He tells the story. The book shows contrasts, *the world of money, drinking, power, class differences, love and revenge*. Gatsby has a history of crime, some dirty friends, and is having an affair with Daisy, Nick's young cousin. Great Gatsby is a book about a rich man who tries to win back his teenage sweetheart even though she is married, and is shot by her husband. No money can buy him love. You can never reach/get what you want in your life. It is about people who lose optimism and hope. Fitzgerald died young, as a member of the "lost generation," who sank deep into alcoholism.





WILLIAM STYRON

Sophie's choice is a **war drama**, a book that was also made into a film. Sophie is an introvert with **a traumatic story that happened to her during the war**. The film stars Meryl Streep. It is about three friends sharing a boarding house in New York, in Brooklyn. Sophie is a Polish girl, the survivor of Nazi concentration camp. The book tells a story of **Sophie who is trapped between two bad options**. Sophie's choice is centered on a scene in Auschwitz where Sophie has just **arrived at the concentration camp with her ten-year old son and her seven-year old daughter** and a sadistic doctor tells her that **she can only bring one of her children**; one will be allowed to live while **the other is to be killed**.

As a mother, Sophie adores both of her children and can't make this agonizing choice, until **several soldiers force her to choose** and she gives her daughter to them.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Ernest Hemingway was one of the best-known American writers. He lived in the USA, in Paris and Cuba. He made a member of **hunting trips to Africa** and he **traveled all his life**. He was a **newspaper reporter** and that is why he was **deeply interested in public events**. He used to take part in many public events. **In World War I he served as an ambulance driver, during the Spanish Civil War he stayed in Spain** and reported on it. He was keen on hunting trips so **he has a great respect for courage**. [karidž](kuráž) His brave characters do not always survive but they live their lives to the fullest.

Hemingway **belonged to a group of American intellectuals who called themselves "the lost generation"**. **They felt that having lived through one disaster - the war - they could expect another, still worse, catastrophe**. Life can get even worse. Their work is full of **pessimism**.

His books are very emotional. His **interest in hunting, fishing and bull-fighting** is reflected in his heroes. First Hemingway won popularity with The Sun Also Rises. Hemingway's best books are A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls (these are **novels**) and short **story** The Old Man and the Sea. In A Farewell to Arms Hemingway shows the charming and moving love of an American lieutenant in the Italian Ambulance Service and an English nurse. "For Whom the Bell Tolls" is a psychological picture of the Spanish Civil War. The



main character **knows he is going to die. In the end he realizes what a beautiful place the world really is and how much it is worth fighting for**.

In the short story The Old Man and the Sea Hemingway shows **the fight between nature and man**. The main character of the story is **Santiago**, a poor old Cuban fisherman who goes fishing with a boy as a helper. But for **forty days they have bad luck and catch no fish**. One day, **Santiago is forced to go out to sea alone**, after 84 days of bad luck, Santiago catches **a very big fish**. **After a long fight he kills it and fastens it to the boat**. Santiago has to fight with several sharks. **When he reaches his homeport, there is nothing left of the fish but only its skeleton**. (kostra)

Santiago is **typical character in Hemingway's novels. He knows he cannot win his battle against the forces of the nature but he fights on even when he knows that the fight is useless**. **Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize** for this short story in 1954.

During the last years of his life Hemingway **suffered from a depression, which led to his suicide** in 1961. Some of his work was published after his death.

EDGAR ALLAN POE



was an **American writer, editor, and literary critic**. He was born in Baltimore, in the USA. His father left the family, his **mother died** before he was 3. The Allan family raised him as a **foster child**. (vychovali ho jako chráněnce/ své dítě). Poe had **many conflicts** with the family. He **suffered from alcoholism and depressions, he also took drugs**. His lifestyle didn't change even with success in writing, work, or marriage. Poe is **best known**

for his poetry and short stories, especially his **tales of mystery**. He is the **inventor of the detective fiction. He is the father of horror**.

The Raven is his most famous piece of work. It is a poem. Poe describes **emotions, feelings, scary mystery, motives of love and death**. He escalates torture [tóčr](stupňuje muka/trápení). **The Raven flies from a storm into a quiet, calm room, where the main character, a man, is thinking about the recent loss/ the death of his great love Lenor**. He hears tapping outside and opens the window. **The raven makes the boy feel even more depressed when it constantly repeats the words „never more“**, again and again (and the raven said: „Nevermore“). The book was **translated into many languages** – some authors do not translate the words „nevermore“ to make the poem more dramatic. A havran řekl „víckrát už ne“. It was also made into many films. One of them is for example **Tim Burton's** adaptation or **the Simpsons**.

Vítězslav Nezval translated the poem into Czech. It's called Havran.

Jednou o půlnoci, maje horečku a rozjímaje, nad divnými svazky vědy prastaré a záslužné -když jsem klímal v polospaní, ozvalo se znenadání velmi jemné zaťukání na dveře - a pak už ne.