

Authoring America:

A Survey of American Literature
from Its Beginnings to 2020

An Open Anthology



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Volume 4: American Literature from 1914-1945

An Open Anthology

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This open textbook was developed as an adaptation of the textbook *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* by Amy Berke, Robert Bleil, Jordan Cofer, and Doug Davis, developed at the University of Georgia and the Galileo Open Learning Materials program. We appreciate the editors and creators making the text available for adaptation. The current work includes literary works representative of additional periods in the history of American literature, and intentionally includes non-canonical, ethnic, and/or countercultural writers. Also included here are essays providing information about the texts' cultural contexts and historical relevance.

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I appreciate the help of Chelsea Alderman, who assisted me in transcribing some of the texts.

As all of us who study literature know, this anthology is far from complete, as all anthologies are. I've tried to include diverse voices. Copyright has been a challenge. If there is anything you want to see added, please email me at cgrogan@udel.edu, and I will look into including it. In addition to being incomplete, this anthology is also far from perfect. If you see any mistakes, please email me at cgrogan@udel.edu, and I will correct them. And if you'd like the Word versions of the volumes, I'm happy to share them if you email me at cgrogan@udel.edu.

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Volume 4: 1914-1945

4.1 Introduction to Modernism

The following is a revised version of the introductory essay to Chapter 5 of *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

“Make it New” instructed Ezra Pound, encouraging innovative work. Whether it was technology, art, architecture, or poetry, Modernism sought to reinvent the world, a world engaged in the first of two world wars. Uninhibited by the past, the Modernist era redefined America’s political, religious, economic, and social values. From areas of women’s suffrage to the invention of the assembly line, from Harlem to the Deep South, Modernism was a time of social upheaval, extraordinary growth, and accelerated change for America.

Dubbed “the Great War,” WWI was largely a four-year (1914-1918) European conflict between the Allied Forces (Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy), and the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire). Yet it brought turbulent changes to the entire world, America included. Although America did not officially enter the war effort until 1917, many young men already volunteered before then to fight with other detachments, such men including Ernest Hemingway, who was stationed as an ambulance driver on the Italian front. This war was the first global war and, as the world evolved, so did warfare. Additionally, this war was the first fully-industrialized war, featuring shelling, machine guns, mustard gas, and several other kinds of advanced weaponry. Indeed this war was the likes of which no one had ever seen. As such, it was a war of attrition, with over 30 million casualties. Never before in the history of civilization had there been such a large and full-scale military affair. Although in 1918, the Armistice signaled the end to World War I, many tensions and hostilities remained, especially among the combatants who felt disillusioned and used by their country. It’s no coincidence that in 1919, just one year later, riots broke out across the United States. After the dust settled, one thing was clear: the world had changed permanently; this change would be at the heart of Modernist literature and art.

Of course World War I did not end European conflict; tension began to arise when Adolf Hitler came to power in the 1930s and bristled under Germany’s heavy sanctions imposed by the Armistice. Hitler’s rise in Germany would lead to World War II, which the United States tried to avoid using isolationist policies. However, Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) served as the catalyst for

America's entrance into World War II. This period between the two wars marks an important time in American life and culture. During this time, America grew and matured, largely in reaction to these events that unified the nation against common enemies. This unprecedented American growth included growth from immigration, industrialization, technological developments, and the development of the modern cities.

If the mantra of Modernism was Pound's "Make it New," then the defining characteristic for the generation comes from Gertrude Stein's comment to young Ernest Hemingway that you are all "*une generation perdue*" (you all are a lost generation). With the economy at an all-time high—due to the increased industrial manufacturing and development of so many new industries—came an increase in wealth in America; indeed, the Modernist period is characterized by the boom of a growing economy before the bust of the Great Depression. While overall wealth increased, dissatisfaction with America also increased and a growing number of young people, artists and veterans alike, lived as expatriates outside the country—largely taking up residence in France and Spain. Most notable among these expatriates were writers T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway. This movement is depicted in Hemingway's novel, *The Sun Also Rises*.

The industrial revolution and the meteoric rise of factories helped shift the nation's economy from its agricultural roots to an industry-based economy. World War I (which began in 1914) along with America's entrance into the war (1917) put pressure on all of the citizens to ration goods and supplies. To meet demand, more factories began to experiment with mass production. This boom led to more jobs and a stronger economy, often referred to as the Boom years. Furthermore, while live music led to the prevalence of nightclubs, Prohibition created an underground industry of bootlegging to supply alcohol for these entertainment and music venues. This instant wealth led to a greater population of the newly rich and encouraged growth throughout the country. Often called "The Jazz Age," this era of wealth was written about by many different Modernists but made famous by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

However, the Boom years did not last forever. This age of prosperity came to a sudden halt in October 1929, when the sudden stock market collapse led to the Great Depression. The economic downturn led to more than 10,000 banks shutting down and more than 15 million workers becoming unemployed. Worse still, a series of droughts in the early 1930s, known as the "Dust Bowl," left 500,000 people homeless, as many of these families moved to California looking for work. The Great Depression became a major literary theme chronicled, most notably, by John Steinbeck in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1932) ushered in the age of “The New Deal.” During the New Deal era, Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which used federal funds to put more people to work, building America’s infrastructure. The WPA was responsible for roads, various public buildings, and other projects, most notably the Hoover Dam, using federal funds. The WPA provided employment for millions, including writers and artists who were sponsored by the Federal Writers’ Project. James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, featuring the photography of Walker Evans, was an eye-opening book that captured the extent of New Deal poverty in the American South.

At the same time, more and more people started migrating out of small rural agricultural areas into cities. Most notable among this time period is the Great Migration, during which African-Americans left the South to escape poverty and Jim Crow laws and moved to larger cities like Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and New York. The Great Migration included as many as 1.5 million African-Americans and represents the greatest population shift in American history. These cultural and population shifts, along with the freedom of transportation, caused cultural cross-pollination, as people brought their old customs to new places. These shifts helped spark regional cultural revolutions, such as the Harlem Renaissance in Harlem, which brought many important African-American artists to the forefront and is captured in works like Zora Neal Huston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or Jean Toomer’s *Cane*. Additionally, the Southern Literary Renaissance, also referred to by Southern Writers as the Southern Literary Renascence, foregrounded the creativity of the South and brought authors like William Faulkner and Eudora Welty to national prominence.

New technologies were changing the face of modern life. The Brooklyn Bridge, completed in 1883, was a giant suspension bridge which connected Brooklyn with Manhattan. Although it pre-dates Modernism, it was seen as one of America’s greatest technological achievements and was the subject of Hart Crane’s famous Modernist book of poems, *The Bridge*. The invention of the automobile by inventors like Henry Ford and the development of the assembly line in the early 1920s not only created an industry, but also spurred investments in America’s infrastructure, that is, its roads and highways. Suddenly, all of America was connected and personal travel was more readily available. The mass production of phonographs, projection reels, and telephones made these technologies more accessible to the public and allowed for more recording, making mass culture possible. The same could be said about the publishing industry, which flourished during this time. The paperback book made books more affordable, and the development of Book-of-the-Month clubs and subscription reading programs allowed for mass audiences, giving rise to the modern day “best seller.” The affordability of magazines also made them a popular venue for

many writers, as F. Scott Fitzgerald regularly published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, while many famous Modernist writers, such as Ezra Pound, held editorial positions for magazines, and literary magazines, such as *The Dial*, became popular venues for Modernist writers to publish.

The term Modernism as a literary term is largely used as a catchall for a global movement that was centered in the United States and Europe, for literature written during the two wars, which is said to be the first industrialized modern period. In another sense, Modernism refers to the general theme: much of the literature of the period is written in reaction to these accelerated times. After World War I, many writers felt betrayed by the United States, but even more than that, there was a general feeling of change, of progress, of questioning the ways of the past. Throughout the art of this time period, whether it is painting, sculpture, poetry, fiction, or non-fiction, all question the truths of the past, all question the status quo. Largely, this attitude goes hand-in-hand with the disaffection with politics caused by World War I.

There is no single style that would encompass all of Modernist poetry; rather, a lot of Modernist poetry could be separated as High Modernism and Low Modernism. These terms are not meant to serve as an aesthetic judgment about the quality of the work, but rather help us understand the range of experimentation occurring during this period. High Modernism features poets who are much more formal, such as T. S. Eliot with his “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and who look at the modern era as a period of loss, in some ways, looking at how much America has changed and fearing that the change might be for the worse. Essentially, in high Modernist works, the authors realize that society has shifted so much, it will never be possible to return to the old ways, so they often represent the world as fragmented, disjointed, or chaotic. High Modernist poetry also maintains a traditional structure and form and often contains explicit allusions to history, myth, or religion, such as the epigraph from Dante’s *Inferno* which begins T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”

Low Modernism is much less formal, experimenting with form. The poetry of William Carlos Williams, the doctor turned poet, is a great example of Low Modernism. His poetry—like “This is Just to Say” and “The Red Wheelbarrow”—often plays with the traditional structure of a poem. These writers tend to be so different that first-time readers often questioned whether these works—Williams’s “This is Just to Say”; Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro”; Cummings’s “[in Just-]”—are poems. Ezra Pound did not even consider himself a poet; rather, in his essay, “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste,” he refers to himself as an imagiste, or one who creates images.

Experimentation was not limited to Modernist poetry, as prose (fiction and non-fiction) writers were also challenging form, style, and content, that is, what you could or could not write about. Authors such as Faulkner experimented with how to tell a story, especially by using a rotating cast of characters often set in the same county of Yoknapatawpha, while Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* experimented with what exactly was a story. Sherwood Anderson's book, *Winesburg, Ohio*, was able to blur the line between short stories and the novel by writing a book of short stories that fit together as a novel. In much the same way, Jean Toomer's *Cane* combined poetry, prose, and drama in one strange and beautiful book, foregrounding the dangerous racial politics of the time. Modernist prose was much more than just experimentation, though, in that it also introduced new subject matter. Writers no longer felt the need to veil their opinions; instead, many were explicit in their political critiques. The Great Depression gave rise to Communism among many artists, especially in the works of Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, while the Women's Suffrage Movement highlighted early feminism. Furthermore, the widespread distribution of easily affordable magazines and paperbacks meant that these writers were reaching a wider audience with a more radical message.

The Modernist period was perhaps the birth of the American playwright. Before Modernism, theater consisted of largely vaudeville or productions of European works. However, the success of Eugene O'Neill paved the way for several other successful American playwrights, such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

Although theirs was a time of great change, the common thread that ties the Modernist writers together—whether they write poetry, prose, or drama—is the techniques they invented. Writers such as Faulkner, whose novel *The Sound and the Fury* offered an entirely new way to narrate a book, or Langston Hughes, whose poetry blended music and verse, developed entirely new ways of telling a story. Modernist writers radically rejected previous standards in an attempt to “make it new” and, in the process, changed the course of literary history.

4.2 Willa Cather (1873-1947)



Image 4.1: Willa Cather, 1936
Photographer: Carl Van Vechten
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Considered one of the finest American novelists of the first half of the twentieth century, Willa Cather was born Wilella Sibert Cather at her grandmother's farm in Back Creek Valley, Virginia, on December 7, 1873. The oldest of seven children, Cather preferred her four brothers to her two sisters. By the time she was a year old, her family was gifted 130 acres of land by her grandparents. They moved onto the land into a house named the Willow Shade. In 1883, the Cathers moved west to rural Webster County, Nebraska, when Willa was nine. A year and a half later, they resettled in Red Cloud, Nebraska, where Cather lived until college. The father, Charles, turned to farming as a source of income for the family but after 18 months, he started his own business in insurance and real estate. Her mother worked as a school teacher. While in Nebraska, Cather was influenced by prairie land and the Bohemian and Scandinavian immigrants. She captures pioneer life of the western plains in her writing.

Cather attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, graduating in the year 1895. She first intended to study science and medicine. However, after one of her English essays was published in the Lincoln newspaper by her teacher, she changed her career choice to writer. She was published in the *Nebraska State Journal* and the *Lincoln Courier* during her college years, where she wrote music and theatre reviews and produced four columns per week.

After graduation, she accepted the position of managing editor with the women's magazine *Home Monthly* and moved to Pittsburgh. She became known for her poetry and short stories, contributing to *The Library* publication as well. Cather worked at Central High School in Pittsburgh for a year, teaching Latin, algebra, and English. Her career in journalism progressed and was recognized in 1906. She was hired for an editing position for the most widely circulated general monthly in the U.S., *McClure's Magazine*, in New York City.

Her first book was published in 1903: titled *April Twilights*, it featured her poetry. It was followed in 1905 by a collection of short stories, *The Troll Garden*, which contains "The Sculptor's Funeral!" reproduced below. By 1912, she was able to leave editorial work and work full time as a writer. During her career, she published twelve novels, six collections of short fiction, two editions of her book of poetry, and numerous works of nonfiction, collected journalism, speeches, and letters. Her works include *Alexander's Bridge* (1912), *One of Ours* (1922), *A Lost Lady* (1923), *The Professor's House* (1925), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), *Lucy Gayheart* (1935), and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940).

The novels for which she is most known include *O Pioneers!* (1913), *The Song of the Lark* (1915), and *My Ántonia* (1918). These stories draw on the farm life she knew from her childhood. *O Pioneers!* centers on immigrant farmers overcoming the challenges of prairie life. Praised by many critics, *My Ántonia* is regarded as one of the most beautiful and influential love stories ever written. Cather received the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1923, the Howells Medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1943, and a gold medal for fiction from the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1944. In addition to University of Nebraska and University of Michigan, other universities awarded her honorary degrees, including Yale, Princeton, and Berkeley.

Cather died in New York City on April 24, 1947, from a cerebral hemorrhage and was buried in Jaffery, New Hampshire. Engraved on her tombstone is this quotation from *My Ántonia*: “that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great.” She lived with domestic partner and professional writer, Edith Lewis, for about 39 years.

At times dismissed as a regional writer who wrote sentimental books, Cather’s work has drawn interest in the last few decades, and critics have increasingly identified her as a canonical American writer, on a par with Hemingway and Faulkner. The Willa Cather Memorial Prairie was constructed in Red Cloud, Nebraska, in her honor. She is said to have been the first to grant immigrants a respectable place in American literature. One of her best endorsements comes from poet Wallace Stevens, who said: “We have nothing better than she is. She takes so much pains to conceal her sophistication that it is easy to miss her quality.”

The Willa Cather biography was written by Olivia Sonson, a University of Delaware student.

4.2.1 “A Sculptor’s Funeral!” (1905)

A group of the townspeople stood on the station siding of a little Kansas town, awaiting the coming of the night train, which was already twenty minutes overdue. The snow had fallen thick over everything; in the pale starlight the line of bluffs across the wide, white meadows south of the town made soft, smoke-colored curves against the clear sky. The men on the siding stood first on one foot and then on the other, their hands thrust deep into their trousers pockets, their overcoats open, their shoulders screwed up with the cold; and they glanced from time to time toward the southeast, where the railroad track wound along the river shore. They conversed in low tones and moved about restlessly, seeming uncertain as to what was expected of them. There was but one of the company who looked as though he knew exactly why he was there, and he kept conspicuously apart, walking to the far end of the platform, returning to the station door, then pacing up the track again, his chin sunk in the high collar of his overcoat, his burly shoulders drooping forward, his gait heavy and dogged. Presently he was approached by a tall, spare, grizzled man clad in a faded Grand Army suit, who shuffled out from the group and advanced with a certain deference, craning his neck forward until his back made the angle of a jack-knife three-quarters open.

“I reckon she’s a-goin’ to be pretty late agin to-night, Jim,” he remarked in a squeaky falsetto. “S’pose it’s the snow?”

“I don’t know,” responded the other man with a shade of annoyance, speaking from out an astonishing cataract of red beard which grew fiercely and thickly in all directions.

The spare man shifted the quill toothpick he was chewing to the other side of his mouth. “It ain’t likely that anybody from the East will come with the corpse, I s’pose?” he went on reflectively.

“I don’t know,” responded the other, more curtly than before.

“It’s too bad he didn’t belong to some lodge or other. I like an order funeral myself. They seem more appropriate for people of some reputation,” the spare man continued, with an ingratiating concession in his shrill voice, as he carefully placed his toothpick in his vest pocket. He always carried the flag at the G.A.R. funerals in the town.

The heavy man turned on his heel without replying, and walked up the siding. The spare man shuffled back to the uneasy group. “Jim’s ez full ez a tick, ez ushel,” he commented commiseratingly.

Just then a distant whistle sounded, and there was a shuffling of feet on the platform. A number of lanky boys of all ages appeared as suddenly and slimily as eels wakened by the crack of thunder; some came from the waiting-room, where they had been warming themselves by the red stove, or half asleep on the slat benches; others uncoiled themselves from baggage trucks or slid out of express wagons. Two clambered down from the driver’s seat of a hearse that stood backed up against the siding. They straightened their stooping shoulders and lifted their heads, and a flash of momentary animation kindled their dull eyes at that cold, vibrant scream, the world-wide call for men. It stirred them like the note of a trumpet; just as it had often stirred in his boyhood the man who was coming home to-night.

The night express shot, red as a rocket, out of the eastward marsh lands, and wound along the river shore under the long lines of shivering poplars that sentineled the meadows, the escaping steam hanging in gray masses against the pale sky and blotting out the Milky Way. In a moment the red glare from the headlight streamed up the snow-covered track before the siding and glittered on the wet, black rails. The burly man with the disheveled red beard walked swiftly up the platform toward the approaching train, uncovering his head as he went. The group of men behind him hesitated, glanced questioningly at one another, and awkwardly followed his example. The train stopped, and the crowd shuffled up to the express car just as the door was thrown open, the spare man in the G.A.R. suit

thrusting his head forward with curiosity. The express messenger appeared in the doorway, accompanied by a young man in a long ulster and traveling-cap.

“Are Mr. Merrick’s friends here?” inquired the young man.

The group on the platform swayed and shuffled uneasily. Philip Phelps, the banker, responded with dignity: “We have come to take charge of the body. Mr. Merrick’s father is very feeble and can’t be about.”

“Send the agent out here,” growled the express messenger, “and tell the operator to lend a hand.”

The coffin was got out of its rough box and down on the snowy platform. The townspeople drew back enough to make room for it and then formed a close semicircle about it, looking curiously at the palm-leaf which lay across the black cover. No one said anything. The baggageman stood by his truck, waiting to get at the trunks. The engine panted heavily, and the fireman dodged in and out among the wheels with his yellow torch and long oil-can, snapping the spindle boxes. The young Bostonian, one of the dead sculptor’s pupils, who had come with the body, looked about him helplessly. He turned to the banker, the only one of that black, uneasy, stoop-shouldered group who seemed enough of an individual to be addressed.

“None of Mr. Merrick’s brothers are here?” he asked uncertainly.

The man with the red beard for the first time stepped up and joined the group. “No, they have not come yet; the family is scattered. The body will be taken directly to the house.” He stooped and took hold of one of the handles of the coffin.

“Take the long hill road up, Thompson; it will be easier on the horses,” called the liveryman, as the undertaker snapped the door of the hearse and prepared to mount to the driver’s seat.

Laird, the red-bearded lawyer, turned again to the stranger: “We didn’t know whether there would be any one with him or not,” he explained. “It’s a long walk, so you’d better go up in the hack.” He pointed to a single battered conveyance, but the young man replied stiffly: “Thank you, but I think I will go up with the hearse. If you don’t object,” turning to the undertaker, “I’ll ride with you.”

They clambered up over the wheels and drove off in the starlight up the long, white hill toward the town. The lamps in the still village were shining from under the low, snow-burdened roofs; and beyond, on every side, the plains reached out into emptiness, peaceful and wide as the soft sky itself, and wrapped in a tangible, white silence.

When the hearse backed up to a wooden sidewalk before a naked, weather-beaten frame house, the same composite, ill-defined group that had stood upon the station siding was huddled about the gate. The front yard was an icy swamp, and a couple of warped planks, extending from the sidewalk to the door, made a sort of rickety foot-bridge. The gate hung on one hinge, and was opened wide with difficulty. Steavens, the young stranger, noticed that something black was tied to the knob of the front door.

The grating sound made by the casket, as it was drawn from the hearse, was answered by a scream from the house; the front door was wrenched open, and a tall, corpulent woman rushed out bareheaded into the snow and flung herself upon the coffin, shrieking: "My boy, my boy! And this is how you've come home to me!"

As Steavens turned away and closed his eyes with a shudder of unutterable repulsion, another woman, also tall, but flat and angular, dressed entirely in black, darted out of the house and caught Mrs. Merrick by the shoulders, crying sharply: "Come, come, mother; you musn't go on like this!" Her tone changed to one of obsequious solemnity as she turned to the banker: "The parlor is ready, Mr. Phelps."

The bearers carried the coffin along the narrow boards, while the undertaker ran ahead with the coffin-rests. They bore it into a large, unheated room that smelled of dampness and disuse and furniture polish, and set it down under a hanging lamp ornamented with jingling glass prisms and before a "Rogers group" of John Alden and Priscilla, wreathed with smilax. Henry Steavens stared about him with the sickening conviction that there had been some horrible mistake, and that he had somehow arrived at the wrong destination. He looked painfully about over the clover-green Brussels, the fat plush upholstery; among the hand-painted china plaques and panels and vases, for some mark of identification, for something that might once conceivably have belonged to Harvey Merrick. It was not until he recognized his friend in the crayon portrait of a little boy in kilts and curls, hanging above the piano, that he felt willing to let any of these people approach the coffin.

"Take the lid off, Mr. Thompson; let me see my boy's face," wailed the elder woman between her sobs. This time Steavens looked fearfully, almost beseechingly, into her face, red and swollen under its masses of strong, black, shiny hair. He flushed, dropped his eyes, and then, almost incredulously, looked again. There was a kind of power about her face—a kind of brutal handsomeness, even; but it was scarred and furrowed by violence, and so colored and coarsened by fiercer passions that grief seemed never to have laid a gentle finger there. The long nose was distended and knobbed at the end, and there were deep lines on either side of it; her heavy, black brows almost met across her forehead, her teeth were large and square, and set far apart—teeth that could tear. She filled the

room; the men were obliterated, seemed tossed about like twigs in an angry water, and even Steavens felt himself being drawn into the whirlpool.

The daughter—the tall, raw-boned woman in *crêpe*, with a mourning comb in her hair which curiously lengthened her long face—sat stiffly upon the sofa, her hands, conspicuous for their large knuckles, folded in her lap, her mouth and eyes drawn down, solemnly awaiting the opening of the coffin. Near the door stood a mulatto woman, evidently a servant in the house, with a timid bearing and an emaciated face pitifully sad and gentle. She was weeping silently, the corner of her calico apron lifted to her eyes, occasionally suppressing a long, quivering sob. Steavens walked over and stood beside her.

Feeble steps were heard on the stairs, and an old man, tall and frail, odorous of pipe smoke, with shaggy, unkempt gray hair and a dingy beard, tobacco-stained about the mouth, entered uncertainly. He went slowly up to the coffin and stood rolling a blue cotton handkerchief between his hands, seeming so pained and embarrassed by his wife's orgy of grief that he had no consciousness of anything else.

"There, there, Annie, dear, don't take on," he quavered timidly, putting out a shaking hand and awkwardly patting her elbow. She turned with a cry, and sank upon his shoulder with such violence that he tottered a little. He did not even glance toward the coffin, but continued to look at her with a dull, frightened, appealing expression, as a spaniel looks at the whip. His sunken cheeks slowly reddened and burned with miserable shame. When his wife rushed from the room, her daughter strode after her with set lips. The servant stole up to the coffin, bent over it for a moment, and then slipped away to the kitchen, leaving Steavens, the lawyer, and the father to themselves. The old man stood trembling and looking down at his dead son's face. The sculptor's splendid head seemed even more noble in its rigid stillness than in life. The dark hair had crept down upon the wide forehead; the face seemed strangely long, but in it there was not that beautiful and chaste repose which we expect to find in the faces of the dead. The brows were so drawn that there were two deep lines above the beaked nose, and the chin was thrust forward defiantly. It was as though the strain of life had been so sharp and bitter that death could not at once wholly relax the tension and smooth the countenance into perfect peace—as though he were still guarding something precious and holy which might even yet be wrested from him.

The old man's lips were working under his stained beard. He turned to the lawyer with timid deference: "Phelps and the rest are comin' back to set up with Harve, ain't they?" he asked. "Thank 'ee, Jim, thank 'ee." He brushed the hair back gently from his son's forehead. "He was a good boy, Jim; always a good boy. He was ez gentle ez a child and the kindest of 'em all—only we didn't none of us ever understand him." The tears trickled slowly down his beard and dropped upon the sculptor's coat.

“Martin, Martin—Oh, Martin! come here,” his wife wailed from the top of the stairs. The old man started timorously: “Yes, Annie, I’m coming.” He turned away, hesitated, stood for a moment in miserable indecision; then reached back and patted the dead man’s hair softly, and stumbled from the room.

“Poor old man, I didn’t think he had any tears left. Seems as if his eyes would have gone dry long ago. At his age nothing cuts very deep,” remarked the lawyer.

Something in his tone made Steavens glance up. While the mother had been in the room the young man had scarcely seen any one else; but now, from the moment he first glanced into Jim Laird’s florid face and blood-shot eyes, he knew that he had found what he had been heart-sick at not finding before—the feeling, the understanding, that must exist in some one, even here.

The man was red as his beard, with features swollen and blurred by dissipation, and a hot, blazing blue eye. His face was strained—that of a man who is controlling himself with difficulty—and he kept plucking at his beard with a sort of fierce resentment. Steavens, sitting by the window, watched him turn down the glaring lamp, still its jangling pendants with an angry gesture, and then stand with his hands locked behind him, staring down into the master’s face. He could not help wondering what link there could have been between the porcelain vessel and so sooty a lump of potter’s clay.

From the kitchen an uproar was sounding; when the dining-room door opened, the import of it was clear. The mother was abusing the maid for having forgotten to make the dressing for the chicken salad which had been prepared for the watchers. Steavens had never heard anything in the least like it; it was injured, emotional, dramatic abuse, unique and masterly in its excruciating cruelty, as violent and unrestrained as had been her grief of twenty minutes before. With a shudder of disgust, the lawyer went into the dining-room and closed the door into the kitchen.

“Poor Roxy’s getting it now,” he remarked when he came back. “The Merricks took her out of the poor-house years ago; and if her loyalty would let her, I guess the poor old thing could tell tales that would curdle your blood. She’s the mulatto woman who was standing in here a while ago, with her apron to her eyes. The old woman is a fury; there never was anybody like her for demonstrative piety and ingenious cruelty. She made Harvey’s life a hell for him when he lived at home; he was so sick ashamed of it. I never could see how he kept himself so sweet.”

“He was wonderful,” said Steavens slowly, “wonderful; but until to-night I have never known how wonderful.”

“That is the true and eternal wonder of it, anyway; that it can come even from such a dung-heap as this,” the lawyer cried, with a sweeping gesture which seemed to indicate much more than the four walls within which they stood.

“I think I’ll see whether I can get a little air. The room is so close I am beginning to feel rather faint,” murmured Steavens, struggling with one of the windows. The sash was stuck, however, and would not yield, so he sat down dejectedly and began pulling at his collar. The lawyer came over, loosened the sash with one blow of his red fist, and sent the window up a few inches. Steavens thanked him, but the nausea which had been gradually climbing into his throat for the last half hour left him with but one desire—a desperate feeling that he must get away from this place with what was left of Harvey Merrick. Oh, he comprehended well enough now the gentle bitterness of the smile that he had seen so often on his master’s lips!

He remembered that once, when Merrick returned from a visit home, he brought with him a singularly feeling and suggestive bas-relief of a thin, faded old woman, sitting and sewing something pinned to her knee; while a full-lipped, full-blooded little urchin, his trousers sustained by a single gallows, stood beside her impatiently twitching her gown to call her attention to a butterfly he had caught. Steavens, impressed by the tender and delicate modelling of the thin, tired face, had asked him if it were his mother. He remembered the dull flush that had burned up in the sculptor’s face.

The lawyer was sitting in a rocking-chair beside the coffin, his head thrown back and his eyes closed. Steavens looked at him earnestly, puzzled at the line of the chin, and wondering why a man should conceal a feature of such distinction under that disfiguring shock of beard. Suddenly, as though he felt the young sculptor’s keen glance, he opened his eyes.

“Was he always a good deal of an oyster?” he asked abruptly. “He was terribly shy as a boy.”

“Yes, he was an oyster, since you put it so,” rejoined Steavens. “Although he could be very fond of people, he always gave one the impression of being detached. He disliked violent emotion; he was reflective, and rather distrustful of himself—except, of course, as regarded his work. He was sure-footed enough there. He distrusted men pretty thoroughly, and women even more, yet somehow without believing ill of them. He was determined, indeed, to believe the best, but he seemed afraid to investigate.”

“A burnt dog dreads the fire,” said the lawyer grimly, and closed his eyes.

Steavens went on and on, reconstructing that whole miserable boyhood. All this raw, biting ugliness had been the portion of the man whose tastes were refined beyond the limits of the reasonable—whose mind was an exhaustless gallery of beautiful impressions, and so sensitive that the mere shadow of a poplar leaf flickering against a sunny wall would be etched and held there forever. Surely, if ever a man had the magic wand in his finger-tips, it was Merrick. Whatever he

touched, he revealed its holiest secret; liberated it from enchantment and restored it to its pristine loveliness, like the Arabian prince who fought the enchantress, spell for spell. Upon whatever he had come in contact with, he had left a beautiful record of the experience—a sort of ethereal signature; a scent, a sound, a color that was his own.

Steavens understood now the real tragedy of his master's life; neither love nor wine, as many had conjectured, but a blow which had fallen earlier and cut deeper than these could have done—a shame not his, and yet so unescapably his, to hide in his heart from his very boyhood. And without, the frontier warfare; the yearning of a boy, cast ashore upon a desert of newness and ugliness and sordidness, for all that is chastened and old, and noble with traditions.

At eleven o'clock the tall, flat woman in black crêpe entered and announced that the watchers were arriving, and asked them "to step into the dining-room." As Steavens rose, the lawyer said dryly: "You go on—it'll be a good experience for you, doubtless; as for me, I'm not equal to that crowd to-night; I've had twenty years of them."

As Steavens closed the door after him, he glanced back at the lawyer, sitting by the coffin in the dim light, with his chin resting on his hand.

The same misty group that had stood before the door of the express-car shuffled into the room. In the light of the kerosene lamp they separated and became individuals. The minister, a pale, feeble-looking man with white hair and blond chin-whiskers, took his seat beside a small side table, and placed his Bible upon it. The Grand Army man took a seat behind the stove and tilted his chair back comfortably against the wall, fishing his quill toothpick from his waistcoat pocket. The two bankers, Phelps and Elder, sat off in a corner behind the dinner-table, where they could finish their discussion of the new usury law and its effect on chattel security loans. The real estate agent, an old man with a smiling, hypocritical face, soon joined them. The coal and lumber dealer and the cattle shipper sat on opposite sides of the hard coal burner, their feet on the nickel-work. Steavens took a book from his pocket and began to read. The talk around him ranged through various topics of local interest while the house was quieting down. When it was clear that the members of the family were in bed, the Grand Army man hitched his shoulders, and untangling his long legs, caught his heels on the rounds of his chair.

"S'pose there'll be a will, Phelps?" he queried in his weak falsetto.

The banker laughed disagreeably, and began trimming his nails with a pearl-handled pocket-knife.

"There'll scarcely be any need for one, will there?" he queried in his turn.

The restless Grand Army man shifted his position again, getting his knees still nearer his chin. "Why, the ole man says Harve's done right well lately," he chirped.

The other banker spoke up. "I reckon he means by that Harve ain't asked him to mortgage any more farms lately so as he could go on with his education."

"Seems like my mind don't reach back to a time when Harve wasn't bein' edycated," tittered the Grand Army man.

There was a general chuckle. The minister took out his handkerchief and blew his nose sonorously. Banker Phelps closed his knife with a snap. "It's too bad the old man's sons didn't turn out better," he remarked, with reflective authority. "They never hung together. He spent money enough on Harve to stock a dozen cattle-farms, and he might as well have poured it into Sand Creek. If Harve had stayed at home and helped nurse what little they had, and gone into stock on the old man's bottom farm, they might all have been well fixed. But the old man had to trust everything to tenants and was cheated right and left."

"Harve never could have handled stock none," interposed the cattleman. "He hadn't it in him to be sharp. Do you remember when he bought Sander's mules for eight-year olds, when everybody in town knew that Sander's father-in-law give 'em to his wife for a wedding present eighteen years before, an' they was full-grown mules then."

Everyone chuckled, and the Grand Army man rubbed his knees with a spasm of childish delight.

"Harve never was much account for anything practical, and he shore was never fond of work," began the coal and lumber dealer. "I mind the last time he was home; the day he left, when the old man was out to the barn helpin' his hand hitch up to take Harve to the train, and Cal Moots was patchin' up the fence, Harve, he come out on the step and sings out, in his ladylike voice: 'Cal Moots, Cal Moots! please come cord my trunk.'"

"That's Harve for you," approved the Grand Army man gleefully. "I kin hear him howlin' yet, when he was a big feller in long pants, and his mother used to whale him with a rawhide in the barn for lettin' the cows git foundered in the cornfield when he was drivin' 'em home from pasture. He killed a cow of mine that-a-way onct—a pure Jersey and the best milker I had, an' the ole man had to put up for her. Harve, he was watchin' the sun set acrost the marshes when the anamile got away; he argued that sunset was on common fine."

"Where the old man made his mistake was in sending the boy East to school," said Phelps, stroking his goatee and speaking in a deliberate, judicial tone. "There was where he got his head full of trapseing to Paris and all such folly. What Harve

needed, of all people, was a course in some first-class Kansas City business college.”

The letters were swimming before Steaven’s eyes. Was it possible that these men did not understand, that the palm on the coffin meant nothing to them? The very name of their town would have remained forever buried in the postal guide, had it not been now and again mentioned in the world in connection with Harvey Merrick’s. He remembered what his master had said to him on the day of his death, after the congestion of both lungs had shut off any probability of recovery, and the sculptor had asked his pupil to send his body home. “It’s not a pleasant place to be lying while the world is moving and doing and bettering,” he had said, with a feeble smile: “but it rather seems as though we ought to go back to the place we came from in the end. The townspeople will come in for a look at me; and after they have had their say, I shan’t have much to fear from the judgment of God. The wings of the Victory, in there”—with a weak gesture toward his studio— “will not shelter me.”

The cattleman took up the comment. “Forty’s young for a Merrick to cash in; they usually hang on pretty well. Probably he helped it along with whisky.”

“His mother’s people were not long-lived, and Harvey never had a robust constitution,” said the minister mildly. He would have liked to say more. He had been the boy’s Sunday-school teacher, and had been fond of him; but he felt that he was not in a position to speak. His own sons had turned out badly, and it was not a year since one of them had made his last trip home in the express-car, shot in a gambling-house in the Black Hills.

“Nevertheless, there is no disputin’ that Harve frequently looked upon the wine when it was red, also variegated, and it shore made an uncommon fool of him,” moralized the cattleman.

Just then the door leading into the parlor rattled loudly, and everyone started involuntarily, looking relieved when only Jim Laird came out. His red face was convulsed with anger, and the Grand Army man ducked his head when he saw the spark in his blue, blood-shot eye. They were all afraid of Jim; he was a drunkard, but he could twist the law to suit his client’s needs as no other man in all western Kansas could do; and there were many who tried. The lawyer closed the door gently behind him, leaned back against it, and folded his arms, cocking his head a little to one side. When he assumed this attitude in the court-room, ears were always pricked up, as it usually foretold a flood of withering sarcasm.

“I’ve been with you gentlemen before,” he began in a dry, even tone, “when you’ve sat by the coffins of boys born and raised in this town; and, if I remember rightly, you were never any too well satisfied when you checked them up. What’s the matter, anyhow? Why is it that reputable young men are as scarce as millionaires in Sand City? It might almost seem to a stranger that there was some

way something the matter with your progressive town. Why did Reuben Sayer, the brightest young lawyer you ever turned out, after he had come home from the university as straight as a die, take to drinking and forge a check and shoot himself? Why did Bill Merrit's son die of the shakes in a saloon in Omaha? Why was Mr. Thomas's son, here, shot in a gambling-house? Why did young Adams burn his mill to beat the insurance companies, and go to the pen?"

The lawyer paused and unfolded his arms, laying one clenched fist quietly on the table. "I'll tell you why. Because you drummed nothing but money and knavery into their ears from the time they wore knickerbockers; because you carped away at them as you've been carping here to-night, holding our friends Phelps and Elder up to them for their models, as our grandfathers held up George Washington and John Adams. But the boys, worse luck, were young, and raw at the business you put them to; and how could they match coppers with such artists as Phelps and Elder? You wanted them to be successful rascals; they were only unsuccessful ones—that's all the difference. There was only one boy ever raised in this borderland between ruffianism and civilization who didn't come to grief, and you hated Harvey Merrick more for winning out than you hated all the other boys who got under the wheels. Lord, Lord, how you did hate him! Phelps, here, is fond of saying that he could buy and sell us all out any time he's a mind to; but he knew Harve wouldn't have given a tinker's damn for his bank and all his cattle-farms put together; and a lack of appreciation, that way, goes hard with Phelps.

"Old Nimrod, here, thinks Harve drank too much; and this from such as Nimrod and me!

"Brother Elder says Harve was too free with the old man's money—fell short in filial consideration, maybe. Well, we can all remember the very tone in which brother Elder swore his own father was a liar, in the county court; and we all know that the old man came out of that partnership with his son as bare as a sheared lamb. But maybe I'm getting personal, and I'd better be driving ahead at what I want to say."

The lawyer paused a moment, squared his heavy shoulders, and went on: "Harvey Merrick and I went to school together, back East. We were dead in earnest, and we wanted you all to be proud of us some day. We meant to be great men. Even I, and I haven't lost my sense of humor, gentlemen, I meant to be a great man. I came back here to practise, and I found you didn't in the least want me to be a great man. You wanted me to be a shrewd lawyer—oh, yes! Our veteran here wanted me to get him an increase of pension, because he had dyspepsia; Phelps wanted a new county survey that would put the widow Wilson's little bottom farm inside his south line; Elder wanted to lend money at 5 per cent a month and get it collected; old Stark here wanted to wheedle old women up in Vermont into investing their annuities in real-estate mortgages that are not worth the paper they

are written on. Oh, you needed me hard enough, and you'll go on needing me; and that's why I'm not afraid to plug the truth home to you this once.

"Well, I came back here and became the damned shyster you wanted me to be. You pretend to have some sort of respect for me; and yet you'll stand up and throw mud at Harvey Merrick, whose soul you couldn't dirty and whose hands you couldn't tie. Oh, you're a discriminating lot of Christians! There have been times when the sight of Harvey's name in some Eastern paper has made me hang my head like a whipped dog; and, again, times when I liked to think of him off there in the world, away from all this hog-wallow, doing his great work, and climbing the big, clean up-grade he'd set for himself.

"And we? Now that we've fought and lied and sweated and stolen and hated as only the disappointed strugglers in a bitter, dead little Western town know how to do, what have we got to show for it? Harvey Merrick wouldn't have given one sunset over your marshes for all you've got put together, and you know it. It's not for me to say why, in the inscrutable wisdom of God, a genius should ever have been called from this place of hatred and bitter waters; but I want this Boston man to know that the drivel he's been hearing here to-night is the only tribute any truly great man could ever have from such a lot of sick, side-tracked, burnt-dog, land-poor sharks as the here-present financiers of Sand City—upon which town may God have mercy!"

The lawyer thrust out his hand to Steavens as he passed him, caught up his overcoat in the hall, and had left the house before the Grand Army man had found time to lift his ducked head and crane his long neck about at his fellows.

Next day Jim Laird was drunk and unable to attend the funeral services. Steavens called twice at his office, but was compelled to start East without seeing him. He had a presentiment that he would hear from him again, and left his address on the lawyer's table; but if Laird found it, he never acknowledged it. The thing in him that Harvey Merrick had loved must have gone underground with Harvey Merrick's coffin; for it never spoke again, and Jim got the cold he died of driving across the Colorado mountains to defend one of Phelps's sons, who had got into trouble out there by cutting government timber.

4.3 Robert Frost (1874-1963)



Image 4.2: Robert Frost, circa 1910
Photographer: unknown
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When Robert Frost was asked to recite “The Gift Outright” at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in 1961, he was not only the first poet to be invited to participate in a presidential inauguration, but he was also an American icon whose poetry was as recognizable to the nation as were Norman Rockwell’s *Saturday Evening Post* covers. Yet like his contemporary Rockwell, Frost’s poems reflect a rapidly changing cultural landscape in which the warm glow of memory was tainted by the cold reality of a highly mechanized, and often cruel, world, as illustrated in “Design,” reproduced below. Frost was no passive megaphone for a comfortable past; like other Modernists, Frost melded traditional forms to the American vernacular to produce poetry that was strikingly American and contemporary.

Listeners and readers who are unfamiliar with Frost’s poetry often remark on the consistency of his poetic voice. Many of the poems, in fact, appear to originate from the same person, an older New England gentleman who spends much of his time reminiscing about the past, remarking wistfully on the changes taking place around him, and celebrating those rare moments when he has stepped out of the norm. Thus, poems like “The Road Not Taken,” are often recited at high school graduation ceremonies as a way to encourage students to take risks and celebrate life. Closer inspection of the poems reveals that this voice is not Frost’s at all, but that of an alter ego who exists not to highlight the past glories, but to underline very contemporary frustrations with a decaying world.

“Mending Wall,” a poem written around the time of Frost’s fortieth birthday in 1914, is a strong introduction to his use of this alter ego. A dramatic monologue in forty-five lines of iambic pentameter, the poem opens with the vague pronouncement, “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,” and proceeds to spell out the conditions for this seasonal activity, that of mending the fence that separates two farms. As the speaker and his neighbor proceed to rebuild the wall, each one responsible for the stones that have fallen onto his own side, the first farmer pauses to reflect on how it is that every year the wall requires new attention even though no one, save for a few hunters, has been observed disturbing the stones. This annual cycle of decay and reconstruction is at the heart of this poem, and the need for annual maintenance occurs not only in the world of fences, but in the world of human relationships as well.

This idea of continual decay and maintenance in human relationships provides a useful frame for understanding “Home Burial,” a longer narrative poem that describes the apparently divergent responses of a husband and wife to the death of one of their children. A primer in the relationship between appearance and reality as the wife and husband struggle to understand their individual

responses to this most recent death, the poem continues the theme of decay and rebuilding that is apparent in “Mending Wall.” As the husband and wife appear to move closer together in the poem, they must also rebuild trust in their own relationship. Throughout Frost’s poetry this cycle of decay and reconstruction continues unabated.

The Robert Frost biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.3.1 “Mending Wall” (1914)

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
‘Stay where you are until our backs are turned!’
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.’
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
‘Why do they make good neighbors? Isn’t it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

4.3.2 "Home Burial" (1914)

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs
Before she saw him. She was starting down,
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.
She took a doubtful step and then undid it
To raise herself and look again. He spoke
Advancing toward her: 'What is it you see
From up there always—for I want to know.'
She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,
And her face changed from terrified to dull.
He said to gain time: 'What is it you see,'
Mounting until she cowered under him.
'I will find out now—you must tell me, dear.'
She, in her place, refused him any help
With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,
Blind creature; and awhile he didn't see.
But at last he murmured, 'Oh,' and again, 'Oh.'

'What is it—what?' she said.

'Just that I see.'

'You don't,' she challenged. 'Tell me what it is.'

'The wonder is I didn't see at once.
I never noticed it from here before.
I must be wonted to it—that's the reason.
The little graveyard where my people are!
So small the window frames the whole of it.
Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it?
There are three stones of slate and one of marble,
Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight

On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*.
But I understand: it is not the stones,
But the child's mound—'

'Don't, don't, don't, don't,' she cried.

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm
That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;
And turned on him with such a daunting look,
He said twice over before he knew himself:
'Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?'

'Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!
I must get out of here. I must get air.
I don't know rightly whether any man can.'

'Amy! Don't go to someone else this time.
Listen to me. I won't come down the stairs.'
He sat and fixed his chin between his fists.
'There's something I should like to ask you, dear.'

'You don't know how to ask it.'

'Help me, then.'

Her fingers moved the latch for all reply.

'My words are nearly always an offense.
I don't know how to speak of anything
So as to please you. But I might be taught
I should suppose. I can't say I see how.
A man must partly give up being a man
With women-folk. We could have some arrangement
By which I'd bind myself to keep hands off
Anything special you're a-mind to name.
Though I don't like such things 'twixt those that love.
Two that don't love can't live together without them.
But two that do can't live together with them.'
She moved the latch a little. 'Don't—don't go.
Don't carry it to someone else this time.
Tell me about it if it's something human.
Let me into your grief. I'm not so much
Unlike other folks as your standing there
Apart would make me out. Give me my chance.
I do think, though, you overdo it a little.
What was it brought you up to think it the thing

To take your mother-loss of a first child
So inconsolably—in the face of love.
You'd think his memory might be satisfied—'

'There you go sneering now!'

'I'm not, I'm not!
You make me angry. I'll come down to you.
God, what a woman! And it's come to this,
A man can't speak of his own child that's dead.'

'You can't because you don't know how to speak.
If you had any feelings, you that dug
With your own hand—how could you?—his little grave;
I saw you from that very window there,
Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly
And roll back down the mound beside the hole.
I thought, Who is that man? I didn't know you.
And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs
To look again, and still your spade kept lifting.
Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice
Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,
But I went near to see with my own eyes.
You could sit there with the stains on your shoes
Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave
And talk about your everyday concerns.
You had stood the spade up against the wall
Outside there in the entry, for I saw it.'

'I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed.'

'I can repeat the very words you were saying:
"Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build."
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
What had how long it takes a birch to rot
To do with what was in the darkened parlor?
You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go
With anyone to death, comes so far short
They might as well not try to go at all.
No, from the time when one is sick to death,
One is alone, and he dies more alone.
Friends make pretense of following to the grave,
But before one is in it, their minds are turned

And making the best of their way back to life
And living people, and things they understand.
But the world's evil. I won't have grief so
If I can change it. Oh, I won't, I won't!

'There, you have said it all and you feel better.
You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.
The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.
Amy! There's someone coming down the road!'

'*You*—oh, you think the talk is all. I must go—
Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you—'

'If—you—do!' She was opening the door wider.
'Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.
I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will!*—'

4.3.3 "Design" (1916)

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth—
A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.
What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.

4.4 Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941)

Born in Camden, Ohio, in September 1876, Sherwood Anderson was the third child of seven. His father kept the family moving from town to town. After eight years they settled in Clyde, Ohio. His father's business did not do well, and the family faced financial hardships. Anderson soon had to take on some of the economic burden. Young Anderson gained the nickname "Jobby" because of all of the jobs he held. He grew up working all of the time to help support his family. He didn't feel like his relationship with his father was good and felt that his mother chose the wrong person to marry. Anderson signed up for the National Guard to finish his schooling.

While in Chicago for the Guard, he met and fell in love with Cornelia Lane of Toledo. They got married in 1904 and two years later moved to Cleveland where he accepted the job as the president of the United Factories Company. His first son was born in 1907. Anderson did not want his son to go through the same thing he did. Overwork, however, led to his first nervous breakdown in 1907, causing him to leave the company.



Image 4.3: Sherwood Anderson, 1937
Photographer: Pirie MacDonald
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Upon returning to Ohio, Anderson started his own business. His infamous breakdown took place in 1912, when a disoriented Anderson wandered around for four days, in which he lost his business and family but found his literary ambition. His works are some of the first to engage with psychological insight and Freudian analysis.

With the help of friends, Anderson's work was published. His work largely fictionalizes his personal struggles. *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), a sequence of short stories, is his most enduring work. Reproduced here are two of the stories that appear in it. He influenced many literary greats, including William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway.

Anderson died in Colón, Panama, on March 8, 1941. A swallowed toothpick caused internal damage and resulted in peritonitis.

The Sherwood Anderson biography was written by Zach Cox, a University of Delaware student.

4.4.1 From *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919)

"Hands"

Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down. Across a long field that had been seeded for clover but that had produced only a dense crop of yellow mustard weeds, he could see the public

highway along which went a wagon filled with berry pickers returning from the fields. The berry pickers, youths and maidens, laughed and shouted boisterously. A boy clad in a blue shirt leaped from the wagon and attempted to drag after him one of the maidens, who screamed and protested shrilly. The feet of the boy in the road kicked up a cloud of dust that floated across the face of the departing sun. Over the long field came a thin girlish voice. "Oh, you Wing Biddlebaum, comb your hair, it's falling into your eyes," commanded the voice to the man, who was bald and whose nervous little hands fiddled about the bare white forehead as though arranging a mass of tangled locks.

Wing Biddlebaum, forever frightened and beset by a ghostly band of doubts, did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years. Among all the people of Winesburg but one had come close to him. With George Willard, son of Tom Willard, the proprietor of the New Willard House, he had formed something like a friendship. George Willard was the reporter on the Winesburg Eagle and sometimes in the evenings he walked out along the highway to Wing Biddlebaum's house. Now as the old man walked up and down on the veranda, his hands moving nervously about, he was hoping that George Willard would come and spend the evening with him. After the wagon containing the berry pickers had passed, he went across the field through the tall mustard weeds and climbing a rail fence peered anxiously along the road to the town. For a moment he stood thus, rubbing his hands together and looking up and down the road, and then, fear overcoming him, ran back to walk again upon the porch on his own house.

In the presence of George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum, who for twenty years had been the town mystery, lost something of his timidity, and his shadowy personality, submerged in a sea of doubts, came forth to look at the world. With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. The voice that had been low and trembling became shrill and loud. The bent figure straightened. With a kind of wriggle, like a fish returned to the brook by the fisherman, Biddlebaum the silent began to talk, striving to put into words the ideas that had been accumulated by his mind during long years of silence.

Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression.

The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name. Some obscure poet of the town had thought of it. The hands alarmed their owner. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads.

When he talked to George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum closed his fists and beat with them upon a table or on the walls of his house. The action made him more comfortable. If the desire to talk came to him when the two were walking in the fields, he sought out a stump or the top board of a fence and with his hands pounding busily talked with renewed ease.

The story of Wing Biddlebaum's hands is worth a book in itself. Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men. It is a job for a poet. In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. Also they made more grotesque an already grotesque and elusive individuality. Winesburg was proud of the hands of Wing Biddlebaum in the same spirit in which it was proud of Banker White's new stone house and Wesley Moyer's bay stallion, Tony Tip, that had won the two-fifteen trot at the fall races in Cleveland.

As for George Willard, he had many times wanted to ask about the hands. At times an almost overwhelming curiosity had taken hold of him. He felt that there must be a reason for their strange activity and their inclination to keep hidden away and only a growing respect for Wing Biddlebaum kept him from blurting out the questions that were often in his mind.

Once he had been on the point of asking. The two were walking in the fields on a summer afternoon and had stopped to sit upon a grassy bank. All afternoon Wing Biddlebaum had talked as one inspired. By a fence he had stopped and beating like a giant woodpecker upon the top board had shouted at George Willard, condemning his tendency to be too much influenced by the people about him, "You are destroying yourself," he cried. "You have the inclination to be alone and to dream and you are afraid of dreams. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and you try to imitate them."

On the grassy bank Wing Biddlebaum had tried again to drive his point home. His voice became soft and reminiscent, and with a sigh of contentment he launched into a long rambling talk, speaking as one lost in a dream.

Out of the dream Wing Biddlebaum made a picture for George Willard. In the picture men lived again in a kind of pastoral golden age. Across a green open country came clean-limbed young men, some afoot, some mounted upon horses. In crowds the young men came to gather about the feet of an old man who sat beneath a tree in a tiny garden and who talked to them.

Wing Biddlebaum became wholly inspired. For once he forgot the hands. Slowly they stole forth and lay upon George Willard's shoulders. Something new and bold came into the voice that talked. "You must try to forget all you have

learned,” said the old man. “You must begin to dream. From this time on you must shut your ears to the roaring of the voices.”

Pausing in his speech, Wing Biddlebaum looked long and earnestly at George Willard. His eyes glowed. Again he raised the hands to caress the boy and then a look of horror swept over his face.

With a convulsive movement of his body, Wing Biddlebaum sprang to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Tears came to his eyes. “I must be getting along home. I can talk no more with you,” he said nervously.

Without looking back, the old man had hurried down the hillside and across a meadow, leaving George Willard perplexed and frightened upon the grassy slope. With a shiver of dread the boy arose and went along the road toward town. “I’ll not ask him about his hands,” he thought, touched by the memory of the terror he had seen in the man’s eyes. “There’s something wrong, but I don’t want to know what it is. His hands have something to do with his fear of me and of everyone.”

And George Willard was right. Let us look briefly into the story of the hands. Perhaps our talking of them will arouse the poet who will tell the hidden wonder story of the influence for which the hands were but fluttering pennants of promise.

In his youth Wing Biddlebaum had been a school teacher in a town in Pennsylvania. He was not then known as Wing Biddlebaum, but went by the less euphonic name of Adolph Myers. As Adolph Myers he was much loved by the boys of his school.

Adolph Myers was meant by nature to be a teacher of youth. He was one of those rare, little-understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in their love of men.

And yet that is but crudely stated. It needs the poet there. With the boys of his school, Adolph Myers had walked in the evening or had sat talking until dusk upon the schoolhouse steps lost in a kind of dream. Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads. As he talked his voice became soft and musical. There was a caress in that also. In a way the voice and the hands, the stroking of the shoulders and the touching of the hair were a part of the schoolmaster’s effort to carry a dream into the young minds. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. He was one of those men in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized. Under the caress of his hands doubt and disbelief went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream.

And then the tragedy. A half-witted boy of the school became enamored of the young master. In his bed at night he imagined unspeakable things and in the

morning went forth to tell his dreams as facts. Strange, hideous accusations fell from his loosehung lips. Through the Pennsylvania town went a shiver. Hidden, shadowy doubts that had been in men's minds concerning Adolph Myers were galvanized into beliefs.

The tragedy did not linger. Trembling lads were jerked out of bed and questioned. "He put his arms about me," said one. "His fingers were always playing in my hair," said another.

One afternoon a man of the town, Henry Bradford, who kept a saloon, came to the schoolhouse door. Calling Adolph Myers into the school yard he began to beat him with his fists. As his hard knuckles beat down into the frightened face of the school-master, his wrath became more and more terrible. Screaming with dismay, the children ran here and there like disturbed insects. "I'll teach you to put your hands on my boy, you beast," roared the saloon keeper, who, tired of beating the master, had begun to kick him about the yard.

Adolph Myers was driven from the Pennsylvania town in the night. With lanterns in their hands a dozen men came to the door of the house where he lived alone and commanded that he dress and come forth. It was raining and one of the men had a rope in his hands. They had intended to hang the school-master, but something in his figure, so small, white, and pitiful, touched their hearts and they let him escape. As he ran away into the darkness they repented of their weakness and ran after him, swearing and throwing sticks and great balls of soft mud at the figure that screamed and ran faster and faster into the darkness.

For twenty years Adolph Myers had lived alone in Winesburg. He was but forty but looked sixty-five. The name of Biddlebaum he got from a box of goods seen at a freight station as he hurried through an eastern Ohio town. He had an aunt in Winesburg, a black-toothed old woman who raised chickens, and with her he lived until she died. He had been ill for a year after the experience in Pennsylvania, and after his recovery worked as a day laborer in the fields, going timidly about and striving to conceal his hands. Although he did not understand what had happened he felt that the hands must be to blame. Again and again the fathers of the boys had talked of the hands. "Keep your hands to yourself," the saloon keeper had roared, dancing, with fury in the schoolhouse yard.

Upon the veranda of his house by the ravine, Wing Biddlebaum continued to walk up and down until the sun had disappeared and the road beyond the field was lost in the grey shadows. Going into his house he cut slices of bread and spread honey upon them. When the rumble of the evening train that took away the express cars loaded with the day's harvest of berries had passed and restored the silence of the summer night, he went again to walk upon the veranda. In the darkness he could not see the hands and they became quiet. Although he still hungered for the presence of the boy, who was the medium through which he expressed his love of man, the hunger became again a part of his loneliness and his waiting. Lighting a

lamp, Wing Biddlebaum washed the few dishes soiled by his simple meal and, setting up a folding cot by the screen door that led to the porch, prepared to undress for the night. A few stray white bread crumbs lay on the cleanly washed floor by the table; putting the lamp upon a low stool he began to pick up the crumbs, carrying them to his mouth one by one with unbelievable rapidity. In the dense blotch of light beneath the table, the kneeling figure looked like a priest engaged in some service of his church. The nervous expressive fingers, flashing in and out of the light, might well have been mistaken for the fingers of the devotee going swiftly through decade after decade of his rosary.

“Adventure”

Alice Hindman, a woman of twenty-seven when George Willard was a mere boy, had lived in Winesburg all her life. She clerked in Winney’s Dry Goods Store and lived with her mother, who had married a second husband.

Alice’s step-father was a carriage painter, and given to drink. His story is an odd one. It will be worth telling some day.

At twenty-seven Alice was tall and somewhat slight. Her head was large and overshadowed her body. Her shoulders were a little stooped and her hair and eyes brown. She was very quiet but beneath a placid exterior a continual ferment went on.

When she was a girl of sixteen and before she began to work in the store, Alice had an affair with a young man. The young man, named Ned Currie, was older than Alice. He, like George Willard, was employed on the Winesburg Eagle and for a long time he went to see Alice almost every evening. Together the two walked under the trees through the streets of the town and talked of what they would do with their lives. Alice was then a very pretty girl and Ned Currie took her into his arms and kissed her. He became excited and said things he did not intend to say and Alice, betrayed by her desire to have something beautiful come into her rather narrow life, also grew excited. She also talked. The outer crust of her life, all of her natural diffidence and reserve, was torn away and she gave herself over to the emotions of love. When, late in the fall of her sixteenth year, Ned Currie went away to Cleveland where he hoped to get a place on a city newspaper and rise in the world, she wanted to go with him. With a trembling voice she told him what was in her mind. “I will work and you can work,” she said. “I do not want to harness you to a needless expense that will prevent your making progress. Don’t marry me now. We will get along without that and we can be together. Even though we live in the same house no one will say anything. In the city we will be unknown and people will pay no attention to us.”

Ned Currie was puzzled by the determination and abandon of his sweetheart and was also deeply touched. He had wanted the girl to become his mistress but changed his mind. He wanted to protect and care for her. "You don't know what you're talking about," he said sharply; "you may be sure I'll let you do no such thing. As soon as I get a good job I'll come back. For the present you'll have to stay here. It's the only thing we can do."

On the evening before he left Winesburg to take up his new life in the city, Ned Currie went to call on Alice. They walked about through the streets for an hour and then got a rig from Wesley Moyer's livery and went for a drive in the country. The moon came up and they found themselves unable to talk. In his sadness the young man forgot the resolutions he had made regarding his conduct with the girl.

They got out of the buggy at a place where a long meadow ran down to the bank of Wine Creek and there in the dim light became lovers. When at midnight they returned to town they were both glad. It did not seem to them that anything that could happen in the future could blot out the wonder and beauty of the thing that had happened. "Now we will have to stick to each other, whatever happens we will have to do that," Ned Currie said as he left the girl at her father's door.

The young newspaper man did not succeed in getting a place on a Cleveland paper and went west to Chicago. For a time he was lonely and wrote to Alice almost every day. Then he was caught up by the life of the city; he began to make friends and found new interests in life. In Chicago he boarded at a house where there were several women. One of them attracted his attention and he forgot Alice in Winesburg. At the end of a year he had stopped writing letters, and only once in a long time, when he was lonely or when he went into one of the city parks and saw the moon shining on the grass as it had shone that night on the meadow by Wine Creek, did he think of her at all.

In Winesburg the girl who had been loved grew to be a woman. When she was twenty-two years old her father, who owned a harness repair shop, died suddenly. The harness maker was an old soldier, and after a few months his wife received a widow's pension. She used the first money she got to buy a loom and became a weaver of carpets, and Alice got a place in Winney's store. For a number of years nothing could have induced her to believe that Ned Currie would not in the end return to her.

She was glad to be employed because the daily round of toil in the store made the time of waiting seem less long and uninteresting. She began to save money, thinking that when she had saved two or three hundred dollars she would follow her lover to the city and try if her presence would not win back his affections.

Alice did not blame Ned Currie for what had happened in the moonlight in the field, but felt that she could never marry another man. To her the thought of

giving to another what she still felt could belong only to Ned seemed monstrous. When other young men tried to attract her attention she would have nothing to do with them. "I am his wife and shall remain his wife whether he comes back or not," she whispered to herself, and for all of her willingness to support herself could not have understood the growing modern idea of a woman's owning herself and giving and taking for her own ends in life.

Alice worked in the dry goods store from eight in the morning until six at night and on three evenings a week went back to the store to stay from seven until nine. As time passed and she became more and more lonely she began to practice the devices common to lonely people. When at night she went upstairs into her own room she knelt on the floor to pray and in her prayers whispered things she wanted to say to her lover. She became attached to inanimate objects, and because it was her own, could not bare to have anyone touch the furniture of her room. The trick of saving money, begun for a purpose, was carried on after the scheme of going to the city to find Ned Currie had been given up. It became a fixed habit, and when she needed new clothes she did not get them. Sometimes on rainy afternoons in the store she got out her bank book and, letting it lie open before her, spent hours dreaming impossible dreams of saving money enough so that the interest would support both herself and her future husband.

"Ned always liked to travel about," she thought. "I'll give him the chance. Some day when we are married and I can save both his money and my own, we will be rich. Then we can travel together all over the world."

In the dry goods store weeks ran into months and months into years as Alice waited and dreamed of her lover's return. Her employer, a grey old man with false teeth and a thin grey mustache that drooped down over his mouth, was not given to conversation, and sometimes, on rainy days and in the winter when a storm raged in Main Street, long hours passed when no customers came in. Alice arranged and rearranged the stock. She stood near the front window where she could look down the deserted street and thought of the evenings when she had walked with Ned Currie and of what he had said. "We will have to stick to each other now." The words echoed and re-echoed through the mind of the maturing woman. Tears came into her eyes. Sometimes when her employer had gone out and she was alone in the store she put her head on the counter and wept. "Oh, Ned, I am waiting," she whispered over and over, and all the time the creeping fear that he would never come back grew stronger within her.

In the spring when the rains have passed and before the long hot days of summer have come, the country about Winesburg is delightful. The town lies in the midst of open fields, but beyond the fields are pleasant patches of woodlands. In the wooded places are many little cloistered nooks, quiet places where lovers go to sit on Sunday afternoons. Through the trees they look out across the fields and see farmers at work about the barns or people driving up and down on the roads. In

the town bells ring and occasionally a train passes, looking like a toy thing in the distance.

For several years after Ned Currie went away Alice did not go into the wood with the other young people on Sunday, but one day after he had been gone for two or three years and when her loneliness seemed unbearable, she put on her best dress and set out. Finding a little sheltered place from which she could see the town and a long stretch of the fields, she sat down. Fear of age and ineffectuality took possession of her. She could not sit still, and arose. As she stood looking out over the land something, perhaps the thought of never ceasing life as it expresses itself in the flow of the seasons, fixed her mind on the passing years. With a shiver of dread, she realized that for her the beauty and freshness of youth had passed. For the first time she felt that she had been cheated. She did not blame Ned Currie and did not know what to blame. Sadness swept over her. Dropping to her knees, she tried to pray, but instead of prayers words of protest came to her lips. "It is not going to come to me. I will never find happiness. Why do I tell myself lies?" she cried, and an odd sense of relief came with this, her first bold attempt to face the fear that had become a part of her everyday life.

In the year when Alice Hindman became twenty-five two things happened to disturb the dull uneventfulness of her days. Her mother married Bush Milton, the carriage painter of Winesburg, and she herself became a member of the Winesburg Methodist Church. Alice joined the church because she had become frightened by the loneliness of her position in life. Her mother's second marriage had emphasized her isolation. "I am becoming old and queer. If Ned comes he will not want me. In the city where he is living men are perpetually young. There is so much going on that they do not have time to grow old," she told herself with a grim little smile, and went resolutely about the business of becoming acquainted with people. Every Thursday evening when the store had closed she went to a prayer meeting in the basement of the church and on Sunday evening attended a meeting of an organization called The Epworth League.

When Will Hurley, a middle-aged man who clerked in a drug store and who also belonged to the church, offered to walk home with her she did not protest. "Of course I will not let him make a practice of being with me, but if he comes to see me once in a long time there can be no harm in that," she told herself, still determined in her loyalty to Ned Currie.

Without realizing what was happening, Alice was trying feebly at first, but with growing determination, to get a new hold upon life. Beside the drug clerk she walked in silence, but sometimes in the darkness as they went stolidly along she put out her hand and touched softly the folds of his coat. When he left her at the gate before her mother's house she did not go indoors, but stood for a moment by the door. She wanted to call to the drug clerk, to ask him to sit with her in the darkness on the porch before the house, but was afraid he would not understand.

“It is not him that I want,” she told herself; “I want to avoid being so much alone. If I am not careful I will grow unaccustomed to being with people.”

* * *

During the early fall of her twenty-seventh year a passionate restlessness took possession of Alice. She could not bear to be in the company of the drug clerk, and when, in the evening, he came to walk with her she sent him away. Her mind became intensely active and when, weary from the long hours of standing behind the counter in the store, she went home and crawled into bed, she could not sleep. With staring eyes she looked into the darkness. Her imagination, like a child awakened from long sleep, played about the room. Deep within her there was something that would not be cheated by phantasies and that demanded some definite answer from life.

Alice took a pillow into her arms and held it tightly against her breasts. Getting out of bed, she arranged a blanket so that in the darkness it looked like a form lying between the sheets and, kneeling beside the bed, she caressed it, whispering words over and over, like a refrain. “Why doesn’t something happen? Why am I left here alone?” she muttered. Although she sometimes thought of Ned Currie, she no longer depended on him. Her desire had grown vague. She did not want Ned Currie or any other man. She wanted to be loved, to have something answer the call that was growing louder and louder within her.

And then one night when it rained Alice had an adventure. It frightened and confused her. She had come home from the store at nine and found the house empty. Bush Milton had gone off to town and her mother to the house of a neighbor. Alice went upstairs to her room and undressed in the darkness. For a moment she stood by the window hearing the rain beat against the glass and then a strange desire took possession of her. Without stopping to think of what she intended to do, she ran downstairs through the dark house and out into the rain. As she stood on the little grass plot before the house and felt the cold rain on her body a mad desire to run naked through the streets took possession of her.

She thought that the rain would have some creative and wonderful effect on her body. Not for years had she felt so full of youth and courage. She wanted to leap and run, to cry out, to find some other lonely human and embrace him. On the brick sidewalk before the house a man stumbled homeward. Alice started to run. A wild, desperate mood took possession of her. “What do I care who it is. He is alone, and I will go to him,” she thought; and then without stopping to consider the possible result of her madness, called softly. “Wait!” she cried. “Don’t go away. Whoever you are, you must wait.”

The man on the sidewalk stopped and stood listening. He was an old man and somewhat deaf. Putting his hand to his mouth, he shouted. “What? What say?” he called.

Alice dropped to the ground and lay trembling. She was so frightened at the thought of what she had done that when the man had gone on his way she did not dare get to her feet, but crawled on hands and knees through the grass to the house. When she got to her own room she bolted the door and drew her dressing table across the doorway. Her body shook as with a chill and her hands trembled so that she had difficulty getting into her nightdress. When she got into bed she buried her face in the pillow and wept brokenheartedly. "What is the matter with me? I will do something dreadful if I am not careful," she thought, and turning her face to the wall, began trying to force herself to face bravely the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg.

4.5 Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

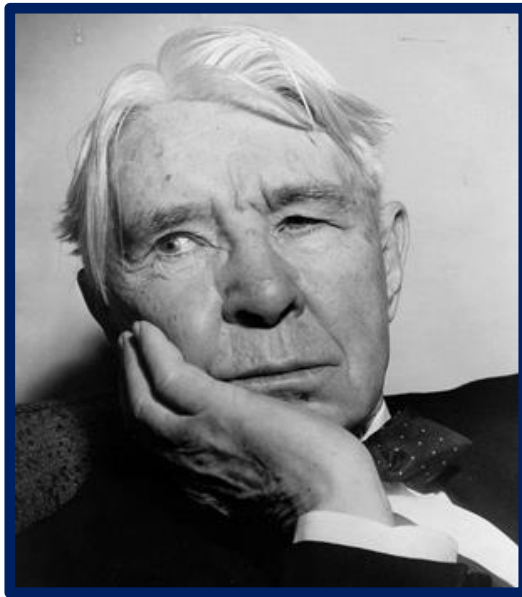


Image 4.4: Carl Sandburg, 1955
Photographer: Al Ravenna, World Telegram staff photographer
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Three-time Pulitzer Prize winner and member of the Chicago Literary Renaissance, Carl August Sandburg was born on January 6, 1878, in Galesburg, Illinois, to parents who had emigrated from Sweden. The family slightly changed the spelling of their last name from Sandberg to Sandburg; most people called Carl by his nickname, Charlie. At the age of 13, Sandburg quit school and started driving a milk wagon. He had a few other side jobs, as a hotel servant and even a bricklayer. Sandburg resided in the Midwest until he moved to North Carolina. He volunteered for the military and briefly attended The United States Military Academy (West Point) although he never saw battle and failed his math and grammar exams. One of his professors, however, encouraged him to pursue writing and even paid to publish his first volume of poetry, a pamphlet called *Reckless Ecstasy* (1904). After that, he attempted to finish school but found love and married Lillian Steichen in 1908. They had three children—Margaret, Helga, and Janet.

A move to Chicago, Illinois, in 1912, is what launched Sandburg's career as he was offered a job for a Chicago newspaper as an editorial writer and eventually branched off as a journalist for the *Chicago Daily News*. In 1916, he published *Chicago Poems*, which included "Chicago," reproduced below. In fact, most of his poetic works are set in Chicago. Some of his other notable works are *Cornhuskers* (1918) and *Smoke and Steel* (1920). Sandburg published a 6-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln, a man he greatly admired. He also wrote children's literature and was a supporter of the Civil Rights Movement. The first white man to be honored by the NAACP with a lifetime achievement award, Sandburg has been heralded the voice of America.

American journalist, editor, biographer, and poet, Sandburg garnered a Grammy Award for "Best Performance" for his recording of Aaron Copland's Lincoln Portrait. He passed away on July 22, 1967, from natural causes and his ashes were interred under "Remembrance Rock," located behind his birth house in Galesburg.

The Carl Sandburg biography was written by Jamar McCall, a University of Delaware student.

4.5.1 “Chicago” (1914)

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation’s Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your painted
women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I have seen the
gunman kill and go free to kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces of women and
children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.
And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city, and I
give them back the sneer and say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and
coarse and strong and cunning.
Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is a tall bold
slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;
Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage pitted against
the wilderness,
Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,
Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs the
heart of the people,
Laughing!
Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked, sweating,
proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads
and Freight Handler to the Nation.

4.6 Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

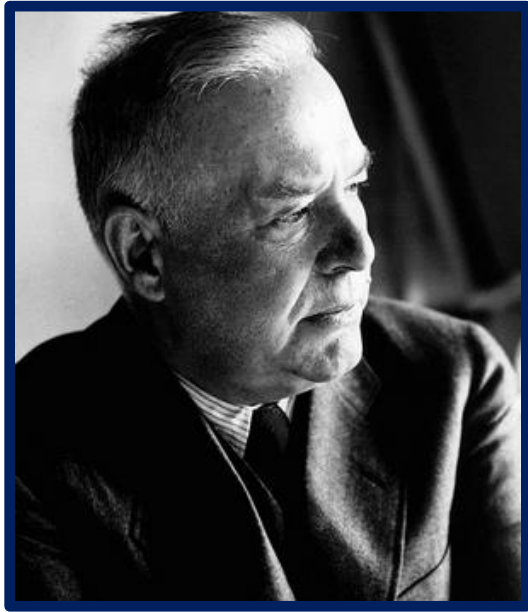


Image 4.5: Wallace Stevens, 1948
Photographer: Sylvia Salmi
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Wallace Stevens's reputation as an American poet has undergone something of a transformation over the sixty years since his death in the middle of the twentieth century. Celebrated during his lifetime for his imagery and for his attempts to unite the real world with the imagination, Stevens was also the target of frequent criticism for both the ordinary subjects of his early poetry and for the abstractness of his later work. Those who celebrate Stevens's work often point to this dichotomy, between the world of commerce and the world of the mind, as evidence of Stevens's particularly American upbringing. Unlike many of his generation, Stevens did not shy from commerce or industry in pursuit of his art; instead, he embraced both halves of himself by working during the day as a lawyer and insurance company executive and by writing poetry in the evenings and on vacation. While many modernist poets considered it a badge of honor to support themselves solely through their writings, Stevens saw no conflict in pursuing both the world of real things and the flights of the imagination. These

were the stuff of poetry, not of conflict. From his first collection, *Harmonium*, published in 1923, to *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, published in 1954, the year before his death, Stevens resolutely mixed the ordinary and the imaginary in poems that are technically sophisticated while accessible to a wider audience.

The selections from Stevens in this section highlight these two aspects of his poetry. In "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" (1923), the poet uses just sixteen lines to connect the reader to an ordinary funeral, one in which there are no grand flourishes or flagrant displays, but only mourners in everyday clothes, bouquets of flowers wrapped in newspaper, and a widow who covers her face with a dresser cloth. Juxtaposed against a poet like Whitman, who celebrates the body, here in this poem we never even see the deceased in repose; nonetheless we know that she is an ordinary woman. By 1923 Stevens warns us that the only emperor, the only one to deserve or receive a grand funeral, is the emperor of ice cream. As is often the case with Stevens's poetry, conflict exists between the outer and inner worlds, as demonstrated in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," which reflects on the different ways of seeing and perceiving the world, and "Anecdote of the Jar," which ponders man's desire to control what cannot be contained.

Stevens's much-quoted "Of Modern Poetry" (1942) has become an iconic twentieth-century poem. Here Stevens makes his own argument for poetry that picks up on Marianne Moore's call for more precise language that is found in her own poem, "Poetry" (1921). Stevens, like Moore, argues that a poem "has to be living," and therefore poetry must embrace the simple language of ordinary things in order for the imagination to create images. Yet, Stevens cautions poets and readers that modern poetry must not seek merely to represent an image; it must also connect to

the imagination in order for it to succeed. These selections are but a small portion of Stevens's rich body of work, but in reflecting both the early and the later parts of his career as a poet, they show a consistency of purpose, and a dedication to the natural language of readers, that few equaled in the twentieth century.

The Wallace Stevens biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.6.1 “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” (1917)

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow

An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

4.6.2 “Anecdote of the Jar” (1919)

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

4.6.3 “The Emperor of Ice Cream” (1922)

Call the roller of big cigars,
The muscular one, and bid him whip
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress
As they are used to wear, and let the boys
Bring flowers in last month’s newspapers.
Let be be finale of seem.
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal,
Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet
On which she embroidered fantails once
And spread it so as to cover her face.
If her horny feet protrude, they come
To show how cold she is, and dumb.
Let the lamp affix its beam.
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

4.6.4 “Of Modern Poetry” (1942)

[Link to “Of Modern Poetry”](#)

4.7 William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

Affectionately known as “the good doctor,” the prolific William Carlos Williams published dozens of works of literature in his lifetime, including novels, plays, essay and poetry collections, an autobiography, and one of the longest Modernist poems ever composed, the five-part epic *Paterson*. Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, in 1883, Williams attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, where he met fellow poets Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) and Ezra Pound. Soon after graduating, Williams settled back home in Rutherford with his wife and family to run a medical practice, delivering over 2,000 babies during his lifelong career as a pediatrician. While establishing himself as a successful neighborhood doctor, Williams also established himself as an influential voice in New York City’s Modernist art scene, befriending writers such as Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore and experimental painters such as Marcel Duchamp. In 1913, the International Exhibition of Modern Art at New York City’s 69th Regiment Armory introduced Americans to radical new styles of painting such as Cubism and Fauvism. Inspired by these new forms of visual art, Williams sought to craft a similarly new form of poetry for modern America. Like the modern painters, Williams focuses on the details of urban life through shifting perspectives and juxtaposed images. To both free his poetry from the restrictions of traditional verse forms and save it from the anarchy of free verse, Williams devised a new poetic rhythm called “the variable foot” that he used to structure his poems organically according to the rhythms of everyday American speech.



Image 4.6: William Carlos Williams, 1921
Photographer: unknown
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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At a time when many American modernist authors were moving to Europe to find artistic inspiration, Williams found inspiration in his native New Jersey, taking its small cities and working people as the subjects for his poetry. In “Spring and All,” reproduced below, Williams finds renewal after a long, hard northeastern winter. Stylistically, Williams’s poetry is rooted in the Imagism championed by his friend Ezra Pound, as evidenced by the short imagist poems, “The Red Wheelbarrow,” reproduced below. In his *Autobiography*, Williams writes that the poet is “not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works, upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal.” Williams’s insistence on writing about the particular led him to differ from poets such as Pound and Eliot, who eventually sought to make modern poetry more universal by making it more international, infusing it with different cultures and languages. Williams chose instead to write most of his poems—to use the title of one of his essay collections—“in the American grain,” finding the universal in the everyday experiences of his native land. For example, in “This Is Just To Say,” Williams combines the linguistic economy of an Imagist poet with the shifts in perspective of a Cubist

painter, presenting multiple perspectives on a small family drama over the course of three brief stanzas.

The William Carlos Williams biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.7.1 “Spring and All” (1923)

By the road to the contagious hospital
under the surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the
northeast—a cold wind. Beyond, the
waste of broad, muddy fields
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees
with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined—
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of
entrance—Still, the profound change
has come upon them: rooted they
grip down and begin to awaken

4.7.2 “The Red Wheelbarrow” (1923)

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

4.7.3 “This Is Just to Say” (1934)

[Link to “This Is Just to Say”](#)

4.8 Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

As brilliant as he was controversial, Ezra Pound more than any other single poet or editor shaped modernist poetry into the forms you find in this volume. Pound grew up in Philadelphia and attended the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied world languages and became friends with fellow poets Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) and William Carlos Williams. After being fired from his first college teaching job at Wabash College for his idiosyncratic behavior, Pound moved to London in 1908, working as a teacher, book reviewer, and secretary to William Butler Yeats. The energetic and prolific Pound soon became a force within London's literary scene, urging his fellow poets to break from poetic tradition and, as he famously wrote, "make it new." Over his lifetime Pound published collections of critical essays such as "Make it New" (1934) and *The ABC of Reading* (1934), translations of Chinese and Japanese poetry, and volumes of his own poetry, most notably his 116 *Cantos*, a decades-long project that he envisioned as the sum total of his life's learnings and observations. After World War I, Pound became disillusioned with free-market democratic society, blaming it for both the immediate war and the general decline of civilization. He moved to Italy and became enamored with Italy's fascist government, recording hundreds of pro-fascist radio programs for Rome Radio that were broadcast to allied troops. After the war, Pound was arrested for treason, found mentally unfit, and incarcerated in Washington, D.C.'s Saint Elizabeth's Hospital until 1958, when his fellow poets successfully lobbied to have him freed.

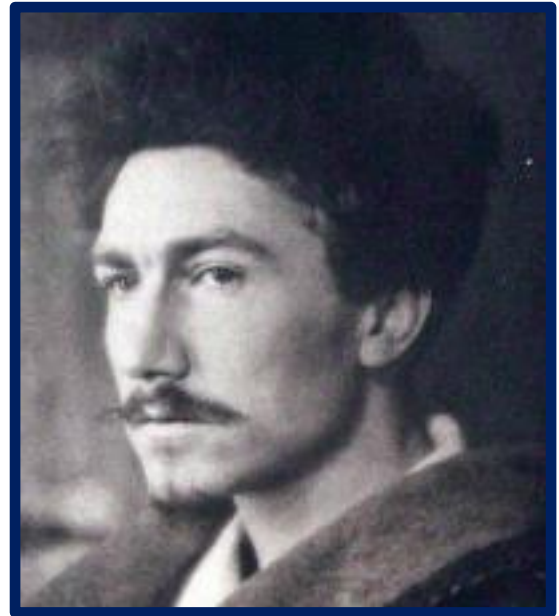


Image 4.7: Ezra Pound, 1913
Photographer: Alvin Langdon Coburn
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Pound influenced modernist literature in two ways: by championing and editing numerous writers such as H. D., Robert Frost, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Wyndham Lewis, and T. S. Eliot (whose *The Waste Land* he substantially revised); and by campaigning for the Imagist and Vorticist poetic movements. "A Retrospect," reproduced below, outlines the principles of Imagism. "In a Station of the Metro" is a perfect example of an Imagist poem. The poem is based on an experience Pound had of stepping off a train in Paris's underground Metro. As he writes in his essay, "From Vorticism," he "saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another...and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me..." It took Pound an entire year to find those words. His first draft of the poem was thirty lines long. His second draft was fifteen lines long. Still unable to express the emotion he felt that day, Pound continued to cut verbiage from the poem until it came closer in form to a Japanese haiku than a traditional Western lyric. The final two-line poem exemplifies Pound's three criteria for an Imagist poem: that the poet must treat things directly; eliminate unnecessary words; and use rhythm musically, not mechanically.

The Ezra Pound biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks.
5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.8.1 “In a Station of the Metro” (1913)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.

4.8.2 “A Retrospect” (1918)

There has been so much scribbling about a new fashion in poetry, that I may perhaps be pardoned this brief recapitulation and retrospect.

In the spring or early summer of 1912, “H. D.,” Richard Aldington and myself decided that we were agreed upon the three principles following:

1. Direct treatment of the “thing” whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

Upon many points of taste and of predilection we differed, but agreeing upon these three positions we thought we had as much right to a group name, at least as much right, as a number of French “schools” proclaimed by Mr. Flint in the August number of Harold Monroe’s magazine for 1911.

This school has since been “joined” or “followed” by numerous people who, whatever their merits, do not show any signs of agreeing with the second specification. Indeed vers libre has become as prolix and as verbose as any of the flaccid varieties that preceded it. It has brought faults of its own. The actual language and phrasing is often as bad as that of our elders without even the excuse that the words are shovelled in to fill a metric pattern or to complete the noise of a rhyme-sound. Whether or no the phrases followed by the followers are musical must be left to the reader’s decision. At times I can find a marked metre in “vers libres,” as stale and hackneyed as any pseudo-Swinburnian, at times the writers seem to follow no musical structure whatever. But it is, on the whole, good that the field should be ploughed. Perhaps a few good poems have come from the new method, and if so it is justified.

Criticism is not a circumscription or a set of prohibitions. It provides fixed points of departure. It may startle a dull reader into alertness. That little of it which is good is mostly in stray phrases; or if it be an older artist helping a younger it is in great measure but rules of thumb, cautions gained by experience.

I set together a few phrases on practical working about the time the first remarks on imagisme were published. The first use of the word “Imagiste” was in my note to T. E. Hulme’s five poems, printed at the end of my “Ripostes” in the autumn of 1912. I reprint my cautions from *Poetry* for March, 1913.

A FEW DON'TS

An “Image” is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. I use the term “complex” rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists, such as Hart, though we may not agree absolutely in our application.

It is the presentation of such a “complex” instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.

It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.

All this, however, some may consider open to debate. The immediate necessity is to tabulate A LIST OF DON'TS for those beginning to write verses. I can not put all of them into Mosaic negative.

To begin with, consider the three propositions (demanding direct treatment, economy of words, and the sequence of the musical phrase), not as dogma—never consider anything as dogma—but as the result of long contemplation, which, even if it is some one else’s contemplation, may be worth consideration.

Pay no attention to the criticism of men who have never themselves written a notable work. Consider the discrepancies between the actual writing of the Greek poets and dramatists, and the theories of the Graeco-Roman grammarians, concocted to explain their metres.

LANGUAGE

Use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something.

Don’t use such an expression as “dim lands of peace.” It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer’s not realizing that the natural object is always the adequate symbol.

Go in fear of abstractions. Do not retell in mediocre verse what has already been done in good prose. Don’t think any intelligent person is going to be deceived when you try to shirk all the difficulties of the unspeakably difficult art of good prose by chopping your composition into line lengths.

What the expert is tired of today the public will be tired of tomorrow.

Don't imagine that the art of poetry is any simpler than the art of music, or that you can please the expert before you have spent at least as much effort on the art of verse as an average piano teacher spends on the art of music.

Be influenced by as many great artists as you can, but have the decency either to acknowledge the debt outright, or to try to conceal it.

Don't allow "influence" to mean merely that you mop up the particular decorative vocabulary of some one or two poets whom you happen to admire. A Turkish war correspondent was recently caught red-handed babbling in his despatches of "dove-grey" hills, or else it was "pearl-pale," I can not remember.

Use either no ornament or good ornament.

RHYTHM AND RHYME

Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language [This is for rhythm, his vocabulary must of course be found in his native tongue], so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement; e.g. Saxon charms, Hebridean Folk Songs, the verse of Dante, and the lyrics of Shakespeare—if he can dissociate the vocabulary from the cadence. Let him dissect the lyrics of Goethe coldly into their component sound values, syllables long and short, stressed and unstressed, into vowels and consonants.

It is not necessary that a poem should rely on its music, but if it does rely on its music that music must be such as will delight the expert.

Let the neophyte know assonance and alliteration, rhyme immediate and delayed, simple and polyphonic, as a musician would expect to know harmony and counterpoint and all the minutiae of his craft. No time is too great to give to these matters or to any one of them, even if the artist seldom have need of them.

Don't imagine that a thing will "go" in verse just because it's too dull to go in prose.

Don't be "viewy"—leave that to the writers of pretty little philosophic essays. Don't be descriptive; remember that the painter can describe a landscape much better than you can, and that he has to know a deal more about it.

When Shakespeare talks of the "Dawn in russet mantle clad" he presents something which the painter does not present. There is in this line of his nothing that one can call description; he presents.

Consider the way of the scientists rather than the way of an advertising agent for a new soap.

The scientist does not expect to be acclaimed as a great scientist until he has discovered something. He begins by learning what has been discovered already. He goes from that point onward. He does not bank on being a charming fellow personally. He does not expect his friends to applaud the results of his freshman class work. Freshmen in poetry are unfortunately not confined to a definite and recognizable class room. They are “all over the shop.” Is it any wonder “the public is indifferent to poetry?”

Don’t chop your stuff into separate iambs. Don’t make each line stop dead at the end and then begin every next line with a heave.

Let the beginning of the next line catch the rise of the rhythm wave, unless you want a definite longish pause.

In short, behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music. The same laws govern, and you are bound by no others.

Naturally, your rhythmic structure should not destroy the shape of your words, or their natural sound, or their meaning. It is improbable that, at the start, you will be able to get a rhythm-structure strong enough to affect them very much, though you may fall a victim to all sorts of false stopping due to line ends, and caesurae.

The Musician can rely on pitch and the volume of the orchestra. You can not. The term harmony is misapplied in poetry; it refers to simultaneous sounds of different pitch. There is, however, in the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base.

A rhyme must have in it some slight element of surprise if it is to give pleasure, it need not be bizarre or curious, but it must be well used if used at all.

Vide further Vildrac and Duhamel’s notes on rhyme in “Technique Poétique.”

That part of your poetry which strikes upon the imaginative eye of the reader will lose nothing by translation into a foreign tongue; that which appeals to the ear can reach only those who take it in the original.

Consider the definiteness of Dante’s presentation, as compared with Milton’s rhetoric. Read as much of Wordsworth as does not seem too unutterably dull.

If you want the gist of the matter go to Sappho, Catullus, Villon, Heine when he is in the vein, Gautier when he is not too frigid; or, if you have not the tongues, seek out the leisurely Chaucer. Good prose will do you no harm, and there is good discipline to be had by trying to write it.

Translation is likewise good training, if you find that your original matter “wobbles” when you try to rewrite it. The meaning of the poem to be translated can not “wobble.”

If you are using a symmetrical form, don’t put in what you want to say and then fill up the remaining vacuums with slush.

Don’t mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another. This is usually only the result of being too lazy to find the exact word. To this clause there are possibly exceptions.

The first three simple prescriptions will throw out nine-tenths of all the bad poetry now accepted as standard and classic; and will prevent you from many a crime of production.

“...Mais d’abord il faut être un poète,” as MM. Duhamel and Vildrac have said at the end of their little book, “Notes sur la Technique Poétique.”

Since March 1913, Ford Madox Hueffer has pointed out that Wordsworth was so intent on the ordinary or plain word that he never thought of hunting for le mot juste.

John Butler Yeats has handled or man-handled Wordsworth and the Victorians, and his criticism, contained in letters to his son, is now printed and available.

I do not like writing about art, my first, at least I think it was my first essay on the subject, was a protest against it.

4.9 Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953)

The foremost American dramatist, Eugene O'Neill was born in a hotel on Broadway in 1888, to Ella Quinlan and actor James O'Neill. He was born shortly after the death of one of his brothers, who died in childhood of measles. The youngest of three boys, O'Neill spent part of his early life on the road travelling with his father's company. Both of his parents suffered addiction: his father to alcohol and his mother to morphine, which had been prescribed to alleviate the pain of Eugene's difficult birth. Because his parents were often on tour for his father's job, Eugene was sent to a Catholic boarding school in the Bronx. He later attended De La Salle Institute in Manhattan and Betts Academy in Connecticut. In 1906, he enrolled at Princeton, but this was short-lived. After 10 months, he left—either from missing too many classes or from being expelled.

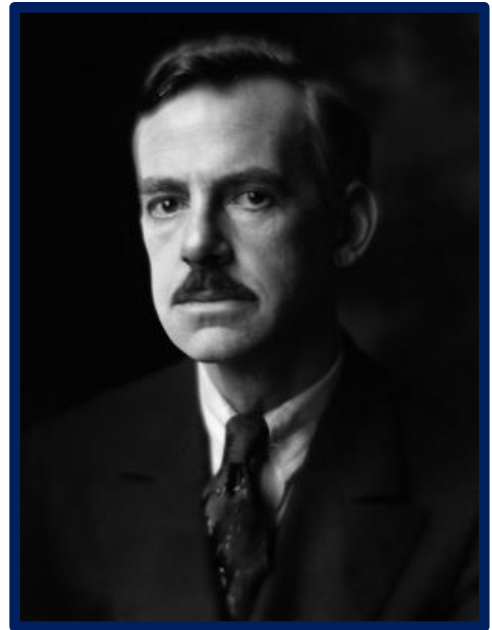


Image 4.8: Eugene O'Neill
Photographer: Alice Boughton
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After leaving Princeton, O'Neill spent several years working odd job, never holding one for long. He was a secretary of a mail order house in New York then went on a gold expedition in Spanish Honduras (where he found not gold but malarial fever). After returning to the United States, he became an assistant manager of a theatrical company on tour. He went to sea and worked in Buenos Aires for Westinghouse Electrical Company, Swift Packing Company, and Singer Sewing Machine Company. He spent a few years at sea working on the American Line of transatlantic liners. During these years, he developed a love for the sea, and it became a recurring theme in his plays. While at sea he indulged in alcohol and developed severe depression. O'Neill then dabbled in acting in vaudeville and reporting for a local newspaper. Between all of these odd jobs, he married Kathleen Jenkins in 1909, and had one son, Eugene O'Neill Jr., the following year. In 1912, O'Neill fell ill and spent six months in a tuberculosis sanatorium. This was also the year Eugene and Kathleen divorced.

In the fall of 1913, O'Neill began writing plays, and in the fall of 1914, he attended a dramatic technique course in Harvard. As he had done at Princeton, he left after one year. In the fall of 1916, a play of his was first produced: *Bound East for Cardiff* was the opening bill for the Provincetown Players. In 1920, *Beyond the Horizon* was commercially produced on Broadway, to critical acclaim. It earned him his first of three Pulitzer Prizes awarded during his lifetime. He would receive the prize in 1922 for *Anna Christie* and in 1928 for *Strange Interlude*.

Other O'Neill plays include *Before Breakfast* (1916), *The Long Voyage Home* (1917), *In the Zone* (1917), *The Moon of the Carabbees* (1917), *Ile* (1917), *The Rope* (1918), *The Dreamy Kid* (1918), *Where the Cross is Made* (1918), *The Straw* (1919), *Gold* (1920), *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *Different* (1920), *The First Man* (1921), *The Hairy Ape* (1921), *The Fountain* (1921-22), *Welded* (1922), *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1923), *Marco*

Millions (1923-25), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *The Great God Brown* (1925), *Lazarus Laughed* (1926), *Dynamo* (1928), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929-31), *Ah, Wilderness* (1932), and *Days Without End* (1932-33). Many of his plays are written in the vein of realism and deal with tragedy and disappointment. He introduced psychological and social realism to the American stage and was among the earliest to use American vernacular and to focus on characters marginalized by society.

O'Neill married Agnes Boulton in 1918, and the couple had two children together. O'Neill later disowned his daughter because she married the 54-year-old Charlie Chapman when she was 18. O'Neill and Boulton divorced in 1929 after he left the family for actress Carlotta Monterey. O'Neill and Monterey married a month after O'Neill's divorce was finalized. His marriage to Monterey deteriorated, in part because of her addiction to sedatives. They separated a number of times but never divorced.

O'Neill's parents and brother died between the years of 1920 and 1923. Eugene based a play on the last days of his brother in 1952 called *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. Both of O'Neill's sons struggled with addictions (alcohol and heroin) and died by suicide.

O'Neill died in 1953. It is said that his last words were: "I knew it. I knew it. Born in a hotel room and died in a hotel room." It was later discovered that the cause of death was cerebellar cortical atrophy, a rare form of brain deterioration. Three years after his death—despite his wishes to wait 25 years after his death—O'Neill's autobiographical play, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, linked below, was published. Winner of the 1957 Pulitzer Prize and a 1956 Tony award, it is considered his best play and one of the best of the 20th century. It was written, according to O'Neill, "in tears and blood...with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness."

Other posthumous plays include *A Touch of the Poet* (1958) and *More Stately Mansions* (1967). In addition to being awarded a Tony and Pulitzer Prizes, O'Neill was the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936. His plays continue to be produced. He left a large legacy behind and has a theatre named after him in New York City, The Eugene O'Neill Theatre. Considered "the father of American theater," O'Neill changed American theater during his career which spanned three decades.

The Eugene O'Neill biography was written by Morgan Cresswell, a University of Delaware student.

4.9.1 *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941)

[E-video available via SWANK](#)

4.10 T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)



Image 4.9: T. S. Eliot, 1934
Photographer: Lady Ottoline Morrell
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri. Eliot's father, Henry Eliot, was a successful businessman, while his mother, Charlotte Stearns, wrote poetry and was involved in St. Louis's cultural scene. Eliot lived in St. Louis until 1906, when he enrolled at Harvard University where he studied until 1910. Later that year, Eliot left to study at the Sorbonne in Paris for a year, before returning to Harvard to begin work on a Ph.D. In 1914, Eliot left the United States and accepted a scholarship at Oxford University, where he stayed for a year. Although he did not finish his studies at Oxford, Eliot remained in England, completing his dissertation for Harvard University, since World War I prevented Eliot from returning to the U.S. Instead Eliot stayed in London, later renouncing his American citizenship in favor of British citizenship (1927). Although he was a successful writer, Eliot also worked for a living, first as a teacher, then a banker, before accepting a position at Faber and Faber Publishing House.

Eliot would become a tastemaker of the Modernist period, discovering and publishing many Modernist writers and eventually serving as the director of Faber and Faber. Although Eliot never moved back to the United States, he returned quite often to visit as well as to give lectures and readings.

Eliot began writing poetry in college, but it was after he moved to England (1914) that he began to write in earnest. Once he started to publish, Eliot's reputation grew until he became one of the central figures of the modernist movement. His essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," offered a highly influential approach for reading and interpreting literature. However, Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land* (1922), was possibly the most famous work of the Modernist era, one that is considered a masterpiece and significantly raised Eliot's profile. Written with editorial guidance from fellow Modernist poet Ezra Pound, *The Waste Land* sought to express the disillusionment of the post WWI Modernist era. It is a poem that many other Modernist writers used in their own writing. Throughout his career, Eliot produced several major works spanning multiple genres, including his poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *The Waste Land*, "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," and *The Four Quartets*, as well as the famous essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and the play, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). Common themes in his work include isolation, religious insecurities, and frustration.

Eliot's poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which begins with an epigraph from Dante's *Inferno*, is innovative in form because it is formatted as a dramatic monologue without a clearly identified audience. It quickly becomes evident to the reader that this poem defies the conventions of a traditional love letter; rather, it reads like a confessional, with Prufrock confessing his feelings to the reader. The reader is privy to Prufrock's own insecurities and self-doubt that cannot be assuaged by God/religion, his fear of rejection, and his fear of dying alone.

The T. S. Eliot biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks.
5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.10.1 “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915)

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...

Oh, do not ask, “What is it?”
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,

And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

4.11 Claude McKay (1889-1948)

A central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, Claude McKay was born on September 15, 1889, in Jamaica, to peasant farmers. In his younger years he studied English poetry and literature. In 1912, McKay published *Songs of Jamaica*. With the stipend from an award he won for his collection, he briefly attended Tuskegee Institute, transferring to Kansas State University where he studied agriculture for a short period and was impacted by W. E. B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*.

In 1914, McKay moved to New York City and published "The Harlem Dancer" and "Invocation" as well as "To the White Fiends." One of his most notable works, which was published in 1919, is "If We Must Die." It is a poem about black Americans resisting racial oppression. McKay moved to London in 1919 and read a variety of communist literature.



Image 4.10: Claude McKay, 1920
Photographer: unknown
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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1922 saw the publication of *Harlem Shadows*, one of the first books to come out of the Harlem Renaissance. "America" and "The Lynching," reproduced below, are included in this collection. Disappointed with racial issues as well as how Harlem Renaissance leaders responded to it, McKay left America and moved to Russia later that year. During this period, he wrote the novel *Home to Harlem* and its sequel *Banjo*, which were notable for their vivid description of Harlem LGBTQ life.

In 1934, McKay returned to Harlem. He published his autobiography, *A Long Way from Home*, in 1937. Despite being agnostic for most of his life, in his late years he converted to Catholicism. McKay moved to Chicago in 1944 and joined the Catholic Youth Organization. He died on May 22, 1948, from heart failure.

The Claude McKay biography was written by Travis Pluck, a University of Delaware student.

4.11.1 "America" (1921)

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate,

Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

4.11.2 “The Lynching” (1922)

His spirit is smoke ascended to high heaven.
His father, by the cruelest way of pain,
Had bidden him to his bosom once again;
The awful sin remained still unforgiven.
All night a bright and solitary star
(Perchance the one that ever guided him,
Yet gave him up at last to Fate's wild whim)
Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.
Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view
The ghastly body swaying in the sun:
The women thronged to look, but never a one
Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue;
And little lads, lynchers that were to be,
Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

4.12 Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980)



Image 4.11: Katherine Anne Porter
Photographer: unknown
Source: Katherine Anne Porter Society
Website
License: Public Domain

One of the finest practitioners of the short story, Katherine Anne Porter was born Callie Russell Porter on May 15, 1890, in Indian Creek, Texas. The fourth of five children, Porter's mother died in 1892 at which time Callie and her siblings went to live with their paternal grandmother, Catherine Ann Porter. When her grandmother died in 1901, she was sent to convent schools in Texas and Louisiana. Porter ran away from school and got married in 1906, the first of four short-lived marriages. Officially divorcing her first husband in 1915, she changed her name to Katherine Anne Porter.

After working odd jobs, Porter began a career as a journalist. She joined the staff of the Fort Worth *Critic* and Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*. While in Colorado, she almost died in the 1918 influenza pandemic, an experience she fictionalizes in her short story, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," which is one of the only fictional accounts of the deadly "Spanish flu."

During the 1920s and 1930s, Porter traveled back and forth between Mexico and New York City. Her first story, "María Concepción," was published in 1922. Porter published her first collection of stories, *Flowering Judas*, in 1930. It established her place in American literature. Linked below is "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," first published in 1929 and collected in *Flowering Judas*. She went on to publish three more collections of short stories: *Hacienda* (1934), *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), and *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* (1944).

Awarded a Guggenheim fellowship for *Flowering Judas*, Porter sailed to Germany, which became the setting for her novel *Ship of Fools*, published in 1962. Her first and only novel won her a large readership. It was a bestseller and was made into a movie in 1965. Many of her works contain dark themes like betrayal, death, and human evil.

Commenting on Porter's incredible life, Porter scholar Alexandra Subramanian writes: "Porter experienced and observed many of the major events of the twentieth century. She lived in Greenwich Village during its cultural and literary heyday and Mexico during its cultural revolution of the 1920s. In the early thirties, she experienced Berlin during the years when Nazism was on the rise, after which she moved to Paris during a time of impending war. She then returned to the United States and lived there throughout the years of the Cold War. As she moved from place to place, she established long-lasting friendships with many of the literary lights of the era, including Robert Penn Warren, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Sylvia Beach, Glenway Wescott, and Malcolm Cowley."

In 1943, Porter became an elected member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. She was writer-in-residence at several colleges and universities, including the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, and the University of Virginia.

In 1965, she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the U.S. National Book Award for *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*. In 1966, she was appointed to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received an honorary degree from the University of Maryland.

After suffering from several debilitating strokes, Porter died at the age of 90 on September 18, 1980, in Silver Spring, Maryland. She is buried in Indian Creek beside her mother's grave.

The Katherine Anne Porter biography was written by Day'ja Smith, a University of Delaware student.

4.12.1 “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” (1930)

[Link to “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”](#)

4.13 Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960)



Image 4.12: Zora Neale Hurston, circa 1935

Photographer: unknown

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 in Alabama, moving with her family when she was a young child to Eatonville, Florida, one of the nation's first all-black towns. Hurston enjoyed a happy childhood in Eatonville. In 1904, however, Hurston's idyllic young life came to an end when her mother died. Hurston's father soon remarried, and family life for Hurston became complicated. She moved frequently, living with relatives and working to support herself. Eventually, she attended Howard University where she nurtured her writing talent. She later attended Barnard College where she studied anthropology, earning her bachelor's degree in 1928. In the 1920s, Hurston became one of the most important figures of the Harlem Renaissance, producing a number of literary pieces and working with Langston Hughes to launch a literary magazine that promoted the talents of young African-American writers. "Drenched in Light," reproduced below, is Hurston's first published short story. The semi-autobiographical story, which stars eleven-year-old, black female protagonist, Isis Watts, reveals Hurston's conflicted views regarding white patronage as both altruistic and culturally appropriative.

In the 1930s, Hurston enjoyed one of her most productive decades. She conducted anthropological fieldwork across the South, studying African-American folklore, and she traveled in Haiti and Jamaica, where she conducted research on spiritual practices including hoodoo and voodoo. Her book *Mules and Men*, published in 1935, remains an important work on African-American folklore. In 1937, she published her most well-known novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, an early African-American feminist work that inspired later writers such as Alice Walker. During the next twenty years, Hurston continued to work as a journalist and a freelance writer. She married twice, but each marriage ended. By the time of her death, she was living in Florida in relative obscurity and poverty, dying of a stroke in 1960.

Unlike her contemporaries, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, Hurston in her fiction did not take on overtly political or racial themes. Hurston's art was essentially apolitical. Hurston's work celebrated racial pride and African-American culture without any filtering, and characters' power came from their own self-discoveries and their own inner resources. In her most critically acclaimed novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the main character Janie Crawford comes of age, moving from a young girl taught by her grandmother that she must be cared for by a man to a young woman trapped in an abusive marriage to a self-actualized woman who loves herself and lives life on her own terms, including freely expressing her sexuality.

The Zora Neale Hurston biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug,

4.13.1 “Drenched in Light” (1924)

You Isie Watts! Git ’own offen dat gatepost an’ rake up dis yahd!”

The little brown figure perched upon the gatepost looked yearningly up the gleaming shell road that led to Orlando, and down the road that led to Sanford and shrugged her thin shoulders. This heaped kindling on Grandma Potts’ already burning ire.

“Lawd a-mussy!” she screamed, enraged—“Heah Joel, gimme dat wash stick. Ah’ll show dat limb of Satan she kain’t shake hufseff at me. If she ain’t down by de time Ah gets dere Ah’ll break huh down in de lines” (loins).

“Aw Gran’ma, Ah see Mist’ George and Jim Robinson comin’ and Ah wanted to wave at ’em,” the child said petulantly.

“You jes wave dat rake at dis heah yahd, madame, else Ah’ll take you down a button holelower. You’s too ’oomanish jumpin’ up in everybody’s face dat pass.”

This struck the child in a very sore spot for nothing pleased her so much as to sit atop of the gate post and hail the passing vehicles on their way South to Orlando, or North to Sanford. That white shell road was her great attraction. She raced up and down the stretch of it that lay before her gate like a round eyed puppy hailing gleefully all travelers. Everybody in the country, white and colored, knew little Isis Watts, the joyful. The Robinson brothers, white cattlemen, were particularly fond of her and always extended a stirrup for her to climb up behind one of them for a short ride, or let her try to crack the long bullwhips and yee whoo at the cows.

Grandma Potts went inside and Isis literally waved the rake at the “chaws” of ribbon cane that lay so bountifully about the yard in company with the knots and peelings, with a thick sprinkling of peanut hulls.

The herd of cattle in their envelope of gray dust came alongside and Isis dashed out to the nearest stirrup and was lifted up.

Hello theah Snidlits, I was wonderin’ wheah you was,” said Jim Robinson as she snuggled down behind him in the saddle. They were almost out of the danger zone when Grandma emerged.

“You Isis-s!” she bawled.

The child slid down on the opposite side from the house and executed a flank movement through the corn patch that brought her into the yard from behind the privy.

“You lil’ hasion you! Wheah you been?”

“Out in de back yahd” Isis lied and did a cartwheel and a few fancy steps on her way to the front again.

“If you doan git tuh dat yahd, Ah make amommuk of you!” Isis observed that Grandma was cutting a fancy assortment of switches from peach, guana and cherry trees.

She finished the yard by raking everything under the edge of the porch and began a romp with the dogs, those lean, floppy eared ’coon hounds that all country folks keep. But Grandma vetoed this also.

“Isie, you set ’own on dat porch! Uh great big ’leben yeah ole gal racin’ an’ rompin’ lak dat—set ’own!”

Isis impatiently flung herself upon the steps.

“Git up offa dem steps, you aggavatin’ limn, ’fore Ah git dem hick’ries tuh you, an’ set yo’ seff on a cheah.”

Isis petulantly arose and sat down as violently as possible in a chair, but slid down until she all but sat upon her shoulder blades.

“Now look atcher,” Grandma screamed, “Put yo’ knees together, an’ git up offen yo’ backbone! Lawd, you know dis hellion is gwine make me stomp huh insides out.”

Isis sat bolt upright as if she wore a ramrod down her back and began to whistle. Now there are certain things that Grandma Potts felt no one of this female persuasion should do—one was to sit with the knees separated, “settin’ brazen” she called it; another was whistling, another playin’ with boys, neither must a lady cross her legs.

Up she jumped from her seat to get the switches.

“So youse whistlin’ in mah face, huh!” She glared till her eyes were beady and Isis bolted for safety. But the noon hour brought John Watts, the widowed father, and this excused the child from sitting for criticism.

Being the only girl in the family, of course she must wash the dishes, which she did in intervals between frolics with the dogs. She even gave Jack, the puppy, a

swim in the dishpan by holding him suspended above the water that reeked of “pot likker”—just high enough so that his feet would be immersed. The deluded puppy swam and swam without ever crossing the pan, much to his annoyance. Hearing Grandma she hurriedly dropped him on the floor, which he tracked up with feet wet with dishwater.

Grandma took her patching and settled down in the front room to sew. She did this every afternoon, and invariably slept in the big red rocker with her head lolled back over the back, the sewing falling from her hand.

Isis had crawled under the center table with its read plush cover with little round balls for fringe. She was lying on her back imagining herself various personages. She wore trailing robes, golden slippers with blue bottoms. She rode white horses with flaring pink nostrils to the horizon, for she still believed that to be land’s end. She was picturing herself gazing over the edge of the world into the abyss when the spool of cotton fell from Grandma’s lap and rolled away under the whatnot.

Isis drew back from her contemplation of the nothingness at the horizon and glanced up at the sleeping woman. Her head had fallen far back. She breathed with a regular “snark” intake and soft “poosah” exhaust. But Isis was a visual minded child. She heard the snores only subconsciously but she saw straggling beard on Grandma’s chin, trembling a little with every “snark” and “poosah.” They were long gray hairs curled here and there against the dark brown skin. Isis was moved with pity for her mother’s mother.

“Poah Gran-ma needs a shave,” she murmured, and set about it. Just then Joel, next older than Isis, entered with a can of bait.

“Come on Isie, les’ we all go fishin’. The perchis bitin’ fine in Blue Sink.”

“Sh-sh—” cautioned his sister, Ah got to shave Gran’ma.”

“Who say so?” Joel asked, surprised.

Nobody doan hafta tell me. Look at her chin. No ladies don’t weah no whiskers if they kin help it. But Gran’ma gittin’ ole an’ she doan know how to shave like me.”

The conference adjourned to the back porch lest Grandma wake.

“Aw, Isie, you doan know nothin’ ’bout shavin’ a-tall—but a man lake me”

“Ah do so know.”

“You don’t not. Ah’m goin’ shave her mahseff.”

“Naw, you won’t neither, Smarty. Ah saw her first an’ thought it all up first,” Isis declared, and ran to the calico covered box on the wall above the wash basin and seized her father’s razor. Joel was quick and seized the mug and brush. “Now!” Isis cried defiantly, Ah got the razor.”

“Goody, goody, goody, pussy cat, Ah got the’ brush an’ you can’t shave ’thout lather—see! Ah know mo’ than you,” Joel retorted.

“Aw, who don’t know dat?” Isis pretended to scorn. But seeing her progress blocked for lack of lather she compromised.

“Ah know! Les’ we all shave her. You lather an’ Ah shave.”

This was agreeable to Joel. He made mountains of lather and anointed his own chin, and the chin of Isis and the dogs, splashed the walls and at last was persuaded to lather Grandma’s chin. Not that he was loath but he wanted his new plaything to last as long as possible.

Isis stood on one side of the chair with the razor clutched cleaver fashion. The niceties of razor-handling had passed over her head. The thing with her was to *hold* the razor—sufficient in itself.

Joel splashed on the lather in great gobs and Grandma awoke.

For one bewildered moment she stared at the grinning boy with the brush and mug but sensing another presence, she turned to behold the business face of Isis and the razor-clutching hand. Her jaw dropped and Grandma, forgetting years and rheumatism, bolted from the chair and fled the house, screaming.

“She’s gone to tell papa, Isie. You didn’t have no business wid his razor and he’s gonna lick yo hide,” Joel cried, running to replace mug and brush.

“You too, chuckle-head, you, too,” retorted Isis. “You was playin’ wid his brush and put it all over the dogs—Ah seen you put in on Ned an’ Beulah.” Isis shaved some slivers from the door jamb with the razor and replaced it in the box. Joel took his bait and pole and hurried to Blue Sink. Isis crawled under the house to brood over the whipping she knew would come. She had meant well.

But sounding brass and tinkling cymbal drew her forth. The local lodge of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows led by a braying, thudding band, was marching in full regalia down the road. She had forgotten the barbecue and log-rolling to be held today for the benefit of the new hall.

Music to Isis meant motion. In a minute razor and whipping forgotten, she was doing a fair imitation of the Spanish dancer she had seen in a medicine show some time before. Isis’ feet were gifted—she could dance most anything she saw.

Up, up went her spirits, her brown little feet doing all sorts of intricate things and her body in rhythm, hand curving above her head. But the music was growing faint. Grandma nowhere in sight. She stole out of the gate, running and dancing after the band.

Then she stopped. She couldn't dance at the carnival. Her dress was torn and dirty. She picked a long stemmed daisy and thrust it behind her ear. But the dress, no better. Oh, an idea! In the battered round topped trunk in the bed room!

She raced back to the house, then, happier, raced down the white dusty road to the picnic grove, gorgeously clad. People laughed good naturedly at her, the band played and Isis danced because she couldn't help it. A crowd of children gathered admiringly about her as she wheeled lightly about, hand on hip, flower between her teeth with the red and white fringe of the tablecloth—Grandma's new red tablecloth that she wore in lieu of a Spanish shawl—trailing in the dust. It was too ample for her meager form, but she wore it like a gipsy. Her brown feet twinkled in and out of the fringe. Some grown people joined the children about her. The Grand Exalted Ruler rose to speak; the band was hushed, but Isis danced on, the crowd clapping their hands for her. No one listened to the Exalted one, for little by little the multitude had surrounded the brown dancer.

An automobile drove up to the Crown and halted. Two white men and a lady got out and pushed into the crowd, suppressing mirth discreetly behind gloved hands. Isis looked up and waved them a magnificent hail and went on dancing until—

Grandma had returned to the house and missed Isis and straightway sought her at the festivities expecting to find her in her soiled dress, shoeless, gaping at the crowd, but what she saw drove her frantic. Here was her granddaughter dancing before a gaping crowd in her brand new red tablecloth, and reeking of lemon extract, for Isis had added the final touch to her costume. She *must* have perfume.

Isis saw Grandma and bolted. She heard her cry: "Mah Gawd, mah brand new table cloth Ah jus' bought f'um O'landah!" as she fled through the crowd and on into the woods.

II

She followed the little creek until she came to the fork in a rutty wagon road that led to Apopka and laid down on the cool grass at the roadside. The April sun was quite hot.

Misery, misery and woe settled down upon her and the child wept. She knew another whipping was in store for her.

“Oh, Ah wish Ah could die, then Gran’ma an’ papa would be sorry they beat me so much. Ahb’leeve Ah’ll run away an’ never go home no mo’. Ah’m goin’ drown mahseff in th’ creek!” Her woe grew attractive.

Isis got up and waded into the water. She routed out a tiny ’gator and a huge bull frog. She splashed and sang, enjoying herself immensely. The purr of a motor struck her ear and she saw a large, powerful car jolting along the rutty road toward her. It stopped at the water’s edge.

“Well, I declare, it’s our little gypsy,” exclaimed the man at the wheel. “What are you doing here, now?”

“Ah’m killin’ mahseff,” Isis declared dramatically, “Cause Gran’ma beats me too much.”

There was a hearty burst of laughter from the machine.

“You’ll last sometime the way you are going about it. Is this the way to Maitland? We want to go to the Park Hotel.”

Isis saw no longer any reason to die. She came up out of the water, holding up the dripping fringe of the tablecloth.

“Naw, indeedy. You go to Maitlan’ by the shell road—it goes by mah house—an’ turn off at Lake Sebelia to the clay road that takes you right to the do’.”

“Well,” went on the driver, smiling furtively, “Could you quit dying long enough to go with us?”

“Yessuh,” she said thoughtfully, “Ah wanta go wid you.”

The door of the car swung open. She was invited to a seat beside the driver. She had often dreamed of riding in one of these heavenly chariots but never thought she would, actually.

“Jump in then, Madame Tragedy, and show us. We lost ourselves after we left your barbecue.”

During the drive Isis explained to the kind lady who smelt faintly of violets and to the indifferent men that she was really a princess. She told them about her trips to the horizon, about the trailing gowns, the gold shoes with blue bottoms—she insisted on the blue bottoms—the white charger, the time when she was Hercules and had slain numerous dragons and sundry giants. At last the car approached her gate over which stood the umbrella Chinaberry tree. The car was abreast of the gate and had all but passed when Grandma spied her glorious tablecloth lying back against the upholstery of the Packard.

“You Isie-e!” she bawled, “You lil’ wretch you! Come heah dis instant.”

“That’s me,” the child confessed, mortified, to the lady on the rear seat.

“Oh, Sewell, stop the car. This is where the child lives. I hate to give her up though.”

“Do you wanta keep me?” Isis brightened.

“Oh, I wish I could, you shining little morsel. Wait, I’ll try to save you a whipping this time.”

She dismounted with the gaudy lemon flavored culprit and advanced to the gate where Grandma stood glowering, switches in hand.

“You’re goin tuh ketchit f’um yo’ haid to yo’ heels m’lady. Jes’ come in heah.”

“Why, good afternoon,” she accosted the furious grandparent. “You’re not going to whip this poor little thing, are you?” the lady asked in conciliatory tones.

“Yes, Ma’am. She’s de wustest lil’ limb dat ever drewed bref. Jes’ look at mah new table cloth, dat ain’t never been washed. She done traipsed all over de woods, uh dancin’ an’ uh prancin’ in it. She done took a razor to me t’day an’ Lawd knows whut mo’.”

Isis clung to the white hand fearfully.

“Ah wuzn’t gointer hurt Gran’m, miss—Ah wuz jus’ gointer shave her whiskers fur huh ’cause she’s old an’ can’t.”

The white hand closed tightly over the little brown one that was quite soiled. She could understand a voluntary act of love even though it miscarried.

“Now, Mrs. er—er—I didn’t get the name—how much did your tablecloth cost?”

“One whole big silvah dollar down at O’landah—ain’t had it a week yit.”

“Now here’s five dollars to get another one. The little thing loves laughter. I want her to go on to the hotel and dance in that tablecloth for me. I can stand a little light today—”

“Oh, yessum, yessum,” Grandma cut in, “Everything’s alright, sho’she kin go, yessum.”

The lady went on: "I want brightness and this Isis is joy itself, why she's drenched in light!"

Isis for the first time in her life, felt herself appreciated and danced up and down in an ecstasy of joy for a minute.

"Now, behave yo'seff, Isie, ovah at de hotel wid de white folks," Grandma cautioned, pride in her voice, though she strove to hide it. "Lawd, ma'am, dat gal keeps me so frackshus, Ah doan know mah haid f'um mah feet. Ah orter comb huh haid, too, befo' she go wid you all."

"No, no, don't bother. I like her as she is. I don't think she'd like it either, being combed and scrubbed. Come on, Isis."

Feeling that Grandma had been somewhat quelched did not detract from Isis' spirit at all. She pranced over to the waiting motor and this time seated herself on the rear seat between the sweet, smiling lady and the rather aloof man in gray.

"Ah'm gointer stay wid you all," she said with a great deal of warmth, and snuggled up to her benefactress. "Want me tuh sing a song fuh you?"

"There, Helen, you've been adopted," said the man with a short, harsh laugh.

"Oh, I hope so, Harry." She put her arm about the red draped figure at her side and drew it close until she felt the warm puffs of the child's breath against her side. She looked hungrily ahead of her and spoke into space rather than to anyone in the car. "I want a little of her sunshine to soak into my soul. I need it."

4.14 e. e. cummings (1894-1962)

Like a number of the modernist poets, e. e. cummings came from a family of teachers and ministers. But while many of his contemporaries were active members of the artistic communities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, cummings was a more solitary figure whose poetry and politics tended toward the everyday and the common. This is not to say that cummings was a passive observer of the world around him: while serving overseas during World War I, cummings and a friend were held by the French on charges that their letters home were derisive of authority and of the general war effort. At home in New York, however, cummings seems to have avoided the style of poetry and pronouncements that made his contemporaries like Pound, Williams, Moore, and Stevens into vanguards of Modernist poetry

Nonetheless, contemporary readers are often startled by the appearance of cummings's poetry on the printed page. Eschewing capitalization, punctuation, and standard verse forms, cummings's works take full advantage of the printed page to present poems that are often better suited to private reading than public performance. Where the lack of punctuation and capitalization may disarm readers more accustomed to being told how to vocalize a poem, cummings's verses are presented without a beginning or an ending so as to allow the reader to move through a collection of cummings's verse in a way that befits the private reading experience. Like Marianne Moore, who also paid careful attention to the presentation of her works in print, cummings embraced the opportunities that modern print culture provided to poets. The selection from cummings reproduced below, "[in Just-]," published in 1920, demonstrates many of the attributes that are common in cummings's verse. This poem can be said to begin without a beginning, withholding even the suggestion of where these lines fall in the consciousness of the poetic voice. And yet, while cummings does away with many aspects of poetry, the beginning of the poem is still familiar to the reader. Consider the beginning of the poem written out in prose: in Just-spring when the world is mud-luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee. Written out this way, the reader can quickly ascertain the meaning of the first few lines, but it is not the form on the page, verse or prose, that makes this possible, but the fact that these lines follow an elementary syntax that feels natural to the ear, even if the eye is confused by the physical arrangement. Once the first lines of the poem have been mastered, more traditional patterns begin to emerge for the reader. The three-times repetition of the words, "balloon-man whistles far and wee," divides the poem into two sections describing the games and adventures of two groups of children, Eddie and Bill and Betty and Isbel. With these children, celebrating the early days of spring, the Just-spring of the opening lines are full of movement and energy in contrast to the infirmities of the balloon-man; nonetheless, all five are part of a vignette whose appearance in the poem suggests further



Image 4.13: e. e. cummings, 1953
Photographer: Walter Albertin
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adventures to come. Although unusual in its shape and punctuation, cummings's poetry is linked to the same rhythms of life that have captivated poets from Chaucer to Eliot.

The e. e. cummings biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.14.1 “[in Just-]” (1920)

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer
old balloonman whistles
far and wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's
spring
and

the

goat-footed

balloonMan whistles
far
and
wee

4.15 F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)



Image 4.14: F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1937
Photographer: Carl Van Vechten
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1896 to a comfortable, solidly middle-class family in St. Paul, Minnesota. A social and cultural beneficiary of the Gilded Age, Fitzgerald's family did not enjoy the prominence and ease of the Carnegies, the Vanderbilts, or the Rockefellers, but in the fluidity of the 1890s a young man like Fitzgerald could, with the right manners and reading, pass among the wealthy without causing much of a stir. In an era when the ultra-rich and the working poor were separated by an unbridgeable chasm, Fitzgerald's modest means still placed him closer to the rich than the poor. Fitzgerald was nevertheless acutely aware of the shortcomings of his limited means and his Midwestern heritage. In his stories and novels, Fitzgerald returned time and again to three areas: money, unattainable love, and individual identity.

Fitzgerald's short fiction has been overwhelmed by interest in his novel *The Great Gatsby*, but Fitzgerald survived by writing short stories for popular magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Metropolitan*, and *Cosmopolitan*.

Many of his stories show his development as a writer of social fiction, and they allow us to understand his longer works in a new light. In "The Rich Boy," a story from 1926, Fitzgerald clearly describes the project of his short stories:

Begin with an individual, and before you know it you find that you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find that you have created—nothing. That is because we are all queer fish, queerer behind our faces and voices than we want any one to know or than we know ourselves.

These lines are particularly important to understanding Fitzgerald because they remind us that his characters are not intended to represent anything larger than the essential character. While *Gatsby* may be great, his story is uniquely his own and unrepresentative of any other industrial baron, brewer, or bootlegger of the 1920s. Thus, Fitzgerald portrays his most famous character through the eyes of a single, flawed narrator. We are not meant to know all of *Gatsby*'s secrets, and, by not knowing his secrets, the story of *Gatsby*'s rise and fall is both individual and universal.

Later in "The Rich Boy," Fitzgerald's narrator offers one of the most memorable and misquoted passages in American literature:

Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand. They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because

we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves. Even when they enter deep into our world or sink below us, they still think that they are better than we are. They are different.

The essential differences of the rich fascinated Fitzgerald and his readers. Throughout the 1920s, the rich and mysterious filled dozens of short stories that enabled Fitzgerald to marry Zelda Sayre, a Southern debutante, and to start a family. But constant exposure to the rich, without being rich, took its toll on both of them. “Winter Dreams,” reproduced below, is ultimately a story of disillusionment with a strong moral center. Filled with wonder and caution, the story blends realism and fable into a uniquely modernist take on wealth, love, and success. It explores themes that are closely related to Fitzgerald: young love between a rich girl and a middle-class boy. The moral compass is very clear: the Midwesterner who stays true to his values will survive even as his romantic heart is damaged. Although the story is from the early years of Fitzgerald’s career, the distinctly American ethic and tone reverberates throughout his oeuvre.

The F. Scott Fitzgerald biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.15.1 “Winter Dreams” (1922)

Some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses with a neurasthenic cow in the front yard, but Dexter Green’s father owned the second best grocery-store in Black Bear—the best one was “The Hub,” patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island—and Dexter caddied only for pocket-money.

In the fall when the days became crisp and gray, and the long Minnesota winter shut down like the white lid of a box, Dexter’s skis moved over the snow that hid the fairways of the golf course. At these times the country gave him a feeling of profound melancholy—it offended him that the links should lie in enforced fallowness, haunted by ragged sparrows for the long season. It was dreary, too, that on the tees where the gay colors fluttered in summer there were now only the desolate sand-boxes knee-deep in crusted ice. When he crossed the hills the wind blew cold as misery, and if the sun was out he tramped with his eyes squinted up against the hard dimensionless glare.

In April the winter ceased abruptly. The snow ran down into Black Bear Lake scarcely tarrying for the early golfers to brave the season with red and black balls. Without elation, without an interval of moist glory, the cold was gone.

Dexter knew that there was something dismal about this Northern spring, just as he knew there was something gorgeous about the fall. Fall made him clinch his hands and tremble and repeat idiotic sentences to himself, and make brisk abrupt gestures of command to imaginary audiences and armies. October filled him with hope which November raised to a sort of ecstatic triumph, and in this mood the

fleeting brilliant impressions of the summer at Sherry Island were ready grist to his mill. He became a golf champion and defeated Mr. T. A. Hedrick in a marvellous match played a hundred times over the fairways of his imagination, a match each detail of which he changed about untiringly—sometimes he won with almost laughable ease, sometimes he came up magnificently from behind. Again, stepping from a Pierce-Arrow automobile, like Mr. Mortimer Jones, he strolled frigidly into the lounge of the Sherry Island Golf Club—or perhaps, surrounded by an admiring crowd, he gave an exhibition of fancy diving from the spring-board of the club raft.... Among those who watched him in open-mouthed wonder was Mr. Mortimer Jones.

And one day it came to pass that Mr. Jones—himself and not his ghost—came up to Dexter with tears in his eyes and said that Dexter was the—best caddy in the club, and wouldn't he decide not to quit if Mr. Jones made it worth his while, because every other caddy in the club lost one ball a hole for him—regularly—

“No, sir,” said Dexter decisively, “I don't want to caddy any more.” Then, after a pause: “I'm too old.”

“You're not more than fourteen. Why the devil did you decide just this morning that you wanted to quit? You promised that next week you'd go over to the State tournament with me.”

“I decided I was too old.”

Dexter handed in his “A Class” badge, collected what money was due him from the caddy master, and walked home to Black Bear Village.

“The best—caddy I ever saw,” shouted Mr. Mortimer Jones over a drink that afternoon. “Never lost a ball! Willing! Intelligent! Quiet! Honest! Grateful!”

The little girl who had done this was eleven—beautifully ugly as little girls are apt to be who are destined after a few years to be inexpressibly lovely and bring no end of misery to a great number of men. The spark, however, was perceptible. There was a general ungodliness in the way her lips twisted down at the corners when she smiled, and in the—Heaven help us!—in the almost passionate quality of her eyes. Vitality is born early in such women. It was utterly in evidence now, shining through her thin frame in a sort of glow.

She had come eagerly out on to the course at nine o'clock with a white linen nurse and five small new golf-clubs in a white canvas bag which the nurse was carrying. When Dexter first saw her she was standing by the caddy house, rather ill at ease and trying to conceal the fact by engaging her nurse in an obviously unnatural conversation graced by startling and irrelevant grimaces from herself.

“Well, it’s certainly a nice day, Hilda,” Dexter heard her say. She drew down the corners of her mouth, smiled, and glanced furtively around, her eyes in transit falling for an instant on Dexter.

Then to the nurse:

“Well, I guess there aren’t very many people out here this morning, are there?”

The smile again—radiant, blatantly artificial—convincing.

“I don’t know what we’re supposed to do now,” said the nurse, looking nowhere in particular.

“Oh, that’s all right. I’ll fix it up.

Dexter stood perfectly still, his mouth slightly ajar. He knew that if he moved forward a step his stare would be in her line of vision—if he moved backward he would lose his full view of her face. For a moment he had not realized how young she was. Now he remembered having seen her several times the year before in bloomers.

Suddenly, involuntarily, he laughed, a short abrupt laugh—then, startled by himself, he turned and began to walk quickly away.

“Boy!”

Dexter stopped.

“Boy—”

Beyond question he was addressed. Not only that, but he was treated to that absurd smile, that preposterous smile—the memory of which at least a dozen men were to carry into middle age.

“Boy, do you know where the golf teacher is?”

“He’s giving a lesson.”

“Well, do you know where the caddy-master is?”

“He isn’t here yet this morning.”

“Oh.” For a moment this baffled her. She stood alternately on her right and left foot.

“We’d like to get a caddy,” said the nurse. “Mrs. Mortimer Jones sent us out to play golf, and we don’t know how without we get a caddy.”

Here she was stopped by an ominous glance from Miss Jones, followed immediately by the smile.

“There aren’t any caddies here except me,” said Dexter to the nurse, “and I got to stay here in charge until the caddy-master gets here.”

“Oh.”

Miss Jones and her retinue now withdrew, and at a proper distance from Dexter became involved in a heated conversation, which was concluded by Miss Jones taking one of the clubs and hitting it on the ground with violence. For further emphasis she raised it again and was about to bring it down smartly upon the nurse’s bosom, when the nurse seized the club and twisted it from her hands.

“You damn little mean old thing!” cried Miss Jones wildly.

Another argument ensued. Realizing that the elements of the comedy were implied in the scene, Dexter several times began to laugh, but each time restrained the laugh before it reached audibility. He could not resist the monstrous conviction that the little girl was justified in beating the nurse.

The situation was resolved by the fortuitous appearance of the caddymaster, who was appealed to immediately by the nurse.

“Miss Jones is to have a little caddy, and this one says he can’t go.”

“Mr. McKenna said I was to wait here till you came,” said Dexter quickly.

“Well, he’s here now.” Miss Jones smiled cheerfully at the caddy-master. Then she dropped her bag and set off at a haughty mince toward the first tee.

“Well?” The caddy-master turned to Dexter. “What you standing there like a dummy for? Go pick up the young lady’s clubs.”

“I don’t think I’ll go out to-day,” said Dexter.

“You don’t—”

“I think I’ll quit.”

The enormity of his decision frightened him. He was a favorite caddy, and the thirty dollars a month he earned through the summer were not to be made

elsewhere around the lake. But he had received a strong emotional shock, and his perturbation required a violent and immediate outlet.

It is not so simple as that, either. As so frequently would be the case in the future, Dexter was unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams.

II

Now, of course, the quality and the seasonability of these winter dreams varied, but the stuff of them remained. They persuaded Dexter several years later to pass up a business course at the State university—his father, prospering now, would have paid his way—for the precarious advantage of attending an older and more famous university in the East, where he was bothered by his scanty funds. But do not get the impression, because his winter dreams happened to be concerned at first with musings on the rich, that there was anything merely snobbish in the boy. He wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves. Often he reached out for the best without knowing why he wanted it—and sometimes he ran up against the mysterious denials and prohibitions in which life indulges. It is with one of those denials and not with his career as a whole that this story deals. He made money. It was rather amazing. After college he went to the city from which Black Bear Lake draws its wealthy patrons. When he was only twenty-three and had been there not quite two years, there were already people who liked to say: “Now there’s a boy—” All about him rich men’s sons were peddling bonds precariously, or investing patrimonies precariously, or plodding through the two dozen volumes of the “George Washington Commercial Course,” but Dexter borrowed a thousand dollars on his college degree and his confident mouth, and bought a partnership in a laundry.

It was a small laundry when he went into it but Dexter made a specialty of learning how the English washed fine woollen golf-stockings without shrinking them, and within a year he was catering to the trade that wore knickerbockers. Men were insisting that their Shetland hose and sweaters go to his laundry just as they had insisted on a caddy who could find golfballs. A little later he was doing their wives’ lingerie as well—and running five branches in different parts of the city. Before he was twenty-seven he owned the largest string of laundries in his section of the country. It was then that he sold out and went to New York. But the part of his story that concerns us goes back to the days when he was making his first big success.

When he was twenty-three Mr. Hart—one of the gray-haired men who like to say “Now there’s a boy”—gave him a guest card to the Sherry Island Golf Club for a week-end. So he signed his name one day on the register, and that afternoon played golf in a foursome with Mr. Hart and Mr. Sandwood and Mr. T. A. Hedrick. He did not consider it necessary to remark that he had once carried Mr. Hart’s bag over this same links, and that he knew every trap and gully with his eyes shut—but he found himself glancing at the four caddies who trailed them,

trying to catch a gleam or gesture that would remind him of himself, that would lessen the gap which lay between his present and his past.

It was a curious day, slashed abruptly with fleeting, familiar impressions. One minute he had the sense of being a trespasser—in the next he was impressed by the tremendous superiority he felt toward Mr. T. A. Hedrick, who was a bore and not even a good golfer any more.

Then, because of a ball Mr. Hart lost near the fifteenth green, an enormous thing happened. While they were searching the stiff grasses of the rough there was a clear call of “Fore!” from behind a hill in their rear. And as they all turned abruptly from their search a bright new ball sliced abruptly over the hill and caught Mr. T. A. Hedrick in the abdomen.

“By Gad!” cried Mr. T. A. Hedrick, “they ought to put some of these crazy women off the course. It’s getting to be outrageous.”

A head and a voice came up together over the hill:

“Do you mind if we go through?”

“You hit me in the stomach!” declared Mr. Hedrick wildly.

“Did I?” The girl approached the group of men. “I’m sorry. I yelled ‘Fore !’”

Her glance fell casually on each of the men—then scanned the fairway for her ball.

“Did I bounce into the rough?”

It was impossible to determine whether this question was ingenuous or malicious. In a moment, however, she left no doubt, for as her partner came up over the hill she called cheerfully:

“Here I am! I’d have gone on the green except that I hit something.”

As she took her stance for a short mashie shot, Dexter looked at her closely. She wore a blue gingham dress, rimmed at throat and shoulders with a white edging that accentuated her tan. The quality of exaggeration, of thinness, which had made her passionate eyes and down-turning mouth absurd at eleven, was gone now. She was arrestingly beautiful. The color in her cheeks was centered like the color in a picture—it was not a “high” color, but a sort of fluctuating and feverish warmth, so shaded that it seemed at any moment it would recede and disappear. This color and the mobility of her mouth gave a continual impression of flux, of intense life, of passionate vitality—balanced only partially by the sad luxury of her eyes.

She swung her mashie impatiently and without interest, pitching the ball into a sand-pit on the other side of the green. With a quick, insincere smile and a careless "Thank you!" she went on after it.

"That Judy Jones!" remarked Mr. Hedrick on the next tee, as they waited—some moments—for her to play on ahead. "All she needs is to be turned up and spanked for six months and then to be married off to an oldfashioned cavalry captain."

"My God, she's good-looking!" said Mr. Sandwood, who was just over thirty.

"Good-looking!" cried Mr. Hedrick contemptuously, "she always looks as if she wanted to be kissed! Turning those big cow-eyes on every calf in town!"

It was doubtful if Mr. Hedrick intended a reference to the maternal instinct.

"She'd play pretty good golf if she'd try," said Mr. Sandwood.

"She has no form," said Mr. Hedrick solemnly.

"She has a nice figure," said Mr. Sandwood.

"Better thank the Lord she doesn't drive a swifter ball," said Mr. Hart, winking at Dexter.

Later in the afternoon the sun went down with a riotous swirl of gold and varying blues and scarlets, and left the dry, rustling night of Western summer. Dexter watched from the veranda of the Golf Club, watched the even overlap of the waters in the little wind, silver molasses under the harvest-moon. Then the moon held a finger to her lips and the lake became a clear pool, pale and quiet. Dexter put on his bathing-suit and swam out to the farthest raft, where he stretched dripping on the wet canvas of the springboard.

There was a fish jumping and a star shining and the lights around the lake were gleaming. Over on a dark peninsula a piano was playing the songs of last summer and of summers before that—songs from "Chin-Chin" and "The Count of Luxemburg" and "The Chocolate Soldier"—and because the sound of a piano over a stretch of water had always seemed beautiful to Dexter he lay perfectly quiet and listened.

The tune the piano was playing at that moment had been gay and new five years before when Dexter was a sophomore at college. They had played it at a prom once when he could not afford the luxury of proms, and he had stood outside the gymnasium and listened. The sound of the tune precipitated in him a sort of ecstasy and it was with that ecstasy he viewed what happened to him now. It was a mood of intense appreciation, a sense that, for once, he was magnificently attune

to life and that everything about him was radiating a brightness and a glamour he might never know again.

A low, pale oblong detached itself suddenly from the darkness of the Island, spitting forth the reverberate sound of a racing motor-boat. Two white streamers of cleft water rolled themselves out behind it and almost immediately the boat was beside him, drowning out the hot tinkle of the piano in the drone of its spray. Dexter raising himself on his arms was aware of a figure standing at the wheel, of two dark eyes regarding him over the lengthening space of water—then the boat had gone by and was sweeping in an immense and purposeless circle of spray round and round in the middle of the lake. With equal eccentricity one of the circles flattened out and headed back toward the raft.

“Who’s that?” she called, shutting off her motor. She was so near now that Dexter could see her bathing-suit, which consisted apparently of pink rompers.

The nose of the boat bumped the raft, and as the latter tilted rakishly he was precipitated toward her. With different degrees of interest they recognized each other.

“Aren’t you one of those men we played through this afternoon?” she demanded.

He was.

“Well, do you know how to drive a motor-boat? Because if you do I wish you’d drive this one so I can ride on the surf-board behind. My name is Judy Jones”—she favored him with an absurd smirk—rather, what tried to be a smirk, for, twist her mouth as she might, it was not grotesque, it was merely beautiful—“and I live in a house over there on the Island, and in that house there is a man waiting for me. When he drove up at the door I drove out of the dock because he says I’m his ideal.”

There was a fish jumping and a star shining and the lights around the lake were gleaming. Dexter sat beside Judy Jones and she explained how her boat was driven. Then she was in the water, swimming to the floating surfboard with a sinuous crawl. Watching her was without effort to the eye, watching a branch waving or a sea-gull flying. Her arms, burned to butternut, moved sinuously among the dull platinum ripples, elbow appearing first, casting the forearm back with a cadence of falling water, then reaching out and down, stabbing a path ahead.

They moved out into the lake; turning, Dexter saw that she was kneeling on the low rear of the now uptilted surf-board.

“Go faster,” she called, “fast as it’ll go.”

Obediently he jammed the lever forward and the white spray mounted at the bow. When he looked around again the girl was standing up on the rushing board, her arms spread wide, her eyes lifted toward the moon.

“It’s awful cold,” she shouted. “What’s your name?”

He told her.

“Well, why don’t you come to dinner to-morrow night?”

His heart turned over like the fly-wheel of the boat, and, for the second time, her casual whim gave a new direction to his life.

III

Next evening while he waited for her to come down-stairs, Dexter peopled the soft deep summer room and the sun-porch that opened from it with the men who had already loved Judy Jones. He knew the sort of men they were—the men who when he first went to college had entered from the great prep schools with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers. He had seen that, in one sense, he was better than these men. He was newer and stronger. Yet in acknowledging to himself that he wished his children to be like them he was admitting that he was but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang. When the time had come for him to wear good clothes, he had known who were the best tailors in America, and the best tailors in America had made him the suit he wore this evening. He had acquired that particular reserve peculiar to his university, that set it off from other universities. He recognized the value to him of such a mannerism and he had adopted it; he knew that to be careless in dress and manner required more confidence than to be careful. But carelessness was for his children. His mother’s name had been Krimslich. She was a Bohemian of the peasant class and she had talked broken English to the end of her days. Her son must keep to the set patterns.

At a little after seven Judy Jones came down-stairs. She wore a blue silk afternoon dress, and he was disappointed at first that she had not put on something more elaborate. This feeling was accentuated when, after a brief greeting, she went to the door of a butler’s pantry and pushing it open called: “You can serve dinner, Martha.” He had rather expected that a butler would announce dinner, that there would be a cocktail. Then he put these thoughts behind him as they sat down side by side on a lounge and looked at each other.

“Father and mother won’t be here,” she said thoughtfully.

He remembered the last time he had seen her father, and he was glad the parents were not to be here to-night—they might wonder who he was. He had been born in Keeble, a Minnesota village fifty miles farther north, and he always gave Keeble as his home instead of Black Bear Village. Country towns were well

enough to come from if they weren't inconveniently in sight and used as footstools by fashionable lakes.

They talked of his university, which she had visited frequently during the past two years, and of the near-by city which supplied Sherry Island with its patrons, and whither Dexter would return next day to his prospering laundries.

During dinner she slipped into a moody depression which gave Dexter a feeling of uneasiness. Whatever petulance she uttered in her throaty voice worried him. Whatever she smiled at—at him, at a chicken liver, at nothing—it disturbed him that her smile could have no root in mirth, or even in amusement. When the scarlet corners of her lips curved down, it was less a smile than an invitation to a kiss.

Then, after dinner, she led him out on the dark sun-porch and deliberately changed the atmosphere.

“Do you mind if I weep a little?” she said.

“I’m afraid I’m boring you,” he responded quickly.

“You’re not. I like you. But I’ve just had a terrible afternoon. There was a man I cared about, and this afternoon he told me out of a clear sky that he was poor as a church-mouse. He’d never even hinted it before. Does this sound horribly mundane?”

“Perhaps he was afraid to tell you.”

“Suppose he was,” she answered. “He didn’t start right. You see, if I’d thought of him as poor—well, I’ve been mad about loads of poor men, and fully intended to marry them all. But in this case, I hadn’t thought of him that way, and my interest in him wasn’t strong enough to survive the shock. As if a girl calmly informed her fiance that she was a widow. He might not object to widows, but—

“Let’s start right,” she interrupted herself suddenly. “Who are you, anyhow?”

For a moment Dexter hesitated. Then:

“I’m nobody,” he announced. “My career is largely a matter of futures.”

“Are you poor?”

“No,” he said frankly, “I’m probably making more money than any man my age in the Northwest. I know that’s an obnoxious remark, but you advised me to start right.”

There was a pause. Then she smiled and the corners of her mouth drooped and an almost imperceptible sway brought her closer to him, looking up into his eyes. A lump rose in Dexter's throat, and he waited breathless for the experiment, facing the unpredictable compound that would form mysteriously from the elements of their lips. Then he saw—she communicated her excitement to him, lavishly, deeply, with kisses that were not a promise but a fulfillment. They aroused in him not hunger demanding renewal but surfeit that would demand more surfeit... kisses that were like charity, creating want by holding back nothing at all.

It did not take him many hours to decide that he had wanted Judy Jones ever since he was a proud, desirous little boy.

IV

It began like that—and continued, with varying shades of intensity, on such a note right up to the denouement. Dexter surrendered a part of himself to the most direct and unprincipled personality with which he had ever come in contact. Whatever Judy wanted, she went after with the full pressure of her charm. There was no divergence of method, no jockeying for position or premeditation of effects—there was a very little mental side to any of her affairs. She simply made men conscious to the highest degree of her physical loveliness. Dexter had no desire to change her. Her deficiencies were knit up with a passionate energy that transcended and justified them. When, as Judy's head lay against his shoulder that first night, she whispered, "I don't know what's the matter with me. Last night I thought I was in love with a man and to-night I think I'm in love with you—"—it seemed to him a beautiful and romantic thing to say. It was the exquisite excitability that for the moment he controlled and owned. But a week later he was compelled to view this same quality in a different light. She took him in her roadster to a picnic supper, and after supper she disappeared, likewise in her roadster, with another man. Dexter became enormously upset and was scarcely able to be decently civil to the other people present. When she assured him that she had not kissed the other man, he knew she was lying—yet he was glad that she had taken the trouble to lie to him.

He was, as he found before the summer ended, one of a varying dozen who circulated about her. Each of them had at one time been favored above all others—about half of them still basked in the solace of occasional sentimental revivals. Whenever one showed signs of dropping out through long neglect, she granted him a brief honeyed hour, which encouraged him to tag along for a year or so longer. Judy made these forays upon the helpless and defeated without malice, indeed half unconscious that there was anything mischievous in what she did.

When a new man came to town every one dropped out—dates were automatically cancelled.

The helpless part of trying to do anything about it was that she did it all herself. She was not a girl who could be “won” in the kinetic sense—she was proof against cleverness, she was proof against charm; if any of these assailed her too strongly she would immediately resolve the affair to a physical basis, and under the magic of her physical splendor the strong as well as the brilliant played her game and not their own. She was entertained only by the gratification of her desires and by the direct exercise of her own charm. Perhaps from so much youthful love, so many youthful lovers, she had come, in self-defense, to nourish herself wholly from within.

Succeeding Dexter’s first exhilaration came restlessness and dissatisfaction. The helpless ecstasy of losing himself in her was opiate rather than tonic. It was fortunate for his work during the winter that those moments of ecstasy came infrequently. Early in their acquaintance it had seemed for a while that there was a deep and spontaneous mutual attraction that first August, for example—three days of long evenings on her dusky veranda, of strange wan kisses through the late afternoon, in shadowy alcoves or behind the protecting trellises of the garden arbors, of mornings when she was fresh as a dream and almost shy at meeting him in the clarity of the rising day. There was all the ecstasy of an engagement about it, sharpened by his realization that there was no engagement. It was during those three days that, for the first time, he had asked her to marry him. She said “maybe some day,” she said “kiss me,” she said “I’d like to marry you,” she said “I love you”—she said—nothing.

The three days were interrupted by the arrival of a New York man who visited at her house for half September. To Dexter’s agony, rumor engaged them. The man was the son of the president of a great trust company. But at the end of a month it was reported that Judy was yawning. At a dance one night she sat all evening in a motor-boat with a local beau, while the New Yorker searched the club for her frantically. She told the local beau that she was bored with her visitor, and two days later he left. She was seen with him at the station, and it was reported that he looked very mournful indeed.

On this note the summer ended. Dexter was twenty-four, and he found himself increasingly in a position to do as he wished. He joined two clubs in the city and lived at one of them. Though he was by no means an integral part of the stag-lines at these clubs, he managed to be on hand at dances where Judy Jones was likely to appear. He could have gone out socially as much as he liked—he was an eligible young man, now, and popular with down-town fathers. His confessed devotion to Judy Jones had rather solidified his position. But he had no social aspirations and rather despised the dancing men who were always on tap for the Thursday or Saturday parties and who filled in at dinners with the younger married set. Already he was playing with the idea of going East to New York. He wanted to take Judy Jones with him. No disillusion as to the world in which she had grown up could cure his illusion as to her desirability.

Remember that—for only in the light of it can what he did for her be understood.

Eighteen months after he first met Judy Jones he became engaged to another girl. Her name was Irene Scheerer, and her father was one of the men who had always believed in Dexter. Irene was light-haired and sweet and honorable, and a little stout, and she had two suitors whom she pleasantly relinquished when Dexter formally asked her to marry him.

Summer, fall, winter, spring, another summer, another fall— so much he had given of his active life to the incorrigible lips of Judy Jones. She had treated him with interest, with encouragement, with malice, with indifference, with contempt. She had inflicted on him the innumerable little slights and indignities possible in such a case—as if in revenge for having ever cared for him at all. She had beckoned him and yawned at him and beckoned him again and he had responded often with bitterness and narrowed eyes. She had brought him ecstatic happiness and intolerable agony of spirit. She had caused him untold inconvenience and not a little trouble. She had insulted him, and she had ridden over him, and she had played his interest in her against his interest in his work—for fun. She had done everything to him except to criticise him—this she had not done— it seemed to him only because it might have sullied the utter indifference she manifested and sincerely felt toward him.

When autumn had come and gone again it occurred to him that he could not have Judy Jones. He had to beat this into his mind but he convinced himself at last. He lay awake at night for a while and argued it over. He told himself the trouble and the pain she had caused him, he enumerated her glaring deficiencies as a wife. Then he said to himself that he loved her, and after a while he fell asleep. For a week, lest he imagined her husky voice over the telephone or her eyes opposite him at lunch, he worked hard and late, and at night he went to his office and plotted out his years.

At the end of a week he went to a dance and cut in on her once. For almost the first time since they had met he did not ask her to sit out with him or tell her that she was lovely. It hurt him that she did not miss these things—that was all. He was not jealous when he saw that there was a new man to-night. He had been hardened against jealousy long before.

He stayed late at the dance. He sat for an hour with Irene Scheerer and talked about books and about music. He knew very little about either. But he was beginning to be master of his own time now, and he had a rather priggish notion that he—the young and already fabulously successful Dexter Green—should know more about such things.

That was in October, when he was twenty-five. In January, Dexter and Irene became engaged. It was to be announced in June, and they were to be married three months later.

The Minnesota winter prolonged itself interminably, and it was almost May when the winds came soft and the snow ran down into Black Bear Lake at last. For the first time in over a year Dexter was enjoying a certain tranquility of spirit. Judy Jones had been in Florida, and afterward in Hot Springs, and somewhere she had been engaged, and somewhere she had broken it off. At first, when Dexter had definitely given her up, it had made him sad that people still linked them together and asked for news of her, but when he began to be placed at dinner next to Irene Scheerer people didn't ask him about her any more—they told him about her. He ceased to be an authority on her.

May at last. Dexter walked the streets at night when the darkness was damp as rain, wondering that so soon, with so little done, so much of ecstasy had gone from him. May one year back had been marked by Judy's poignant, unforgivable, yet forgiven turbulence—it had been one of those rare times when he fancied she had grown to care for him. That old penny's worth of happiness he had spent for this bushel of content. He knew that Irene would be no more than a curtain spread behind him, a hand moving among gleaming tea-cups, a voice calling to children ...fire and loveliness were gone, the magic of nights and the wonder of the varying hours and seasons ...slender lips, down-turning, dropping to his lips and bearing him up into a heaven of eyes.... The thing was deep in him. He was too strong and alive for it to die lightly.

In the middle of May when the weather balanced for a few days on the thin bridge that led to deep summer he turned in one night at Irene's house. Their engagement was to be announced in a week now—no one would be surprised at it. And to-night they would sit together on the lounge at the University Club and look on for an hour at the dancers. It gave him a sense of solidity to go with her—she was so sturdily popular, so intensely "great."

He mounted the steps of the brownstone house and stepped inside.

"Irene," he called.

Mrs. Scheerer came out of the living-room to meet him.

"Dexter," she said, "Irene's gone up-stairs with a splitting headache. She wanted to go with you but I made her go to bed."

"Nothing serious, I—"

"Oh, no. She's going to play golf with you in the morning. You can spare her for just one night, can't you, Dexter?"

Her smile was kind. She and Dexter liked each other. In the living-room he talked for a moment before he said good-night.

Returning to the University Club, where he had rooms, he stood in the doorway for a moment and watched the dancers. He leaned against the door-post, nodded at a man or two—yawned.

“Hello, darling.”

The familiar voice at his elbow startled him. Judy Jones had left a man and crossed the room to him—Judy Jones, a slender enamelled doll in cloth of gold: gold in a band at her head, gold in two slipper points at her dress’s hem. The fragile glow of her face seemed to blossom as she smiled at him. A breeze of warmth and light blew through the room. His hands in the pockets of his dinner-jacket tightened spasmodically. He was filled with a sudden excitement.

“When did you get back?” he asked casually.

“Come here and I’ll tell you about it.”

She turned and he followed her. She had been away—he could have wept at the wonder of her return. She had passed through enchanted streets, doing things that were like provocative music. All mysterious happenings, all fresh and quickening hopes, had gone away with her, come back with her now.

She turned in the doorway.

“Have you a car here? If you haven’t, I have.”

“I have a coupe.”

In then, with a rustle of golden cloth. He slammed the door. Into so many cars she had stepped—like this—like that— her back against the leather, so—her elbow resting on the door— waiting. She would have been soiled long since had there been anything to soil her—except herself—but this was her own self outpouring.

With an effort he forced himself to start the car and back into the street. This was nothing, he must remember. She had done this before, and he had put her behind him, as he would have crossed a bad account from his books.

He drove slowly down-town and, affecting abstraction, traversed the deserted streets of the business section, peopled here and there where a movie was giving out its crowd or where consumptive or pugilistic youth lounged in front of pool halls. The clink of glasses and the slap of hands on the bars issued from saloons, cloisters of glazed glass and dirty yellow light.

She was watching him closely and the silence was embarrassing, yet in this crisis he could find no casual word with which to profane the hour. At a convenient turning he began to zigzag back toward the University Club.

“Have you missed me?” she asked suddenly.

“Everybody missed you.”

He wondered if she knew of Irene Scheerer. She had been back only a day—her absence had been almost contemporaneous with his engagement.

“What a remark!” Judy laughed sadly—without sadness. She looked at him searchingly. He became absorbed in the dashboard.

“You’re handsomer than you used to be,” she said thoughtfully. “Dexter, you have the most rememberable eyes.”

He could have laughed at this, but he did not laugh. It was the sort of thing that was said to sophomores. Yet it stabbed at him.

“I’m awfully tired of everything, darling.” She called every one darling, endowing the endearment with careless, individual comradeship. “I wish you’d marry me.”

The directness of this confused him. He should have told her now that he was going to marry another girl, but he could not tell her. He could as easily have sworn that he had never loved her.

“I think we’d get along,” she continued, on the same note, “unless probably you’ve forgotten me and fallen in love with another girl.”

Her confidence was obviously enormous. She had said, in effect, that she found such a thing impossible to believe, that if it were true he had merely committed a childish indiscretion—and probably to show off. She would forgive him, because it was not a matter of any moment but rather something to be brushed aside lightly.

“Of course you could never love anybody but me,” she continued. “I like the way you love me. Oh, Dexter, have you forgotten last year?”

“No, I haven’t forgotten.”

“Neither have I! “

Was she sincerely moved—or was she carried along by the wave of her own acting?

“I wish we could be like that again,” she said, and he forced himself to answer:

“I don’t think we can.”

“I suppose not.... I hear you’re giving Irene Scheerer a violent rush.”

There was not the faintest emphasis on the name, yet Dexter was suddenly ashamed.

“Oh, take me home,” cried Judy suddenly; “I don’t want to go back to that idiotic dance—with those children.”

Then, as he turned up the street that led to the residence district, Judy began to cry quietly to herself. He had never seen her cry before.

The dark street lightened, the dwellings of the rich loomed up around them, he stopped his coup in front of the great white bulk of the Mortimer Joneses house, somnolent, gorgeous, drenched with the splendor of the damp moonlight. Its solidity startled him. The strong walls, the steel of the girders, the breadth and beam and pomp of it were there only to bring out the contrast with the young beauty beside him. It was sturdy to accentuate her slightness—as if to show what a breeze could be generated by a butterfly’s wing.

He sat perfectly quiet, his nerves in wild clamor, afraid that if he moved he would find her irresistibly in his arms. Two tears had rolled down her wet face and trembled on her upper lip.

“I’m more beautiful than anybody else,” she said brokenly, “why can’t I be happy?” Her moist eyes tore at his stability—her mouth turned slowly downward with an exquisite sadness: “I’d like to marry you if you’ll have me, Dexter. I suppose you think I’m not worth having, but I’ll be so beautiful for you, Dexter.”

A million phrases of anger, pride, passion, hatred, tenderness fought on his lips. Then a perfect wave of emotion washed over him, carrying off with it a sediment of wisdom, of convention, of doubt, of honor. This was his girl who was speaking, his own, his beautiful, his pride.

“Won’t you come in?” He heard her draw in her breath sharply.

Waiting.

“All right,” his voice was trembling, “I’ll come in.

V

It was strange that neither when it was over nor a long time afterward did he regret that night. Looking at it from the perspective of ten years, the fact that Judy's flare for him endured just one month seemed of little importance. Nor did it matter that by his yielding he subjected himself to a deeper agony in the end and gave serious hurt to Irene Scheerer and to Irene's parents, who had befriended him. There was nothing sufficiently pictorial about Irene's grief to stamp itself on his mind. Dexter was at bottom hard-minded. The attitude of the city on his action was of no importance to him, not because he was going to leave the city, but because any outside attitude on the situation seemed superficial. He was completely indifferent to popular opinion. Nor, when he had seen that it was no use, that he did not possess in himself the power to move fundamentally or to hold Judy Jones, did he bear any malice toward her. He loved her, and he would love her until the day he was too old for loving—but he could not have her. So he tasted the deep pain that is reserved only for the strong, just as he had tasted for a little while the deep happiness.

Even the ultimate falsity of the grounds upon which Judy terminated the engagement that she did not want to "take him away" from Irene—Judy, who had wanted nothing else—did not revolt him. He was beyond any revulsion or any amusement.

He went East in February with the intention of selling out his laundries and settling in New York—but the war came to America in March and changed his plans. He returned to the West, handed over the management of the business to his partner, and went into the first officers' training-camp in late April. He was one of those young thousands who greeted the war with a certain amount of relief, welcoming the liberation from webs of tangled emotion.

VI

This story is not his biography, remember, although things creep into it which have nothing to do with those dreams he had when he was young. We are almost done with them and with him now. There is only one more incident to be related here, and it happens seven years farther on. It took place in New York, where he had done well—so well that there were no barriers too high for him. He was thirty-two years old, and, except for one flying trip immediately after the war, he had not been West in seven years. A man named Devlin from Detroit came into his office to see him in a business way, and then and there this incident occurred, and closed out, so to speak, this particular side of his life.

"So you're from the Middle West," said the man Devlin with careless curiosity. "That's funny—I thought men like you were probably born and raised on Wall Street. You know—wife of one of my best friends in Detroit came from your city. I was an usher at the wedding."

Dexter waited with no apprehension of what was coming.

“Judy Simms,” said Devlin with no particular interest; “Judy Jones she was once.”

“Yes, I knew her.” A dull impatience spread over him. He had heard, of course, that she was married—perhaps deliberately he had heard no more.

“Awfully nice girl,” brooded Devlin meaninglessly, “I’m sort of sorry for her.”

“Why?” Something in Dexter was alert, receptive, at once.

“Oh, Lud Simms has gone to pieces in a way. I don’t mean he ill-uses her, but he drinks and runs around “

“Doesn’t she run around?”

“No. Stays at home with her kids.”

“Oh.”

“She’s a little too old for him,” said Devlin.

“Too old!” cried Dexter. “Why, man, she’s only twenty-seven.”

He was possessed with a wild notion of rushing out into the streets and taking a train to Detroit. He rose to his feet spasmodically.

“I guess you’re busy,” Devlin apologized quickly. “I didn’t realize—”

“No, I’m not busy,” said Dexter, steadying his voice. “I’m not busy at all. Not busy at all. Did you say she was— twenty-seven? No, I said she was twenty-seven.”

“Yes, you did,” agreed Devlin dryly.

“Go on, then. Go on.”

“What do you mean?”

“About Judy Jones.”

Devlin looked at him helplessly.

“Well, that’s, I told you all there is to it. He treats her like the devil. Oh, they’re not going to get divorced or anything. When he’s particularly outrageous she forgives him. In fact, I’m inclined to think she loves him. She was a pretty girl when she first came to Detroit.”

A pretty girl! The phrase struck Dexter as ludicrous.

“Isn’t she—a pretty girl, any more?”

“Oh, she’s all right.”

“Look here,” said Dexter, sitting down suddenly, “I don’t understand. You say she was a ‘pretty girl’ and now you say she’s ‘all right.’ I don’t understand what you mean—Judy Jones wasn’t a pretty girl, at all. She was a great beauty. Why, I knew her, I knew her. She was—”

Devlin laughed pleasantly.

“I’m not trying to start a row,” he said. “I think Judy’s a nice girl and I like her. I can’t understand how a man like Lud Simms could fall madly in love with her, but he did.” Then he added: “Most of the women like her.”

Dexter looked closely at Devlin, thinking wildly that there must be a reason for this, some insensitivity in the man or some private malice.

“Lots of women fade just like that,” Devlin snapped his fingers. “You must have seen it happen. Perhaps I’ve forgotten how pretty she was at her wedding. I’ve seen her so much since then, you see. She has nice eyes.”

A sort of dulness settled down upon Dexter. For the first time in his life he felt like getting very drunk. He knew that he was laughing loudly at something Devlin had said, but he did not know what it was or why it was funny. When, in a few minutes, Devlin went he lay down on his lounge and looked out the window at the New York sky-line into which the sun was sinking in dull lovely shades of pink and gold.

He had thought that having nothing else to lose he was invulnerable at last—but he knew that he had just lost something more, as surely as if he had married Judy Jones and seen her fade away before his eyes.

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck’s soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why, these things were no longer in the world! They had existed and they existed no longer.

For the first time in years the tears were streaming down his face. But they were for himself now. He did not care about mouth and eyes and moving hands. He

wanted to care, and he could not care. For he had gone away and he could never go back any more. The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.

“Long ago,” he said, “long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more.”

4.16 William Faulkner (1897-1962)

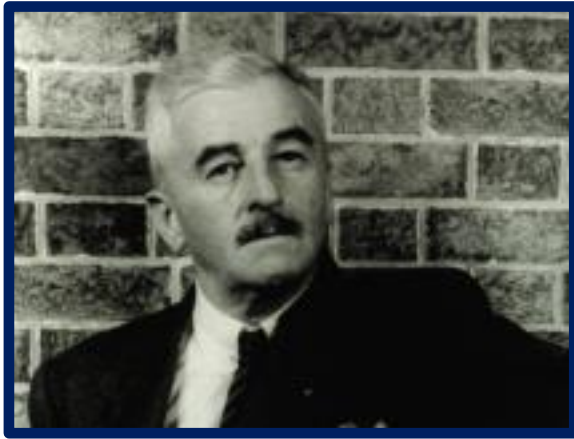


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William Faulkner is the most important writer of the Southern Renaissance. Flannery O'Connor once compared the overpowering force of his influence to a thundering train, remarking that “nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the Dixie Limited is roaring down.” Faulkner was born in Mississippi and raised on tales of his legendary great-great grandfather—the “Old Colonel,” who led a group of raiders in the Civil War, built his own railroad, served in the state legislature, and was murdered by a political rival—and prominent great-grandfather, the “Young Colonel,” who was an assistant United States attorney and banker. Dropping out of high school, Faulkner left Mississippi to pursue his interests in drawing and poetry.

During World War I, Faulkner pretended to be English and enlisted in the Royal Air Force, although he never saw combat. A fictional exaggeration based on his experience as a cadet-pilot for the Royal Air Force became his first short story, “Landing in Luck,” reproduced below. In 1924 he published his first book of poetry, a collection of poems called *The Marble Faun*. Turning his attention to novel writing, Faulkner released two timely books. His first novel, *Soldier's Pay* (1926), explores the states of mind of those who did and did not fight in World War I. His second novel, *Mosquitos* (1927), exposes the triviality of the New Orleans art community of which Faulkner was briefly a part. However, it is with his third novel, *Sartoris* (1929), that Faulkner made what he called his “great discovery”: the fictional possibilities contained within his home state of Mississippi. Returning to Oxford, Mississippi, with his new wife, Faulkner moved into an antebellum mansion and began turning the tales he heard growing up about his hometown and surrounding area into one of the greatest inventions in American literary history: Yoknapatawpha County.

Faulkner eventually wrote thirteen novels set in Yoknapatawpha County. Beginning with his fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Faulkner began to incorporate modernist literary techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration and non-linear plotting into his already lofty style. *The Sound and the Fury* describes the fall of the Compson family through four distinct psychological points of view, one of which is that of a young man who commits suicide, and another belonging to an illiterate who is severely mentally handicapped. *As I Lay Dying* (1930) describes the death and burial of a matriarch from the perspective of fifteen different characters in fifty-seven sections of often stream-of-consciousness prose. In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), four narrators relate the same story yet also change it to arrive at four very different meanings. Modernist techniques such as these enabled Faulkner to show how the particulars of everyday life in the rural American South dramatize what he saw as the universal truths of humanity as a whole. While stylistically modernist, Faulkner's collective epic of Yoknapatawpha County ultimately explores not so much the future of narrative as the human condition itself as

lensed through generation-spanning histories of great and low families. One of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha stories is linked below: "Barn Burning," an early story of the Snopes family about whom Faulkner would eventually write a trilogy of novels. This short story is a good representative of both the range of Faulkner's style and his ambition as a storyteller. In deeply regional tales that are at once grotesque, tragic, brilliant, profound, loving, and hilarious, Faulkner leads us to the source, as he once put it, from which drama flows: "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself."

The William Faulkner biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.16.1 "Landing in Luck" (1919)

The machine levelled off and settled on the aerodrome. It turned and taxied back and stopped, headed into the wind again, its engine running idle. The instructor in the forward cockpit faced about and raised his goggles.

"Fairish," he said, "not so bad. How many hours have you had?"

Cadet Thompson, a "barracks ace," who had just made a fairly creditable landing, assumed an expression of assured confidence.

"Seven hours and nine minutes, sir."

"Think you can—hold that stick back, will you?—think you can take her round alone?"

"Yes, sir, he answered as he had answered at least four times a day for the last three days, with the small remaining part of his unconquered optimism in his voice. The instructor climbed slowly out onto the lower wing, then to the ground, stretching his legs. He got a cigarette from his clothes after a fashion resembling sleight-of-hand.

"You've got to solo some day. The C. O. gave us all a raggin' last night. It's chaps like you that give this stage such a name for inefficiency. Here you have had seven hours, and yet you never know if you are goin' to land on this aerodrome or down at Borden. And then you always pick a house or another machine to land on. What ever brought you to think you could fly? Swear I don't know what to do with you. Let you try it and break your neck, or recommend you for discharge. Get rid of you either way, and a devilish good thing, too."

A silence hung heavily about Thompson's unhappy head. The instructor, sucking his cigarette, stared off across the aerodrome, where other wild and hardy

amateurs took off, landed and crashed. A machine descended tail high, levelled off too soon and landed in a series of bumps like an inferior tennis ball.

“See that chap there? He’s probably had half your time but he makes landings alone. But you, you can cut your gun and sit up there like a blind idiot and when you condescend to dive the bus, you try your best to break our necks, yours and mine too; and I’ll say right now, that’s somethin’ none of you rockin’ chair aviators is goin’ to do. Well, it’s your neck or my reputation, now. Take her off, and what ever you do, keep your nose down.”

Thompson pulled down his goggles. He had been angry enough to kill his officer for the better part of a week, so added indignities rested but lightly upon him. He was a strange mixture of fear and pride as he opened the throttle wide and pushed the stick forward—fear that he would wreck the machine landing, and pride that he was on his own at last. He was no physical coward, his fear was that he would show himself up before his less fortunate friends to whom he had talked largely of spins and side slips and gliding angles.

All-in-all, he was in no particularly safe frame of mind for his solo flight. He gained speed down the field. The tail was off the ground now and Thompson, more or less nervous, though he had taken the machine off like a veteran with the instructor aboard, pulled the stick back before the machine had gained speed sufficient to rise. It lurched forward and the tail sank heavily, losing more speed. He knew that he had gone too far down the field and should turn back and take off again, so he closed the throttle. When the noise of the engine ceased he heard the instructor shouting at him, and the splutter of a motor cycle. Sending after him, were they? Cadet Thompson was once more cleanly angry. He jerked the throttle open.

His subconscious mind had registered a cable across the end of the field, and he had flown enough to know that it was touch and go as to whether he would clear it. He was afraid of rising too soon again and he knew that he would not stop in time were he to close the throttle now. So, his eyes on the speed indicator, he pulled the stick back. The motion at once became easier and he climbed as much as he dared.

A shock; he closed his eyes, expecting to go over and down on his back in the road below. When nothing happened he ventured a frightened glance. Below him was the yellow of wheat field and the aerodrome far to the rear.

So the cable had broken! Must have, for here he was still going forward. His altimeter showed two hundred feet. Thompson felt like shouting. Now he’d show ’em what flying was. Rotten, was he? He’d pull a perfect landing and walk up to that officer and tell him just what kind of a poor fish he was.

“Blasted Englishman,” he said, “thinks he’s the only man in this wing who can really fly. Bet if he’d a’ hit that cable he’d a’ been on his back in that road, right now. Wish t’hell he was.”

He made his turn carefully. Below at the edge of the aerodrome stood the ambulance, its crew gaping foolishly at him. “Like fish,” he thought, “like poor fish.” He leaned out of his cockpit and gestured pleasantly at them, a popular gesture known to all peoples of the civilized world.

Eight hundred feet. “High enough,” he decided, and made another circle, losing height. He picked his spot on the field. “Now,” he thought, cut the throttle and pushed the stick forward. He found a good gliding angle, wires singing, engine idle and long flames wrapping back from the exhausts. The field was filled with people running about and flapping their arms. Another machine rose to meet him. He opened the throttle and closed it again, a warning. “Why’n the hell don’t they get off and lemme land?” he wondered.

The other machine passed him in a long bank, its occupants shouting at him; one of them carried something to which he gestured and pointed frantically. Thompson came out of his dive. They circled again and he saw that the object was about the size and shape of a wheel? A wheel from the landing gear of a machine. What kind of joke was this? Why had they brought a wheel up to show him? He’d seen lots of wheels. Had two on his machine—on his machine—wheels? Then Thompson remembered the cable. He had stripped the wheel on that cable, then. There was nothing else it could mean. His brain assimilated this fact calmly. Having lost a wheel, he had nothing to land on. Therefore it was quite pointless to bother about landing, immediately, anyway. So he circled off and climbed, followed cautiously by the other machine, like two strange dogs meeting.

“Sir,” said an orderly, entering the mess where the C. O. and three lesser lights were playing bridge, “sir, the Flight Commander, B Flight, reports that a cadet is abaht to crash.”

“Crash?” repeated the C. O.

“Out ’ere, sir. Yes, sir, ’e ’assn’t got no landing gear.”

““No landing gear?’ What’s this? What’s this?”

“yes, sir. ’E wiped it orf a-taking orf, sir. ’E’s abaht out of petrol and the Flight Commander says ’e’ll be a-coming down soon, sir.”

“My word,” said the C. O., going to the door and closely followed by the others.

“There ’e is, sir, that’s ’im in front.”

“My word,” said the C. O. again and went off toward the hangars at a very good gait.

“What this? What’s this?” Approaching the group of officers.

“Cadet Thompson, sir,” volunteered one, “Mr. Bessing’s cadet. Oh, Bessing?”

Bessing came over, lifting his feet nervously.

“What’s all this, Mr. Bessing?” The C. O. watched him narrowly. An instructor gets a bad name when his cadet crashes, he is responsible for the cadet’s life as well as the machine.

“Rotten take off, sir. He tried to rise too soon, and when he failed, instead of comin’ back and tryin’ again, he carried right on. Struck that cable and lost his right wheel and he’s been sittin’ up there every since. We sent another chap up to pull him up a bit. He’s almost out of petrol and he’ll have to come down soon.

“H-m. Didn’t send him up too soon, did you, Mr. Bessing?”

“Chap’s had seven hours, sir,” he protested, and produced Thompson’s card.

The C. O. studied it a moment, then returned it.

“Wharton, sir?” He helped the C. O. to a light and lit a cigarette for himself.

“Good lad, good lad,” said the C. O., shading his eyes as he stared into the sky. “Something in you people at this wing, though. Cadets and officers both. N. C. O.’s got it, too. G. O. C. gave me a jolly raggin’ not a fortnight ago. Do something. Do something, swear I will.”

The drone from the engines above suddenly ceased. Thompson was out of petrol at last. The two machines descended in a wide spiral, and they on the earth stood watching him as he descended, as utterly beyond any human aid as though he were on another planet.

“Here they come,” Bessing muttered half aloud. “If he only remembers to land on his left wing—the fool, oh, the blind, bounding fool!”

For Thompson’s nerve was going as he neared the earth. The temptation was strong to kick his rudder over and close his eyes. The machine descended, barely retaining headway. He watched the approaching ground utterly unable to make any pretense of levelling off, paralyzed; his brain had ceased to function, he was all staring eyes, watching the remorseless earth. He did not know his height, the ground rushed past too swiftly to judge, but he expected to crash any second. Thompson’s fate was on the laps of the Gods.

The tail touched, bounded, scraped again. The left wing was low and the wing tip crumpled like paper. A tearing fabric, a strut snapped, and he regained dominion over his limbs, but too late to do anything—were there anything to be done. The machine struck again, solidly, slewed around and stood on its nose.

Bessing was the first to reach him.

“Lord, Lord!” he was near weeping from nervous tension. “Are you all right? Never expected you’d come through, never expected it! Didn’t think to see you alive! Don’t ever let anyone else say you can’t fly. Comin’ out of that was a trick many an old flyer couldn’t do! I say, are you all right?”

Hanging face downward from the cockpit, Cadet Thompson looked at Bessing, surprised at the words of this cold, short tempered officer. He forgot the days of tribulation and insult in this man’s company, and his recent experience, and his eyes filled with utter adoration. Then he became violently ill.

That night Thompson sat gracefully on a table in the writing room of a down town hotel, tapping a boot with his stick and talking to sundry companions.

“—and so, when my petrol gave out, I knew it was up to me. I had already thought of a plan—I thought of several, but this one seemed the best—which was to put my tail down first and then drop my left wing, so the old bus wouldn’t turn over and lie down on me. Well, it worked just as I had doped it out, only a ditch those fool A. M.’s had dug right across the field, mind you, tripped her up and she stood on her nose. I had thought of that, too, and pulled my belt up. Bessing said—he’s a pretty good scout—”

“Ah-h-h—” they jeered him down profanely.

“Look at the nerve he’s got, will you?”

“He”—

“Ah, we know you! Why, the poor bum crashed on his solo, and listen at the line he’s giving us!”

“Well, Bessing said—”

“Bessing said! Bessing said! Go tell the G. O. C. what Bessing said!”

“Dammit, don’t I know what Bessing said? Ask him! That’s all. You’re a bunch of poor hams that think you can fly! Why, I got an hour and a half solo time. You poor fish. Ask Blessing! there’s a guy that knows what’s what.”

He flung out of the room. They watched him with varying expressions.

“Say,” spoke one, a cadet but recently enlisted and still in ground school: D’ you think he really did all that? He must be pretty good.”

“That guy? That guy fly? He’s so rotten they can’t discharge him. Every time he goes up they have to get a gun and shoot him down. He’s the ‘f’ out of flying. Biggest liar in the R. A. F.”

Thompson passed through again, with Bessing, and his arm was through the officer’s. He was deep in discussion evidently, but he looked up in time to give them a cheerfully condescending:

“Hello, you chaps.”

4.16.2 “Barn Burning” (1939)

[Link to “Barn Burning”](#)

4.17 Hart Crane (1899-1932)

Son of Clarence A. Crane and Grace Edna Hart, Harold Hart Crane was born on July 21, 1899, and raised in Garrettsville, Ohio. Clarence Crane was a candy maker, the inventor of “Life savers,” but sold the patent before it became the popular candy it is today. Crane was affected by his parents’ constant fighting and eventual divorce when he was 18 years old. He dropped out of high school in his junior year and set his sights on New York City. When he reached New York, he became a copywriter. Crane would go between his hometown and New York fairly often, working in his father’s factory and as an advertising copywriter.

Crane’s career in poetry started with the publication of *White Buildings*, a collection of poems focused on love and romance that he has been piecing together. At this time, he was falling in love with Emil Opffer, a Danish merchant mariner. Later, Opffer would invite him to live with him in his father’s house, giving him more time to work on writing. His first work received mixed reviews. Crane continued to write and publish his poems. An addiction to alcohol resulted in him getting kicked out of the Opffers. Like many of his generation, he went to Paris; he stayed with his friend Harry Crosby, continuing work on his newest piece, *The Bridge*, inspired by T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. A poem from this collection is linked below. While in Paris, Crane was arrested for getting into a drunken brawl with a waiter over his tab. Upon his return to the U.S., Crane released *The Bridge*, which turned out to be a commercial failure. Crane entered into a state of depression.

A sojourn to Mexico turned out to be his last trip. He lived with Peggy Cowley, who was recently divorced from Malcolm Cowley; Peggy was presumed to be his lover. Still in a depression, he struggled to write and eventually came out with his last work, *The Broken Tower*. He lost his purpose in life and hopped on a boat back to the United States. After getting drunk and beaten up for flirting with a male sailor, 32-year-old Crane took his own life by jumping off the side of the boat, never to be seen again.

The Hart Crane biography was written by Joshua Ginsberg, a University of Delaware student.

4.17.1 “To Brooklyn Bridge” (1930)

[Link to “To Brooklyn Bridge”](#)

4.18 Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)



Image 4.16: Ernest Hemingway, 1923
Photographer: unknown
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Ernest Hemingway was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois, an affluent suburb of Chicago. His father, who was prone to depression and would later commit suicide, was a physician and his mother was a singer turned music teacher. Because Hemingway's father was an avid outdoorsman, the family spent many of their summers in northern Michigan, which is where Hemingway set many of his short fiction, including the Nick Adams stories. One of these stories, "Indian Camp," is reproduced below.

In 1917, Hemingway, at that time a writer for *The Kansas City Star*, was eager to join the Armed Forces to fight in World War I but was medically disqualified. Undiscouraged, he joined the ambulance corps and served on the Italian front. During shelling, Hemingway received a shrapnel injury but still carried a comrade to safety and was decorated as a hero.

When Hemingway returned to the States, living ultimately in Chicago, he fell under the mentorship of fellow modernist, Sherwood

Anderson, who encouraged Hemingway to move to Paris. In 1920, Hemingway married Hadley Richardson; soon afterwards, the couple left for Paris. Surrounded by other writers of the period, such as Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Hemingway used these connections to help develop his own writing career. With F. Scott Fitzgerald's help, Hemingway published his first novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) to great acclaim. The novel established Hemingway's simplistic writing style while expressing the frustration that many felt about World War I. His second novel, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), another critical success, once again, captured the disillusionment of the modernist period.

While Hemingway had a turbulent personal life, filled with divorces and failed relationships, he continued to write successful works including several collections of short fiction, for which he was well known, as well as novels and non-fiction. Some of his many works are *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), bringing bullfighting to a larger audience; *To Have and Have Not* (1937); and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), a classic novel on the Spanish Civil War. In 1952, Hemingway wrote what many consider to be his finest work, *Old Man and the Sea*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and led to his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. In 1961, after struggling with depression for years, Ernest Hemingway took his own life in Ketchum, Idaho. In 1964, Scribners published his posthumous memoir, *A Moveable Feast*, which details both Hemingway and Hadley's expatriate life in Paris during the modernist period.

Hemingway's writing was well known stylistically for its short declarative sentences and lack of detail. Hemingway often said this style is based on his iceberg approach to narrative, where, like an iceberg, ten percent of the story was on the surface and ninety percent was under the water. Hemingway attributes this style to his time spent as a journalist. Due to his distinctive style, Hemingway remained an immensely popular writer and his novels were not only critically acclaimed but also best sellers. In "Hills Like White Elephants" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Hemingway writes about couples with troubled relationships. These stories are great examples of Hemingway's technique since it is clear to the reader that the narrator is leaving out many details about the characters' history.

The Ernest Hemingway biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.18.1 "Indian Camp" (1925)

At the lake shore there was another rowboat drawn up. The two Indians stood waiting.

Nick and his father got in the stern of the boat and the Indians shoved it off and one of them got in to row. Uncle George sat in the stern of the camp rowboat. The young Indian shoved the camp boat off and got in to row Uncle George.

The two boats started off in the dark. Nick heard the oarlocks of the other boat quite a way ahead of them in the mist. The Indians rowed with quick choppy strokes. Nick lay back with his father's arm around him. It was cold on the water. The Indian who was rowing them was working very hard, but the other boat moved further ahead in the mist all the time.

"Where are we going, Dad?" Nick asked.

"Over to the Indian camp. There is an Indian lady very sick."

"Oh," said Nick.

Across the bay they found the other boat beached. Uncle George was smoking a cigar in the dark. The young Indian pulled the boat way up on the beach. Uncle George gave both the Indians cigars.

They walked up from the beach through a meadow that was soaking wet with dew, following the young Indian who carried a lantern. Then they went into the woods and followed a trail that led to the logging road that ran back into the hills. It was much lighter on the logging road as the timber was cut away on both sides. The young Indian stopped and blew out his lantern and they all walked on along the road.

They came around a bend and a dog came out barking. Ahead were the lights of the shanties where the Indian bark peelers lived. More dogs rushed out at them. The two Indians sent them back to the shanties. In the shanty nearest the road there was a light in the window. An old woman stood in the doorway holding a lamp.

Inside on a wooden bunk lay a young Indian woman. She had been trying to have her baby for two days. All the old women in the camp had been helping her. The men had moved off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she made. She screamed just as Nick and the two Indians followed his father and Uncle George into the shanty. She lay in the lower bunk, very big under a quilt. Her head was turned to one side. In the upper bunk was her husband. He had cut his foot very badly with an ax three days before. He was smoking a pipe. The room smelled very bad.

Nick's father ordered some water to be put on the stove, and while it was heating he spoke to Nick.

"This lady is going to have a baby, Nick," he said.

"I know," said Nick.

"You don't know," said his father. "Listen to me. What she is going through is called being in labor. The baby wants to be born and she wants it to be born. All her muscles are trying to get the baby born. That is what is happening when she screams."

"I see," Nick said.

Just then the woman cried out.

"Oh, Daddy, can't you give her something to make her stop screaming?" asked Nick.

"No. I haven't any anaesthetic," his father said. "But her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important."

The husband in the upper bunk rolled over against the wall.

The woman in the kitchen motioned to the doctor that the water was hot. Nick's father went into the kitchen and poured about half of the water out of the big kettle into a basin. Into the water left in the kettle he put several things he unwrapped from a handkerchief.

"Those must boil," he said, and began to scrub his hands in the basin of hot water with a cake of soap he had brought from the camp. Nick watched his father's

hands scrubbing each other with the soap. While his father washed his hands very carefully and thoroughly, he talked.

“You see, Nick, babies are supposed to be born head first but sometimes they’re not. When they’re not they make a lot of trouble for everybody. Maybe I’ll have to operate on this lady. We’ll know in a little while.”

When he was satisfied with his hands he went in and went to work.

“Pull back that quilt, will you, George?” he said. “I’d rather not touch it.”

Later when he started to operate Uncle George and three Indian men held the woman still. She bit Uncle George on the arm and Uncle George said, “Damn squaw bitch!” and the young Indian who had rowed Uncle George over laughed at him. Nick held the basin for his father. It all took a long time.

His father picked the baby up and slapped it to make it breathe and handed it to the old woman.

“See, it’s a boy, Nick,” he said. “How do you like being an interne?”

Nick said, “All right.” He was looking away so as not to see what his father was doing.

“There. That gets it,” said his father and put something into the basin.

Nick didn’t look at it.

“Now,” his father said, “there’s some stitches to put in. You can watch this or not, Nick, just as you like. I’m going to sew up the incision I made.”

Nick did not watch. His curiosity had been gone for a long time.

His father finished and stood up.

Uncle George and the three Indian men stood up. Nick put the basin out in the kitchen. Uncle George looked at his arm. The young Indian smiled reminiscently.

“I’ll put some peroxide on that, George,” the doctor said.

He bent over the Indian woman. She was quiet now and her eyes were closed. She looked very pale. She did not know what had become of the baby or anything.

“I’ll be back in the morning,” the doctor said, standing up. “The nurse should be here from St. Ignace by noon and she’ll bring everything we need.”

He was feeling exalted and talkative as football players are in the dressing room after a game.

“That’s one for the medical journal, George,” he said. “Doing a Cassarian with a jackknife and sewing it up with nine-foot, tapered gut leaders.”

Uncle George was standing against the wall, looking at his arm.

“Oh, you’re a great man, all right,” he said.

“Ought to have a look at the proud father. They’re usually the worst sufferers in these little affairs,” the doctor said. “I must say he took it all pretty quietly.”

He pulled back the blanket from the Indian’s head. His hand came away wet. He mounted on the edge of the lower bunk with the lamp in one hand and looked in. The Indian lay with his face toward the wall. His throat had been cut from ear to ear. The blood had flowed down into a pool where his body sagged the bunk. His head rested on his left arm. The open razor lay, edge up, in the blankets.

“Take Nick out of the shanty, George,” the doctor said.

There was no need of that. Nick, standing in the door of the kitchen, had a good view of the upper bunk when his father, the lamp in one hand, tipped the Indian’s head back.

It was just beginning to be daylight when they walked along the logging road back toward the lake.

“I’m terribly sorry I brought you along, Nickie,” said his father, all his post-operative exhilaration gone. “It was an awful mess to put you through.”

“Do ladies always have such a hard time having babies?” Nick asked.

“No, that was very, very exceptional.”

“Why did he kill himself, Daddy?”

“I don’t know, Nick. He couldn’t stand things, I guess.”

“Do many men kill themselves, Daddy?”

“Not very many, Nick.”

“Do many women?”

“Hardly ever.”

“Don’t they ever?”

“Oh, yes. They do sometimes.”

“Daddy?”

“Yes.”

“Where did Uncle George go?”

“He’ll turn up all right.”

“Is dying hard, Daddy?”

“No, I think it’s pretty easy, Nick. It all depends.”

They were seated in the boat, Nick in the stern, his father rowing. The sun was coming up over the hills. A bass jumped, making a circle in the water. Nick trailed his hand in the water. It felt warm in the sharp chill of the morning.

In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, he felt quite sure that he would never die.

4.18.2 “Hills Like White Elephants” (1927)

[Link to “Hills Like White Elephants”](#)

4.18.3 “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (1936)

[Link to “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”](#)

4.19 Kay Boyle (1902-1992)



Image 4.17: Kay Boyle, 1944
Photographer: Al Ravenna, New York World
Telegram and the Sun staff photographer
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Kay Boyle was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on February 19, 1902. Her father was a lawyer, and her mother Katherine was a literary and social activist, which had a great influence on Kay. Her post-secondary education included architecture at the Ohio Mechanics Institute and violin studies at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. After briefly living in New York City in 1922, she married a French exchange student, and they moved to France a year later.

During her first few months abroad, Boyle wrote her first novel *Process* and began writing poems and short stories for various magazines. She left her husband and relocated to Paris in 1926, had a child, and wrote three semi-autobiographical novels. Boyle married her second husband Laurence Vail in 1932; they lived in southern France and had three children together.

Boyle and her family lived in Austria, England, and the French Alps through the 1930s, which was a very productive decade for her writing career. In 1936, she published “The White Horses of Vienna,” linked below, a story about the rise of Nazism in

Austria. In 1941, her family moved to the United States and she was remarried to Joseph von Franckenstein, an Austrian expatriate, in 1943. From 1946-1953, she went to Germany and France as a correspondent for *The New Yorker* and wrote a few short stories within that time. During the McCarthyism of the 1950s, Boyle and her husband faced difficulties; he was dismissed from his Public Affairs Division of the U.S. Department of State job and Boyle lost her *New Yorker* correspondent position. She was also blacklisted by many major magazines—all of which caused her life and writing to turn political. Eventually, the U.S. Department of State cleared the couple in 1957 and they moved to Connecticut where her husband worked at a private school, eventually rehired by the State Department until he died in 1963.

Following her husband’s death, Boyle accepted a position at San Francisco State College to teach creative writing where she would work until 1979. While there, she became a political activist who participated in multiple protests against the Vietnam War and even was arrested twice in 1967. Along with working at San Francisco State College, she volunteered with the NAACP and supported Amnesty International. After retiring, she held a few writing positions at colleges in Washington and Oregon. Kay Boyle passed away on December 27, 1992. Throughout her lifetime, she published over 40 books, including 14 novels, 11 short stories, 8 volumes of poetry, 3 children’s books, and various French to English translations.

The Kay Boyle biography was written by Victoria Delgadillo, a University of Delaware student.

4.19.1 “The White Horses of Vienna” (1935)

[Link to “The White Horses of Vienna”](#)

4.20 Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

“We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame,” Langston Hughes writes in his 1926 manifesto for the younger generation of Harlem Renaissance artists, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.” He continues, “If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful.” Celebrated as “the poet laureate of Harlem,” Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and traveled extensively before settling in the neighborhood he came to call home. When growing up, Hughes lived variously with his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas, his father in Mexico, and his mother in Washington, D.C. After just one year at Columbia University, Hughes left college to explore the world, working as a cabin boy on ships bound for Africa and as a cook in a Paris kitchen. Throughout these early years, Hughes published poems in the African-American magazines *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*; these poems soon earned him recognition as a rising star of the Harlem Renaissance who excelled at the lyrical use of the music, speech, and experiences of urban, working-class African-Americans. Hughes published his first book of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, at the age of twenty-four while still a student at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. The title poem is linked below. Over the course of his long and influential literary career, Hughes worked extensively in all areas of African-American literature, writing novels, short stories, plays, essays, and works of history; translating work by black authors; and editing numerous anthologies of African-American history and culture, such as *The First Book of Jazz* (1955) and *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers* (1969).



Image 4.18: Langston Hughes, 1936
Photographer: Carl Van Vechten
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Hughes’s poems embody one of the major projects of the Harlem Renaissance: to create distinctively African-American art. By the turn of the twentieth century, African-Americans had awakened to the realization that two hundred years of slavery had simultaneously erased their connections to their African heritage and created, in its wake, new, vital forms of distinctively African-American culture. Accordingly, politicians, authors, and artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance reconstructed that lost history and championed art rooted in the black American experience. Hughes’s poems from the 1920s are particularly notable for celebrating black culture while also honestly representing the deprivations of working-class African-American life. In “Mother to Son,” Hughes draws upon the music of the blues and black dialect to celebrate the indomitable heart of working black America.

Hughes grew increasingly radicalized in the 1930s following such high-profile examples of American racism as the 1931 Scottsboro trial in Alabama. He travelled to the Soviet Union in 1932 to work on an unfinished film about race in the American South and published in leftist publications associated with the American Communist Party, the only political party at the time to oppose segregation. Poems such as “I, Too,” “Theme for English B,” and “Silhouette,” in turn,

combine Hughes’s provocative politics with his cultural lyricism to articulate a theme that runs throughout his life’s work: that the American experience is as black as it is white.

Hughes’s 1951 *Montage of a Dream Deferred* includes two poems linked below: “Harlem” (also known as “A Dream Deferred”) and “Dream Boogie.” The jazz poems in this collection focus on scenes over the course of a 24-hour period in Harlem, New York. The book is Hughes’s first major publication following the end of World War II. Like many of his poems, it serves as a call for social change.

The Langston Hughes biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.20.1 “Mother to Son” (1922)

Well, son, I’ll tell you:
Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.
It’s had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I’ve been a-climbin’ on,
And reachin’ landin’s,
And turnin’ corners,
And sometimes goin’ in the dark
Where there ain’t been no light.
So boy, don’t you turn back.
Don’t you set down on the steps
’Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.
Don’t you fall now—
For I’ve still goin’, honey,
I’ve still climbin’,
And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

4.20.2 “I, Too” (1926)

[Link to “I, Too”](#)

4.20.3 “The Weary Blues” (1926)

[Link to “The Weary Blues”](#)

4.20.4 “Silhouette” (1936)

[Link to “Silhouette”](#)

4.20.5 “Harlem” (1949)

[Link to “Harlem”](#)

4.20.6 “Theme for English B” (1951)

[Link to “Theme for English B”](#)

4.20.7 “Dream Boogie” (1951)

[Link to “Dream Boogie”](#)

4.21 Countee Cullen (1903-1946)



Image 4.19: Countee Cullen, 1941
Photographer: Car Van Vechten
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Celebrated writer of the Harlem Renaissance, Countee Cullen, whose birth name is Countee LeRoy Porter, was born on May 30, 1903. His exact place of birth is unknown, but some sources list Baltimore, New York City, or Louisville. His parents and brother died when he was young, and he most likely was raised by his paternal grandmother, who brought the nine-year-old Countee to Harlem, the center of black art, politics, and culture in the United States at the time. After his grandmother's death when he was 15 years old, Countee was taken in by Reverend Frederick Cullen and his wife. The Reverend was later elected president of the Harlem chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Countee changed his last name to Cullen in honor of the Reverend.

Cullen's literary talents were apparent from an early age. He began writing poetry at the age of 14. During his high school years in a predominantly white school, he edited the school newspaper and literary magazine, winning a city-wide poetry competition. At NYU, he graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1925 and won the Witter Bynner Poetry Prize. Also in 1925 he published his debut volume of poetry, *Color*, to critical acclaim. It is considered a landmark of the Harlem Renaissance, and it includes two of his most famous poems: "Incident," reproduced below, and "Heritage." In 1926, he graduated with a master's degree from Harvard University at which time he joined the editorial staff of *Opportunity* magazine. 1927 saw the publication of two poetry collections, *Copper Sun* and *The Ballad of the Brown Girl*, which secured his place in American literature.

In 1928, Cullen married Nina Yolande Du Bois, the daughter of W. E. B. Du Bois, who was a founding member of the NAACP and was known as the leader of the African American intellectual community. The marriage did not last, as the two divorced in 1932, upon Cullen's return to the United States after being in France on a Guggenheim Fellowship. Published at the height of his career, *The Black Christ and Other Poems* was released in 1929. The title poem compares the lynching of a black man to the crucifixion of Christ. By the time of its publication, the Black Messiah was prevalent among African-American artists and thinkers.

In addition to creating poems, Cullen taught English, French, and creative writing at a junior high school, edited poetry by other African-Americans, wrote two children's books, one novel, plays, and essays, and translated and published Euripides's classical work *Medea*. He mentored James Baldwin.

Influenced by John Keats and A. E. Housman and working within the English traditions of poetry, Cullen viewed poetry as a vehicle to transcend race and to unite black and white Americans. He was not afraid to criticize African-American poets who used race to divide citizens. For example, in his review of *Weary Blues*, Cullen calls Langston Hughes a "racial artist" who should not rely on jazz. He felt that black writers should not include the unpleasant

realities of the black community in their works. And yet, Cullen praised fellow black writers when their work, even when blatantly race conscious, was meritorious. Furthermore, some of his best poems give voice to racial injustice, as seen in “Incident.” Poet Rita Dove has said that Cullen’s piece is “a heart-wrenching poem about how prejudice and racial hatred can impact someone at a young age.”

Cullen died in New York on January 9, 1946, at 42 years old from high blood pressure and uremic poisoning. The Countee Cullen Library, a Harlem branch location of the New York Public Library, was named in his honor. In 2013, he was inducted into the New York Writers Hall of Fame. Posthumous publications include *On These I Stand: An Anthology of the Best Poems of Countee Cullen* and *My Soul’s High Song: The Collected Writings of Countee Cullen*.

The Countee Cullen biography was written by Emily R. Myers, a University of Delaware student.

4.21.1 “Incident” (1925)

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
And he was no whit bigger,
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue, and called me, “Nigger.”

I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
That’s all that I remember.

4.22 Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)

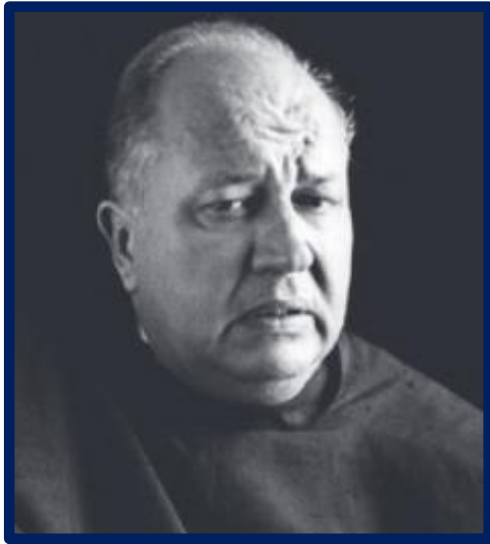


Image 4.20: Theodore Roethke, 1959
Photographer: Imogen Cunningham
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Theodore Roethke is one of the most influential poets of the postmodern era. A student of the Modernists, who ultimately outgrew their poetry, Roethke's world is filled with contrasting images of nature and industry that create a sense of hope that distinguishes him from the Modernists, and a sense of insecurity that seems aptly suited to the middle years of the twentieth century. The winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and two National Book Awards, Roethke is frequently remembered as a teacher, and the work of his own students often obscured the work of the master. The centenary of Roethke's birth in 2008, however, brought renewed attention to his poetic career.

Roethke's earliest works of poetry are restrained and spare, as the last lines of "Cuttings" (1948) demonstrate:

One nub of growth
Nudges a sand-crumb loose,
Pokes through a musty sheath
Its pale tendrilous horn. (5-8)

Even in these short lines, however, Roethke's gift for the lyric is clearly visible with the repeated opening sounds of "nub" and "nudges" pushing the reader to the end of the poem. At the same time, the sounds and rhythms of Roethke's poems, with their short lines and broken rhythms, evoke images of constraint and hesitation.

The selection from Roethke linked below, "My Papa's Waltz," also from 1948, takes us from the world of hothouses into the hot and enclosed houses of American life. Much like the young plants struggling to grow in "Cuttings," the young boy in "My Papa's Waltz" struggles to grow in his home environment. Arranged in broken three-quarter time, "My Papa's Waltz" evokes contrasting images of playful roughhousing and domestic abuse. These contrasting images often lead to heated discussions among readers who are divided by their interpretations of this poem as one of joyous abandon and one of repeated brutality. Just what is the nature of this waltz that the boy and his father engage in, and how can it be wondrous if the mother's gaze is so disapproving? That Roethke's poetry invites such disparate responses is both a testament to his craftsmanship and a reaction to his deliberate ambiguity. Like the other postmodern poets in this section, Roethke's poems reveal the many shadows of modern life.

The Theodor Roethke biography was reproduced from *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present*. Berke, Amy; Bleil, Robert; Cofer, Jordan; and Davis, Doug, *Writing the Nation: A Concise Introduction to American Literature 1865 to Present* (2015). EnglishOpen Textbooks. 5. [Link to ebook](#)

4.22.1 “My Papa’s Waltz” (1942)

[Link to “My Papa’s Waltz”](#)

4.23 Richard Wright (1908-1960)



Image 4.21: Richard Wright, 1943
Photographer: Gordon Parks
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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The first African-American author of a bestseller, Richard Wright was born in Roxie, Mississippi, on September 4, 1908. He was born into hardship. His grandparents were slaves, his father left when he was five years old, and he was raised by his poor, single mother. Wright struggled with poverty for the first years of his life and was passed from home to home. He left school at the age of 16, only having gotten a ninth grade education.

Although Wright's education was cut short, he was an avid reader. He even forged notes in order to use a white man's library card since African-Americans could not use the library then. In 1907, Wright moved to Chicago to try and better his life. There he worked at the post office and as a floor sweeper. Things became much harder in the 1930s due to the Depression. Wright, along with many others, joined the Communist Party in 1932. In 1937, he joined the Federal Writers' Project and moved to New York City for more opportunities and to follow his passion of writing.

Once Wright settled in Manhattan, he began to write, publishing his first piece in 1938 called *Uncle Tom's Children*. This piece earned him a \$500 prize from *Story* magazine. Included in this work is "Bright and Morning Star," linked below. The story embraces the communist themes of organizing the working class and liberating oppressed people. In 1940, Wright published *Native Son*, which was an immediate best seller and raised him to fame. *Native Son* was turned into a Broadway show in 1941 and later turned into a film in 1951 in which he played the protagonist Bigger Thomas. *Native Son* was the first book by an African-American writer to ever be chosen for the Book-of-the-Month Club in the U.S. In 1945, Wright published his memoir, *Black Boy*, which describes his own childhood, poverty, hardships, and experiences with racism including racial violence.

Wright lived abroad for a large portion of his life—in Mexico from 1940 to 1945 and Paris, France from 1946 to 1960. He died from a heart attack in Paris on November 28, 1960.

The Richard Wright biography was written by Karyme Lopez, a University of Delaware student.

4.23.1 "Bright and Morning Star" (1938)

[Link to "Bright and Morning Star"](#)