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RESEARCH GUIDE TO AMERICAN LITERATURE

EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE

1776–1820

Angela Vietto

Research Guide
to American Literature

Early American Literature 1776–1820

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Volume 1: *Colonial Literature, 1607–1776*

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A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book

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To Carla, with gratitude for Junto days

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Series Introduction

Research Guide to American Literature is a series of handbooks for students and teachers that recommends strategies for studying literary topics and frequently taught literary works and authors. The rationale for the series is that successful study is predicated on asking the right questions and then devising a logical strategy for addressing them. The process of responsible literary investigation begins with facts and usually ends with opinions. The value of those opinions depends on the ability of the reader to gather useful information, to consider it in context, to interpret it logically, and finally to decide what the interpretation means outside the confines of the literary work. Often the answers to questions a sophisticated reader asks about a literary topic are subjective, involving a reader's perception of an author's or a character's motive; always the search for the answer to a meaningful question involves a process of self-education and, in the best of circumstances, self-awareness.

RGAL is intended as a resource to assist readers in identifying questions to ask about literature. The seven volumes in this series are organized chronologically, corresponding to generally accepted literary periods. Each volume follows this general pattern:

Part I provides the social and historical context for a literary period, explaining its historical boundaries, describing the nature of the literary output of the time, placing the literature in its social and historical contexts, identifying literary influences, and tracing the evolution of critical approaches.

Part II comprises ten study guides on general themes or topics related to the period, organized alphabetically. Each guide first provides necessary background information, then suggests questions or research topics that might be fruitfully considered, and with suggestions of specific primary and secondary works that students will find useful. Each guide also includes an annotated checklist of recommended secondary works and capsule identifications of people mentioned.

Part III comprises some thirty study guides for particular literary works or authors, organized alphabetically by the author's name. Each guide begins with a brief overview of the author's career to provide context, and then suggests some half-a-dozen topics for discussion and research, with advice about how to begin investigating the topic. These topics are meant to facilitate classroom discussion as well as to suggest interesting ideas for research papers.

Part IV is an annotated general bibliography recommending the most useful general works of literary history, literary criticism, and literary reference pertinent to the period.

Part V is a glossary of terms used in the volume.

A keyword index is included in each volume.

The purpose of *RGAL* is not to tell students what literature means but to help them determine the meaning for themselves by asking significant questions and seeking answers diligently and thoughtfully. That is how learning that matters takes place. The method is as old as Socrates.

—*Richard Layman*

Part I
Overview

Boundaries of the Period

In the early years of the study of American literature, critics neglected the period that corresponds to the founding years of the nation because the literature of that time was considered insufficiently American, too derivative of European models. The period from 1776 to 1820 in American literary history, often called the era of the Early Republic, has received renewed attention from critics in recent years, with good reason. If one of the goals of studying a national literature is to understand the cultural and social history of the nation, the literary response during the creation of the nation is an essential body of information. In those early years of the United States, many of the social and cultural issues we still struggle with today were being actively engaged in literature: What does it mean to forge a nation from groups of people with different cultural and racial backgrounds? What did it mean to say that "all men are created equal" in a country where some people were still considered as property? What kind of English should we speak in the United States—and what attitude should we adopt to the use of other languages? What are the requirements for a democratic form of government to work? What makes a good citizen, and how can different groups of people have access to the requirements for citizenship? Americans of the founding generations saw an opportunity to redesign and reconstruct every aspect of their society, and literature was, as it has been in many places and at many times, an arena in which Americans could test their assumptions about their world and confront the daunting responsibility of designing a new social order.

Like all periods of literature and history, the choice of starting and ending dates for the Revolutionary and early national era is somewhat arbitrary. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 marks for many people the beginning of the American Revolution, but the tensions that led to the outbreak of hostilities predate the official Declaration by at least a decade. Even murkier is an "ending" point for the early national era. Some critics have suggested that the War of 1812 marks a turning point from Republicanism, with its more communal social and literary concerns, to liberalism, with its greater emphasis on the individual; in addition, as Karen Weyler argues in *Intricate Relations* (2004), the industrialization and improved transportation of the 1820s led to major changes in the ability to manufacture and distribute books, marking a decisive shift in literary history in the 1820s. In addition, 1820 roughly marks a generational shift; most writers who were old enough to have lived through the Revolution, at least as adults, had died or their careers had waned by 1820.

Broad surveys often skim over both American history and American literature of the early Republican era. Accounts of the Revolution tend to be followed quickly by overviews of the ratification of the Constitution and the War of 1812; coverage of literature is limited to a few famous war-related texts and one or two novels. A closer look at the literature of the era reveals that neither the Revolution nor the Constitution were uncomplicated events. Society up and down the eastern seaboard was fractured and re-created multiple times in the course of the Revolutionary and early Republican years. This conflict entailed both political and cultural changes that are reflected in the content and the form of the

literature of the era. Autobiography remained popular reading, and during the 1790s the novel as a genre practiced by Americans developed its own tradition. During the early Republican period, the boundaries between fiction and nonfictional narratives were porous, and genre mixing in prose was common. Poetry in the neoclassical mode, exemplified by Alexander Pope, remained popular throughout the era. Poetry was well suited to the literary magazines, which were one of the most readily accessible outlets for American writers, and the neoclassical model of poetry allowed poets to adapt the genre to almost any topic, political, moral, or social, that they wished to address. Domestically produced drama grew somewhat more slowly, but a tradition of patriotic plays, often featuring events of the Revolution, emerged in the early national period, suggesting the importance of a communal creation of an idealized history of the origins of the nation.

Dominant Genres and Literary Forms

During the war years, the literary works that most often captured the public's attention were texts that dealt with confrontation at hand: texts that laid out political arguments in support of the war or made plans and predictions, optimistic or pessimistic, about the future of the new nation; texts that exhorted others to join the war effort or to support it. Of this literature, only a small portion is read today. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776), which laid out the philosophical and practical arguments for war, and the Declaration of Independence, which officially declared the intention of the united colonies to break away from England, are two texts that have remained essential reading as forceful expressions of the philosophical and cultural changes wrought by the Revolution. The Articles of Confederation, the governing document of the United States from 1777 to 1788, and the Constitution that replaced it are more frequently read by students of political science than literature, but given the serious debates that surrounded them, they are worth the attention of anyone interested in the culture of the early Republic. In the postwar period, plentiful writing about political matters continued to attract a broad readership, but writers were also free to apply renewed attention to more traditional literary genres, the most prominent of these being poetry, nonfiction prose, and fiction.

POETRY

Eighteenth-century poetry, the conventions of which persisted in American literature throughout the period covered by this volume, features characteristics that can be disconcerting to readers conditioned by twentieth-century forms. Poets in the early Republican era understood poetry to have a didactic purpose, and they saw the poet as having a social responsibility. Poems often addressed specifically public topics; poetry rarely served the primary purpose of simply expressing the personal feelings of the poet. Even when a poem was written to a specific person, whether a loved one or a historical figure, part of the purpose of the poem was to provide a model for social interaction. Furthermore, in accordance with the neoclassical tradition that was dominant in England in the eighteenth century, American poetry in this era relied on definite verse forms with regular rhyme and rhythm, using poetic diction, and making frequent allusions to classical writers, myth, and the Bible.

Throughout this period, poetry was a highly regarded genre, published frequently in newspapers and literary magazines. Students who spoke at college and at young ladies' academy graduations regularly composed verses to read at those ceremonies. Moreover, many literate people who did not publish their writing tried their hands at poetry. Both professional and amateur poets often wrote verse that critics call "occasional," meaning that it was written for a specific occasion. A poet might write a poem to a friend on his or her birthday or to a relative as consoling words on the death of a child; poems were written to commemorate events of the Revolution or the arrival of a celebrity in the area. Poetry was an integral part of literary and literate life, an everyday endeavor.

Although in many ways poetry was fairly homogenous, sharing a solid set of generic conventions throughout the period and across regions, there were several regionally affiliated groups of poets worth noting. The one most familiar in literary criticism has been called the Connecticut Wits (earlier the Hartford Wits or the "wicked wits"). This group of young men, mostly graduates of Yale, included Joel Barlow, Timothy Dwight IV, David Humphreys, John Trumbull, Lemuel Hopkins, Richard Alsop, and Theodore Dwight. While these poets produced works of their own, they also composed and published some collaboratively written poetry, most notably *The Anarchiad* (1786–1787), a highly topical commentary on contemporary political disorder that reflected the group's generally Federalist tendencies. More recently, scholars have drawn attention to the work of a network of women writers in the Delaware Valley, encompassing Philadelphia and its Pennsylvania and New Jersey environs; significant portions of these women's work can be found in *Milcah Martha Moore's Book* (1997) and *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton* (1995).

NONFICTION: AUTOBIOGRAPHY, LETTERS, ESSAYS

Nonfiction in a variety of forms was very popular throughout the period. Biographies and autobiographies of famous people and less-famous people whose lives were considered exemplary in some way were popular, as were their letters. Life writings and letters were frequently printed both in book form and in shorter forms in magazines. Essays on topics of social, philosophical, and historical interest were common in magazines. In part, such writings were seen as constituting a more serious alternative to fiction reading, but frequently nonfictional texts contained many of the same features that made fiction attractive. Lives that featured adventures of some kind or that illustrated aspects of sentimentality were likely to be highlighted, and published letters often focused on matters such as how to avoid seduction or other temptations; how to find a suitable husband; or how to negotiate the perilous economic times and the dubious business practices faced by young men entering business life in the early Republican era.

NOVELS

Perhaps the most notable change in American literature in the period following the Revolution was the development of an American tradition of the novel. Before the late 1780s, Americans were certainly reading novels they had imported from abroad, but they were not writing novels. Beginning in the late 1780s and through the 1790s, however, the novel did flourish. As Cathy N. Davidson demonstrated in one of the crucial books that began a resurgence of academic attention to this period (*Revolution and the Word,* 1986), the hundred or so novels written and published in the United States during the early Republican era can be grouped generally into three categories: the sentimental, the picaresque, and the Gothic.

Sentimental Fiction

The term "sentimental" as used to group certain novels of eighteenth-century literature only partly corresponds to the way in which that word is used today in common speech. While it is true that sentimental novels focused on emotion as the key force behind human action, they also generally featured a certain set of ideas about emotions, a particular view of human psychology that was popular in the era. Originating largely in the work of English philosopher John Locke, who in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) argued that ideas were generated through impressions gathered by the senses, a concept called sensibility was understood to be an important part of human psychology. Sensibility as it was understood in the eighteenth century was a kind of responsiveness, expressed both emotionally and in the body, between a person and his or her environment. Sensibility could cause a person to feel intense sympathy for the sufferings (or joys) of others; it could also cause one to respond to stress, such as fear, or to positive emotions, with involuntary emotional and physical responses. Sensibility was viewed as powerful, and potentially a force for either good or ill. Sensibility could help people forge strong relationships with friends and family through sympathy and could lead the rich to treat the poor charitably; too much sensibility, however, could lead people to die of grief, elope with people they should not marry, or faint at a moment when they most needed to be conscious.

Sentimental fiction in the early Republican era often, but not always, featured stories of seduction or attempted seduction of innocent young women. When successful, seduction usually ended in pregnancy and, frequently, the death during or shortly after childbirth of the seduced woman. Tales of mismatched and potentially incestuous love affairs were also a common staple of sentimental fiction. Among the most important works in the sentimental tradition are the novel often counted as the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) by William Hill Brown (although the status of that novel as first is contested), and the first two best-selling American novels, Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth* (1791; better known as *Charlotte Temple*) and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797). Rowson was the most prolific of the early American sentimental novelists, producing not only a sequel to the popular *Charlotte Temple* but also several other sentimental novels in a long career that spanned into the 1820s.

Picaresque Fiction

Picaresque fiction offered a different worldview. While picaresque fiction sometimes referred to sentimentality and sensibility, such references were generally mocking. Though American picaresque writers likely modeled their works primarily on English writers, the picaresque tradition is indebted to Miguel de Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote* (1605). A major feature of the picaresque novel is an episodic plot; that is, the novel strings together a series of events or adventures that do not necessarily build to a single culminating climax. In fact, the episodes in a picaresque novel may repeat similar situations over and over. What holds the episodes together is the main character, who is

an antihero. The main character may be of low birth or may simply lack some important feature of a classic hero, such as good judgment or courage. Usually, the main character is traveling, and usually he (or she) has a sidekick or companion. Picaresque fiction is normally humorous, and the humor typically arises through farce, a kind of humor that relies on very unlikely events; in the picaresque novel the farce often involves ludicrous disguises and mistaken identities.

The picaresque novel's ability to encompass a wide range of social classes and a large number of characters and situations made it particularly appropriate to the unsettled political, cultural, and social world of the early Republic. Hugh Henry Brackenridge took advantage of those possibilities in *Modern Chivalry* (1792–1797) to explore politics on the western frontier. The best-selling (and anonymous) *History of Constantius and Pulchera* (1794) is a picaresque novel focused on ill-fated lovers, demonstrating that not all novels about romantic love had to be cast in the sentimental mode. Other American picaresques featured foreign settings, such as S. S. B. K. Wood's *Ferdinand and Elmira: A Russian Story* (1804) or Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captiv*e (1797).

Gothic Fiction

From its European origins, Gothic fiction featured mystery, often horror or terror, elements of the supernatural, and extreme states of psychological disorder. In the English versions, gothic often featured a castle or other exotic setting. In America, Gothic novelists sometimes set their novels in Europe in order to have a good reason to include such gothic trappings as a castle; in other cases, they created fantastic scenarios to locate these settings in the United States. The most interesting Gothic novels in American literature found American settings (the wilderness or the city) that could serve the same function as the European castle. As Cathy Davidson has argued in *Revolution and the Word*, the Gothic novel allowed American writers to explore "the limits of individualism." In addition, the gothic often featured fractured or dysfunctional families; indeed, some theorists of gothic consider the family to be its primary topic. Jay Fliegelman has argued in *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority* (1982), that one important cultural trend in early America was a revolution against the patriarchal family, so the popularity of gothic may reflect that cultural preoccupation as well.

American Gothic took a variety of forms. Perhaps the most popular Gothic novel by an American was Isaac Mitchell's *The Asylum; or Alonzo and Melissa* (1811), which was reprinted throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Mitchell transplants all the stock features of traditional Gothic fiction to Connecticut. Better-known today are the castle-free Gothic novels of Charles Brockden Brown. While Brown was not the most popular novelist of his day, by the time of his death and into the nineteenth century, he was recognized as a major American writer, primarily for those of his works that have been considered gothic: *Wieland* (1798), *Edgar Huntly* (1799), *Ormond* (1799), and *Arthur Mervyn* (1799–1800). These novels feature the American wilderness, which can be as mysterious as any Gothic house, and the increasingly urban and bewildering city

of Philadelphia. They also feature some of the other characteristics of European gothic: a high-born villain, mysterious death and mysterious voices, and ambiguous figures whose identity is unclear. Above all, each novel presents a mystery.

While sentimental, picaresque, and gothic are convenient terms for categorizing early American fiction, many novels combine these subgenres or resist categorization. *Arthur Mervyn,* for example, begins in a mode that logically may be called gothic; yet, by the end of the novel it appears to have turned into a sentimental novel, resolving the initial mystery about the identity of the title character and marrying him off to a suddenly discovered true love. *Alonzo and Melissa* was published in two volumes, the first resolutely sentimental, the second definitively gothic. So rather than thinking of these categories as labels to be attached to a particular novel, readers are well advised to regard them merely as ways of thinking about the relationships between various novels and their attitudes toward human psychology and social reality.

Historical and Social Context

The early Republic featured a rapidly shifting array of political events, but the era may be divided roughly into three periods: the Revolutionary War and early years under the Articles of Confederation; the ratification of the Constitution and Bill of Rights and subsequent Federalist administrations of George Washington and John Adams; and the Democratic-Republican administrations of the first quarter of the nineteenth century (Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe).

REVOLUTION AND CONFEDERATION (1775–1787)

The American Revolution can be traced to the 1750s, when England and France fought over territory in North America in a series of conflicts generally called in the United States the French and Indian Wars. At the conclusion of those conflicts, England began levying a series of taxes in the colonies to cover the costs. The colonists objected to these measures for a variety of reasons: many had served in the military during those wars and had helped to supply the British forces; they felt they had fought not merely for their protection but to expand the British empire, so that expecting them to pay seemed unfair. Moreover, they objected to the specific kinds of taxes that were being levied, and, as most students of American history know, they objected to taxes being levied by Parliament, where the colonists had no representatives. Throughout the 1760s, the British levied one tax after another; the colonists resisted, through boycotts, petitions, and, as things escalated, through civil disobedience (notably the Boston Tea Party). In 1775 the British moved to seize weapons and arrest those who plotted rebellion, and the shooting war began.

Several important battles were fought before the Declaration of Independence was written and presented to the world in the summer of 1776. On the basis of an early military success at Saratoga in New York, the colonists were able to broker an alliance with France in 1778; an alliance with the Spanish followed in 1779 and with the Dutch in 1780. These alliances were crucial to the colonists' eventual success; the British were forced to fight on several fronts and they had to negotiate naval blockades in order to send troops to North America. By 1781 the defeat of Cornwallis in Virginia marked the effective end of the fighting, although some peripheral fighting continued and peace was not finalized until 1783, when the British ceded rights to the lands east of the Mississippi (excluding Florida) to the United States.

Thousands of residents of the colonies who had remained loyal to the Crown fled during and after the war; many settled in British colonies in Canada. The property they left behind, and the property of some colonists who remained but were considered to have been Loyalists became the spoils of war, often sold at auction. For those who remained, the task of rebuilding the economy and many aspects of society and government remained. The disruption of the war and the demands of European creditors to be repaid in gold and silver (rather than paper money) gave rise to a variety of financial crises and periods of economic

depression in the decades that followed the war. These economic pressures led to political and social disruptions, even an armed rebellion in Massachusetts in 1786–1787.

The government of the new nation in its first few years continued under the Articles of Confederation, a document that had been ratified during the war to establish the union of the states. The articles created a relatively weak central government with authority vested in Congress but no executive branch. Probably most important, the Confederation did not have the authority to raise taxes. (Only the individual states could do this.) The Confederation had incurred considerable debt in order to fight and win the war, but Congress could only ask the states to contribute to paying these debts. The considerable debate about whether or how to revise or replace the Articles of Confederation led to the first major factional division in American politics, between those who wanted a stronger federal government (who came to be known as Federalists) and those who wanted to retain most power in the states (who during this early period were often called Anti-Federalists).

CONSTITUTION AND FEDERALISM (1787–1801)

Constitution and Bill of Rights

In 1787 the Congress (still operating under the Articles of Confederation) endorsed discussions of ways to improve the federal constitution. A constitutional convention met in Philadelphia and crafted the U.S. Constitution as it stands today. Ratification by the Congress and by the states was by no means simple; as noted above, the Constitution created a stronger federal government with an executive power. Critics of the proposed Constitution feared that the stronger federal government would prove oppressive to the states, and that the president would turn into a de facto monarch. Debates were carried on in newspapers in states such as New York, where ratification was especially contentious. Ultimately, the Constitution was passed, but the first ten amendments to the Constitution, collectively known as the Bill of Rights, were a concession to the opposition; by guaranteeing certain rights to individuals and restricting the federal government from taking certain actions, the Bill of Rights attempted to address concerns that had been raised during the debates over ratification. Nonetheless, those who had supported a stronger federal government had essentially carried the day. Although the first president, George Washington, officially belonged to no party, his policies were generally Federalist in tendency, as were those of the Adams administration, which followed.

Washington Administration (1789–1797)

Washington was sworn in to office in New York City, where the federal capital remained for the first year of his presidency; for the remainder of his administration (and John Adams's), the federal government was located in Philadelphia. The Washington administration's emphasis on maintaining a strong union and providing for the security of the new nation dictated much of its policy. Notable events during his administration include the Whiskey Rebellion, a revolt against

a congressionally imposed tax, resolved without bloodshed, that took place in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. In foreign affairs, Washington was faced with the problem of how to handle France's 1793 declaration of war against England; Washington issued a Declaration of Neutrality, forbidding Americans to aid either side. He also had to deal with leftover business from the Revolution, which largely was accomplished after the signing of the 1794 Jay Treaty, under which the British agreed to leave the forts they still occupied in the Northwest Territory and normalize trade. Although there was as yet no restriction on the number of terms a president could serve, Washington declined to run for reelection at the end of his second term, establishing the common practice of a two-term limit that was followed for more than a century.

Adams Administration (1797–1801)

John Adams, who had served as vice president under Washington, was a strong Federalist. In foreign affairs, the most notable event during his administration was the Quasi-War with France, an undeclared war that was waged entirely at sea. On the domestic front, Adams is best remembered for a series of laws collectively called the Alien and Sedition Acts, which supporters claimed were required by the dangers of the Quasi-War. These four acts made it more difficult for non-natives of the United States to become citizens, made it easier for the government to deport foreigners it found troublesome, and criminalized the publication of "false, scandalous, and malicious writing" about the government or its officials. Opponents of these laws called them unconstitutional, and historians have generally agreed. Three of the four acts were allowed to expire or were repealed by the Jefferson administration; the Alien Enemies Act, which gives the president the power to deport citizens of a country with which the United States is at war, remains in effect as of 2009. These laws crystallized the opposition's position that the Adams administration tended toward too much central control—the charge at the time was that Adams secretly wished to reestablish a monarchy. Not surprisingly, these issues played a very important role in the defeat of Adams in his bid for reelection.

THE DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICANS (1801–1825)

Jefferson Administration (1801–1809)

Thomas Jefferson's two terms as president marked both a shift in the party leanings of the presidential office and the beginning of a significant period of expansionism. Jefferson's party, the Democratic-Republicans, in general favored less central control and a more democratic approach to governance. Ironically, however, Jefferson oversaw several developments that could be seen as increasing the power of the federal government, most notably the Louisiana Purchase, which approximately doubled the size of the United States as it then existed. Despite his belief that the federal branch did not have the constitutional authority to acquire property, Jefferson made the purchase because he recognized the importance of assuring the ability to trade through New Orleans, and he wanted to pursue the possibility of finding a northwest passage through the continent to

the Pacific Ocean. The Lousiana Purchase encompassed lands roughly west of the Mississippi as far as the Rockies and stretching from New Orleans in the south to North Dakota in the north, even including some territory that is now part of Canada. The acquisition was of enormous importance for several reasons; the United States acquired new territory, but it also acquired a new "Indian problem," since the purchase was made from France, not from any of the native people who inhabited this large expanse of land.

Madison Administration (1809–1817)

James Madison, author of the Constitution, served as the fourth president, continuing Democratic-Republican control of the White House. The most significant event of his presidency was the War of 1812 (which lasted from 1812 until 1815). This war with England has been looked on by some as the final battle of the Revolution; among the causes of the war was the English tendency to impress American sailors who might be construed as British citizens. (To *impress* a sailor means to force him into military service; today we might say *kidnap*.) The war was fought on several fronts: in Canada; along the western frontier, where the British armed Native Americans; and at sea, where the British blockaded the eastern coast. Although many historians believe Madison should have taken stronger steps to avoid war, at the conclusion of the conflict, the nation began what has been called the "Era of Good Feeling," a period of complacency during which the level of partisanship and paranoia among governmental leaders dropped briefly.

Monroe Administration (1817–1825)

During the Monroe administration, the expansionist policies of the United States continued. Florida was acquired in 1819; the Missouri Compromise in 1820 settled, temporarily, the question of how slavery would be handled in the new territories acquired through the Louisiana Purchase (allowing slavery in Missouri and Arkansas but prohibiting it in the northern plains). Monroe is most famous for the Monroe Doctrine (1823), which asserted the right of the United States to resist any attempts on the part of European powers to colonize anywhere in the Americas. The Monroe Doctrine, like the Louisiana Purchase, is a dramatic milestone. It helped to define, though it did not single-handedly create, the American impulse toward a continent-wide empire.

SOCIAL ISSUES AND LITERATURE

Throughout the period of the Revolution and the early Republic, Americans were concerned with determining what it meant to be an American, regarding both the collective question of what the national character should be and the more individually oriented question of how its people should aspire to live. Breaking away from a parent country with which most inhabitants shared their language and much of their culture meant that Americans faced special challenges in defining their national identity. One way in which Americans could easily define an identity that was unique to the new nation was to use place as

a defining characteristic. In literature, this often meant setting literary works in American places, but also making use of features such as foods that were unique to the New World (as in Joel Barlow's 1792 mock epic poem about cornmeal mush, "The Hasty-Pudding"). Native Americans and warfare or other relations with them figure in much writing of the early Republican period. In works such as Sarah Wentworth Morton's play *Ouâbi* (1790) or Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly,* Native American characters were included as a way of making the work truly "American."

National identity, of course, was not based solely on place or even on the presence of the indigenous inhabitants. In their early national literature, Americans began to develop a set of characteristics that could be identified as particularly American. One of these was the high level of general education among the populace, including owners of small farms and other decidedly middle-class people. This ideal is evident in works like Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) and Hannah Webster Foster's novel *The Boarding School* (1798). Another crucial aspect of the emerging American ideal was the notion of Republican virtue, which was understood to be a special feature of societies governed through representative voting. For a Republic to work properly, so the understanding went, the average citizen needed to be both well educated and able and willing to put the interest of the nation above his own personal interests. That ideal pervades early Republican literature. Poetry written in praise of George Washington, common enough almost to constitute a subgenre during the early Republic, held Washington up as a model of the benevolent Republican man who put the interests of the country above his own. Republican virtue is also a topic of discussion in the essays of moralists, such as Benjamin Rush and Judith Sargent Murray. Novels, although they sometimes featured characters who could be seen as examplars of Republican virtue, more often tended to complicate the question by demonstrating the ways in which personal desires might conflict with the good of the community, whether in the form of seduction, financial fraud, or other crimes. Republican virtue also figures prominently in the nonfiction writings of the era. Franklin's self-portrait in his *Autobiography* (1791) is sometimes viewed as the model of the virtuous Republican man; in some ways, Franklin resolves the apparent problem of a conflict between personal interests and public interests by demonstrating that a man could become wealthy and influential while serving the public interest at the same time.

Republican virtue was necessarily different for men, who could hold public office and help select representatives to the government, than for women, who were not entrusted with these duties. Yet, theorists of Republican society still saw an important role for women: as the first educators of children, they were responsible for laying the foundations of Republican virtue in each successive generation. Thus women, too, needed to be well educated and to share the values of patriotic virtue. The good Republican mother shared the concern about the public good and the industrious and benevolent characteristics of her ideally virtuous husband, and she was well educated enough to serve as a good instructor and role model for her children. Essays about women's education and a growth in female academies in the post-Revolutionary era reflect this new concern with

women's education; essayist Judith Sargent Murray took up these issues in her work, as did other women writers. Like the virtuous Republican man, however, the ideal Republican woman is problematized in the fiction of the era, with less-than-positive images ranging from seemingly virtuous but ineffective mothers (in such novels as *Charlotte Temple* and *The Coquette*) to the anti-Republican mother Mrs. Hammond depicted in Rebecca Rush's novel *Kelroy* (1812).

These ideals for men and women, developed by theorists of Republican society, dovetailed with a general reassessment of the appropriate relations between family members that was taking place during the era. As Jay Fliegelman has described in *Prodigals and Pilgrims,* an older family structure based on fatherly authority and a hierarchical model of both marriage and parenting was being replaced during this period with a model based on affection. Whereas in the past parents felt that children had a duty to respect them and that the parents' role was merely to guide their children in the proper paths of religion and hard work, now it was increasingly thought that parents had an obligation to be affectionate to their children and to earn their respect. These ideas were new in the early eighteenth century, and they came to dominate American thinking by the end of the century. One indicator of this change is the frequent use of the word "friend" to describe loving family members. The new model of the family can be seen in a variety of permutations throughout the early American novel, but these changes noticeably appear as well in the rhetoric of the Revolution, in texts such as Paine's *Common Sense*.

If white Americans drew analogies between changing family structure and the Revolution, enslaved Africans and free blacks also drew analogies, seeing a clear hypocrisy in the American assertion of natural rights while slavery was not only institutionalized but a core feature of the developing economy. Writers such as Lemuel Haynes and Phillis Wheatley (in her letters rather than her poetry) observed this contradiction and co-opted the language of revolution for their own purposes. Both African Americans and Native Americans wrote narratives of their lives that adopted the American rhetoric of self-reliance and independence to their situations. Meanwhile, however, white writers also had to deal with the internal contradictions of a nation, explicitly founded on a rhetoric of human rights, that still restricted rights based on race. In major works such as Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), in essays such as Franklin's on slavery and the slave trade, and in novels such as those of Charles Brockden Brown, white Americans attempted to find solutions to the problems presented by the racially based social system and its apparent incompatibility with the stated ideals of the Revolution. People of color used their access to literacy and to print culture, when they obtained it, to reveal those contradictions.

The Material Conditions of Literary Production

The colonial printing industry was small. Americans before the Revolution imported most of their books from England. During the war, Americans were encouraged to develop various aspects of the printing industry to fill the void left when importation was interrupted. At the end of the war, then, there were more printers in the new nation than had been in the colonies. Capacity to print works

increased, but it was still relatively limited, and distribution tended to be localized; if their books weren't imported, readers in Boston were likely to read books published in Boston, readers in Philadelphia were likely to read books published in Philadelphia, and so on. After the war, American printers faced a challenge as importation of books from abroad resumed. The bigger printing operations in England and elsewhere in Europe enabled those printers to be competitive, even with the added cost of shipping the books.

For a variety of reasons, American writers tended to be published by American publishers, which meant that they tended to develop their reputations locally, at least at first. Editions of novels and other creative works by American writers were generally small, often fewer than a thousand copies, and the profit for both publisher and author was small. The practice of publishing books by subscription—in other words, by getting orders for the book before it was published—was one way for presses to ensure that they would not take a loss, and this practice survived from colonial times. Even the best-selling books of the era sold in numbers that are small by modern standards: Cathy Davidson estimates that *Charlotte Temple,* one of the best-selling American novels of the era, sold roughly forty thousand copies in the first two decades after its publication. The result was that few people sought to make a living through writing and publishing books before the 1820s. Some did, of course, and some writers, such as religious writer Hannah Adams and textbook author Noah Webster, had enough success to be considered professional authors.

It is worth noting that both Adams and Webster were active in lobbying for copyright and protecting their own copyrights. There was no copyright law in the United States until 1790; the Copyright Act of 1790 gave authors who registered their works and deposited a copy of the work with the Library of Congress a fourteen-year term of exclusive rights, with the option to renew for another fourteen-year period during the life of the author. Given the low profits to be made, however, it was still common for a writer to sell his or her work to the printer/publisher for a lump sum of money; Rebecca Rush, for example, sold *Kelroy* to its publisher for $100. Although the establishment of copyright was ultimately an important component in the development of authorship as a viable profession by the mid nineteenth century, in the transitional book publishing industry of the early Republic, the development of production capacity and improvement of transportation lines were ultimately more essential.

Literary Influences

When American literary studies as a field was instituted in the late nineteenth century, and even more when the field turned increasingly nationalistic during the Cold War, critics emphasized the tradition of American literature as it differentiated itself from other national literatures. It is not surprising, then, that the early Republican period, with its strong indicators of English influence, received scant attention in the early years of American literary study. At the same time, there is also nothing surprising in the heavy influence of British literature during this era. Before the Revolution, Anglo-American writers naturally saw themselves as part of a tradition of English literature. Almost immediately following the Revolution, writers and critics began to talk about the necessity of creating an American literature; indeed, William Hill Brown's novel *The Power of Sympathy* was heavily marketed as the "first American novel." Like other writers of the day, however, Brown in his ideas about novels and about literature generally had been conditioned by his reading in Greek and Roman classics and in contemporary British and European literature. In that way, Brown was typical of writers of his generation and others who came of age in the decades following the war; no matter how innovative they wanted to be, the standards, genres, goals, and themes that they knew were derived from English literature and, for the better educated, from the ancient classics that still formed the core of the curriculum in colleges.

In general, when considering the influence of English literature on American writing, readers are sometimes surprised at what appears to be a serious lag; works from the early part of the eighteenth century continue to be strongly influential in the 1790s. Keeping in mind the condition of American publishing, however, the situation becomes more comprehensible. Even after the Revolution, as printing capacity in the United States was expanding, very large numbers of books were still imported. Booksellers who were going to the expense of buying books and paying to transport them across the Atlantic were likely to lay in good supplies of tried-and-true popular works and less likely to take risks on new works that they could not be certain would sell well. In addition, existing copyright law made it legal to reprint English works without paying the author or the English printers; so during the 1790s American printers working to establish themselves were likely to reprint English classics of which they already had copies available, thus further extending the influence of the established canon.

The durability of literary values over decades is obvious when one considers the influences on American poetry. The type of poetry popular throughout the period is often called "neoclassical," a name that alludes to the fact that this movement was inspired by the ancient Greek and Roman writers. These writers were at the core of the college curriculum, so that college-educated men would have known them well; women of the same social class would not have attended college but would have been familiar with many of the classical writers in translation or through references to them in the work of English writers. Of the neoclassical poets popular in Britain, two in particular were influential with Americans. Alexander Pope was recognized in the eighteenth century as the preeminent English poet of his time. His *An Essay on Man* (1733), a long philosophical poem in heroic

couplets, exemplifies many of the characteristics of neoclassical poetry that dominated American poetic efforts. *An Essay on Man* is didactic in intent, with serious philosophical content; it uses regular meter and rhyme; it demonstrates balance and regularity in its four sections. It was so popular in America that, in addition to the copies that were imported from England, it was reprinted dozens of times in the United States between the 1780s and 1810. While Pope is well remembered today, a less familiar name, that of James Thomson, holds a similarly important place in terms of the American reading public and his influence on American poets. Thomson was a Scottish poet whose work *The Seasons* (1730) had, like *An Essay on Man,* four long parts. *The Seasons* is both nature poetry and religious poetry, celebrating the glory of the natural world in its specific and diverse forms in 5,500 lines of blank verse. Although not as widely reprinted as Pope's work, *The Seasons* was frequently cited by readers and poets in America as a book they considered beautiful and highly accomplished poetry.

In the world of prose, another early-century form that maintained its influence in the later part of the century was the occasional essay as practiced by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in *The Spectator* (1711–1712). These essays inspired numerous imitators on both sides of the ocean. Supposedly authored by a club of men, each of whom represented a type in English society, *The Spectator* essays ranged broadly over social and cultural topics and aimed to be both entertaining and educational. A rising middle class looked to *The Spectator* as a cultural guide and monitor, and writers who wished to serve the same purpose aimed to duplicate the style and method of Addison and Steele. Benjamin Franklin acknowledges his indebtedness to these models in his *Autobiography,* when he describes his efforts at improving his style by rewriting essays from *The Spectator.* Moreover, essay column after essay column sprang up in American periodicals of the 1790s and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The emphasis on education and the formation of taste in literature and culture made the *Spectator*-style essay uniquely attractive to writers in a nation that was intent on reforming its culture.

Although, as noted elsewhere, Americans did not publish much native-written fiction before the 1790s, they had been reading English fiction throughout the century. Sentimental novels were among the most popular light reading imported from England and Europe. Samuel Richardson's novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–1748) were popular enough to inspire critical commentary from numerous American readers, expressed both in print and in private letters and journals. Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) combined sentimentality with the travel genre, which was usually more outwardly focused; in Sterne's version of travel, the personal encounters and reflections of the traveler become the focus. Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* was widely read and appreciated in America. Along with Richardson's works, Sterne's helped to establish the sentimental mode that dominated much of American literature. Sterne's mixture of sensibility with the occasional hint of bawdiness was sometimes denounced by more-conservative American readers, but his influence can be seen in sometimes suggestive novels such as Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism* (1801) and Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*. If Sterne mixed sentimentality with humor and the occasional double entendre, at the opposite

end of the sentimental spectrum was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), a decidedly dark work that ends in the suicide of the central character. This book is found beside the body of a suicide in William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy,* indicating at once the influence of the novel and the author's consciousness of contemporary discourse about the power of novels.

Other types of fiction that clearly influenced the emerging American novel included gothic and picaresque novels. Gothic fiction might have been "invented" (or, as he claimed, dreamed) by Horace Walpole with his novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), but it was Ann Radcliffe who really popularized the genre, especially in America. Radcliffe's works, notably her *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797), were both imported and quickly reprinted by American printers. One of the distinctive features of Radcliffe's version of gothic is that the seemingly supernatural elements are all eventually explained away, found not really to be supernatural at all. Where gothic, especially in Radcliffe's version, used apparently supernatural features to return the reader to a true understanding of reality, picaresque fictions worked within social reality but used exaggeration and farce to create satirical portraits of society. English versions of the picaresque were popular in America, particularly the works of Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding. Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748) and *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and Fielding's *History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *The Adventures of Tom Jones* (1749) were all popular titles, reprinted in American editions and imported from abroad. As the novel developed in the 1790s and beyond, Americans imitated these subgenres and also innovated from them.

Beginning in the early Republican era, Americans had been aware both of the influence of English literature and of the possibility of imagining a separate American tradition. Over the centuries, the political implications of English influence have been viewed differently. In the early twenty-first century, literary critics have begun to call for a close examination of the relationship between British and American literature in ways that do not see British influence as somehow diminishing American literature. Paul Giles, for example, in *Transatlantic Insurrections* (2001) argues that rather than reading American literature as influenced by British, we should read the two literatures as mutually explanatory. In *The Importance of Feeling English* (2007), Leonard Tennenhouse goes further, arguing that Americans continued to consider themselves "culturally English" long after the Revolution and that we should not necessarily divide literature along national boundaries. While students in courses in American literature might not feel able to challenge the institutional dictate that defines the subject they are required to study, Tennenhouse's argument at the very least suggests that a serious consideration of the interrelation of American and British literature can be a profitable perspective for understanding literary history and specific works of early American literature.

Evolution of Critical Opinion

From the earliest days of English colonization, literacy rates in the Anglo-American colonies were high. The Puritans who led the New England settlements greatly valued the ability to read, since they insisted that reading the Bible was an essential part of church membership. The tradition of widespread literacy continued and grew in the early Republican period even as the secular press grew. In a society in which the people had moved from being subjects to a king to being an electorate governed through representatives they themselves had selected, it was considered very important that citizens be well educated; and in a culture of print, literacy was the first step in education. Although at this time citizenship was still limited by and large to free, white, property-owning men, women were seen as the educators of the rising generation, and among those who could not vote, literacy was still seen as a tool of self-improvement. In the period after the Revolution, lending libraries became more common and larger, even in smaller communities, making a wide variety of reading materials available to those with even modest economic means.

For writers, then, a broad readership seemed within easy reach. The wealthy, the middle class, and even the literate poor read in order to educate and entertain themselves. Judging by their content, magazines and newspapers were aimed at a largely middle-class audience, and among whites the middle class was large. Without an inherited aristocracy, American society lacked the most extreme differences between rich and poor found in Europe; the eighteenth-century mansions still standing today often seem small to contemporary visitors. While young indentured servants or free blacks likely read newspapers and magazines, they were on the fringe of the readership to which the publications were aimed.

Novels, often explicitly addressed in their dedications to young American women as a group, were read broadly by young and old, male and female, although women appear to have been the larger part of the audience. The poetry, nonfiction, and short fiction published in magazines were likely read by men as often or more often than women; magazines and newspapers, while they were found in homes, were also available in coffeehouses and taverns, where middle-class men were more likely to be the patrons than women of any class. History was considered particularly useful reading for women; if upper-class men were educated primarily by the reading of classics in Greek and Latin, works of history in English supplied this central place in the education of women.

How writers were shaped by their audience in this period is difficult to determine. On one hand, early American magazines were extremely communal. Since they tended to be published in and for a local community, magazines were likely to be read by those familiar with the authors. The same writers appeared repeatedly in the same periodicals, and they could learn the tastes of their local audience fairly readily. On the other hand, hardly anyone could make a living as a writer. Even magazine publishers and editors often had other sources of income, whether in the printing industry or elsewhere. So pleasing the audience was a matter not of economics, by and large, but of reputation and respect. It is worth noting, too, that although this volume (like most guides to American literature) focuses on

works that were printed during the early Republican era, a thriving culture of literary manuscript production survived throughout this period: writers, often of the wealthiest classes, chose to write for smaller, personally known communities of other writers, circulating their works privately rather than printing them. For these writers, as for many who participated in the communities that arose around local periodicals, the goal was to produce literary objects worthy of the respect of a particular audience, not necessarily to achieve high sales.

In this earliest period of a self-consciously American literature, authorship itself was only beginning to be professionalized. American literature was not yet taught in colleges, and only the most innovative textbooks (Noah Webster's, most notably) used the works of American writers to instruct younger students. To the extent that literary criticism was practiced, magazines were largely the venue in which it appeared, although the early American novel is notable for the frequency with which it comments on novels and novel reading.

Within the writing about American literature as a specifically national literature, there were basically two camps: those who championed the writings of Americans and those who viewed American society as poorly suited to the development of a great national literature. The first group (which naturally included some of the more ambitious writers of the era) often called for increased literary production from Americans and praised the writings of their peers by comparing them with acknowledged "great" writers of England and of antiquity. Joseph Dennie, for example, wrote a series of essays in one of his periodicals about a now-forgotten American epic poem, Timothy Dwight's *Conquest of Canäan* (1785), a move that William Cullen Bryant later characterized as an attempt to elevate Dwight's work to the same degree of popularity as John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). Boston poet Sarah Wentworth Morton was dubbed by a contemporary critic "the Sappho of America." Boosterism of this kind was denounced by cultural critics affiliated with the Federalist party, notably by the editors of the *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* (published from 1803 to 1811) and by Fisher Ames in his "American Literature" (published posthumously in 1809). These critics argued that it was foolish to claim that Americans had achieved anything approaching the stature of the greatest British literature, and in many cases they argued that the basic conditions of American society were opposed to the creation of great literature. The pursuit of money was so ingrained in the American character, so the argument went, that writers worried more about sales than the quality of their work, and the poor and ill-educated inappropriately attempted to enter the world of letters. These arguments anticipated the assertions made later by French commentator Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* (1835, supp. 1840).

Another critical debate in the early part of the era addressed the newest addition to American literature: the novel. Attacked in much the same terms as romantic fiction was attacked in *Don Quixote,* the novel was suspected of influencing individuals in ways that rendered them ill suited to deal with real life because, so the argument went, novels portrayed an unrealistic world and readers conditioned their expectations on the depictions found in novels. Thus, many novels of the 1790s claimed to be based on true stories, suggesting that they had

avoided the unrealistic vision of the world allegedly presented in romances. Most critics responded that some novels were useful and morally uplifting, even if others were not. While discourse about the evils of novel reading did not disappear suddenly, the reality of rapidly growing production and consumption of novels indicates that whatever prejudices were held against pleasure reading before the Revolution, had been largely overcome by the late 1790s.

The development of American literature from 1776 to 1820 is marked by several important changes: a significant increase in the capacity of American printers; a new-found concern with the specifically American qualities of works by American writers; a marked increase in the number of novels; a proliferation of magazines and the short fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that filled them; and the introduction of copyright laws in 1790. Other trends, notably the popularity of the familiar essay, biography and autobiography, and travel writing, remained relatively unchanged from the Colonial era.

The critical response to early American literature has changed dramatically since the middle of the twentieth century. During the Cold War era, the narrative of American literary history gave a foundational role to the New England Calvinists we term the Puritans but paid scant attention to the novels and poetry of the late eighteenth century, which prominently displayed the influence of European models and thus did not adapt readily to a model based around the ideology of American exceptionalism.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the literature of the early Republic began to be reevaluated in important ways. Cathy N. Davidson's 1985 book *Revolution and the Word,* along with Jane Tompkins's 1985 *Sensational Designs,* set into motion a reconsideration of the fiction of the early Republic; instead of dismissing sentimental discourse as unworthy of critical attention, Davidson and Tompkins took seriously the idea that sentimental fiction performed cultural work. Scholars in the following decades focusing on the novel in the years between 1776 and 1820 have followed that approach to investigate the negotiations of new political, legal, economic, and geographic realities in fiction. (For examples, on politics and law see Elizabeth Barnes's 1997 *States of Sympathy* and Robert A. Ferguson's 2004 *Reading the Early Republic;* on economics see Joseph Fichtelberg's 2003 *Critical Fictions,* Jennifer J. Baker's 2005 *Securing the Commonwealth,* and Karen Weyler's 2005 *Intricate Relations;* and on geography see Martin Brückner's 2006 *Geographic Revolution in Early America.*) Reconsiderations of the literature of public documents during the era of Revolution and nation-building have stressed alternately the importance of print culture (Michael Warner's 1990 *Letters of the Republic*) or the residual influence of orality (Christopher Looby's 1996 *Voicing America*).

Reconsiderations of poetry during the era of the early Republic have begun from a new awareness of the importance of manuscript culture. Scholars interested in the poetic literary culture of the day have investigated the extent to which circulation of manuscripts served as a substitute for printed publication and the extent to which such a literary culture drew on and interacted with the everyday culture of polite sociability. David Shields's 1997 *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters* investigated these relationships, and scholars have begun the work of recovering the literary networks in which so many poets engaged.

Part II
Study Guides on General Topics

Political Debate and Print Culture

During the Revolutionary years and the politically unstable years that immediately followed, political writing flourished to such an extent that many critics and historians have seen an important link between print culture and the sweeping political and social changes that took place during this period of American history. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) has long been considered a significant factor in raising the level of public support needed to make the war effort possible. A great number of other writings, including pamphlets and publications in newspapers and magazines, worked toward the same end. Thomas Jefferson's *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774), David Rittenhouse's *Oration . . . Before the American Philosophical Society* (1775), and John Adams's *Thoughts on Government* (1776) all work toward the same end, although they address a smaller audience than Paine's, which aimed, broadly, to reach the common man. Throughout the 1780s, pamphlets flourished as a forum in which political debate could be carried on in public. The Federalist Papers (1787–1788) and the pamphlets and articles that appeared to oppose both the Federalist Papers and the Constitution grow out of this tradition of political writing. Although the pamphlet form (the short, quickly published stand-alone rhetorical text) fell away in favor of publications in newspapers and magazines in the 1790s and after, the use of print to carry on debate among citizens was established as a central component of American politics.

One result of this tradition was that early journalism was highly partisan. Today, we expect journalists in their news reporting to be as objective as possible. Eighteenth-century standards did not make the same demand; readers assumed that a Federalist journalist would present the facts in light of Federalist interpretations of political issues, and similarly for journalists aligned with the Democratic-Republican Party. In the 1790s the emerging political parties realized it was important for them to have newspapers and magazines aligned with their interests, and journalists became important figures in politics. (In some cases, in fact, individuals were both politicians and journalists.) Students who wish to write about political writing and print culture in the early Republican era will likely work with the most easily accessible texts, such as *Common Sense* or the Federalist Papers. Students with access to the online database American Periodical Series will be able to supplement this study by reviewing magazines and newspapers of the era.

In *Reading the Early Republic* (2004) Robert A. Ferguson, a scholar of both literature and law, analyzes the conflicting values found in early political writing, including conflicts between religion and secularism and over definitions of representative government. The volume discusses canonical works such as *Common Sense* as well as writings related to Gabriel's Rebellion, a failed slave insurrection in 1800, and other contentious legal issues. Two other broad studies of political writing in the era are essential reading for students who wish to understand the theoretical debates about political writing in the early Republic. Michael Warner's *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (1992) is the classic statement of the connection between print culture

and the rise of Republican political values. Christopher Looby in *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (1996) presents a contrasting view that sees speech as being as important if not more important than print in early American political culture.

Several studies on journalism and politics provide the necessary background to understand political journalism in the context of early American values and standards. In *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (2001), Jeffrey L. Pasley studies newspaper editors in different regions of the United States, with special attention to those affiliated with the Democratic-Republican Party. Marcus Daniel's *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Politics* (2009) offers case studies of individual journalists (William Cobbett, Benjamin Franklin Bache, Philip Freneau, Noah Webster, and John Fenno) and their impact on politics in the 1790s. Catherine O'Donnell Kaplan, on the other hand, provides an important view of the collective culture around periodicals, with special reference to Elihu Hubbard Smith, Joseph Dennie, and the editors of the *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* in her *Men of Letters in the Early Republic: Cultivating Forums of Citizenship* (2008).

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, passed in 1791, forbids the federal government from "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." Yet, in 1798, Congress passed and President John Adams signed into law the Sedition Act, which made it a crime to print "false, scandalous, and malicious writing" against the government. The Sedition Act expired in 1801 at the end of the Adams administration. This background can be a starting point for considering the role and importance of freedom of speech in early political writings. In addition, students might be interested in comparing this historical moment with control of reporting in modern American politics (the embedding of journalists in Iraq, for example).
2. As Catherine Kaplan has shown in *Men of Letters in the Early Republic,* the literary culture that produced widely read periodicals in the early Republican era was a highly collaborative literary culture. The individual author as celebrity or authority was often downplayed in favor of productions literally written by groups or exchanges in which a group of writers responded to one another in the pages of magazines. Collaborative or at least highly social literary culture was also a feature in other areas of early American life. Students might wish to compare the functioning of any of the groups described by Kaplan with other collective formations in early American literature and culture. David S. Shields's *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (1997) describes the culture of sociability, including club culture, in early America. Collaborative culture in poetry is presented well in *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America* (1997).
3. Readers today are often surprised at how openly early American newspaper editors took partisan positions. Yet, significant components of our political culture today (notably television news, talk radio, and blogs) similarly take

open positions on one side or another of political issues. What aspect of contemporary news coverage seems most like eighteenth-century news coverage? In what ways is news coverage today different from the early days of the republic? How might these differences affect our understanding of the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech and freedom of the press?

4. Students who have access to the digital American Periodical Series through their libraries should examine some early American newspapers and magazines. Note the combination of texts we normally call "literary" with political articles and news. How does the combination affect the political writing, and vice versa?
5. Advanced students with theoretical interests should consider the debate between Looby and Warner. Focusing on a specific text such as *Common Sense,* can you argue that either speech or writing was more important than the other in the constitution of the early American political realm?

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Benjamin Franklin Bache (1769–1798)
Grandson of Benjamin Franklin, was editor of the *Philadelphia Aurora,* a Jeffersonian-leaning publication. Bache was arrested under the Sedition Act but died of yellow fever before his trial.

William Cobbett (1763–1835)
An English political writer, lived in the United States from 1792 to 1798, where he published under the name Peter Porcupine, writing pro-English propaganda.

Joseph Dennie (1768–1812)
Was a Federalist journalist, founder of *The Port-Folio,* one of the most successful periodicals of the era.

John Fenno (1751–1798)
Was a Federalist and editor of the *Gazette of the United States,* published first in New York and then Philadelphia.

David Rittenhouse (1732–1796)
Was an inventor, mathematician, and scientist, and a member of the American Philosophical Society.

Elihu Hubbard Smith (1771–1798)
Was a physician and writer, member of New York's Friendly Club, and close friend of Charles Brockden Brown.

Letters as Literature

Letters written in the past often are regarded as personal documents by present-day readers: one person writing informally to one other person, with an expectation of privacy. This model of letter writing is fairly far from the reality of letter writing in the Revolutionary era. Given the realities of travel and communication in early America, letters were an essential way of sharing important news that today might be communicated by telephone, television, text message, or other medium. People wrote letters to keep in touch with friends and family who were at a distance, either temporarily or permanently, to exchange important business news or conduct business, to address the government, to seek advice or information, even to start friendships or courtships. Because of the importance and ubiquity of letter writing, letters were often shared. (If a person wanted the recipient of a letter to keep something private, he or she would need to say so explicitly in the letter.) Letters might be read aloud to a group of friends or family or passed along to other readers. Letters were not read and immediately discarded; they were often saved for years, read and reread, quoted from or copied. Given the importance of letters, writers usually composed them carefully. Manuals teaching principles of letter writing and offering models for letters written for specific purposes were published in England and in the United States.

As important as letter writing was in the period before telegraphs and telephones, it should come as no surprise that people were interested in reading the letters of well-known figures or of people whose lives or letters were considered worthy of imitation. In addition to the collections of real letters that were read as both entertaining and educational, writers began to take advantage of the form of the letter collection to create fictional works, often supposedly authored by a foreign traveler, as a way to comment on contemporary society. Advice books were also often written in the form of a series of letters to a young person. Finally, as anyone who has read eighteenth-century novels knows, the letter collection became a standard way of presenting a fictional account. Letters have special characteristics as a kind of literature. Because they are addressed by one person to another, letters presumably give readers access to a person's honest feelings and opinions (although sometimes, especially in fiction, readers might be expected to see that a particular correspondent has a reason to be less than honest with a particular letter recipient). In addition, because readers of printed letter collections are, in effect, reading over the shoulder of the "real" recipient, there is a sense of being let in on a private document.

Letter-writing manuals, collections of letters by prominent British men and women, epistolary novels such as those of Samuel Richardson, and travel letters were all popular reading throughout the eighteenth century. As with the publication of domestically produced novels, Americans began publishing their own letters in greater numbers in the decades after the revolution. The letters of the era that are best known today, those of John and Abigail Adams, were not published until later in the nineteenth century. In 1780, in what constituted a review of a collection of letters by Lord Chesterfield, Mercy Otis Warren wrote a letter to her son praising Chesterfield's style but deploring his morals;

the letter was printed in several newspapers. Warren's letter is typical of those written to be reprinted, since it was didactic and, therefore, presumably worth the attention of other readers besides her own son. Similar reasons justified the publication of letters by religious women, such as *Familiar Letters, Written by Mrs. Sarah Osborn, and Miss Susanna Anthony, late of Newport, Rhode-Island* (1807). Posthumous publication of women's letters was not uncommon, since during their lifetimes women of the upper classes presumably would have been too modest to have their letters published. This was the case for Martha Laurens Ramsay, whose letters were published by her husband as *Memoirs of the Life of Martha Laurens Ramsay* (1811). Ramsay's letters include discussions of her religious struggles and letters of advice to her son, both presumably educational, to readers who might apply what they learned about life from Ramsay to their own religious lives or their own parenting. Other notable collections of letters include James Kirke Paulding's *Letters from the South* (1817) and George Tucker's *Letters from Virginia* (1816); the second of these purported to have been written by a Frenchman traveling through the South, and both satirize the social pretensions of the Virginia middle class and the newly rich. Traces of the influence of the collection of letters can be seen not only in the epistolary form of many novels but also in works such as Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Franklin's *Autobiography* (1793), and Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle* (1797), where letters become the pretense under which a long continuous narrative is recounted.

Eve Tavor Bannet's *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680–1820* (2005) reviews the popular self-help books that taught English and Anglo-American people how to write letters and describes techniques of secret writing used in private correspondence. In *Correspondence and American Literature, 1787–1865* (2004), Elizabeth Hewitt traces correspondence in relationship to American literature. In the early chapters, she traces the relationship of various theories of correspondence in relationship to Federalist and Democratic-Republican visions of representative government. For a discussion of letter writing in the United States that pays special attention to the generic conventions as well as studying particular writers of letters (including an excellent discussion of John and Abigail Adams), see William Merrill Decker's *Epistolary Practices* (1998).

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Students interested in epistolary fiction may wish to read some nonfictional letters in order to compare the tone and style of those letters to the fictionally created letters.
2. Although it may seem that the writer of a letter is revealing his or her "true" self, like any other kind of writing, the speaker of a letter is a persona created by the author, whether consciously or unconsciously, for the audience he or she is addressing. In addition, since Revolutionary-era writers knew that others might read their letters, they surely kept in mind that the image they projected in their letters might reach people they did not anticipate. So in looking at any

letter or collection of letters, we can and should analyze the persona the writer has constructed.
3. Letter writing was one genre in which women participated in numbers rivaling those of men. Comparing female and male writers, do you see similarities or differences? What versions of femininity and masculinity do writers of letters embody in their writing personae?
4. Some of the most significant texts of the Revolutionary era use epistolarity in an unusual way. Consider part 1 of Franklin's *Autobiography* or Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), both of which begin as letters but then continue as long narratives. Why might Franklin or Brown have chosen to frame his works as letters even though he did not make use of multiple correspondents or even multiple letters?
5. How does the Revolutionary-era culture of the letter compare to contemporary culture's use of e-mail, the Internet, and text messaging? Some critics feel that new technologies have reproduced the characteristics of letter-writing culture. Can you see differences?

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Susanna Anthony (1726–1791)
A resident of Rhode Island, became active in the Congregational Church after experiencing a spiritual conversion during the period of religious revival known as the Great Awakening. Anthony remained single throughout her life and helped to support herself through needlework.

James Kirke Paulding (1778–1860)
A close friend of Washington Irving, was a writer and politician who held several appointed positions, the highest of these being the secretary of the navy from 1838 to 1841.

Sarah Osborn (1714–1796)
Was a Rhode Island educator and writer who became a Congregational Church member during the Great Awakening.

Martha Laurens Ramsay (1759–1811)
Was the daughter of Henry Laurens. Active in the Revolutionary War effort and wife of physician and historian David Ramsay, she was the mother of ten children.

George Tucker (1775–1861)
Was an attorney, a U.S. congressman, a writer, historian, economist, and professor at the University of Virginia.

Biography and Autobiography: Stranger Than Fiction

Before the popularity of the novel came the popularity of life-writing. Biographies and autobiographies, some primarily religious in focus but others more secular, were popular reading in the eighteenth century. Life-writing resisted the criticisms typically levied against fiction: that by purporting an unrealistic view of life, fiction made it hard for readers to accept the reality of their own lives. Since life-writing by definition dealt with reality (though assuredly some of it was fictionalized), it could be justified as educational. This is not to say that life-writing was never entertaining. Many biographies and autobiographies featured unusual events, adventures, and even the kinds of melodramatic events that might have been criticized in fiction. To take just a few examples: Elizabeth Ashbridge, when on the verge of suicide, hears a voice telling her "There is a life beyond the grave"; Olaudah Equiano recounts the tearful scene when slave traders tore him from his sister; Herman Mann recounts the cross-dressing exploits of Deborah Sampson in his biography of her.

Although life-writing would seem less likely than fiction to have a strong plotline, the events selected for attention are generally chosen to fit some kind of narrative. Spiritual narratives generally begin with an account of the initial sinfulness of the subject with a conversion experience serving as the narrative's high point followed by an account of the reformed life following the conversion. Slave narratives like Equiano's follow a similar pattern, with the achievement of freedom taking the place of (or, in Equiano's case, standing beside) the conversion experience. Franklin's *Autobiography* is notable in that its secular narrative does not fluctuate in the same way. In addition to plotting, life-writing shares other characteristics with fiction: the use of scenes and dialogue contrasted with summary; the development of characters, both the character of the primary subject and of the subject's family and acquaintances. It should come as no surprise, then, that autobiographies and biographies were popular and entertaining reading, just as fiction was.

Important life writings of the Revolutionary period include a wide variety of famous and more-obscure individuals from different social classes and backgrounds. Ashbridge, a convert to the Quaker faith, published an account of her life as an emigrant, indentured servant, and religious convert in *Some Account of the Fore-Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* (1774). Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789) presented the life of a slave who attained his freedom. Franklin's *Autobiography,* in comparison to those of Ashbridge and Equiano, presents the life of an already famous individual; Franklin's account of his own life is also notable for its dominantly secular approach.

Shorter biographies often formed part of the posthumous publication of a writer's works, as in the cases of David Ramsay's biography of his wife in *Memoirs of the Life of Martha Laurens Ramsay* and Margaretta Faugeres's biography of her mother in *Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker in Prose and Verse* (1793). Sensational biographies like Mann's *The Female Review* (1797), which recounted

the life of a woman who dressed as a man in order to fight in the Continental army, had obvious appeal to a readership interested in biography as entertainment. In the interests of furthering specifically American biography, Jeremy Belknap published a two-volume collection of short biographies of famous Americans (*American Biography,* 1794, 1798). One of the most famous (and fictionalized) biographies of the era was Mason Locke Weems's *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues, and Exploits of General George Washington* (1800). Weems also wrote *The Life of Dr. Benjamin Franklin* (1815); his biography of Washington, along with Franklin's autobiography, were the two biographical works from the era that remained popular throughout the nineteenth century.

Many of the most famous biographies and autobiographies of the period are readily available in multiple editions and in textbooks of American literature. Elizabeth Ashbridge's narrative can be found in *Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives,* edited by William L. Andrews and others (1990). Other more-difficult-to-find life-writings are accessible in digital form. Belknap's *American Biography,* Weems's *A Life of Washington* and *The Life of Dr. Benjamin Franklin,* and David Ramsay's *Memoirs of the Life of Martha Laurens Ramsay* are all available through Google Books.

For a critical consideration of American autobiographies in the eighteenth century, see Susan Clair Imbarrato's *Declarations of Independency in Eighteenth-Century American Autobiography* (1998). Felicity Nussbaum's *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (1989) focuses on British autobiography but can provide useful models for reading autobiographical texts through a critical lens. William Spengemann's *The Forms of Autobiography* (1980) and Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001) offer methodological guidance.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. If biography or autobiography could claim a more respectable place as educational reading than fiction could, one should be able to distinguish clearly between the experience of reading memoir and the experience of reading fiction. Try to articulate these differences. If it seems difficult to tell fiction from nonfiction, attempting to explain why can lead to interesting analyses. Why would readers view memoir so differently from fiction? For that matter, consider the popularity of memoir at the present day: Do readers still think of memoir as significantly different from fiction? How and why?
2. One debate over life-writing in the Revolutionary era is whether it reinforced communal social values or individuality. Beginning with Franklin, students might be inclined to agree with the critics who see the genre as moving toward individualism. Even in Franklin's account of his life, though, he appears to be very deeply embedded in his community. One analysis of Franklin might pit his own sense of his independence against the many ways in which his community supported his success. Similar approaches to other narratives can help focus a consideration of the extent to which life-writing did or did not valorize

the individual over the larger demands of society. What role does religion play in this conflict?

3. One of the most interesting features of memoir is that it has historically encompassed both famous and obscure individuals; readers find both of interest. Comparing biographical writings about Franklin or Washington to those of less famous people, look for differences or similarities. Is there a separate genre of "lives of the rich and famous"? Or "lives of the poor and powerless"?
4. Another comparative approach is to use gender as the basis of comparison. Ashbridge and Franklin, for example, both began life by running away, and both served as indentured servants. Can a comparison of their lives teach anything about what it meant to be a man or a woman in the Revolutionary era?
5. Finally, narratives of peoples of different races can teach a great deal about how race was understood in the early Republic. It is essential to keep in mind that in multiracial societies, race operates in the lives of white people as well, even if they do not speak explicitly about it.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Elizabeth Ashbridge (1713–1755)
Was a convert to the Quaker faith and eventually became a Quaker "female preacher," traveling in England and Ireland to spread the Quaker message.

Jeremy Belknap (1744–1798)
Was a Boston native, a Harvard-educated minister, and a historical writer.

Deborah Sampson Gannet (1760–1827)
Was a Massachusetts woman who by her own account masqueraded as a man in order to enlist in the Continental army; after the war she went on a lecture tour.

Herman Mann (1771–1833)
Was a schoolteacher, newspaper writer, and publisher in Dedham, Massachusetts.

David Ramsay (1749–1815)
Was a Charleston, South Carolina, physician and historian who wrote the first major account of the American Revolution as well as a history of South Carolina.

Mason Locke Weems (1759–1825)
The son of a Maryland farmer, practiced medicine briefly before studying divinity and serving as a pastor for several years; for most of his career, however, he was an itinerant bookseller and author of moralistic books.

Poetry and Social Class

Readers today generally find eighteenth-century poetry less readable than eighteenth-century prose. Yet, most middle-class or upper-class readers and writers of the eighteenth century valued poetry above prose. Members of the elite in particular saw the composition and consumption of poetry as a genteel activity that marked their education and taste. Moreover, poetry was well suited to the situation of American publishing, in which book-length works were expensive and risky to print, while new periodicals in need of poetry and other shorter material were frequently established (even if they did not last long). The poetry that readers and writers prized was what we now call neoclassical: poetry that used regular rhyme and meter, that often mimicked forms found in classical writing, that served an educational purpose as well as being entertaining, and that celebrated the values of reason, moderation, and balance. In its use of set forms and poetic diction and allusion, such poetry required a certain set of skills that marked the writer as well educated and cultured.

Poetry was so highly valued and so widely practiced that the list of Revolutionary-era poets is very long, but because of the changing tastes in poetry, most of the names are not familiar to readers today. Each of the poets from that era whose reputations have best survived—Phillis Wheatley, Philip Freneau, and the group collectively known as the Connecticut Wits—has a distinguishing feature. Wheatley we remember today because of her historical importance and because of the amazing feat of her poetic achievement despite her status as a slave. Freneau is remembered because he appears to anticipate the Romantic movement in poetry, which was slow to influence American writers. The Connecticut Wits remain a staple of textbooks and surveys in part because they were the first to call themselves a school of poets and because they worked early to "canonize" themselves. This is by no means to say that Wheatley, Freneau, and the Wits are not worth reading and remembering for other reasons; rather, they are only a small slice of a broader poetic field that is also worth consideration.

Wheatley's work, although unusual because of its author's enslaved status, is representative in many ways of the major trends of poetry of the time. Wheatley's poetry is serious, written in recognizable forms and genres, often has a moral purpose or intent, uses poetic diction, and often is written to a specific person or group of people to commemorate a specific event. Much of Freneau's work, similarly, fits the general poetic trends, although some of his works, notably "The House of Night" (1779) and "The Wild Honey Suckle" (1786) are notable for attitudes and themes more typically considered Romantic. The group called the Connecticut Wits included John Trumbull, Timothy Dwight, Joel Barlow, David Humphreys, Lemuel Hopkins, Richard Alsop, and Elihu Hubbard Smith. A group of these writers collaborated on a mock epic, *The Anarchiad* (1786–1787), that mocked contemporary social disorder in the wake of the Revolution. Other notable works by members of the group include Barlow's *The Hasty-Pudding* (1796), Dwight's *Greenfield Hill* (1794), Humphreys's *A Poem on the Industry. Addressed to the Citizens of the United*

States of America (1794), and Barlow's *The Columbiad* (1807). In 1793, Smith edited and published the first anthology of American poetry, *American Poems,* a collection of work mostly by members of this group. Although he is generally thought of as a later-nineteenth-century poet, William Cullen Bryant, who was considered a young prodigy in poetry, has his roots in this era; his first poetic efforts appeared in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and one of his most famous poems, "Thanatopsis," in 1817.

Many of the poets who are less well remembered are women. Sarah Wentworth Morton has been remembered largely for a single work, "The African Chief" (1792), because that poem was influential later in the nineteenth century as the abolitionist movement grew. Morton wrote a great deal of verse, however, including several verse plays that dealt self-consciously with American themes, including *Ouâbi; or the Virtues of Nature* (1790) and *Beacon Hill* (1797). Mercy Otis Warren also wrote verse plays, several of them satirical representations of the royal administration in the years just before the Revolution; she published a collection of her work, *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous,* in 1790. Many women, however, wrote poetry without publishing it, and some of that work has recently been rediscovered by literary critics. A group of mostly female poets, including Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, Hannah Griffitts, Milcah Martha Moore, Annis Boudinot Stockton, and Susanna Wright flourished in the post-Revolutionary era in the Delaware Valley around Philadelphia. While some of these women published a few poems, they wrote mostly for a smaller audience that included each other and an extended network of friends, family, and acquaintances.

American Poetry: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (2007) includes generous selections of poetry by a broad variety of poets. Additional collections include *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton* (1995) and *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America* (1997). These two volumes include valuable introductory material that provides important context for understanding these poets and the concept of manuscript culture.

Critical works related to poetry of the era focus mostly on the work of a single poet or a group of poets. Broader studies that are useful include David S. Shields's *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (1997) and Susan M. Stabile's *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-Century America* (2004).

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. During the period of the Revolution and early Republic, British poets were developing the style of poetry we today call Romantic; at the same time, they were pioneering a vision of the author as an individual who was highly original in his or her (mostly his) style and ideas. American poets, as seen in the work of the Connecticut Wits and the Delaware Valley network, tended to associate in groups and to mentor one another and even to write collaboratively. Issues of authorship are worth considering, then, in relationship to poetry of the

era. Students interested in questions of communal authorship are advised to explore *Milcah Martha Moore's Book* or the work of the Connecticut Wits.

2. As noted, Philip Freneau has often been seen as a precursor of the Romantic style in poetry. Why didn't Romantic poetry take hold earlier in the United States? Students might wish to conduct a comparative study that takes into consideration the social conditions that affected the development of poetry on both sides of the Atlantic. It is worth noting here that the differences in poetic development are much more pronounced than in trends in prose writing.
3. In general, male poets of the era have been better remembered and are more likely than women to appear in textbooks, with a few notable exceptions. Students interested in these gender differences might wish to compare the work of male and female poets to determine whether the greater representation of male poets is a result of their superior quality or other reasons. Students might also wish to consider the models of masculinity and femininity implied in the works of these poets.
4. As noted, not all poets chose to publish their work; poets whose works remained in manuscript were until recently considered amateurs, despite the fact that eighteenth-century readers did not make that distinction in the same way. In fact, poets who wrote for print publication were often looked down upon by some elite-class writers, who felt that the printed works were pandering to the lowest element in culture, rather than serving those with the best literary taste. With these issues in mind, students are encouraged to consider what differences are observable in the works of poets who wrote for publication and those who did not.
5. Since poets required a certain kind of education to meet the standards of neoclassical verse, poetry might justly be considered the most elitist genre in early American literature. What do you make of this claim? Can a rhetoric of class difference or class distinction be found in the work of early American poets?

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878)
Was a journalist and poet, the first American to win international acclaim for his poetry.

Timothy Dwight (1752–1817)
Was a Congregationalist minister, author, and educator; he ran his own school for several years and served as president of his alma mater, Yale College, for the last seventeen years of his life.

Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (1737–1801)
Daughter of a prominent Philadelphia physician, held a literary salon at her father's home, Graeme Park, and was an active writer and translator throughout her adult life; she and her friend, Annis Boudinot Stockton, exchanged writing frequently.

Hannah Griffitts (1727–1817)
Was a Philadelphia Quaker who never married and devoted herself to literary activities throughout her adult life.

Lemuel Hopkins (1750–1801)
Was a physician, a Yale graduate, a Revolutionary War veteran, and one of the Connecticut Wits.

David Humphreys (1752–1818)
Was a Yale graduate and Revolutionary War veteran who became a close friend and confidant of George Washington, pursued a political career, and was a founding member of the group of writers known as the Connecticut Wits.

Milcah Martha Moore (1740–1829)
Lived most of her life in the suburbs of Philadelphia and was related to several prominent Quaker families. Because she married a cousin, Moore was ousted from the Society of Friends. She was the author of a widely used textbook and at the center of a network of mostly female writers in the Delaware Valley.

Sarah Wentworth Morton (1759–1846)
Was born into a wealthy Boston merchant family; her husband, Perez Morton, was a prominent lawyer and politician.

Elihu Hubbard Smith (1771–1798)
Was a physician and writer, member of New York's Friendly Club, and close friend of Charles Brockden Brown.

Annis Boudinot Stockton (1736–1801)
Daughter of a prominent merchant, was the wife of Richard Stockton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence; the Stocktons held social and literary gatherings at their New Jersey estate, Morven.

John Trumbull (1750–1831)
A Yale graduate, studied law with John Adams and practiced law as well as serving in the state legislature in Connecticut, where he was also associated with the Connecticut Wits.

Phillis Wheatley (1753?–1784)
Was an African taken into slavery as a child and transported to Boston, Massachusetts, where she was purchased by the Wheatley family, who provided her with an unusual education equivalent to that given their own children. Wheatley demonstrated poetic talent early and by the age of approximately sixteen was publishing her poetry. Her *Poems on Various Subjects* was published in England in 1773.

Susanna Wright (1697–1785)
Was a Philadelphia Quaker who emigrated from England with her parents in her teenage years; she never married but practiced horticulture, raised silkworms, and wrote. Wright was well known for her learning and literary activities in the Philadelphia region.

Travel: Nonfiction and Fiction

In American history before the Revolutionary era, travel and exploration were naturally important activities; as a colonial outpost of Great Britain, the colonies on the East Coast had to be explored, and Americans also read the literature of travel and exploration produced by Spanish and French explorers on other parts of the North American continent. For generations, it was the case that a large percentage of the American population were immigrants, with significant travel experiences of their own, or were the children of immigrants. In the early national era, the United States acquired new territory, and even before the Louisiana Purchase, Americans, especially political and business leaders, were eager for news that explorers had found a passage by water to the West Coast to open trade across the Pacific Ocean. The literature of travel thus had practical functions, and yet it also had enormous entertainment potential. Travel and adventure writing as a genre thus spans the boundary often drawn between fiction and nonfiction: within the body of travel writing some texts are easily identifiable as fiction; others are easily identifiable as nonfiction; and a third group of texts are difficult to categorize in terms of what is "true" and what is invented.

Travel writing is inevitably part of the colonizing process; that means it necessarily involves questions related to colonialism: attitudes toward the land and its appropriate ownership and use; attitudes toward the native inhabitants; and ideas about nationality, history, and progress. This does not mean that travel writers could not represent a range of political perspectives, but it does mean that both cultural and political issues are always at stake in travel writing. One of the first major travel texts of the Revolutionary and early Republican era and one of the most widely reprinted American travel texts, Jonathan Carver's *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (1778), is a good example of many of the basic trends in early American travel writing. Carver was later criticized for stretching and manipulating the truth, but his work influenced many school texts. Carver's book is an interesting point of departure and comparison for other travel works, since it brings up many of the recurring issues of travel writing: depictions of the native peoples, the quest for a grail of sorts (in this case, the Northwest Passage), and meditations on future national expansion. A similarly optimistic account of new territories is John Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke* (1784), including an appendix about Daniel Boone. More-serious travel accounts include the first published account of the Lewis and Clark expedition, crafted by Nicholas Biddle: *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark to the Sources of the Missouri, Thence across the Rocky Mountains and down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean* (1814), based on the journals kept by the leaders of the expedition. William Bartram's account of his four-year journey in the Southeast, *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida* (1791), more commonly referred to as "Bartram's *Travels*," was both respected and highly influential. This poetic account, which like Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* often invoked the sublime in its accounts of nature, was a source of inspiration to nineteenth-century writers including Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Bartram's *Travels,* with its clear literary overtones, suggests how easily travel writing adapted to more-traditionally literary forms. Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* was both clearly based on much of Crèvecoeur's experiences and clearly fictionalized, while other works of pure fiction adopted the conventions and interests of travel writing. Brackenridge's novel *Modern Chivalry* (1792–1797) made use of motifs common in writing about the western frontier, as did Gilbert Imlay's novel *The Emigrants* (1793). At the end of the period under consideration here, one of the most fictionalized of travel narratives appeared: *Symzonia: Voyages of Discovery* (1820), by "Captain Adam Seaborn," is a pseudonymous text, with several proposed candidates for its authorship. A fictional account of voyages to the poles of the earth, *Symzonia* fictionalized ideas propagated as truth by John Cleves Symmes, who claimed that the earth was hollow, with openings at the poles that a ship could enter. Symmes's theories famously appeared again in American literature, in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838).

As with novels of the period, some of the important travel writings are available in easy-to-locate editions, but others are more difficult to find and are most easily accessed in electronic editions. Bartram's *Travels* and Jefferson's *Notes* are available in multiple editions, including from the Library of America. Imlay's *The Emigrants* is available in a Penguin edition (edited by Wil Verhoeven). Carver's *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America* is available in several electronic editions, including one from the Wisconsin Historical Society <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=383>. Biddle's account of the Lewis and Clark expedition is available through Google Books. Readers seeking to contextualize American travel writing will find an excellent selection of texts from around the time of the British Empire, including North America, in *Travel Writing 1700–1830: An Anthology,* edited by Elizabeth A. Bohls and Ian Duncan (2005).

Two volumes from Cambridge will be useful for students wishing to develop a deeper and broader knowledge of travel writing as a genre. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing,* edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (2002), covers Western traditions of travel writing since the Renaissance, including chapters at the end on gender, ethnography, and theoretical approaches to travel writing. *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing,* edited by Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (2009), traces the American tradition in travel writing, beginning with the colonial period. A study that focuses specifically on the Revolutionary period is Robert Lawson-Peebles's *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (1988). Martin Brückner's book *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (2006) will be useful to students wishing to examine the connections between travel literature and political ideology, especially the drive toward westward expansion.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Representations of Native Americans and of Anglo-Native relations are a recurrent theme in American travel writing. How do these writers treat the legal and moral issues involved in exploration and appropriation of other people's land? What image do they present of the native people and their relationship to

the land? An excellent study of the relationship between cultural attitudes and policy can be found in Brian Dippie's *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1982).

2. The earliest travel narratives about the New World often saw North America as a kind of Eden, a part of the world in which it might be possible to build a utopia. How do these themes appear in later travel writing? Specifically, students might wish to consider the relationship between the "newness" of formerly unexplored territories and the "newness" of the nation, paying close attention to publication dates in relationship to domestic politics.
3. As noted, travel writing often challenges the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction. Students might wish to consider the texts that appear to be "pure" fiction or nonfiction and examine those texts in light of awareness of the fictionalizing of travel in other texts. To what extent are the conventions of fiction applied even in "straight" travel narratives?
4. Most American travel writing is written by men. What gender attitudes are revealed in these writings? In *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975), Annette Kolodny, focusing mostly on nineteenth-century texts, argues that American writers saw the land as feminine. In these earlier texts, how do the male writers depict masculinity? Do they use metaphors that imply the land as female?
5. Bartram's *Travels* influenced later writers we call Romantic. How does travel writing generally relate to the literary shift between the eras we call "Enlightenment" and "Romantic"? Students are encouraged to investigate Enlightenment conceptions of balance, moderation, and reason as well as Romantic ideas of the sublime.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

William Bartram (1739–1823)
Was a second-generation naturalist and a native of Philadelphia; classically educated at the Academy of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pennsylvania), he was one of the founders of the American Philosophical Society.

Nicholas Biddle (1786–1844)
A Princeton graduate, was a lawyer and writer; he served as associate editor of *The Port-Folio* for a time and was also the president of the Second Bank of the United States from 1822 to 1829.

Jonathan Carver (1710–1780)
A native New Englander, served as a militiaman in the French and Indian Wars; in the 1760s, he was commissioned by a royal official to explore the upper Great Lakes Region in search of a northwest passage by water, the journey on which his travel narrative was based, at least in part.

John Filson (1753?–1788)
Was a surveyor, pioneer, schoolteacher, and one of the founders of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Gilbert Imlay (1754–1828)
A Revolutionary War veteran, speculated in land in Kentucky after the war, then to escape creditors fled to England, where he met and had a relationship with British author Mary Wollstonecraft that resulted in the birth of a daughter. In addition to his novel, Imlay was the author of a descriptive work about the American West, which in later editions was combined with Filson's work on Daniel Boone.

Essays, Magazines, and Nation-Building

During the years of the early Republic, a class of American magazines emerged that offered both new reading opportunities and new outlets for writers. Given the challenges of publishing, the average life of these publications was short (a little over a year), but they still offered a dynamic venue for American writing. The word *magazine* initially meant a storehouse, and early American magazines functioned much like storehouses of literature: they frequently reprinted material from elsewhere and collected a wide range of material—news, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and essays. Although magazines often serialized longer works of fiction or book-length nonfiction, they encouraged the development of shorter forms such as the short story and essay. Material in magazines often appeared either anonymously or under pseudonyms. The magazines thus functioned much like a model of the republic, with a certain leveling of differences between established writers and new ones, borrowed texts from long-dead writers, and material written just for the magazine by local talent. In the essay, the dominant model of excellence had been established early in the century by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Spectator* essays. Directed to a middle-class audience and concerned with matters of taste and culture, the essay was well suited to the concerns and interests of the new republic. The many questions of social and cultural change at issue in the postrevolutionary society—education, theater, art, customs related to marriage, dress, and other matters of social life—all were discussed in the magazines. Although writers were usually anonymous or pseudonymous, they still replied to one another, so that debates on cultural matters were carried out in the pages of magazines, sometimes constituting dialogues sustained over a period of months.

A good example of the breadth of topics treated by essayists can be seen in the essays of Benjamin Rush, physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence. In the years after the war, Rush wrote a series of essays on education, the death penalty, slavery, and natural history that appeared in Philadelphia's *Columbian Magazine* and were later collected in *Essays, Literary, Moral & Philosophical* (1798). Joseph Dennie, a professional man of letters, who edited a series of magazines including one of the most successful, *The Port-Folio,* wrote about the essay as a form in his early essay series "The Farrago" (1792), arguing that it was best suited to the middle class of casual readers who did not have time to read lengthy books but wanted to be both entertained and educated by their reading. Some magazine writers were ferociously partisan: Fisher Ames, wedded to the Federalist Party agenda, used newspaper and magazine writing to help build his political career. After retiring from political life, he continued as a cultural commentator, writing significant essays such as "The Dangers of American Liberty" (1805) and "American Literature" that expressed the most conservative vision of American postwar society. Other writers, notably Judith Sargent Murray, found the magazines a congenial place to put forward arguments for broadening social opportunities. Despite Murray's generally conservative politics, she advocated improved education for women in essays such as "Desultory Thoughts upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self-Complacency, Especially in FEMALE BOSOMS" (1784), which appeared in *The Gentleman and Lady's Town and Coun-*

try Magazine. Murray also published a *Spectator*-type series titled "The Gleaner" that purported to be written by a middle-class man. After publishing some thirty essays under the male persona, Murray in 1798 published a book-length collection of Gleaner essays in which she revealed her authorship of the series. One of the most celebrated authors of the early part of the nineteenth century, Washington Irving, made his debut in print with a *Spectator*-style series of essays using the pen name Jonathan Oldstyle (1802–1803).

Students with access to the American Periodicals Series online should make use of that resource to see early American magazines as contemporary readers saw them and to experience firsthand the mixture of materials that took place in their pages. College students with access to research libraries may also be able to view early magazines in rare-books rooms. Those without access to these resources can read essays from the magazines mostly in collections of works by individual writers. A generous selection of Murray's essays can be found in *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray,* edited by Sharon M. Harris (1995). Works by Benjamin Rush are available in *Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush,* edited by Dagobert D. Runes (1947). A two-volume collection of the *Works of Fisher Ames* was published in 1983.

Students interested in the development of magazines in early America can find a basic history in volume one of Frank Luther Mott's *A History of American Magazines* (1930). More-recent scholarly studies can be found in the collection of essays *Periodical Literature in Eighteenth-Century America,* edited by Mark L. Kamrath and Sharon M. Harris (2005). Catherine O'Donnell Kaplan's *Men of Letters in the Early Republic: Cultivating Forums of Citizenship* (2008) studies the collective culture surrounding periodicals, including an analysis of the group of men who edited *The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. The work of Judith Sargent Murray, who pretended to be a man writing the Gleaner series, draws attention to gender issues in magazine publication. Students interested in this issue will want to consider Murray's work as well as attitudes toward masculinity expressed in the work of other magazine writers, such as Ames or Rush.
2. As Kaplan has shown in *Men of Letters in the Early Republic,* a collective literary culture surrounded periodicals in the early Republican era. Students might wish to compare the functioning of any of the groups described by Kaplan with other collective formations in early American literature and culture. David S. Shields's *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* describes the culture of sociability, including club culture, in early America. Collaborative culture in poetry is presented well in *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America.*
3. At a time when a cult of Romantic authorship was emerging in England and elsewhere, most publications in U.S. magazines did not have their authors' names attached to them. Why might Americans have resisted attributing authorship? Students interested in this topic should consult Martha Woodmansee's essay

"On the Author Effect: Recovering Collectivity" in *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature* (1994), edited by Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi.

4. How do early American magazines compare with contemporary American magazines? Are there any magazines that still mix the wide range of genres that could be found in early American magazines? If so, what is the readership of those magazines like? Is there any other genre in American culture that fills the same role in the entertainment and education of a broad cross-section of the middle class?
5. How does the culture of civic debate in early American magazines compare with media culture today? You might consider phenomena such as blogging, reader's e-mails to news programs, comment sections at the end of articles in online versions of newspapers, for example.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Fisher Ames (1758–1808)
Was educated at Harvard and subsequently practiced law. For twenty years Ames was a spokesman for the most conservative faction of the Federalist Party.

Joseph Dennie (1768–1812)
Was a professional man of letters, an essayist and editor of *The Port-Folio* as well as several other publications.

Benjamin Rush (1746–1813)
Educated at Princeton and at Edinburgh University in Scotland, was a respected Philadelphia-area physician, professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and commentator on political and social issues.

Satire and Parody

Satire, especially when it is ironic, relies on the reader sharing with the author some common values and common knowledge about the subject being satirized. For example, if a student says "I just *love* four-hour exams filled with trick questions," most U.S. students today would recognize the statement as ironic, since four-hour exams are not the norm and trick questions are considered unfair by most students. But that interpretation requires a level of nonverbal interpretation. The need to share cultural knowledge and values with the author can make satire difficult to read when we are separated by centuries from the author and his or her original audience. As a result, it is especially important to recognize that satire was a common mode in a variety of literary genres in the early Republic. Satire was well suited to the Enlightenment vision of literature, since it was generally understood that literature should both educate and entertain readers. Since satire usually had some kind of serious social point, it had a claim to being useful or educational, but it also generally produced humor.

Benjamin Franklin was one of the best-known practitioners of satire in the early Republic; one of Franklin's last writings, "On the Slave Trade" (1790), presented a speech supposedly by "Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim," a fictional Algerian Muslim, who argues that it is acceptable for Muslims to enslave Christians. Franklin here uses irony and parody and argues through analogy: If Christian readers were outraged to read that a Muslim would argue for the acceptability of enslaving Christians, why would they not find it just as outrageous that fellow Christians continued to hold Africans in slavery? Many other writers also made use of satire. David Humphreys, Joel Barlow, Lemuel Hopkins, and John Trumbull used mock epic to satirize the disorder of the immediate postwar period in *The Anarchiad*. Another group of writers associated with the Connecticut Wits (Theodore Dwight, Richard Alsop, Lemuel Hopkins, Elihu Hubbard Smith, and Mason Cogswell) published satirical verse directed against the Anti-Federalists under the title "The Echo" in the *American Mercury* from 1791 to 1805; a collected version was published in 1807. Satirical novels were also popular and successful. Jeremy Belknap's *The Foresters, An American Tale: Being a Sequel to the History of John Bull the Clothier* (1792) adopted allegorical names such as John Bull from John Arbuthnot's *The History of John Bull* (1712), and Belknap made up allegorical names of his own, such as "antifiddlers" to represent the Anti-Federalists. Hugh Henry Brackenridge's novel *Modern Chivalry* (1804) was also satirical, mocking the class aspirations of the lowest ranking members of the new republic. Timothy Dwight made use of satire to support his arguments against deism, although his *The Triumph of Infidelity* (1788) has received little attention from critics. Out of a rich tradition of satire as a form of political critique as well as entertainment came Washington Irving's first book-length production, one of the most developed pieces of satire in American literature, *A History of New-York, From the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* (1809), which mocks historians and scholarship, colonists, the Dutch, the English Puritans, and Thomas Jefferson, among others.

A selection of the work of the Connecticut Wits can be found in David S. Shields's *American Poetry: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. *The Echo* in its book-length version can be found in Google Books, as can Belknap's novel *The Foresters*. Irving's *History of New-York* is readily available in multiple editions, as are Franklin's satirical writings. Students seeking background will find useful information on early American satire in chapters 8 and 9 in the *Oxford Handbook of Early American Literature* (2008), edited by Kevin J. Hayes. Colin Wells in *The Devil & Doctor Dwight: Satire & Theology in the Early American Republic* (2002) studies the relationship between Timothy Dwight's conservative theology and his use of satire with particular attention to "The Triumph of Infidelity," and provides the complete text of that poem.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Satire written in historically distant periods is difficult to read now because it is so dependent on context. Readers understandably tend to rely on footnotes supplied by editors to make sense of satirical texts from the past, but other ways of building context can yield additional insights. Taking a cue from the footnotes or introduction to a specific text, students are encouraged to research background of a specific text more extensively.
2. Satire in the early Republican era seems frequently to have been employed in support of conservative social and political ends (especially in the case of the Connecticut Wits); however, satire is also sometimes employed in the service of more-progressive politics (notably, Franklin's late-in-life satire of justifications of slavery). Is there a conclusion to draw from this general tendency toward the conservative in satire? How does it compare with uses of political satire in the present?
3. Students interested in satire as educational might wish to focus on Irving's *History of New-York* as a particularly interesting case study. *History of New-York* seems to satirize just about everything, which makes it difficult to determine what the rhetorical point of the text is. Does *History of New-York* serve a didactic purpose, or is its satire purely entertaining?
4. Students may be interested in comparing a satirical treatment of a subject to a nonsatirical treatment of the same subject. One good possibility would be to compare *The Foresters,* Belknap's satirical vision of colonization, to *The Columbiad,* Barlow's earnest and optimistic version of colonization. Do Belknap and Barlow have particular political differences that influence their choice of satirical or nonsatirical modes for their works?
5. Because satire is associated with major British poets of the early and mid eighteenth centuries, we generally associate it with neoclassicism. The writers of the early Republic who took up satire as one of their chosen modes of writing were contemporaries with the movement in English writing generally known as Romanticism. Is there any way in which the satirists of the early period seem to anticipate the Romantic reliance on imagination?

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Richard Alsop (1761–1815)
Was a poet and member of the Connecticut Wits, the leading force behind the collaborative project *The Echo*.

Jeremy Belknap (1744–1798)
Was a Harvard graduate, native of Boston, a Congregational minister, and a writer of history as well as the satirical *Foresters*.

Mason Fitch Cogswell (1761–1830)
A Connecticut physician, was also a writer associated with the Connecticut Wits.

Theodore Dwight (1764–1846)
The younger brother of better-known Connecticut Wit Timothy Dwight, was a lawyer, a leading Federalist who served briefly in Congress, and a newspaper journalist and editor.

Timothy Dwight (1752–1817)
Was a Congregationalist minister, author, and educator; he ran his own school and then served as president of his alma mater, Yale College, for the last seventeen years of his life. He was one of the Connecticut Wits.

Lemuel Hopkins (1750–1801)
Was a physician, a Yale graduate, a Revolutionary War veteran, and a member of the Connecticut Wits.

David Humphreys (1752–1818)
Was a Yale graduate and Revolutionary War veteran who became a close friend and confidant of George Washington, pursued a political career, and was a founding member of the group of writers known as the Connecticut Wits.

Elihu Hubbard Smith (1771–1798)
Was a physician and writer, member of New York's Friendly Club, and close friend of Charles Brockden Brown.

John Trumbull (1750–1831)
A Yale graduate, studied law with John Adams and practiced law, as well as serving in the state legislature in Connecticut, where he was also associated with the Connecticut Wits.

Sentimental Novels: Love, Seduction, and Scandal

Sentimental fiction was pervasive in early Republican literature, not only among the published novels but also in the sketches, stories, and serializations of fiction that appeared in early American magazines. Among the most popular works imported from England throughout the eighteenth century were sentimental novels: Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* and Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*. Today, the term "sentimental" generally indicates that a work is emotional, perhaps overly so. Sentimental fiction was certainly characterized by an interest in emotion, but the eighteenth-century conception of sentimentality was more elaborate than that. "Sentimentalists" believed that emotion was the key to human connection and to relationships, the glue that cemented society together. Sympathy was regarded as the capacity of one person to experience emotion created by the emotion of another. Sympathy bound friends and family members together, but it also accounted for philanthropy and charity and for the possibility of reforming those whose unruly behavior disturbed the social fabric. So although sentimental fiction often deals with romance, it also deals with other relationships that might be affected by sympathy or sentiment.

Although sentimentality was not the only mode for fiction, it was the dominant one, so much so that the fiction loudly proclaimed to be the "first American novel" referred to a key component of sentimentality in its title: William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy; or, The Triumph of Nature.* The two novels by Americans recognized as best sellers (based on the relationship of sales to the population at the time) were also sentimental novels: Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette*. These novels set a pattern for the novel of seduction that ends with the death of the seduced woman, but other novels, notably Leonora Sansay's *Laura* (1809) varied the pattern, allowing the seduced woman to survive. Other more-optimistic sentimental novels employing seduction themes avoided disaster by having their heroines resist temptation to eventually reach a happy ending. Sukey Vickery's *Emily Hamilton* (1803) is an epistolary novel about romance and marriage that explores options for young women by having the central character involved with three potential husbands. Emily Hamilton sticks to the path of virtue and is rewarded by marriage to the man of her choice. Foster's *The Boarding School* (1798) presents the flip side of the novel of seduction, in which the central character makes the wrong choice and is punished. Seduction was not always the center of sentimental fiction: some sentimental novels traced the difficulties of a pair of lovers who for one reason or another encountered obstacles to the consummation of their love: Isaac Mitchell's popular *The Asylum: or, Alonzo and Melissa* (1811) falls into this category, as do, arguably, Charles Brockden Brown's *Clara Howard* (1801) and *Jane Talbot* (1801).

In addition to seduction and marriage, sentimental fiction often dealt with perilous and imperiled finances. Sally Wood's novel *Dorval; or, The Speculator* (1801) warned against the danger of financial speculation. Caroline Matilda

Warren Thayer's novel, *The Gamesters; or, Ruins of Innocence* (1805) is a good example of a sentimental novel whose focus is primarily on male characters; and rather than romance, the plot revolves around economics. Rebecca Rush's *Kelroy* (1812), like the novels of Jane Austen, emphasized the connection between money and romantic love. Sentimental fiction could also adopt other generic conventions: Rowson's *Reuben and Rachel* (1798), for example, adapted the sentimental mode to a historical novel that spanned from 1492 to the end of the eighteenth century, tracing the romantic adventures of a far-flung family.

Although the most popular of the sentimental novels are readily available in multiple editions, others are still more difficult to obtain, but this situation is being transformed by Internet access, particularly the resources made available through Google Books. Brown's *Power of Sympathy* and Foster's *The Coquette* are available in one volume edited by Carla J. Mulford (1996). Both of Sansay's novels *(Secret History* [1808] and *Laura)* are available in a single volume edited by Michael Drexler (2007). *Charlotte Temple* is available in several editions; for a volume with a historically important critical introduction, see Cathy N. Davidson's edition (1987). Oxford also published Rebecca Rush's *Kelroy* (1993), edited by Dana Nelson. Using Google Books one can find complete reading copies of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century editions of at least the following: *Lucy Temple* (first published in 1828 as *Charlotte's Daughter,* Rowson's sequel to *Charlotte Temple*), Rowson's *Sarah, or the Exemplary Wife* (1813), Caroline Thayer's *The Gamesters, or the Ruins of Innocence,* Charles Brockden Brown's *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot,* and Isaac Mitchell's *The Asylum: or, Alonzo and Melissa*.

The most comprehensive introduction to early American fiction remains Davidson's *Revolution and the Word* (1986; expanded 2004). Students interested in following the critical debates about early American fiction should familiarize themselves with the debates over the extent to which sentimental fiction serves as an allegory about politics. Jane Tompkins in *Sensational Designs* (1985) was among the first proponents of an interpretation of sentimental fiction as politically engaged. Shirley Samuels in *Romances of the Republic* (1996) argued that early American fiction was indeed interested in political formations but that the emphasis was on the shaping of families as a unit of civil society rather than on individuals. Readers interested in the political dimensions of the novel of seduction will want to see at least the early chapters of Elizabeth Barnes's *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (1997). For an opposing view, see Stephen Shapiro's *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel* (2008).

Students interested in the financial matters dealt with in early fiction will want to consult Joseph Fichtelberg's *Critical Fictions: Sentiment and the American Market* (2003), Jennifer Baker's cross-genre study *Securing the Commonwealth: Debt, Speculation, and Writing in the Making of Early America* (2005), as well as Karen Weyler's *Intricate Relations: Sexual and Economic Desire in American Fiction* (2004). Baker provides a longer historical view to contextualize financial matters as they appear in literature while Weyler provides more readings of individual novels from the early Republican period.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. The eighteenth-century debates about fiction pitted a view of literature as educational against a view of literature as primarily entertaining. Even when writers explicitly state that their purpose is education (maybe especially in that case), readers might reasonably disagree. How do individual novels work to educate readers? Do the novels ever work at cross-purposes, claiming to teach one lesson but really suggesting another? Readers might also wish to consider in what ways the novels are entertaining and make their own analysis of the role of entertainment versus education in these novels.
2. How do sentimental novels relate to real social values regarding sexuality during the era? Good background will be found in the collection of essays *Sex and Sexuality in Early America* (1998), edited by Merril Smith, and also Richard Godbeer's *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (2002).
3. Some critics, including Davidson in *Revolution and the Word,* have demonstrated the link between novels and women's education. In many of these novels, discussions of women's education feature in the novels themselves. Students might wish to compare visions of education and women's reading (good novels to consider would be Sansay's *Laura,* Foster's *Coquette* and especially *The Boarding School,* and Charles Brockden Brown's *Clara Howard*).
4. Debates about the gender politics of these novels are long-standing. Whether written by a man or a woman, does a given novel appear to suggest that women's options in life were inappropriately limited? *The Coquette,* with its central character who uses the language of independence that recalls the Declaration of Independence, has been a central text in the debate, but these questions can profitably be pursued in any sentimental novel.
5. As noted above, much recent criticism of the sentimental novel has dealt with the relationship between sentiment and economics. For background on economic thought in the era, students might wish to consult *A Union of Interests: Political and Economic Thought in Revolutionary America,* edited by Cathy D. Matson and Peter S. Onuf (1990).

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Isaac Mitchell (1759?–1812)
Was editor of several newspapers in New York State and an active member of the Democratic-Republican Party.

Leonora Sansay (1781?–1823?)
Was a native Philadelphian who married Louis Sansay, a Frenchman who fled the Haitian Revolution; Sansay was also romantically involved with Aaron Burr. Later in life she separated permanently from her husband and established a business making artificial flowers on the outskirts of Philadelphia.

Caroline Matilda Warren Thayer (1785–1844)
The granddaughter of a Revolutionary War hero, was a Massachusetts native who married a physician and settled in western Massachusetts, still considered frontier at the time.

Sukey Vickery (1779–1821)
Was the daughter of a tailor, but despite this seemingly middle-class background, she was educated at least briefly at a fashionable female academy. Prior to publishing her only novel, she had published poetry in Boston periodicals.

Sally Sayward Barrell Keating Wood (1759–1855)
Was a member by both birth and marriage of prominent Maine families. Her first husband died when she was in her twenties, and most of Wood's novels were published during the years between her first husband's death and her remarriage.

Plays: On the Stage and In the Closet

In terms of developing well-known writers, drama in the early Republican period lagged considerably behind fiction and other genres. During the war itself, many people regarded theatre as an unnecessary luxury, particularly since the British staged performances in New York City and Boston when they occupied those cities. In Massachusetts, a ban on plays was maintained until 1792, well after the end of the war. Copyright law did not encourage native production of plays: the Copyright Act of 1790 did not give playwrights any control over performance. Once the playwright had sold the play to a company, he or she would receive no further financial benefit from the work, no matter how popular it was or how long it played. The unsurprising result was that native plays were few in number; foreign plays and adaptations of foreign plays continued to be popular. William Dunlap, one of the few theater professionals who attempted to make his living as a playwright and theater manager, even adapted plays from fiction. His *The Father, or American Shandyism* (1789) was loosely based on Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* (1760–1767), and his *Fountainville Abbey* (1795) was an adaptation of a novel by Ann Radcliffe.

The plays that Americans did write tended to be based on current events or recent history and to be patriotic, even jingoistic, in tone. Audiences responded loudly to American heroes and English villains, and playwrights kept producing, adapting, and revising plays that featured the kinds of political material that could unite an audience in patriotic fervor. Hugh Henry Brackenridge contributed two such plays during the war itself: *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill* (1776) and *The Death of General Montgomery* (1777). Dunlap's *André* (1798) was based on the famous case of the English spy Major John André. Several years later Dunlap rewrote that play into an even more patriotic pastiche: *The Glory of Columbia: Her Yeomanry!* (1803). Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1790) did not take events of the Revolution as its action, but did exploit a contrast between the virtues identified as particularly American and the vices associated with the influence of the Old World, a theme James Barker Nelson would reprise in his *Tears and Smiles* (1808). Not all topical plays were set in the Revolution or even in North America. Susanna Rowson (who wrote several other plays that are now lost) took up the conflicts with the Barbary pirates in her play *Slaves in Algiers* (1794). Sarah Pogson Smith in *The Female Enthusiast* (1807) turned to the French Revolution, dramatizing the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat. Mordecai M. Noah used the War of 1812 as the setting for his comedy *She Would Be a Soldier, or, The Plains of Chippewa* (1819), which featured a cross-dressing female. James Nelson Barker dramatized the story of Pocahontas in *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808), which was produced in London as *Pocahontas*.

The Contrast, the single most reprinted play of the era, is available in multiple editions, including many textbooks; the Penguin edition of *Early American Drama,* edited by Jeffrey H. Richards (1997) includes *The Contrast* as well as Dunlap's *André* and Barker's *The Indian Princess*. Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* and Pogson Smith's *Female Enthusiast,* along with other plays by women from the era, are available in *Plays by Early American Women: 1775–1850* (1995), edited by

Amelia Howe Kritzer (1995). Brackenridge's *Battle of Bunkers-Hill* and Noah's *She Would Be a Soldier* can be found in the collection *Representative Plays by American Dramatists* (1918–1925), three volumes, edited by Montrose J. Moses, which is available in its entirety through Google Books; a nineteenth-century edition of Dunlap's *The Father* can also be found in Google Books.

An essential reference work on American theater from its origins through the Civil War is the *Cambridge History of the American Theatre* (1998), volume 1, edited by Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby. Also useful is the collection of critical essays *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (1999), edited by Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor (1999); essays in this volume treat topics including Federalist politics on the stage, the use of Native American imagery in drama, gender roles in early plays, and connections between theater and westward expansion. Recent critical studies debate the question of how "American" drama in the early United States really was. Tice L. Miller in *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (2007) traces the "Americanness" of early American theater to its deployment of topical issues important to Americans. In *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (2007), Jason Shaffer argues that the patriotism of the Revolutionary era was at once an expression of resistance and an embodiment of characteristics considered recognizably English. Jeffrey Richards, in *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (2005), situates Republican-era drama within a transatlantic framework, arguing that the quest for specifically "American" theater is misguided.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. One of the debates about early American drama has been the extent to which early drama can be said to be specifically American. Students interested in this topic might wish to compare an American play of the era with a British play from the same period. Students with interests in linguistics might investigate whether there are recognizably American usages in the dialogue of the plays. Joey Lee Dillard's *A History of American English* (1992) is a starting point for investigations of American language in the early plays.
2. Many early American plays are based on historical events. Students interested in historical research might wish to investigate the relationship between the representation of the events in certain plays and the historical facts as they have been established. How and why are the events changed? What historical sources do the plays rely on?
3. If the early American novel is known for focusing on women's identities and appropriate roles in the new republic, the early American theater, with its emphasis on the war and related historical events, tends to put male characters front and center. Thus, it presents an interesting opportunity to study early American versions of masculinity. Note that even some plays that focused on female-central characters tended to present them in traditionally masculine roles *(The Female Enthusiast, She Would Be a Soldier,* and even, arguably, *The Indian Princess)*. Students interested in models of manhood in the early

Republic should consult chapter 1 of Michael Kimmel's *Manhood in America* (1996).

4. Are there points of comparison between the patriotism in early American drama and the attitudes toward patriotism in twenty-first-century films about war? How are patriotic attitudes acted out in these two eras?
5. William Shakespeare's plays were frequently acted in the United States during the Revolutionary and early Republican period. One favorite was *Julius Caesar,* which some critics have argued American audiences saw as a vindication of the American Revolution. Students familiar with Shakespeare might wish to read *Julius Caesar* as an "American" play. How, if at all, does the play read as a commentary on the American Revolution?

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

James Nelson Barker (1784–1858)
A Philadelphian who spent much of his life in public service, including twenty years as controller of the U.S. Treasury, wrote several plays in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

William Dunlap (1766–1839)
Is recognized as the first professional playwright in America. Author of more than sixty plays and adaptations and a theater manager and owner; he was also a member of the Friendly Club of New York and the first biographer of Charles Brockden Brown. Dunlap was also a painter and wrote a history of early American theater.

Mordecai M. Noah (1785–1851)
A native of Philadelphia and later a respected member of the New York literary community, was a career politician and civil servant, a supporter of the restoration of the State of Israel, and a well-received playwright and newspaper writer.

Sarah Pogson Smith (1774–1870)
Was born in England but migrated to South Carolina with her brother, a minister, in 1793. Smith was a poet and playwright.

Writing about Race and Gender

One of the most puzzling features of the Revolution for many people is the apparent incompatibility of the discourse of human rights (asserting "All men are created equal") that underwrote the Revolution and the continuing enslavement of African Americans, dispossession of Native Americans, and legal suppression of white women that followed the Revolution and continued for decades. Given the hierarchical (monarchical) society out of which Revolutionary America emerged, however, it would have been truly surprising had all inequities been redressed at once and immediately. While it is tempting simply to call the white men who created the new government hypocrites and be done with the matter, it is also an overly simplistic response to a complex situation. At the same time, the claim that is sometimes made in the Founders' defense—that people in the eighteenth century did not recognize the moral and ethical problems inherent in slavery, dispossession, or disenfranchisement—is clearly not true. Writers were actively engaging with the moral and philosophical issues during this formative period for the nation (as indeed, others had done before them).

Some of the important documents that demonstrate an awareness of the philosophical issues at stake in the new Republic's treatment of racial others include documents that remained unprinted, including Samson Occom's narrative of his life (circa 1768) and Lemuel Haynes's *Liberty Further Extended* (circa 1777; both are treated in individual study guides elsewhere in this volume). In the booming print culture of the period, however, debates were beginning that would lead to the growth of the abolitionist movement later in the nineteenth century. Jefferson's comments on race in *Notes on the State of Virginia,* published in 1788, are notorious. Equiano's strongly abolitionist *Interesting Narrative* appeared the following year. In 1790, the year of his death, Benjamin Franklin published a strongly abolitionist satire, the speech of "Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim." In 1791, mathematician and surveyor Benjamin Banneker addressed a letter on the hypocrisy of slavery in America to Thomas Jefferson, then secretary of state; Banneker's letter and Jefferson's reply were printed as a pamphlet the following year. The most systematic treatment of race in terms of racial theory to be published during the era was Samuel Stanhope Smith's *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species,* first published serially in 1787 then in an enlarged book edition in 1810. Smith argued against the notion of race as a fixed and unalterable entity; he argued that racial characteristics were physical only and were caused by environmental influences. Smith also attempted to counter claims by Jefferson (in *Notes on the State of Virginia*) and others that Africans had not produced any important intellectual work.

Although women did not argue specifically to be allowed to vote during this era, women's rights and social position were certainly under debate. Judith Sargent Murray published an essay titled "On the Equality of the Sexes," in 1790, two years before the better-known work by British writer Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Wollstonecraft's book

was read in America and admired by many, though later scandal after the publication of her biography tended to cloud the initial positive reception of the work. Charles Brockden Brown published *Alcuin,* a tract that seemed Wollstonecraftian in its leanings in 1798. Martha Meredith Read offered *A Second Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1801) while Hannah Mather Crocker produced the more conservative *Observations on the Real Rights of Women* (1818).

Of course, both race and gender issues pervade the fiction and other more "literary" works of the time. One should not read works such as Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer,* Brown's *Edgar Huntly,* or Tenney's *Female Quixotism* without a clear awareness of the debates about race that were going on at the same time. Nor should one read the sentimental fiction without an awareness that issues of women's rights were indeed being publicly discussed at the same time these melodramas of female desire were being produced and consumed for entertainment. The discourses of race and gender are thus important both in their own right as an example of the literary debate that formed a staple of American print culture and as background for understanding the traditional literary genres.

Several of the texts discussed above are treated at greater length elsewhere in this volume. Banneker's exchange with Jefferson can be found in many American literature textbooks and in collections of Jefferson's writing; it is also included in the online collections of the University of Virginia Library. Samuel Stanhope Smith's *Essay* has appeared in modern editions but is out of print; it is available in its entirety through Google Books. Murray's essays on women's rights and women's education can be found in *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray*. *Alcuin* is widely available.

Students seeking historical background and scholarly studies on race theory will find especially useful Bruce Dain's *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (2002), which traces the debates over the causes and significance of racial differences in American discourse from the Revolution through the mid nineteenth century. Cedrick May's *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic, 1760–1835* (2008) demonstrates the importance to the emerging abolitionist movement of evangelical African American writers, including among others Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatley, John Marrant, and Prince Hall. Students interested in how racial thought affected whites as well as African Americans will be interested in Jared Gardner's *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787–1845* (1998), which traces racial theory in early U.S. literature with special attention to the formation of stories of origin that account for white Americans as distinct not only from those of other races but from white Europeans as well. The best histories on women and rights discourses in the era are Linda Kerber's *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (1980), Mary Beth Norton's *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (1980), and Mary Kelley's *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (2006).

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. In terms of theories about race, there was an emerging debate between those who argued that race was a fixed, unchanging characteristic created by God, possibly by creating different races as different species, and others who understood racial characteristics as responses to environment. This debate parallels later debates about "nature versus nurture" as late as the present day, both in the arena of race and gender. Analyzing any one of the early Republican texts that deal with race or gender, trace ideas of nature and nurture to try to reveal the writer's underlying theory of where difference comes from.
2. Although race and gender are often discussed as if they are separate categories, in practice in American society everyone is marked and identified according to both race and gender. The two identities necessarily interact with one another. Looking at the work of a white woman, consider investigating her whiteness as well as her femaleness; or, when looking at the work of an African American woman, consider how her gender identity influences her racial experience.
3. As noted, the debates over race and gender in the early Republic anticipate the abolitionist and suffragist movements of the nineteenth century. Students with knowledge of or interest in the nineteenth century are encouraged to undertake comparative study of the earlier and later writers.
4. How does an awareness of contemporary theories of race and gender change one's reading of any of the novels of the period?
5. Mary Wollstonecraft is far better known than any of the Americans who were writing about women's rights at the same time. Wollstonecraft is often called a feminist, while the American women mentioned here are often considered "prefeminist" or "protofeminist." Students interested in cultural history are encouraged to take a comparative approach here. In what ways are Wollstonecraft's ideas different from those of her American contemporaries? Where is there overlap?

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Benjamin Banneker (1731–1806)
Was a free African American, a farmer, mathematician and surveyor, author of almanacs and of a famous abolitionist letter to Thomas Jefferson. He assisted in surveying the boundaries of the District of Columbia.

Hannah Mather Crocker (1752–1829)
Granddaughter of famous New England minister Cotton Mather and wife of a Revolutionary War veteran, raised a family of ten before beginning a writing career. She was the author of a work in defense of the Masons and an early book addressed to sailors, advocating temperance in addition to her *Observations on the Real Rights of Women.*

Prince Hall (1738?–1807)
A free African American and a property holder in Boston, was the founder of African American Freemasonry.

Martha Meredith Read (circa 1770–after 1807)
A member of prominent Philadelphia families, was author of two novels, *Monima, or The Beggar Girl* (1802) and *Margaretta; or The Intricacies of the Heart* (1807), as well as the "Second Vindication of the Rights of Women."

Samuel Stanhope Smith (1751–1819)
Was a Presbyterian minister and served as president of Princeton University from 1795 to 1812.

Part III
Study Guides on Works and Writers

John and Abigail Adams
Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail, During the Revolution

Edited by Charles Francis Adams (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1876)

John Adams (1735–1826) and his wife, Abigail (Smith) Adams (1744–1818), were central figures in the American Revolution and in the early Republic. John Adams was the second president of the United States. The letters John and Abigail Adams exchanged before and during the Revolution have for generations been a resource for readers interested in the period, in the politics of that group we now call the Founders, and in gender relations and family life during the founding era. Both were Massachusetts natives; John Adams was a Harvard graduate and an attorney. The couple married in 1764, so that the events leading up to the Revolution marked the very beginning of their married life. At the same time that John Adams was taking a leading role among the Bostonians opposed to the royal administration, Abigail Adams was busily engaged in caring for a young and growing family; between 1765 and 1777, Abigail gave birth six times, although only four of those children survived to adulthood. During these same years, John Adams was practicing law, publishing essays and letters in the Boston papers on specific political issues as well as general political principles, serving as a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses, and helping to draft the Declaration of Independence. John Adams traveled to Europe twice during the war years, first as part of a joint commission to France and later as an early peace negotiator and on a mission to procure loans from the Netherlands. This second stay was protracted, and in 1785 Adams was appointed ambassador to Great Britain. Abigail joined him there; they returned to Massachusetts in 1788.

From 1789 to 1797, Adams served as the first vice president of the United States, and from 1797 to 1801 he was the country's second president. His presidency was marked by fears of war with France (a period of tension known as the Quasi-War), which Adams successfully resolved, and by controversy within his own party and over the legislation for which he is best known, a series of laws collectively called the Alien and Sedition Acts. After he lost a bid for reelection to Thomas Jefferson, the Adamses returned to their farm in Quincy, Massachusetts, where both spent the remainder of their lives. John Adams was reconciled with Thomas Jefferson in 1812 and the two maintained a long correspondence. Abigail Adams died in 1818, six years before the Adamses' son, John Quincy Adams, became the sixth president of the United States.

Except for their years of retirement after the presidency, John and Abigail Adams's entire married life was marked by frequent and extended periods when, due to his career, the two were separated by distance. The result is a remarkable collection of over a thousand letters, written between 1762 (before their marriage) and 1801 (when Adams left the office of president), that provide insights into the politics and historical events of the day as well as the day-to-day life of an American family in the Revolutionary years. The letters were published by their grandson, Charles Francis Adams, a congressmen and diplomat; he published a

collection of his grandmother's letters in 1840 and a collection of letters between the two in 1876. Various editions of the letters have appeared since then. For many readers, these letters offer a personal connection with the people who made the Revolution happen and bring the events to life in a way that more impersonal political documents cannot.

The most frequent reference to the Adamses' letters is to one specific exchange that took place when John Adams was in Philadelphia attending the Continental Congress. Toward the end of a letter written on March 31, 1776, Abigail wrote that she imagined the Continental Congress would be establishing a new code of laws and asked John to "Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors." This letter, with John Adams's response, which appears to treat the matter as a joke, has been widely discussed, but generally out of context. On its own, this summary of the exchange might give a false impression both of the conversation itself and of the Adamses' attitudes toward women. While it is certainly true that neither John nor Abigail Adams held views that today would be classified as feminist, it is also true that a more extensive reading of the letters reveals a marriage based on mutual trust and respect. Readers genuinely interested in the personal view of the Revolution and its political background available through the letters of John and Abigail Adams would do well to read as widely as possible in this rich correspondence.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. In reading the correspondence of the Adamses as part of the literature of early America, the first problem is whether (and how) to read personal letters as literature. To understand the letters and their literary qualities, it is necessary to note and keep in mind that letters in the eighteenth century were written with an expectation that they might be read aloud to groups of friends or family, and that books offering advice on good letter writing were a common form of advice literature. Letter writing, in other words, was a literary practice that most people who knew how to write, including women, were expected to practice with a certain level of skill, and the audience for apparently personal letters was broader than might be expected. Discussions of the Adamses' letters as examples of this literary genre should begin from some consideration of the recently burgeoning scholarship on letter writing. (See the study guide on Letters as Literature for specific recommendations.) Once readers have some familiarity with the expectations for good letter writing, discussion might proceed by considering how well both John and Abigail fulfill the demands of the genre. Given the many times of stress during which the Adamses wrote their letters, students might consider whether their attention to the style and form of their letters changes over time or depending on circumstances.
2. Personal letters of the eighteenth century frequently display cultural attitudes of the period that can also be found in novels and other literary texts. As historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has noted in *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make*

History, the most famous exchange of letters between the Adamses is strongly influenced by the discourse of sentimentality that permeated eighteenth-century literature and cultural representations. Sentimentality is a network of concepts about emotion and character that included the ideas that emotional responses are the strongest motivators of human action and that the quality and type of a person's emotional responses demonstrate that person's character. This set of cultural beliefs gave a certain kind of privilege to women, and it is this privilege that John Adams refers to in explaining to Abigail why greater legal equality for women was not necessary. Discussion of the "Remember the Ladies" exchange therefore should include a consideration of sentimentality; the discussion could easily be broadened simply by looking at how sentimentality comes into play in connection with the other topics discussed in that particular exchange of letters. From there, however, discussion or research might extend to include other letters. How do John and Abigail talk about their emotional responses? How do they talk about the emotional responses of other people? Is there some connection between their attitudes toward emotion and their ideas about men and women, or other political and social ideas? Since sentimentality is a dominant idea in early American novels, comparison to novels of the 1790s is recommended.

3. Another set of cultural ideas that can be examined in the Adams letters relates to models of female behavior, questions of feminism, and what is called Republican motherhood. Elaine Forman Crane's essay "Political Dialogue and the Spring of Abigail's Discontent" provides an excellent starting point for considerations of how ideas about women's rights and women's appropriate behavior are reflected in Abigail Adams's life and writing. Once again, although Crane's essay focuses on the "Remember the Ladies" exchange, students are encouraged to apply this approach to an examination of other letters by both Abigail and John. Abigail's attitude toward her children as well as her husband can reveal the extent to which she understood her role as a mother in a new Republic. The concept of Republican motherhood, which dates to the period just following the Revolution, held that since the success or failure of a republic would depend on the wisdom and virtue of its citizens, mothers had a special role to play in making the new nation successful: they must raise virtuous and wise citizens, a demand that implied that they themselves must be virtuous and well educated. Tracing the idea of Republican motherhood through Abigail and John Adams's correspondence could provide meaningful context for historical discussions of both motherhood and feminism in the Revolutionary era.
4. Discussion of social prescriptions for women's behavior sometimes ignores the fact that men's behavior is also socially prescribed. Models of manhood were in the process of being restructured during the Revolutionary period; the strong patriarch, a father who commanded the obedience of his wife and children, was an ideal that was losing popularity. A more sentimental vision of manhood was emerging: the father and husband who guided his family with love and understanding. This shift in models of manhood would be particularly interesting to examine in the character of John Adams, who was often accused by

his political opponents of being a secret monarchist and of wanting too much power as president. Readers interested in men's gendered roles and the shift in attitudes toward the patriarchal family might wish to consult Jay Fliegelman's *Prodigals and Pilgrims* as background to an examination of models of manhood in John and Abigail Adams's correspondence.

5. Perhaps the most obvious question to ask about the Adams correspondence is how it reflects the political attitudes the Adamses took in light of the historical events in which they were involved. These letters can help us remember how many differences of opinion, attitude, and policy existed within the group we refer to as the Founders. After the Revolution, John and Abigail Adams both worried that the Republic would not survive long and that there was a danger that the nation would quickly degenerate. This led to real conflicts between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Readers interested in understanding the political debates of the early nation might wish to trace the Adamses' concerns in their letters as well as to consider the comments they make about Jefferson and other post-Revolutionary leaders in order to develop a more complex picture of early American politics. David McCullough's biography of John Adams is an accessible starting place. Students are also encouraged to use Massachusetts Historical Society's searchable version of the Adams correspondence to find letters that deal with particular political figures or issues.

RESOURCES

Biography

John and Abigail Adams, *My Dearest Friend: Letters of Abigail and John Adams,* new edition, edited by Margaret A. Hogan and C. James Taylor (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

Edith Belle Gelles, *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

Treats Abigail Adams's life in relationship to larger trends in women's social history of the era. Abigail's relationships with friends and family are treated in depth, providing useful context for a reading of the Abigail–John correspondence.

David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

A sympathetic and comprehensive biography of the Adamses that provides substantial discussion of Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson as well. A readable and accessible biography.

Criticism

Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/> [accessed 26 June 2009].

Provides searchable access to Adams letters held at the Massachusetts Historical Society as well as John Adams's diary and autobiography. Includes both transcripts and images of the manuscript letters.

Elaine Forman Crane, "Political Dialogue and the Spring of Abigail's Discontent," *William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History and Culture,* 56 (October 1999): 745–774.

A detailed, contextualized reading of Abigail's plea to "Remember the Ladies" and John's joking response, as well as the letter Abigail sent commenting on the exchange to Mercy Otis Warren. For readers interested in Abigail Adams's feminism, this essay is an essential starting point.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (New York: Knopf, 2007), chapter 4.

The chapter is largely concerned with later-nineteenth-century women writers and historical figures and includes a brief but important reading of the "Remember the Ladies" exchange, as well as an account of how Abigail's letter influenced the suffragist arguments during the later nineteenth century.

Joel Barlow
The Vision of Columbus, A Poem in Nine Books

(Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1787)

Joel Barlow (1754–1812) was a diplomat and nationalist poet who helped to formulate several key elements of the mythos of American origins. Born in Connecticut and educated at Dartmouth and Yale, Barlow served as a chaplain in the Continental Army for two years during the Revolution. After the Revolution, he opened a printing shop in Connecticut and sought patrons for his writing. Barlow was associated with a group of other Yale graduates in Connecticut who have become known among literary critics as the "Connecticut Wits," a group that also included Timothy Dwight. The "wits" were responsible for some collaboratively authored works, including *The Anarchiad* (1786–1787), a commentary on the political unrest that followed the Revolution. Barlow, however, did not long remain in Connecticut. In 1788 he was employed by a land company to travel to France to recruit immigrants. He spent the next seventeen years in Europe engaged in both commercial and diplomatic endeavors. He became involved in the French Revolution, writing political and social tracts. Later he served as consul to Algiers, attempting to secure the release of Americans taken prisoner by pirates there. In 1805 he returned to the United States and established a home in what is now Washington, D.C., where he could be near his friend, then-president Jefferson, and others in the Jefferson administration. In 1811 he was sent to negotiate a treaty with Napoleon; this proved to be his final diplomatic mission. Barlow died of pneumonia in Poland while following Napoleon's army in its retreat.

Before his first long European trip, Barlow published *The Vision of Columbus,* which he later revised and expanded under the title of *The Columbiad* (1807). Today it might be difficult for readers to understand what was novel about the

way Barlow constructed a story of American history in *The Vision of Columbus,* because the story as Barlow told it has largely become the overly simplified version of early American history that many U.S. citizens absorb as children. As Terence Martin points out, Barlow was not the only writer to compose an epic about Columbus, but his poem is probably the best known. More important, however, Barlow's epic poem was unusual in tracing a historical arc that connected the native peoples of South America to Columbus and Columbus to the Continental Congress. Historically, English and Spanish colonizers in South and North America saw themselves as competitors, not as part of a unified project, and neither group would have seen much connection between themselves and the native peoples of North and South America. In Barlow's *The Vision of Columbus,* however, Columbus is shown a history that is apparently preordained, leading from the Incas, who must inevitably give way in the face of the Europeans, and from Columbus to the new political system represented by the United States and its Republican institutions as represented by the Congress. Thus, Barlow may be the first to present the time-lapse view of American history in which Columbus seems to arrive on the *Mayflower* with the Founding Fathers on board plotting a revolution.

The poem, divided into nine sections, or "books," begins with Columbus already at the end of his travels, having returned to Spain, where he is out of favor with King Ferdinand. Led by an angel to a mountaintop, he sees a series of visions, beginning with the geography of the Americas. Books 2 and 3 describe the native peoples, especially focusing on Mexico and Peru. At the beginning of book 4, the angel foretells the downfall of the indigenous peoples of South America, and Columbus expresses grief, but the angel comforts him by showing him the future, focusing on Europe and the effects on Europe of their new awareness of the western continents. Books 5 and 6 turn the poem's attention to North America, recounting the invasion of those lands by Europeans, the French and Indian wars, the American Revolution, and the alliance with France. Book 7 discusses the prospects for advancement in trade, arts, and sciences following the end of the war. In book 8, the vision is "suspended" and the poet presents a philosophical discussion of the nature of knowledge, science, and progress. Book 9 ends the poem by presenting a millenialist vision of the progress of knowledge and of the global spread of democratic forms of government. Like so many other Enlightenment thinkers, Barlow in this poem argues that the human race can and will improve; and like so many Americans, he suggests that the United States plays a special role in that inevitable progress.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. When Barlow published *The Vision of Columbus* in 1787, neoclassicism, as exemplified by Alexander Pope, dominated American poetry. The neoclassical movement was, as its name indicates, influenced by reading of classical (ancient Latin and Greek) poets. In general, this poetry emphasized balance and symmetry, regularity in verse form and rhyme, and the employment of traditional poetic forms; in terms of purpose, neoclassical poetry aimed to both

entertain and educate its readers. One of the principal classical genres adopted by neoclassical poets was the epic, a long poem that celebrates the achievements of a hero. Columbus in Barlow's *The Vision of Columbus* is in some ways heroic, but in other ways, he is defeated. Students are encouraged to discuss *The Vision of Columbus* as it compares with well-known epic poetry, such as Homer's *Odyssey* (circa 800-700 BCE) or Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). Attention to the characteristics of heroes and the structure of epic voyages can help students appreciate the ways in which Barlow both worked within a tradition and diverged from that tradition.

2. One element of *The Vision of Columbus* that makes this neoclassical epic particularly American is the importance of Native Americans in the poem. As Danielle Conger has described, Barlow makes use of both negative and positive images of Native Americans. Students interested in the racial politics of Barlow's poem should consult Conger's article and should also consider the treatment of ethnic differences among Europeans (Italians, Spaniards, Frenchmen, and Englishmen), keeping in mind that Europeans in the eighteenth century thought of these national ethnicities in much the same way they thought of race. Discussion of the national characteristics of all the racial and ethnic groups presented in the poem is encouraged, in light of the multiracial situation of both the poem and the young nation in which it was published. Students should consider the absence of Africans from Barlow's vision, the significance of the connections between different races, and the position of the reader in relationship to these various groups. A careful consideration of the political implications of Barlow's handling of racial and ethnic groups could lead to a variety of topics for writing and discussion.
3. Another theme in *The Vision of Columbus* that was current in post-Revolutionary America is the idea of a particularly American version of the English language. Barlow talks about both "purity" of language and its American features or qualities, perhaps indicating that those two things are interchangeable. Discussion of this topic should begin with identification of all the references to language in the poem as well as the examples of what appear to be particularly American words or phrases. Students might wish to use the *Oxford English Dictionary* to do some etymological analysis. In addition, although Noah Webster's printed works on language appeared later than Barlow's *The Vision of Columbus,* Webster and Barlow were friends and associates. Students interested in the question of American English might wish to examine portions of Webster's *Grammatical Institutes* and compare the theory of American English found there to Barlow's comments on language and his use of language.
4. *The Vision of Columbus* was published in 1787, the same year as the Constitutional Convention. There is a distinct contrast between Barlow's work with its suggestion that America's future has been preordained, and the uncertainty in American society in the years leading up to the Constitutional Convention. To explore this contrast and its significance, students might wish to compare *The Vision of Columbus* with two texts that on the surface seem to belong to a completely different realm: the Federalist Papers and the Constitution. *The Vision of Columbus* does address some of the same questions, and students are

encouraged to compare the answers Barlow provides with those suggested by the more overtly political texts. Students who wish to write about *The Vision of Columbus* in terms of its historical moment might wish to begin by asking how Barlow creates a view of the future that is so much more optimistic than the vision presented in political rhetoric.

5. Another productive point of comparison would be Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Like Jefferson, Barlow in *The Vision of Columbus* attempts to respond to French scientist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, who argued that the climate in North America would lead to physical degeneration in animals, people, and plants. That is to say, Buffon believed that a given species, say squirrels or human beings, would become weaker and smaller over time when exposed to the American climate. Consider the animals, people, and plants that appear in *The Vision of Columbus.* How does an awareness of the debate with Buffon change your understanding of the significance of portrayals of flora and fauna? How do you think a contemporary reader, aware of Buffon's theories, might have understood Barlow's implied response to Buffon? Students who wish to write about this topic will want to consult a history that describes the development of biological science in the eighteenth century; particularly useful in this regard would be Thomas L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

RESOURCES

Biography

James Woodress, *A Yankee's Odyssey: The Life of Joel Barlow* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1958).

The standard biography, with critical analysis of works.

Criticism

Danielle E. Conger, "Toward a Native American Nationalism: Joel Barlow's *The Vision of Columbus,*" *New England Quarterly: A Historical Review of New England Life and Letters,* 72, 4 (1999): 558–576.

Traces Barlow's use of Native Americans in *The Vision of Columbus* and both positive and negative images of Native Americans through the lens of the sublime.

William C. Dowling, "Joel Barlow and *The Anarchiad,*" *Early American Literature,* 25, 1 (1990): 18–33.

Attempts to trace Barlow's ideological relationship to this early work in the context of his political career, and in particular to reconsider the notion that Barlow underwent an extreme political "conversion" from conservative to radical, by reconsidering the politics of *The Anarchiad.*

Emory Elliott, *Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic, 1725–1810* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Analyzes in the context of changing political and cultural trends the changes Barlow made to *The Vision of Columbus* in the process of creating *The Columbiad.*

Terence Martin, "Three Columbiads, Three Visions of the Future," *Early American Literature,* 27 (1992): 128–134.
Compares Barlow's *Columbiad* with two other epic poems about Columbus (one by a French writer before the Revolution, the other by an Englishman after the war).

Ann Eliza Bleecker and Margaretta Faugeres
The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker in Prose and Verse. To which is added, A Collection of Essays, Prose and Poetical, by Margaretta V. Faugeres

Edited by Faugeres
(New York: T. & J. Swords, 1793)

Ann Eliza Bleecker (1752–1783) and her daughter Margaretta V. Faugeres (1771–1801) were authors of a collection of poetry and prose that is exemplary of the tradition of polite belles lettres as it was practiced by two generations at the end of the eighteenth century. Ann Elizabeth Bleecker was born into a wealthy landowning Dutch family in New York state. She began writing as a young woman and, after her marriage in 1769, she increased her literary efforts with encouragement from her husband, John Bleecker. Though he had studied law, he gave up that profession in 1771 to devote himself to agriculture on a large farm in Tomhanick, New York, outside Albany. The first peaceful years the Bleeckers spent in Tomhanick was a period that Ann Bleecker was later to remember as idyllic. In 1777, British forces led by General Burgoyne advanced on Albany and, with her husband away from home, Bleecker decided she needed to flee, taking her two young children along. After her husband found her, the family began returning to Albany and, on the way, her youngest child, Abella, became ill and died. Within a very short time, Bleecker's mother and sister also died. This traumatic period influenced her future writing. Although the family returned to Tomhanick, in 1781 her husband was taken captive by the British, and shortly afterward Bleecker suffered a miscarriage; she lived only two more years, dying at the age of 31. Her daughter Margaretta was an adolescent at the time. John Bleecker moved the household to New York City. In 1790, Margaretta began publishing her mother's poetry in *The New-York Magazine,* where she also began publishing her own writing, including political essays and poetry. In 1792, Margaretta Bleecker married a French émigré physician, Peter Faugeres; the couple wed on July 14 to commemorate the storming of the Bastille on that date three years earlier. The Faugereses' support of the French Revolution is a good indication of the politics Margaretta expressed in

her own political writings, which were egalitarian and radical. (Faugeres wrote against slavery, among other topics.) In 1793, Margaretta Bleecker Faugeres published a volume of both her mother's writing and her own: *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleeker in Prose and Verse.* Faugeres was also the author of a drama, *Belisaurius* (1795). As with her mother, Faugeres's early death cut short her literary career.

The volume Faugeres published that combined her mother's works with her own included Faugeres's biography of her mother quoting from Bleecker's letters; two historical narratives by Bleecker (*The History of Maria Kittle* and *The Story of Henry and Anne*); a collection of Bleecker's poetry and her letters; and a collection of both prose and poetry by Faugeres. In addition, Faugeres finished Bleecker's *Story of Henry and Anne*. Faugeres's writings include poetry on conventional subjects, as well as essays that deal with important political topics of the post-Revolutionary period: abolition, the French Revolution, and opposition to the death penalty.

Bleecker's and Faugeres's works in prose and poetry demonstrate a wide range of writing that was popular in the post-Revolutionary era. Faugeres's biography of her mother, *The History of Maria Kittle,* is a narrative of Indian captivity, a genre that had been popular since the seventeenth century. Indeed, Mary Rowlandson's narrative, one of the most famous, was still being reprinted during this era. *The Story of Henry and Anne* looks forward to the immigrant narrative, a genre that grew in popularity in the later nineteenth century. Henry and Anne are German immigrants who land in New York City after losing a child at sea; Faugeres provides a happy ending, settling the family in Tomhanick. Despite her frequent characterization as someone obsessed with death and loss, Bleecker's poetry treats a variety of topics, including the beauties of rural life and satires about social life, such as "On a Great Coxcomb Recovering from an Indisposition" (about a vain man who recovered from illness because "he loves himself too much to let himself die"). The writings of Bleecker and Faugeres demonstrate the full engagement in contemporary literary culture of a mother and daughter; with the works of other women writing in the Revolutionary era, they convincingly demonstrate that women were part of the literary sphere from the founding years of the Republic.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Among the collected works of Bleecker and Faugeres are several texts worthy of extended consideration on their own. *The History of Maria Kittle* has traditionally been treated as an early example of the captivity novel, although recently Sharon Harris has demonstrated that it is a retelling of a historical event. Nonetheless, the text reads very much like a novel. Readers interested in the connection of truth and fiction in the development of the American novel may find this a useful text to consider, especially in connection with other "based-on-truth" fictional narratives, such as *The Coquette* and *The Power of Sympathy*. The form of *The History of Maria Kittle* is also worthy of attention: an epistolary narrative, written by one narrator to one recipient, brings with it

the idea of being addressed by one person to a specific reader while allowing the narrator to comment on the action and act like a typical third-person narrator. In this way, *The History of Maria Kittle* has connections with epistolary fictions, notably the unusually shaped *Wieland*. Consideration of *The History of Maria Kittle* in comparative terms can thus consider both captivity narratives and novels of the 1790s.

2. One of Bleecker's most famous poems, "Written in the Retreat from Burgoyne," details the confusion and distress caused by Bleecker's flight from Tomhanick with her children and the death of her young child Abella. The poem shares characteristics with other poems about grief, but it can also profitably be compared with other writings about the ravages of war. In the literature of the American Revolution, the piece of prose that most closely compares with "Written in the Retreat from Burgoyne" is the final essay in Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer,* "Distresses of a Frontier Man," in which Crèvecoeur outlines the plans he has made in preparation for flight from the fighting. Notably, Crèvecoeur's text takes place in imagination (and is not what he really did), while Bleecker's poem recounts the real events of her life. Readers are encouraged to consider how Bleecker's poem points out the unrealistic elements of Crèvecoeur's planned retreat to "Indian country." At the same time, of course, one may ask how Bleecker's poem romanticizes her experience.
3. Much of Bleecker's poetry works within the tradition of the elegy, a poem of mourning. As Allison Giffen points out, however, Bleecker's poems do not always offer the resolution that is typically found in elegies of the period. Students interested in genre and how poets work with or against generic conventions should compare Bleecker's elegiac poems with those of her contemporaries, including Phillis Wheatley, Annis Boudinot Stockton, or the group of Quaker poets whose work is collected in *Milcah Martha Moore's Book*. Analysis of both the form and the content of these elegiac poems is essential; the poems may be addressed to a specific mourner or they may express the poet's grief for a general audience; they may use religion or philosophy to reach some kind of resolution; or they may leave the problem of dealing with grief unresolved. Examining Bleecker's poetry in relation to other poets can help to determine how original or conventional Bleecker's elegies are.
4. The elegiac mode in which Bleecker often worked earned women poets of the nineteenth century a great deal of disdain from later poets and writers. Students who have read Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) might recognize a parody of writers like Bleecker in Twain's character Emmeline Grangerford. The emphasis on death suggested by these poets' elegiac works was mocked as intentionally morbid and artificial. While certainly some poets might have lived up to this characterization, to understand these female poets, it is necessary to examine their work on its own terms in order to separate images like Emmeline Grangerford from the reality of a poet like Bleecker. Students who have read Bleecker's poetry in an anthology of literature are likely to have read the poem "Written in the Retreat from Burgoyne"

that makes the morbid characterization of the poet seem plausible. The online edition of *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker,* however, allows readers to browse a wider range of Bleecker's work. After doing so, discussion of the following questions is recommended and could lead to topics for writing: How accurate is the stereotype of Bleecker as a death-obsessed poet? How well does Faugere's biography of her mother reflect the range of Bleecker's poetry? Why do textbooks today tend to choose Bleecker's elegies rather than other poems of hers to include?

5. Once students are aware of Bleecker's poems beyond the elegies, they might wish to examine Bleecker's society poetry. As her daughter notes in the memoir of her mother, Bleecker was known as a young woman for her ability to write "impromptu" poetry—that is, poetry written on the spot, usually during a social event. The ability to compose verses about the day's entertainment or the behavior of a member of a social group on the spot and to produce those verses for the entertainment of a social group was valued among the genteel poets of the day. For examples of this poetry, students might wish to examine Bleecker's poems "To Julia Amanda" and "On a Great Coxcomb." Students interested in this type of poetry will also find examples in the work of other elite-class women poets such as Annis Boudinot Stockton or Mercy Otis Warren. Impromptu society poetry in some ways anticipates the slam poetry popular in the 1990s and early twenty-first century, in the importance of performance as part of the poetic process. Students with interests in contemporary poetry might wish to pursue this comparison.

RESOURCES

Criticism

Allison Giffen, "'Till *Grief* Melodious Grow': The Poems and Letters of Ann Eliza Bleecker," *Early American Literature,* 28, 3 (1993): 222–241.

Examines Bleecker's work in relationship to the generic conventions of elegy and in relationship to Bleecker's biography.

Sharon M. Harris, *Executing Race: Early American Women's Narratives of Race, Society, and the Law* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005).

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with Bleecker and Faugeres consecutively. Chapter 3 presents much more detailed biographical information about Bleecker than available elsewhere and convincingly establishes that *The History of Maria Kittle* was based on real events. Chapter 4 traces the radical politics of Faugeres's writings.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge
Modern Chivalry, Containing the Adventures of Captain John Farrago, and Teague Oregan, His Servant

Volumes 1, 2, and 4 (Philadelphia: John M'Culloch, 1792, 1797);
volume 3 (Pittsburgh: John Scull, 1793)

Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748–1816) was an American jurist and author, one of the first American-born novelists, and founder of the University of Pittsburgh. Born in Scotland, Brackenridge immigrated to Pennsylvania with his family as a child. He attended Princeton University (then called the College of New Jersey), where he became friends with poet Philip Freneau and future president James Madison. From early in life, Brackenridge was a man of letters; with Freneau, he coauthored a satirical fiction, *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca* (1770) and their college commencement address, *A Poem, on the Rising Glory of America* (1771). Although he wrote all his life, Brackenridge as a young man pursued first the ministry and school-teaching and later law. During the war, Brackenridge wrote two patriotic plays, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill* (1776) and *The Death of General Montgomery* (1777). He briefly served as a chaplain in George Washington's army and attempted to found a magazine that failed financially. After being admitted to the bar in Philadelphia, he moved to Pittsburgh, then a frontier town, where he served as a representative to the state assembly, helped to establish the first Western newspaper, and secured state funding to establish an academy that became the University of Pittsburgh. In 1787, Brackenridge was defeated in a campaign to serve as a representative to the Constitutional Convention, and some scholars believe that his opponent, an Irishman, was the original target of his satire in *Modern Chivalry.* The first section of that novel appeared in 1792, and six more volumes were published in the next twenty-three years, with the last of these appearing in 1815. When the Whiskey Rebellion began in 1794, Brackenridge helped to defuse the insurgency in Pittsburgh, but he was for a time suspected of having led the rebellion. In the following years, Brackenridge continued his legal career and also continued writing and revising *Modern Chivalry,* publishing parts and revisions with different printers in different places. In 1799 he was appointed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. In the early years of the nineteenth century Brackenridge turned much of his literary effort to legal writing but continued to work on his sprawling novel. He published a revised version in 1815, a year before his death.

Like other novels typically called picaresque, *Modern Chivalry* took as its model Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605). Like Don Quixote, Captain Farrago, the hero of *Modern Chivalry,* has a more-or-less loyal sidekick, an Irish servant named Teague O'Regan. Much of the satire of the novel revolves around the fact that Teague is always on the verge of being awarded some honor or appointed to some post that he does not deserve: he is almost elected to the legislature, almost ordained as a Presbyterian minister, almost named to the American Philosophical Society, almost made ambassador to England, and almost named chief of the Kickapoo Indians. Given the opportunity to choose their leaders, it

seems, people are often ready to be taken in by misrepresentations of the character of the person they are choosing. Captain Farrago intervenes to prevent these miscarriages of democracy; as Cathy Davidson points out, these interventions conveniently serve both the best interests of society and Captain Farrago's pride and selfish personal needs.

Because of its length and the complexity of its publication history, *Modern Chivalry* has not been among the most-widely studied of early American novels. During the first half of the nineteenth century, however, Brackenridge's novel, despite its messy publication history, was widely read and admired. Readers today are likely to read only a portion of the novel, and that is not necessarily a bad thing: considering the contemporary publication history, it is likely that many readers of the Revolutionary era encountered only part of the novel and that Brackenridge took that likelihood into account as he worked on it. Moreover, the nature of the picaresque makes it easy to extract parts of the novel and read them on their own. Readers who approach *Modern Chivalry* with an expectation that the plot will be episodic and filled with digressions that are meant to be both instructive and entertaining should be able to enjoy the humor of the work and also learn about the politics of the Western frontier in the early decades of the nation.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. For readers accustomed to nineteenth-century novels, in which a central plot line normally plays an important role, *Modern Chivalry* can seem disjointed, its digressions irrelevant. In order to properly appreciate the work, it is essential to understand that novels with episodic plot structure were common in the eighteenth century. Readers appreciated these novels for their depiction of varied scenes and varied social classes, and for their satire and their humor. Discussion of how *Modern Chivalry* compares to other picaresque novels is recommended: some students might be familiar with *Don Quixote,* to which other picaresque novels always seem to refer, or with English picaresque novels such as *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722), *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), or *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760–1767). Comparison of *Modern Chivalry* to any of these English texts could be useful. (Note that *Tristram Shandy* in particular was popular in the colonies.) In order to compare what two fairly different American authors made of the same genre, students might wish to read Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism* (1801) and compare that work with *Modern Chivalry.* Students interested in contemporary popular culture might look for present-day parallels to the episodic structure of the novel in television situation comedies or other "episodic" popular-culture phenomena.
2. *Modern Chivalry* challenges the concept of what a novel is in another, less obvious way. Today it is assumed that a novel reflects, among other things, the time in which it was written and published. As Christopher Looby points out, the first editions of the various parts of *Modern Chivalry* appeared during four different presidential administrations (Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison). To seriously apply the principle that novels reflect the time in which

they are written, the various parts of Brackenridge's novel must be studied in relationship to a range of times: the original parts were written over a five-year period, and the many revisions were published over a span of twenty-seven years. One interesting strategy for writing would be to compare sections written during administrations that are notably different to see whether the point or object of their satire changes in any noticeable ways. Specifically, the first three volumes of part 1 were published in 1792 and 1793, while Washington was president, with the fourth volume of part 1 appearing in 1797, during John Adams's administration; volumes one and two of part 2 appeared in 1804 and 1805, while Jefferson was in office, and the final revision and last volume of part 2 were published in 1815, during the Madison administration. So the original versions of part 1 all appeared during Federalist administrations, and the original versions of part 2 during Republican administrations. Students who have the opportunity to work collaboratively on this novel might wish to distribute the sections from the four administrations to four different students and discuss how the different contexts lead to different understandings of the novel.

3. One set of concerns that pervades the entire work has to do with differences among social classes. Discussion of the novel should begin by describing the kinds of differences the novel demonstrates as marking people of different social classes. A reading might move on to consider whether the novel offers an explanation of where those differences come from, and if it does, what that explanation is. (Are those differences natural? Are they related to education or upbringing?) After exploring the depiction of social differences in the novel, students may ask more-global questions regarding the novel's overall attitude toward society and democracy: the proper relationship between the classes, the proper mechanism for selecting social leaders, the potential dangers of representative government, and the benefits of representative government. Study of race and ethnicity is also recommended; attitudes toward the Irish and toward Native Americans mark this novel as particularly American in its need to deal with the interrelations of a wide variety of racial and ethnic groups.
4. Another concern that pervades the novel is attitudes toward language. From early in U.S. history, the question of establishing a standard but particularly American English interested cultural commentators. As Christopher Looby has demonstrated, the question of style and of competing versions of language are important throughout *Modern Chivalry.* Students interested in questions of standard English should consult Looby's chapter on the novel. This set of questions could lend a second focus to comparative studies with other picaresque novels. Another interesting topic for discussion would be to examine the attitudes toward language here as compared with the attitudes Noah Webster sets forth in his *Grammatical Institutes* (1783).
5. Finally, one aspect of *Modern Chivalry* that makes it unusual among early American novels is that it is set on the Western frontier rather than in an eastern city. Most of the studied works of literature from this period were written and published in urban areas on the East Coast (mostly in and around Boston, New York, and Philadelphia), and although distribution carried the

works beyond those urban centers, writers expected most of their readers to be in those areas. Brackenridge was not just writing about the Western frontier, he was living there and knew that his readers would include the people he was parodying as well as the urban dwellers who might already view people in the "backcountry" as uncultured and ignorant. Discussion of the depiction of the frontier as well as Brackenridge's negotiation of the varying audiences he anticipated can illuminate regional and social differences that few other early American novels address.

RESOURCES

Biography

Claude M. Newlin, *The Life and Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932).

Remains the most complete study of Brackenridge's life and usefully depicts the relationship of biography to writings.

Criticism

Cathy N. Davidson, "The Picaresque and the Margins of Political Discourse," in her *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America,* expanded edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter 7.

Considers *Modern Chivalry* as a cultural work, reflecting the political fractures and lack of consensus in early American political culture. Argues that the novel reflects Brackenridge's deep conflicts over politics, and that neither Farrago nor Teague emerge as heroic.

Christopher Looby, "'Tongues of People Altercating with One Another': Language, Text, and Society in Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry,*" in his *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 203–265.

Considers *Modern Chivalry* as a treatment of the functioning of post-Revolutionary U.S. society through language, with emphasis on the varying kinds of language presented in the novel and the novel's apparent commitment to the establishment of a single linguistic standard.

Dana D. Nelson, "'Indications of the public will': *Modern Chivalry*'s Theory of Democratic Representation," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews,* 15 (January 2002): 23–39.

Argues that the novel brings together questions of political representation and literary representation, and that the political viewpoint Brackenridge puts forward does not align neatly with the established party politics of the day. A sophisticated reading of the politics of the novel; essential for anyone interested in *Modern Chivalry* as political satire.

Grantland S. Rice, "*Modern Chivalry* and the Resistance to Textual Authority," *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography,* 67, 2 (1995): 257–281.

Argues that *Modern Chivalry* works to demonstrate the "manipulative power of print" and to disrupt the tendency of the emerging mass production of printed materials to make culture homogenous and to create a sense of political consensus that was not genuine. Brackenridge's goal, in Rice's account, was to encourage critical thinking among his readers.

Charles Brockden Brown
Arthur Mervyn, Or, Memoirs of the Year 1793

Part 1 (Philadelphia: H. Maxwell, 1799);
Part 2 (New York: George F. Hopkins, 1800)

(For more biographical information and an overview of the literary career of Charles Brockden Brown, see the entry on *Edgar Huntly.*)

Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810) is often considered the most important novelist of the years following the American Revolution. Brown's novels provide a nexus where many social and cultural issues important in the post-Revolutionary period come together; they also show the influence of British literary trends while working creatively within those influences. *Arthur Mervyn* is no exception. Concerns about credit and financial speculation, panic as the result of a deadly epidemic of yellow fever, and generalized anxiety about social mobility in an increasingly urban Philadelphia are all reflected in this novel. Moreover, with its complex frame and repeated motifs of enclosure and escape, *Arthur Mervyn,* though it lacks any supernatural events, shows its debt to the Gothic novel form, using the mysteries of the city in place of a castle or other labyrinth. Brown had personal connections with all the social issues reflected in the novel: he lost his closest friend in a yellow-fever epidemic, his family were merchants during the economically turbulent period of which he writes, and his own position as an aspiring author who had rejected more practical career options put him in a potentially suspect position socially.

Like many Gothic novels, *Arthur Mervyn* begins with a frame: the initial narrator, Dr. Stevens, takes in a mysterious young man who is ill with yellow fever and nurses him back to health. The young man, the title character, turns out to have quite a reputation: one of Stevens's friends recognizes him and tells Stevens that Mervyn is a swindler. This leads Stevens to ask Mervyn to account for himself, and most of part 1 consists of the narrative told by Mervyn, within which two and a half chapters consist of another embedded narrative, the tale told by the forger Welbeck to Mervyn, as recounted by Mervyn to Stevens. Volume two begins by closing the frame that contained most of part 1; part 2 is structured more recursively, with Arthur repeatedly appearing and disappearing from Stevens's direct knowledge. Part 2 includes several embedded narratives as well as letters. Throughout, Stevens is generally sympathetic to Arthur, yet

questions are repeatedly raised by others about Arthur's character. (Is Arthur a victim of the criminal Welbeck or Welbeck's accomplice? Is Arthur well read and well educated or not? Does he intend to impersonate a dead youth named Clavering, or is the resemblance a coincidence? Did Arthur leave his home out of disgust at his father's choice of a second wife, or because he was himself in love with that young woman?) Stevens throughout seeks to determine for himself the truth about Arthur.

Along the way, Arthur's many adventures bring a wide cast of characters and a varied set of incidents: Welbeck, who forges both documents and identities; the seduced foreigner Clemenza Lodi and her father, who hides money in his own manuscripts; the Hadwin family, reduced from a prosperous farm family to one impoverished orphan almost overnight by yellow fever; Achsa Fielding, a Jewish widow (or perhaps an abandoned wife) with a vaguely mysterious fortune. The novel moves through a variety of settings, from farm to urban mansion to doctor's office to house of ill repute to debtors' prison, and the incidents include a murder, a chase scene, an attempted suicide, several thefts, amnesia, and a near elopement, among others. Arthur has a succession of love interests: Clemenza Lodi, who is eventually revealed to be a fallen woman; Eliza Hadwin, who is first Arthur's fiancée but whom he later converts to a foster sister; and Achsa Fielding, whom he initially thinks of as a foster mother but is set to marry at the novel's end. In its broad collection of characters, social settings, and colorful incidents, *Arthur Mervyn* may be viewed as an index to social life and cultural anxieties of 1790s Philadelphia.

Like many other novels of the 1790s, *Arthur Mervyn* features a complicated set of interrelated (and, in some cases, seemingly unrelated) plots and subplots; Brown succeeds in connecting all the many subplots, both financial and romantic, through the protean and confusing character of Arthur. More than many novels named after their protagonists, *Arthur Mervyn* invites the reader to join the other characters in the novel in exploring the most basic questions of the identity of that main character: Who is Arthur Mervyn? Is he basically good or not? What does he want?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. The structure of *Arthur Mervyn* is a striking feature that draws the reader's attention. Rather than following any single narrative form (say, a traditional epistolary novel in the style of Richardson or a narrative with a single all-knowing narrator, in the tradition of Fielding), Brown mixes structures; his first-person narrator, Dr. Stevens, frames the narrative but gives it over almost entirely to Mervyn in the first part; in the second part, Dr. Stevens sometimes narrates, Mervyn sometimes narrates, Stevens reports the narratives of several other characters, and the novel even breaks into the epistolary style. Discussion of the effects and purposes of this mixing of narrative structures should include the general effect of the structure on the reader as well as the specific interactions between the structure and the content at specific points in the narrative. What is the purpose of allowing Mervyn to speak with hardly any interruption

for half the novel? What is the effect of Stevens's silence? What is the effect of the diversity of voices at the beginning of part 2, or of Stevens's withdrawal as narrator at the end of the novel? Answering these questions will depend in part on the judgments readers have already made about the themes of the novel, but addressing questions of structure may also lead to deeper consideration of those judgments.

2. One question that comes into sharper focus through a consideration of structure is the reliability of the various narrators in the text. Stevens appears to have no particular reason to lie to the reader, so readers are likely to see him as an honest narrator but may still question his judgment. Is Stevens too ready to believe Arthur? What makes him ready to trust this young stranger? This of course points to the question of the reliability of Arthur as a narrator. Does his own story indicate that he might have reasons to hide the truth? The question grows even more complicated with regard to Welbeck as narrator. When Welbeck tells his own story, it is related by Arthur. So, if Arthur is judged as a reliable narrator (as many critics do), then what he tells us must be assumed to be what Welbeck really told him, but then the reader must still ask whether Welbeck told Arthur the truth. However, if, with other critics, the reader doubts Arthur's credibility, "Welbeck's" story might actually be a narrative of Arthur's own creation. All of this might seem complicated, but the novel's initial focus on Arthur's character forces the attentive reader to ask these kinds of questions. As these questions are considered, the reader's relationship with the author of this complicated fiction must also be questioned, and perhaps one may ask how we really know anything that we learn by reading or by word of mouth. Students seeking argumentative paper topics should consider carefully the full weight of evidence about Arthur as a reliable or unreliable narrator and generate their own theories about what "really" happens in the novel and how the reader knows what happens.
3. Recently, many literary critics have considered the connection of *Arthur Mervyn* with economic and social change in the late 1790s. The development of an economy based on paper money and credit created both real financial instability and a general lack of confidence in financial transactions and the economic system. Whether the novel articulates a critique or endorsement of liberal capitalist economics is a question that is under debate: Students interested in the topic should see essays by Carl Ostrowski and Jennifer J. Baker for contrasting views. In addition, changes related to social structure in the growing urban setting and as a result of generational changes after the Revolution are reflected in the novel, as well. Readers interested in the generational issues should consult Daniel A. Cohen's essay cited below as well as Jay Fliegelman's *Pilgrims and Prodigals*.
4. Adding to the general sense of anxiety over economic and social change in the 1790s, the yellow-fever epidemics that hit Philadelphia and New York beginning in 1793 created a different but related kind of panic. At the time, the means by which yellow fever was transmitted (through mosquito bite) was not known, and the ill were assumed by most people to be highly contagious. The fears of contagion are an important motif in *Arthur Mervyn.* Discussion

of this topic should consider whether contagion is a metaphor in the novel. Students interested in the medical issues in *Arthur Mervyn* should consult Bryan Waterman's essay; those who want to know more about the history of the epidemic will find an accessible history in Jim Murphy's *An American Plague* (New York: Clarion Books, 2003).

5. Critics have often noted that early American novels frequently include discourse about novel reading. *Arthur Mervyn* includes a more far-reaching concern with literacy generally. Arthur worked as a copyist, and he claims to have educated himself through his own addiction to reading; Welbeck is a forger; "notes" figure prominently, in the form of both communications and money; Clemenza's father's manuscript becomes the only relic of her family; and the list goes on. Discussion of the significance of literacy and the uses (for good and ill) of both reading and writing is recommended.

RESOURCES

(For biographical and other general background reading on Brown, see the entries on *Edgar Huntly* and *Wieland*.)

Criticism

Jennifer J. Baker, "*Arthur Mervyn* and the Reader's Investments," in her *Securing the Commonwealth: Debt, Speculation, and Writing in the Making of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 119–136.

Treats the relationship between debt and the yellow-fever epidemic in *Arthur Mervyn* as a paradoxically positive force: Baker argues that in Brown's vision, debt and speculation help to bind the community together.

Daniel A. Cohen, "Arthur Mervyn and His Elders: The Ambivalence of Youth in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History and Culture,* 43, 3 (1986): 362–380.

Discusses Mervyn's character in the light of social changes that resulted in a general suspicion among older Americans toward the rising generation.

Carl Ostrowski, "'Fated to Perish by Consumption': The Political Economy of *Arthur Mervyn,*" *Studies in American Fiction,* 32, 1 (2004): 3–20.

Examines *Arthur Mervyn* in relationship to economic crises and economic theory of the 1790s to argue that the novel is a critique of liberal economic philosophies.

Bryan Waterman, "*Arthur Mervyn*'s Medical Repository and the Early Republic's Knowledge Industries," *American Literary History,* 15, 2 (2003): 213–247.

Waterman connects *Arthur Mervyn* to the large body of writing about the yellow fever and to the concerns Brown and his friends had about the growing public sphere and the role of literary men in the new republic. Highly recommended for students interested in the yellow fever and its role in the novel.

Charles Brockden Brown
Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker
(Philadelphia: H. Maxwell, 1799)

Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810) is often considered the most important novelist of the years following the American Revolution. A lifelong Philadelphian, Brown was a child during the Revolutionary War and a young man entering professional life in the turbulent period that followed. His parents were members of the Society of Friends (often called Quakers). Like many other Quakers, Brown's father was imprisoned during the war because he refused to fight. Brown was educated first at Friends' Latin School in Philadelphia, and at the age of sixteen he entered the study of law, working privately with an established attorney (the common practice at the time). At the same time he began studying law, Brown began a literary career. He joined a group called The Friendly Club. Members met to discuss reading, to debate ideas, and to share their own writing. Within a year of the founding of the club, Brown had started planning a novel; in 1789, at the age of only eighteen, he began publishing articles in Philadelphia magazines. By 1792 he had decided to abandon law as a profession and to pursue writing full time.

The decision to try to make a living as a writer was unconventional for a young man in the United States in the 1790s. American readers, even after the Revolution, bought many imported books, and even local printers often simply reprinted works by British or French authors; most best-selling novels in the early years of the United States were written by British writers. Though not alone in his effort, Brown was certainly unusual in attempting to make a living solely from a literary career.

Although his family discouraged his career plans, Brown found moral and financial support from his friend, Elihu Hubbard Smith, a physician and founder of The Friendly Club. With the support of Smith and other friends, Brown devoted several years to writing, but his books did not begin to appear until 1798, following Smith's sudden death from yellow fever. Over the next few years Brown's major works appeared in rapid succession. In 1798 he published *Alcuin,* a book-length essay about women's rights, and *Wieland*, one of the two novels that most firmly establish Brown as a Gothic writer. The other is *Edgar Huntly* (1799). *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly* share such Gothic features as mystery, seemingly supernatural events, lonely settings, terror, and murder. In *Ormond* (1799) and *Arthur Mervyn* (1799–1800), Brown turns to urban settings, producing mysteries that are at least in part produced by the anonymity of the city. He published two more novels in 1801, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot,* both more in the style of the sentimental novels that were still selling well at the time. After *Jane Talbot,* Brown produced no more novels; for the remainder of his career he edited several magazines and wrote political essays. His career was cut short by his death at age forty.

As a mystery, *Edgar Huntly* constructs a sophisticated plot that puts both the narrator and the reader in the position of detective. The title character (who

narrates most of the book as a long letter addressed to his fiancée) begins the novel determined to find the murderer of his friend Waldegrave. When he observes a servant from a neighboring farm sleepwalking and behaving strangely at the spot of Waldegrave's death, Huntly becomes convinced that the servant, Clithero, is the murderer. When Huntly eventually confronts Clithero, however, he learns that Clithero actually considers himself guilty of another murder, in Ireland; but probably has nothing to do with Waldegrave's death. At this point, the mystery for the reader becomes what Clithero's story has to do with Huntly's. As the novel proceeds, Huntly discovers that he himself is a sleepwalker, a difficult condition for a would-be detective. In his sleep, Huntly hides objects from himself and gets himself lost in the wilderness; so the detective produces some of the mysteries he is attempting to solve. Similarly, the perceptive reader of the novel must spend a good deal of time and energy attempting to solve not only the mysteries that present themselves to Huntly but also the mysteries produced by the narrative itself: Can Huntly be trusted as a narrator, given that he can barely trust his own senses? How reliable a narrator is Clithero, who admits to being driven to murder by a strange supersitition? And if the two main narrators seem dubious, how can readers piece together the "real" events of this fiction?

Along with the three other novels Brown composed during 1798 and 1799, *Edgar Huntly* can be read as a response to a sense of fragility in the post-Revolutionary United States at a time when Americans were anxious about the future of the newly established country. Individuals, families, and communities are all at risk in *Edgar Huntly.* By extension, the nation is at risk as well. A murder, apparently an isolated incident of violence, sets the novel in motion but later turns out to be the result of interracial warfare (a raid by dispossessed Native Americans). The title character, an orphan who lives with his uncle, plans to be married, but both he and his fiancée are in precarious financial situations and may be unable to establish their own household. Both the title character and his double, the suspicious servant Clithero, walk in their sleep and perform actions that mystify themselves and others. Most strikingly, Huntly, who seeks the solution to several mysteries as well as revenge, is unable to achieve his goals through the use of reason and logic, but stumbles on both answers and revenge where he does not expect to find them. Like the citizens of the United States, who saw their own Revolution as the inspiration for the French Revolution—and then were horrified at the Reign of Terror that followed in France as well as the related slave uprising in Haiti—Edgar Huntly sets into motion bloody and dangerous events that he cannot control and that threaten his own life as well as the lives and welfare of others.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. One common way to approach *Edgar Huntly* is to view Edgar, a young orphan trying to right wrongs and find an inheritance, as a stand-in for the young nation. It is important to note that while this symbolic relationship might seem at first glance to offer a kind of final word on the meaning of the novel, the truth is exactly the opposite: If Edgar represents the United States, then what does

the novel say about the country? The answer is by no means obvious. Is Edgar a hero or an antihero? Are his actions meant to provide a model for imitation or a warning about how things could go wrong? Any serious consideration of *Edgar Huntly* as political allegory must attempt to take into account the entire range of Edgar's action in the novel and the outcomes of that action.

2. Whether or not *Edgar Huntly* is viewed as a political allegory, readers cannot escape the political dimension of the novel introduced by its representation of warfare between whites and Native Americans. Consideration not only of the history of European relationships with Native Americans but also of the specific details of this history in Pennsylvania can lead to interesting analyses of the politics of the novel. Specifically, the elm tree under which Waldegrave was killed and where Edgar observes Clithero digging in the ground in his sleep should bring to mind the Treaty Elm, a tree under which William Penn was said to have signed a treaty with the Lenape people that transferred to the English the land on which Philadelphia was situated. Painted by Benjamin West in 1771, the Treaty Elm's role in the founding of the colony may be more fiction than fact, but it was certainly a symbol of the peaceful transfer of land upon which Pennsylvanians of Brown's generation prided themselves. Although Waldegrave's elm tree is not presented as the identical tree, readers can benefit from noting that this violent death occurs under the branches of a tree associated with a peaceful treaty and that the starting point for the novel is the same as the starting point for the colony's origins. Once these connections are acknowledged, the European–Native American relationship appears more central to the novel than it might otherwise and calls for a serious examination.
3. Traditional approaches to the novel have frequently considered it as an initiation story. Once again, this approach should be seen as a starting point for discussion and inquiry rather than an ending point. If Edgar Huntly's misguided sleuthing, his sleepwalking, and his nightmarish series of killings are part of an initiation into adulthood or social life, what vision of society is the novel presenting readers? Does *Edgar Huntly* suggest that life is inevitably violent and chaotic, or is there something particular about Edgar's experience that results in his transition to adulthood taking this horrific form? Those who favor psychological approaches to the novel might view the development of the title character as emblematic of normal development or of a particular neurotic form of development, or they might consider the relationship between individual psychology and social change. Although considering the novel as an initiation story is by no means original, this approach if thoughtfully considered should raise questions that could yield interesting insights.
4. Another common approach is to consider *Edgar Huntly* as an American example of the Gothic—a genre or movement characterized by supernatural events, suspense and horror, and an interest in altered states of mind. The functions and effects of these elements in the novel deserve careful attention. In addition, recent theorists of the Gothic (notably Anne Williams in *Art of Darkness*) have argued that an enduring interest of Gothic literature is a downfall of the traditional, patriarchal family. Historians of early America have long noted that a general change in family structure was accentuated by

the antiauthoritarian tendencies of the American Revolution. (See especially Jay Fliegelman's *Prodigals and Pilgrims.*) Readers of *Edgar Huntly* are encouraged to consider the relationship among the Gothic elements of the novel, its treatment of family structures, and its representation of specifically American situations and characteristics.

5. *Edgar Huntly* shares a specific narrative technique common to many other Gothic prose works: a series of embedded narratives. Within the original narrative of Edgar's search for Waldegrave's murderer, several other narratives interrupt. Clithero's spoken autobiography is the most prominent example, but both Sarsefield and the minor character Weymouth also present narratives that interrupt the progress of the story. Close consideration of the relationships among these various narratives and the effect of the lengthy interruptions on the reader is recommended.

RESOURCES

Biography

Peter Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution and the Birth of American Gothic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

Provides the most complete account of Brown's family history and presents important information about Brown's childhood. Kafer sees the imprisonment of Brown's father during the Revolution, because of his refusal to support the war, as a formative experience that provides an interpretive key to much of Brown's fiction.

Steven Watts, *The Romance of Real Life: Charles Brockden Brown and the Origins of American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

A biographical-critical study that maintains that Brown's politics changed somewhere around the turn of the century, and that Brown's youthful interest in radical politics ultimately gave way to a solid social conservatism.

Bibliography

Mark Kamrath, general ed., et al., *The Charles Brockden Brown Electronic Archive and Scholarly Edition,* University of Central Florida College of Arts and Humanities <http://www.brockdenbrown.ucf.edu> [accessed 25 June 2009].

Prepared by an international group of distinguished Brown scholars, this site provides the most-comprehensive bibliography of Brown's writings available, as well as an electronic archive of major works, a timeline, and a biography. When complete, the electronic edition of works will be fully searchable.

Criticism

Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

Chapters two and three analyze Brown's relationship with his friends, and in chapter three Crain discusses *Edgar Huntly* as a response to the death of Brown's friend Elihu Hubbard Smith.

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Palo Alto, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2004).
Chapter three includes a discussion of *Edgar Huntly* and its representation of gender and marriage in the early Republic. An important reading that places Brown's novel in the context of trends in American literary representation from the Puritans through Emily Dickinson.

Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*

(New York: Printed by T. & J. Swords for H. Caritat, 1798)

(For more biographical information and an overview of the literary career of Charles Brockden Brown, see the entry on *Edgar Huntly*.)

Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), one of the first major novelists of American literature, was uniquely positioned by his life experiences to consider both the positive and negative sides of the philosophical and political movements often called the Enlightenment. Brown's family were members of the Society of Friends, also called Quakers, known for following what they called the "inner Light." While the rationality of the Enlightenment might seem to be inherently opposed to religion, and some of the most important figures associated with the Enlightenment were religious skeptics or avowed atheists, it is also true that Quakers' emphasis on individual conscience and their resistance to hierarchical social structures reflect important Enlightenment values. On the other hand, the American Revolution, often considered to have been inspired in its political philosophy by Enlightenment thinkers, was hard on the Quaker community in Philadelphia. Philosophically opposed to warfare, Quakers were among the first conscientious objectors: most refused to support the Revolution, even if they were in favor of the goals and objectives of the war. As a result, those non-Quakers in the pro-Revolutionary movement were suspicious of Quakers, many of whom were imprisoned as possible spies or collaborators with the British. Charles Brockden Brown was a young child when his father was taken from the family home and held prisoner in Virginia for eight months. Although Brown later broke away from his Quaker origins—first becoming disaffected with organized religion and then marrying the daughter of a prominent Presbyterian minister—these early experiences clearly influenced his later thinking about authority and religion and about private belief and social responsibility. *Wieland* takes up these issues in complex and sophisticated ways, making this novel one of Brown's most fascinating.

Narrated mostly by Clara Wieland in the form of a long letter to friends, *Wieland* announces from its opening page that some tragedy has taken place but keeps its reader in suspense regarding the nature of that tragedy. A long series of mysterious and complicated events leads to the climax in ways that make sense after everything has been explained, but as the narrative progresses we are drawn

so far into Clara Wieland's point of view that many readers do not see the tragic events coming, any more than Clara can. Clara begins her narrative by describing her family's history, including her father's religious conversion and highly idiosyncratic religious beliefs; his mysterious death during Clara's childhood is tied to his claim that he failed to fulfill this duty after receiving a message from God enjoining him to undertake a particular task. Although these incidents are brief, they are closely tied to all the major themes of the novel. Many critics have noted the biographical resonances between Clara's father's religion and his sudden disappearance in Clara's childhood and Brown's own father's Quaker faith and his imprisonment during Brown's childhood.

The narrative proceeds to recount Clara's and her brother Theodore's education and their genteel life in the country outside Philadelphia, Theodore's marriage to Clara's friend Catherine, and Clara's own infatuation with Catherine's brother, Pleyel. The rural peace enjoyed by this foursome is disturbed in two ways. First Theodore and later Pleyel hear a mysterious voice, that sounds like Theodore's wife but cannot possibly be she, delivering information that apparently could come only from a supernatural source. Second, a strange character named Carwin appears in their neighborhood, maintaining a mysterious silence about his own origins and past but charming Clara and becoming friends with her family group. Clara also begins hearing mysterious voices: murderers in her closet plotting her death, a man's voice that warns her to avoid a particular outdoor spot. Even in her dreams she hears strange voices. Eventually, Clara's brother hears a voice he believes to be that of God directing him to murder his entire family, and he succeeds in killing all but Clara. Following this catastrophe, Carwin admits to being a ventriloquist (or, in Brown's term, a biloquist) and the source of all the mysterious voices *except* the one that told Clara's brother to murder his family. This complex narrative thus revolves around several motifs: voices and their authenticity and authority; individual conscience and responsibility to community and family; sanity, insanity, and the very nature of reality.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Readers who focus on Brown's biography might be tempted to read this novel as an indictment of Quakerism specifically. It is worth noting, however, that Brown carefully specifies a different set of Protestant beliefs for the elder Wieland and Wieland Jr., who might be termed a religious fanatic, if not a Calvinist or at least Calvinistic in tendency. The relationship between religion and Enlightenment more generally, then, is an important topic for discussion in relationship to this novel. The irrationality of Theodore Wieland's behavior seems clear: since he cannot explain where it comes from, he believes that a voice that *claims* it is God *must* be God and therefore follows its instruction to murder his family. Yet, remembering that Wieland's father died a fiery death after the appearance of a mysterious cloud and light when he was praying and after he had told his wife that he had failed to carry out a divine command, we realize that the novel leaves room for a more terrifying possibility: that a divine power does exist and that it might both demand unbearable sacrifices and pun-

ish disobedience with death. Readers who attempt to make sense out of these seeming contradictions in the novel will find fruitful questions for discussion; these topics can usefully be explored by considering the relationship of religion to Enlightenment and to the Revolution specifically.

2. Another way to connect *Wieland* to the Revolution and its related social trends is to consider the violence of the novel (both Wieland the elder's death and his son's murder spree) as emblematic of both the war itself and a less dramatic breakdown of the traditional family that historians have identified as occurring during the decades surrounding the Revolution. Both Wieland the elder and the younger might easily be accused of failing to fill their roles as fathers: the elder believes firmly in his religion but does not give his wife or children any religious direction, and dies and abandons his family early. So the younger Wielands may be said to be a study in what happens to a family without direction; moreover, Theodore Wieland is surely open to charges of being an unnatural father. Students interested in writing about family issues in *Wieland* might want to proceed psychoanalytically, relating the novel to Brown's autobiography and seeing the novel as an expression of his personal familial turmoil, or they might approach these questions through cultural history, relating the novel to the antipatriarchal tendencies of family theory in the later eighteenth century.
3. Although the general social trends and the recent historical events of the war certainly are reflected in *Wieland,* a more immediate political event is also relevant. In June and July of 1798, four laws that have come to be known collectively as the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed by Congress and signed by President John Adams. These acts expressed a general sense of a government whose authority was under attack from both external and internal enemies. The laws made it more difficult for citizens of other countries to become naturalized citizens of the United States and made it easier for the president to deport foreigners who were considered threatening; the most controversial of these laws made it criminal to publish "malicious" writings directed at the federal government or its officials. Carwin, a foreigner who easily takes on the characteristics of people of other nationalities and who uses his words to confuse and disrupt a peaceful group of Americans, clearly picks up on some of the fears of the Adams administration. His intentions, in the end, are not clear: was he really an enemy? Moreover, were his words as powerful as they seem, or was the real enemy always the native son? Students interested in pursuing the connections between *Wieland* and the Alien and Sedition Acts would be well advised to examine newspaper and magazine writings about these controversial laws from 1798 and shortly thereafter.
4. As these connections to the Alien and Sedition Acts make clear, speech is an important motif in *Wieland*, but so is writing. Silence, too, plays an important role. Consider just a few of the moments when speech, writing, and silence appear as important movers of the plot: all of the mysterious voices set off plot developments; Clara "hears" her brother's confession in writing; Carwin learns about Clara and her family by reading her diary; Clara is unable to speak at crucial moments; her father refuses to tell the family what the command was that he failed to carry out. There are several ways this set of motifs may be usefully studied.

Readers interested in orality and literacy may study those subjects through the novel. Moreover, a subdued debate regarding the role of writing and speech in the Revolution has been pursued by literary scholars: was it print that helped spread Revolutionary ideas, or was oral communication more important? *Wieland* is a novel that provides many opportunities to think through the relationship between speech and writing in the Revolutionary era, and its moments of voluntary or involuntary silence should be considered when thinking through these issues.

5. Brown used nonfiction sources for his novel: there were several contemporary murder cases that resembled that of *Wieland,* and Brown included a footnote citing accounts of spontaneous human combustion as precedents for the elder Wieland's death. Students interested in the craft of writing or in the relationship of fiction to nonfiction may wish to consider these sources and the significance of the way Brown both refers to these external sources and manipulates them.

RESOURCES

(For basic bibliographical and biographical sources on Charles Brockden Brown, see the entry on *Edgar Huntly.*)

Criticism

Christopher Looby, "'The Very Act of Utterance': Law, Language, and Legitimation in Brown's *Wieland,*" in his *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 145–202.

Reads the novel in relationship to Brown's training in law in order to argue that Brown's skepticism about the possibility of establishing facts conclusively and communicating clearly led to a natural conclusion that a nation founded on reason and argument was necessarily fragile and endangered.

Frank Shuffelton, "Juries of the Common Reader: Crime and Judgment in the Novels of Charles Brockden Brown," *Revising Charles Brockden Brown: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality in the Early Republic,* edited by Philip Barnard, Mark L. Kamrath, and Stephen Shapiro (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), pp. 88–114.

Argues that Brown's novels, including *Wieland,* demonstrate a concern with the exercise of judgment in the public sphere by creating conditions for reading in which readers must constantly make judgments and frequently revisit or question those judgments.

Bryan Waterman, "The Bavarian Illuminati, the Early American Novel, and Histories of the Public Sphere," *Willliam and Mary Quarterly,* 62, 1 (2005): 9–30.

Reads *Wieland* as an attack on the influence of clergymen in the public sphere, notably in relationship to the anti-Jacobin movement of the 1790s. In Waterman's assessment, *Wieland* expresses anxiety over the public's inclination to accept the arguments of authority figures without careful consideration.

William Hill Brown
The Power of Sympathy, or, The Triumph of Nature. Founded in Truth

(Boston: Isaiah Thomas, 1789)

William Hill Brown (1765–1793) is best known today for his novel *The Power of Sympathy,* often called the first American novel, but he was also a playwright, poet, and essayist. Brown's father was a clockmaker; William Hill Brown was educated at a boys' school in Boston, where he evidently read widely in the classics as well as in British and American literature. His poetry and animal fables appeared in Boston magazines between 1784 and 1792. During these years he also wrote the libretto for an operatical farce called *The Better Sort* (1789); a play, *West Point Preserved, or, the Treason of Arnold,* which was performed in Boston in 1797. He was likely also the author of a short play called *Occurrences of the Times* (1789), which was essentially an advertisement for *The Power of Sympathy.* At some point after this he wrote a novel titled *Ira and Isabella,* which seems to have been a deliberate attempt to reverse or parody *The Power of Sympathy. Ira and Isabella* was not published until 1807, after Brown's death at age twenty-seven cut short his literary career.

Like many other sentimental novels, *The Power of Sympathy* features plotlines that revolve around romantic love. The claim of the novel to be "founded in truth" appears to be based on two sub-plots—the story of Ophelia, a young woman who commits suicide after revelations of her seduction by her brother-in-law Martin and a subsequent out-of-wedlock birth. This story was based on a recent local scandal in Boston involving writer Sarah Morton's sister Frances Apthorp, who bore a child out of wedlock after a sexual liaison with her brother-in-law, Perez Morton. Like Ophelia, Apthorp committed suicide, and that scene of death was used as a frontispiece for Brown's first novel. Moreover, shortly before the novel appeared, a brief play, *Occurrences of the Times,* probably written by Brown and focused entirely on the Morton-Apthorp scandal, was printed in Boston, and this play alluded to the forthcoming novel as a tell-all about the incident. The infamy of the events in the Morton household clearly served as a marketing tool for Brown's novel. In addition, Brown incorporated the story of Elizabeth Whitman, an unmarried mother who died after giving birth at an inn, a story which was the basis for Hannah Webster Foster's later novel, *The Coquette.*

Yet, neither Ophelia nor Elizabeth Whitman is at the center of the book. Rather, it is the story of Harriot, a virtuous woman, and Harrington, a playboy (in eighteenth-century terms, a rake). Harrington's reformation as a result of his love for Harriot is an example of "the power of sympathy," and yet that term may also be taken to refer to the instinctive pull between these two characters, who turn out to be brother and sister. The plot of incestuous, almost incestuous, or apparently incestuous lovers has a long history in literature; readers of Renaissance drama will recognize the motif. Paradoxically, then, although the novel draws on a "true

story" for its subplot, its main plot is heavily influenced by literary conventions; to underscore the point, Harrington, who also commits suicide, is influenced to take that step by a work of literature (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 1774 *The Sorrows of Young Werther*).

The novel is told in a series of letters. The epistolary form was a common device in sentimental fiction, with the capacity of providing both a sense of authenticity and a sense of immediacy. Since real collections of letters were often published and were viewed as a window into the minds and hearts of their writers, epistolary novels promised in effect the opportunity to eavesdrop, to witness the true thoughts and feelings of the people involved in the events. *The Power of Sympathy* tends to focus less on the interior states of the correspondents than other epistolary novels, however.

While the claim of *The Power of Sympathy* to be considered "the first American novel" has been challenged in several ways, one thing that is clear is that Brown's novel features many of the prominent characteristics of early American fiction. Heavily influenced by English and European literature, preoccupied with the effects of the actions of the previous generation on the fate of younger people, self-consciously aware of the perception of fiction as frivolous and potentially corrupting, *The Power of Sympathy* can be seen both as a reflection of what readers of the time found entertaining and of the deep anxieties in post-Revolutionary culture.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. As noted, one of the expectations readers might reasonably have for an epistolary fiction is that it will reveal the honest thoughts and feelings of a variety of characters who write the letters that make up the novel. One good way to begin discussion or analysis of an epistolary novel, then, is to trace each character's development through his or her own letters and the letters of others. If *The Power of Sympathy,* as some critics claim, reveals less of its characters' interior states than do some other epistolary fictions, readers would do well to consider what information appears to be missing and how that affects the reading experience. In addition, the relatively few moments when interior emotional states are the focus of attention should be given special consideration by readers: the high and low emotional points of various characters can reveal the issues and themes that are at the heart of the novel. Students interested in this topic should begin with Karen Weyler's chapter on epistolary fiction in *Intricate Relations,* and they may wish to extend Weyler's interest in the difference in American and British epistolarity by comparing *The Power of Sympathy* to earlier epistolary novels by British writers.
2. Epistolary fiction also features special characteristics in terms of plot, and these characteristics combine with the multiple subplots of *The Power of Sympathy* to create a complex narrative structure. It is not only acceptable but almost necessary in epistolary fiction for the same event to be described more than once by different letter writers. In addition to showing how different characters view or represent those events, multiple accounts of the event can add pieces of

information. Discussion of the reading process as it interacts with the narrative structure is recommended. When are events revealed? How does time pass? How does the meaning of one letter get changed by information we receive in a later letter? These kinds of effects in and on the plot are an important feature of epistolary writing and should be explored in depth. Readers interested in writing about the characteristics of the plot of *The Power of Sympathy* should consult Cathy Davidson's chapter on the novel in *Revolution and the Word* for a careful consideration of the relationship of the various plots.

3. Like *The Coquette* and *Charlotte Temple, The Power of Sympathy* is explicitly designed for female readers. Brown's dedication of the novel to "the young ladies of United Columbia" states that his intention is to "inspire the female mind with a principle of self complacency." By "self complacency" Brown means something like what we today would call self-respect or self-esteem. Whether or not the novel would actually inspire self-complacency in female readers is an open question. Are there models of female self-complacency in the novel? Does the novel give young women reason to feel good about themselves? Discussion of these questions could lead to an analysis of the novel's feminist or antifeminist tendencies. Students might also want to consider the effect of the gender of the author on the novel's claims to educational value: would the "lessons" supposedly taught by this novel have a different effect than similar lessons in novels written by women? Comparison of the didactic qualities of *The Power of Sympathy* and its female-authored companions, *The Coquette* and *Charlotte Temple,* could take up such questions.
4. As is true for other important texts of this period, *The Power of Sympathy* features multiple generations, and the influence of parents is not always benign. The deaths of both Ophelia and Harrington can arguably be blamed on the results of their parents' actions. As Jay Fliegelman has argued in *Prodigals and Pilgrims,* the late eighteenth century witnessed a widespread change in ideal images of how families should function, and the possibility that fathers might not always act in the best interest of their children was widely understood. This change in thinking about authority has been considered by many writers an essential feature of the social thought that both enabled the Revolution and was encouraged by it. Students interested in this topic might wish to proceed comparatively; Rebecca Rush's *Kelroy* and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* both feature this theme, but less overtly novelistic texts might also be considered: Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* or Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* both deal with the parent-child relationship in ways that could illuminate the conflicts presented in *The Power of Sympathy*.
5. Finally, like so many other early American novels, *The Power of Sympathy* includes references to the genre of fiction as well as to specific fictional works. Students interested in the general topic of debates about the nature and value of fiction should read Carla Mulford's introduction to *The Coquette* and *The Power of Sympathy* for an overview of those debates and their relationship to this novel. Interesting paper topics could be found by reading one of the other

texts explicitly mentioned in *The Power of Sympathy,* notably Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and the novels of Laurence Sterne (most popular in the United States were *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* and *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*). Students are encouraged to try to outline the theory of fiction presented by the speakers in *The Power of Sympathy* and then to apply that theory to the novel itself, as well as to compare the ways in which *The Power of Sympathy* operates on its reader's emotions with the way in which *The Sorrows of Young Werther* appears to have operated on Harrington's emotions.

RESOURCES

Criticism

Cathy N. Davidson, "Commodity and Communication: The First American Novel," in her *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America,* expanded edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter 5.

Outlines the debate over the claim of *The Power of Sympathy* to be the "first American novel" and describes the publication and marketing history of the novel. Traces the novel's internal division between its stated purpose of demonstrating the evils of seduction and the many other subjects of attention that occupy the subplots.

Carla Mulford, Introduction, *The Power of Sympathy* and *The Coquette* (New York: Penguin, 1996).

Provides important context for *The Power of Sympathy* by outlining the debates about fiction and morality current at the time as well as the topics at issue in popular British and American fiction.

Richard Walser, "Boston's Reception of the First American Novel," *Early American Literature,* 17, 1 (1982): 65–74.

Describes the publicity around *The Power of Sympathy* and the Fanny Apthorp suicide as well as the published responses to the novel in Boston papers. Essential reading for anyone interested in the biographical aspects of the novel.

Karen A. Weyler, "A Manner Unquestionably More Agreeable: The Politics, Aesthetics, and Praxis of Epistolary Fiction," in her *Intricate Relations: Sexual and Economic Desire in American Fiction, 1789–1814* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2004), pp. 29–74.

Argues that epistolary fiction endured longer in the United States than in British literature because the epistolary form suited the preoccupation of American fiction with self-examination and self-discipline. This chapter surveys the functioning of epistolarity to reinforce thematic concerns in a number of novels, including *The Power of Sympathy.*

William Clark, Meriwether Lewis, and others
Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark

First American edition: Edited by Nicholas Biddle
(Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskeep, 1814)

William Clark (1770–1838) and Meriwether Lewis (1774–1809) were American explorers who led the first overland expedition to the Pacific coast and back. Lewis was born in Virginia and raised largely in Georgia, where he established the skills as a hunter and outdoorsman that were later so important to him. He studied at Washington and Lee University (then called Liberty Hall Academy) and served in the Virginia militia after graduation. In 1801 he became an aide to President Thomas Jefferson, who selected him to lead the westward expedition that took place from 1803 to 1806. In 1807, Lewis was appointed governor of the Louisiana Territory. In 1809 he was traveling to Washington, D.C., to answer criticisms of his administration, when he died of gunshot wounds at a tavern in Tennessee. (Although many believed his death to be a suicide, there remains some mystery.)

Clark was also a Southerner, born in Virginia and growing up there and later in Kentucky. Clark served in the Kentucky militia, engaged in warfare with native peoples. He retired from military life in 1796. In 1803 Lewis asked him to share command of the westward expedition. After the expedition, like Lewis, Clark was appointed by Jefferson to help administer the Louisiana Territory; Clark was named brigadier general of the territory in 1807. He led campaigns during the war of 1812, and in 1813 he was appointed governor of the Missouri Territory, a position he held until 1820 when Missouri became a state, and he lost in the election for a new governor. In 1822, President Monroe appointed Clark Superintendent of Indian Affairs, a position he held until his death.

The expedition for which Lewis and Clark became famous was one that Thomas Jefferson had had in mind and had even attempted to fund privately before the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson feared that the English, who had already explored western parts of Canada, might gain control of western North America. In addition, the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, which brought the United States a huge stretch of the Midwest, was a confusing sale; when the French had earlier acquired the territory from Spain, the boundaries were not clearly specified. When France sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States in 1803, neither country knew its exact boundaries. The United States understood its purchase to include the westward watershed of the Mississippi, but the sources of the major rivers emptying into the Mississippi were not adequately explored. All these motivations combined to make it essential to send an exploratory expedition to the west coast. Jefferson charged Lewis and Clark with exploring the Missouri River and its tributaries and with seeking a northwest passage to the west coast; their job was not merely mapping, but documenting the native peoples, the plants, and the animals they encountered throughout the western part of the continent.

With a group of mostly Anglo-American frontiersmen (also including Frenchmen and, as the trip went on, the Shoshone woman Sacajawea and her infant son), Lewis and Clark traveled from St. Louis to North Dakota, where they spent the winter of 1804–1805, and then northwest as far as Oregon, where they spent their second winter. Keeping journals in order to organize all the information the group had been commissioned to obtain was an essential part of the journey. The journals that have survived are probably not all the journals that were written, but in the best judgment of most editors, they are the ones that were written during the trip or shortly thereafter. The journals are not introspective diaries but rather records of the journey. The two writers differ in that Lewis is more literary, occasionally alluding to classical literature, while Clark's entries are often more strictly factual. Even here, though, by considering what facts were important enough to note, readers can learn about the cultural attitudes as well as the historical endeavor of the Americans who made the first official survey of the American west.

Lewis was initially charged with writing the official history of the expedition, but he did not undertake the task, and after his death, Clark commissioned Nicholas Biddle to write it. Biddle's edition was published in 1814. More recent readers have appreciated the raw journals for their immediacy, despite the fact that they were never intended for publication.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Readers are sometimes disappointed to find so little information about the thoughts and feelings of Lewis and Clark in their expedition journals. Because the expedition was outwardly focused, the journals give us more information about the native peoples the expedition encountered. Yet, Lewis and Clark generally are better at describing the cultural practices of these native peoples than at explaining them; whatever other sciences they may represent, anthropology is not one. Discussion of descriptions of various native groups in the journals, then, should consider both the explanations Lewis and Clark provide and other possible interpretations of behavior. After considering their own interpretations, students may want to consult a reference work such as the *Encyclopedia of North American Indians,* edited by Frederick E. Hoxie (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), for current anthropological information on native practices discussed by Lewis and Clark. In addition to considerations of native peoples generally, the treatment and role of Sacajawea specifically deserve special attention. Wanda Pillow's article (cited below) will be useful to considerations of cultural uses of the image of Sacajawea.
2. Expedition journals can fit into various genres: travel writing, ethnography, scientific writing. Perhaps the most famous such expedition journal, Charles Darwin's account of the voyage of *The Beagle,* would not be published until two decades after the first publication of the official account of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and of course Darwin's purposes were different from Lewis and Clark's. Still, in terms of the mixture of genres, both Darwin and Jefferson's earlier *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) can provide useful points of

comparison for the Lewis and Clark journals. Students interested in scientific writing and its development in the nineteenth century may wish to undertake comparative analysis. The first three chapters of Paul Lawrence Farber's *Finding Order in Nature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) provide an overview of the development of scientific writing during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary years.

3. Although Lewis and Clark tend to focus on the factual descriptions of the flora and fauna they observe, as well as mapping the land through which they travel, Lewis sometimes comments on his observations about natural features in ways that reflect Romantic attitudes toward nature. Edmund Burke's concepts of the beautiful and the sublime, for example, often find their way into Lewis's observations. Students interested in the way that cultural ideas could influence the scientific observation of nature might wish to read Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and then trace the influence of Burke in the journals. Analysis might proceed to consider what difference it would have made in the observations of natural phenomena if the writers had not had Burke's conceptualization of the beautiful and the sublime available to them.
4. The episodic nature of journals, such as the essay format of Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* and Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), offers a distinct type of reading experience. Readers do not necessarily need to read from beginning to end, and if they do they will not find an overarching plot structure as might be expected in a novel. Discussion of the reading experience of episodic texts should consider the effect on the reader of repetition of events and motifs, as well as the effect of changes in repeated events and motifs. What kinds of episodes seem to be repeated, and what are the significant differences? Can a "plot" be traced in this text? Students who are interested in contemporary writing about nature and travel might wish to consider the plotting of a work such as Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* (1997) to consider whether adventure and travel texts share structural characteristics. Students with an interest in fiction might also wish to compare the journals with Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* (1815), set on the frontier at an earlier time.
5. Figures of the historical stature of Lewis and Clark often take on a special significance in popular culture. Since the bicentennial of the expedition was marked in 2003–2006, historical fiction and film, web sites, and children's books, as well as other representations of Lewis and Clark in popular culture have increased. Study of these representations is highly recommended for students with an interest in historical interpretation and popular culture. Students who have developed a familiarity with Lewis and Clark's actual journals will be able to compare the world depicted there with the versions created for entertainment purposes in the twenty-first century. Particular attention should be paid to the depiction of accidents and problems that occurred on the journey, the representation of native peoples and the expedition's interaction with them, and representations of science. Wanda Pillow's article on representations of Sacajawea can serve as a model for this kind of analysis.

RESOURCES

Criticism

Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).
An accessible historical and biographical analysis of the expedition.

Martin Brückner, "Native American Geographies and the Journals of Lewis and Clark," in his *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 204–237.
Considers both the maps and the journals produced by the Lewis and Clark expedition in terms of multiple and collaborative authorship, with particular reference to the use of Native American maps and instructions, as well as Jefferson's instructions for writing.

Wanda S. Pillow, "Searching for Sacajawea: Whitened Reproductions and Endarkened Representations," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy,* 22, 2 (2007): 1–19.
Examines representations of Sacajawea in twentieth-century accounts of the Lewis and Clark expedition to demonstrate that even though attitudes toward this historical figure changed over time all the representations work to help construct a concept of racial whiteness.

J. Hector St. John [de Crèvecoeur]
Letters from an American Farmer

(London: Davies & Davis, 1782; Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1793)

Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur (1735–1813) was a Franco-American writer who became most famous for a book that ventured one of the first post-Revolutionary answers to a question that has continued to be compelling in the centuries since: What is an American? The son of a nobleman, Crèvecoeur was educated at the Jesuit College in Caen, France, and arrived in North America as a member of the French Colonial Militia in 1755 during the series of conflicts between England and France in North America known as the French and Indian Wars. When the French were defeated, Crèvecoeur decided to remain and was naturalized as a citizen of New York in 1759 under the name John Hector St. John. He married an American in 1770 and established himself as a prosperous farmer; he also began writing about American society in these years, although his work was first published in Europe. Biographers disagree about Crèvecoeur's sympathies and his actions during the American Revolution. Some claim he was a Loyalist and a spy for the British; others argue that he was sympathetic to the Patriots but forced to flee because of unfair accusations of espionage. What can be established is that, traveling with one son

and leaving his wife and other children behind, in late 1778 or early 1779 Crèvecoeur was taken prisoner in New York City and held briefly by the British, where various papers of his were confiscated. He was released after a brief imprisonment but did not rejoin his family, and in 1780 he was allowed to return to France. He spent the rest of the war in France and England.

In London in 1782, he published his major work, *Letters from an American Farmer,* a collection of essays in the form of letters that might also be described as a novel, which portrayed American society for a European audience. After the 1783 Treaty of Paris ended the war, Crèvecoeur returned to New York to find that his wife had died, his farm had been destroyed, and his children had been dispersed. After regaining custody of his children, he remained in the United States as a French consul in the following years; he also revised and rewrote *Letters from an American Farmer* in French. During the emerging French Revolution, Crèvecoeur was on a visit to France and found himself unable to return to the United States; he lived the remainder of his life in France, where he published a second volume in 1801, *Voyage dans la Haute Pensylvanie et dans l'État de New-York,* which did not see the same degree of success as *Letters*. Essays left unpublished at his death finally made their way to print in the twentieth century in the volumes *Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* (1923) and *More Letters from the American Farmer* (1995).

Virtually since its first publication, *Letters from an American Farmer* has been recognized as one of the most important documents attempting to describe the national character of the United States and its people. Many of the most important issues related to American identity are raised and discussed in Crèvecoeur's book; *Letters from an American Farmer* provides contemporary readers both a window into eighteenth-century America and a touchstone for considering issues still relevant today. By creating a narrator who differs in important ways from himself, Crèvecoeur attempted to portray a typical American man: a self-reliant, hardworking, landowning farmer who is well-educated and mostly self-educated, whose primary ambition is to provide for his family, who is religious but moderately so, and who is part of a well-regulated community.

The most famous essay in the collection, "What Is an American?" focuses on themes that were present in earlier writing about North America but puts them into a political context that is new with the Revolution. The essay is one of the clearest and earliest statements on the political and social contradictions of the United States. On the one hand, the essay portrays the social mobility and democratic tendencies of American society, defining an American largely by the possibilities of citizenship and political participation. Americans are, in Crèvecoeur's depiction of them, Europeans who have reinvented themselves in a place that allows for newness. Without an aristocracy, American society consists of what appears to be a vast middle class; in this land of plenty, it seems, no one need go hungry. On the other hand, by defining the American as "a new man" who is "either an European or the descendent of an European," the essay implicitly excludes enslaved Africans and dispossessed indigenous peoples from its definition of an American, simultaneously revealing the problematic status of white women, who are European by birth or descent but not full citizens.

In this and other essays in the collection, Crèvecoeur discusses the effects of regional differences on the inhabitants, the religious and social attitudes of Americans, and the possibilities of economic advancement for those who were poor in Europe. By playing up regional differences between the seafaring, commercial New England states and the Southern states with their agrarian production and reliance on slave labor, *Letters from an American Farmer* contributes to a set of cultural ideas that grew in importance in the years leading up to the U.S. Civil War. The final essay, "Distresses of a Frontier Man" differs markedly in tone from those that preceded it; in this essay, Crèvecoeur outlines the difficulties experienced by noncombatants during the Revolution. Expressing ambiguity about siding with the Patriots or the Loyalists and seeing flight as his family's only safe course of action, the narrator presents the war as both a natural result of the new social order and, in some ways, an end to the Edenic vision of America presented earlier in the book.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. In terms of genre, *Letters* is difficult to classify. Each chapter reads like an essay, so some call the book nonfiction. Yet the book as a whole is fictionalized; the narrator, farmer James, who is English rather than French and whose farm is in Pennsylvania rather than New York, cannot simply be identified with Crèvecoeur. While this fictionalizing leads some critics to refer to the work as a novel, any reader who comes to the work expecting a novel with a conventional plot will be disappointed. Letters were a common literary device in the eighteenth century: real (but edited) collections of letters were often published for their informative and entertainment value and the early novel often took the form of a collection of letters that claimed to be real. While a simple classification of *Letters* according to genre is not possible, consideration of its relationship to other epistolary works and to the novel raises some interesting and worthwhile questions: the effects of the epistolary form for contemporary readers, the implications of blurring the lines between fiction and nonfiction, and the structure of the work if it is considered a novel.
2. The structure of *Letters from an American Farmer* might also lead to a consideration of its politics, which are, like its genre, ambiguous. Because of the celebration of the yeoman farmer and of the egalitarianism of American society in the early chapters of the book, *Letters from an American Farmer* and its author have often been assumed to have been patriotic. Yet, the chapter that deals most explicitly with the Revolution, "Distresses of a Frontier Man," suggests that both author and book are quite conflicted about the Revolution. While scholars (most recently Bryce Traister) have debated the biographical facts about Crèvecoeur's political allegiance, students will still find it worthwhile to examine the conflicting political inclinations as revealed in the book itself; in particular, interesting questions are raised through a consideration of the way in which political attitudes do or do not develop from the beginning of the book to the end.

3. Another set of cultural ideas that emerges from the book when considered as a whole has to do with regional identities. Both Crèvecoeur, a naturalized New Yorker, and his Pennsylvanian narrator, James, write from the mid-Atlantic states, the region of early America most often overlooked in discussions of early regional identities. *Letters from an American Farmer,* like most other discussions of region in the early United States, focuses on the contrast between the New England states and the Southern states. The titles of some chapters indicate that they focus on either Northern or Southern locales; still other chapters include contrast between North and South as a motif. Readers interested in regional identity might wish to begin with a consideration of the ways in which Crèvecoeur relates regional culture to geography and to ethnicity. In addition, a careful consideration of the ways in which Crèvecoeur both clarifies and obscures the economic and cultural connections between the regions is recommended. The culture and geography of the mid-Atlantic region may be added to the discussion by considering the chapters focused on James, his farm, and his neighbors as a depiction of this often-neglected region.
4. Agriculture is significant in *Letters from an American Farmer* not merely because the independent farmer is emblematic of Crèvecoeur's middle-class ideal, but also because farming represents a mediating force between nature and civilization, a contrast that is never far from discussions of the so-called New World. Europeans and Native Americans are frequently aligned with these poles of civilization and nature—and (European-descended) Americans then can occupy a middle space identified with cultivated nature and egalitarian civilization. Readers interested in the tensions between idyllic nature and (possibly degenerated) civilization are encouraged to consider the implications of Crèvecoeur's complex treatment of Native Americans in the final chapter, when James presents his plan to move his family to a Native American community to escape the ravages of the Revolution.
5. In the essay "What is an American?" Crèvecoeur restates his question thus: "What, then, is the American, this new man?" When we consider the role that citizenship plays in this book's definition of national identity, it becomes clear that the word "man" here is not accidental. Several gender issues deserve consideration. One obvious question would be to investigate how women are represented here, if they are excluded from the position of representative American. Farmer James's wife provides a good starting point for such a consideration. Perhaps a less obvious, but no less interesting question is what kind of masculinity is represented by Crèvecoeur's representative American "new man." As discussed in the general introduction to this volume, models of ideal manhood were evolving in the late eighteenth century, and these changes were related to changes in the structure of society and of the family. A careful examination of individual characters as well as Farmer James's statements about American and European men could allow a nuanced study of the varieties of manliness in *Letters from an American Farmer.*

RESOURCES

Biography

Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur: The Life of an American Farmer* (New York: Viking, 1987).

The standard biography, co-authored by a distinguished pair of scholars, one American and one French. The most accessible starting point for an understanding of Crèvecoeur's life, about which some mystery still remains.

Criticism

Eve Tavor Bannet, "From Crèvecoeur to Franklin and Mr. Spectator," in her *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680–1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 274–287.

Examines several versions of *Letters* to demonstrate the ways in which Crèvecoeur adjusted his language in coded ways for audiences with different cultural expectations. Part of a larger study of letter writing and cross-cultural communication, Bannet's chapter is useful both for considerations of genre and an understanding of Crèvecoeur's position as an author.

Myra Jehlen, "J. Hector St. Crevècoeur: A Monarcho-Anarchist in Revolutionary America," *American Quarterly,* 31, 2 (Summer 1979): 204–222.

Examines the contradiction between Crevècoeur's admiration for American society and his apparent Loyalist sympathies.

Anne G. Myles, "Elegiac Patriarchs: Crèvecoeur and the War of Masculinities," in *Feminist Interventions in Early American Studies*, edited by Mary C. Carruth (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), pp. 147–160.

Argues that *Letters* and other works by Crevècoeur rely on a more authoritarian model of masculinity than the emerging post-revolutionary ideal and that Crevècoeur's vision of America depends on a suppression of the feminine.

Jeff Osborne, "American Antipathy and the Cruelties of Citizenship in Crèvecoeur's Letters from an American Farmer," *Early American Literature,* 42, 3 (2007): 529–553.

Suggests that the sentimentality and liberal politics of Farmer James are undercut by an ironic treatment of the narrator and that *Letters from an American Farmer* ultimately argues that hierarchy is a natural characteristic of society.

Bryce Traister, "Criminal Correspondence: Authorship and Espionage in Crevècoeur's Revolutionary America," *Early American Literature* 37, 3 (2002): 469–496.

Argues that *Letters* shares some characteristics of documents written by spies and suggests that Crevècoeur might have been strongly aligned with the English, rather than being a Patriot or having conflicted loyalties.

Olaudah Equiano
The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African

(London: The author, 1789; New-York: W. Durell, 1791)

Olaudah Equiano (1745–1797) wrote one of the best-known narratives by a formerly enslaved African; his narrative was important in ending the slave trade in England, and it remains a landmark of early African-American literature. The details of Equiano's early life are debated by historians. According to Equiano's own account, he was born in Africa in a region he identified as Essaka, in present-day Nigeria, and he was kidnapped into slavery and endured the Middle Passage, being sold in the West Indies. (According to some historians, however, evidence suggests that Equiano was actually born in the English colonies, specifically the Carolinas. Although there is a significant debate about his childhood, the historical evidence confirms the details Equiano provides about his adult life.) After changing hands several times, Equiano was purchased by a naval officer who renamed him Gustavus Vassa, after a king of Sweden. Later, he was sold again to Robert King, who eventually agreed to sell Equiano his freedom if he could save the same amount of money King had paid to purchase him; Equiano succeeded. He continued to work as a sailor and trader before settling in England, where he became active in the abolitionist cause, supported by others of the Methodist faith, to which he had been converted earlier. In 1789, with the encouragement of English friends, Equiano published his autobiography in London and embarked on a speaking tour to promote both the book and the abolitionist cause. In 1792, he married an Englishwoman; editions of his autobiography after 1792 include this information. Equiano died in England at approximately age fifty-two.

The autobiography tells the story of Equiano's life beginning with a description of Essaka, the region of northwest Africa where he claimed origin. Equiano's descriptions of his life in Essaka are generally idyllic: his people were peaceful, virtuous, artistic and musical; they lived a simple and happy life, and Equiano was likely to become a leader had he not been taken away. Equiano goes on to describe his capture (with his sister) by slave traders, the long overland journey to the African coast, during which Equiano was held as a slave but treated generally well by other Africans, and his first introduction to Europeans at the coast, where he is shocked by their appearance and believes some of the sailors to be "devils" because of their behavior. Equiano's account goes on to describe the trip across the Atlantic, his sale and various employments as a slave, his eventual purchase of his freedom, his conversion to Christianity, his continued work as a mariner, including on ships transporting slaves, and his eventual settlement in England.

As one of the first and most widely read first-person accounts of slavery, Equiano's narrative in some ways helped to create the genre, with its movement from slavery to freedom. The narrative also drew on a long tradition of spiritual narratives, in which the author recounts his or her own fall into sinfulness, the moment of conversion, and the subsequent struggles to maintain the path of godliness. The slave's physical voyage from Africa to America was an important

component of the story, and, as Henry Louis Gates Jr. has pointed out, the slave's movement from orality to literacy is an important theme here, as it is in later slave narratives.

Equiano's autobiography invites readers to assume that its structure is transparent; we tend to assume that autobiographies simply describe what happened to the author in the order that it happened, without any work on the part of the author to create a "plot," as the author of a work of fiction must do. Whether or not all of Equiano's claims about his life are accepted as true, it is essential to recognize that the book is indeed carefully plotted. The themes (of religious conversion, of the secular search for liberty and economic stability, of coming to literacy, and of physical journeys) that circulate through the text have rising action, turning points, and climaxes, just as the plots of a novel do. This is an essential feature of the text to keep in mind because it was highly rhetorical. Its purpose was not primarily to share the story of a single individual, no matter how interesting that life might have been; its purpose was to capture a particular readership (a white, Christian readership) who could be moved to action in the cause of abolishing African slavery. As much as any other political text of the Revolutionary era, Equiano's narrative must be read in terms of its eighteenth-century purpose, as well as its enduring human interest.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. In the first chapter, Equiano provides information about Ibo life, some based on his personal memories, some frankly borrowed from other sources; this chapter is clearly designed to ask readers to reconsider their prejudices against Africa. Discussion of the effectiveness of this chapter in its rhetorical goal should begin by attempting to identify the specific preconceptions that Equiano seems to be working to counter. How effective are his descriptions at helping to establish a different view of an African culture? How does that goal interact with the larger rhetorical purpose of the work?
2. Equiano's depiction of slavery in Africa and among the Europeans suggests significant differences. Discussion of this topic should begin with a precise description of the differences he demonstrates. Further research might investigate what historians have been able to reconstruct in terms of descriptions of African slavery and the engagement of Africans in the slave trade. Analysis can then move on to a consideration of both how historically accurate Equiano's depiction is and what its rhetorical purpose might be in relation to the larger goals of the narrative. What effect is this description of African slavery designed to have on white European readers?
3. An understanding of Equiano's discussion of Africa and African slavery is, of course, affected by our understanding of where Equiano was actually born. As noted earlier, scholars are divided over the truth about Equiano's place of birth. Discussion of this topic can begin with contemporary readers' responses: How does assuming that Equiano was born in Africa or that he was born in America change one's response to the book now, and why? A second stage of discussion would consider how an American birthplace might have changed

the response of eighteenth-century readers. Further analysis could focus on the evidence historians have discovered. (Several of the sources below provide overviews; see Caretta, Bugg, and Davidson.) That evidence includes "internal" evidence—in other words, it uses evidence derived from Equiano's narrative itself. Using the available information, students are encouraged to evaluate the internal evidence themselves to form a coherent argument about both the weight of the evidence and its effect on how we read Equiano's autobiography.

4. Vincent Caretta's argument that Equiano was not born in Africa might change readers' understanding of the genre within which they should consider Equiano's book. Cathy Davidson has suggested that the work should be read as a novel rather than an autobiography; with other critics, she notes that it draws on a variety of genres, including spiritual narrative. In this way, the novel might seem related to a work such as Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer,* which is close to autobiographical but which changes crucial details about the narrator's place of birth and level of education. Discussion of why this has not made Crèvecoeur a more controversial figure in the literary canon while it *has* generated major controversy over Equiano should help to elucidate what is at stake in Equiano's text and in his life story.
5. Among many other trajectories followed by the subject of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* is that of becoming an Englishman. Regardless of his birthplace, Equiano establishes himself as an English citizen, marries an Englishwoman, becomes active in English political organizations, and lives out his life in England. Where in the narrative does this process begin? Special attention should be paid to the role of literacy in Equiano's movement to assimilate to English culture. See Gates for a full discussion of Equiano's movement between oral and written cultures. Discussion of the specific qualities Equiano develops in the process of becoming English can lead to analysis of how the concepts of race and nationality work in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano.*

RESOURCES

Biography

Vincent Carretta, *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

A cultural biography by the preeminent Equiano scholar that provides context for understanding Equiano's experiences, his reading, and his use of that reading in his writing. Especially valuable for its attention to Equiano's experiences as a sailor.

Criticism

John Bugg, "The Other Interesting Narrative: Olaudah Equiano's Public Book Tour," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America,* 121, 5 (2006): 1424–1442.

Details Equiano's 1789–1794 speaking tour that promoted *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* and his public performances as an essential part of the abolitionist project of the book. Bugg argues for Equiano's African birth.

Cathy Davidson, "Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction,* 40, 1–2, (2006): 18–51.

Argues for the novelistic qualities of the autobiography and suggests that whether readers accept Equiano as born in Africa or not, the narrative's hybrid mixing makes it a crucial point in the development of the American novel. Also provides an excellent overview of the debate over Equiano's birthplace; the bibliography will point interested readers to the most important arguments on both sides.

Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Chapter 4, "The Trope of the Talking Book," discusses Equiano's narrative in terms of the movement from an oral culture to literacy.

Hannah Webster Foster
The Coquette, or the History of Eliza Wharton; A Novel Founded on Fact

(Boston: Printed by Samuel Etheridge for E. Larkin, 1797)

Hannah Webster Foster (1758–1840) was the author of two novels, including one of the first best sellers in American literary history, *The Coquette.* Her second novel, *The Boarding School* (1798), was a combination of conduct manual, textbook, and epistolary novel. Foster was the daughter of a Massachusetts merchant and the wife of minister John Foster. She was the mother of six children, two of whom became popular writers in Canada. After her husband's death, Foster moved to Montreal to live near those two daughters.

Reprinted frequently throughout the nineteenth century, *The Coquette* was adapted as a play in 1802. Clearly, the topic of seduction, treated by both Foster and Susanna Rowson, had great appeal for readers in the 1790s and well into the nineteenth century. Foster's version of this popular theme was based on a true incident of a Connecticut woman named Elizabeth Whitman, who in 1788 gave birth out of wedlock at an inn in Danvers, Massachusetts, and died there, prompting speculation about her identity and that of her seducer. At the time, accounts of the woman's death as well as a poem purportedly written by her appeared in Boston area newspapers. Whitman's story also inspired sermons and possibly a play about seduction produced in Vermont the following spring. The story that emerged about Whitman may or may not have accurately reflected her circumstances, but the salient points of the story were that Whitman had opportunities to marry but turned them down, that she was an avid reader of novels, and that

having turned down good marriage offers she left herself susceptible to the wiles of a seducer who deceived her and failed to assist her in the event of her pregnancy. It was a perfect example for those who believed that novel reading and the cult of sensibility led to disastrous ends.

Whitman's story also made its way into fiction. William Hill Brown incorporated it into one of the subplots of his 1789 novel, *The Power of Sympathy,* and Foster made it the central focus of her novel, published almost a decade later. Brown adapts his use of Whitman's life and death almost directly from the newspapers; Foster, on the other hand, fills out the characters imaginatively, creating a more fictionalized (and arguably a more psychologically complex) rendering of the scandal. The central character, Eliza Wharton, is given a name close enough to Whitman's to make the intended portrait unmistakable. Eliza is portrayed both sympathetically and with nuance, a task to which the epistolary form of the novel is well suited. She represents her desire for "liberty" in terms that almost any young person (and many older people as well) can see as reasonable and attractive. At the same time, the novel opens with her saying some things that might suggest she is self-centered: she is happy to leave her mother's house, and she does not feel all that bad about the death of her fiancé, for whom she was unable to feel love even though she respected him. Eliza Wharton as a character, then, presents a heroine who is not merely naïve or inexperienced but willful and self-directed—a much more complex character than many heroines of seduction fiction. Similarly, Sanford, the man with whom Eliza has the affair that results in her pregnancy, might at first seem to be a stock libertine, but his grief at the death of Eliza seems genuine and heartfelt.

Like other sentimental novels, *The Coquette* claims to educate young women: Eliza's friend Lucy at the end of the novel states that the moral of her now-dead friend's story is that "virtue alone, independent of the trappings of wealth, the parade of equipage, and the adulation of gallantry, can secure lasting felicity." Given its epistolary form and the psychological depth of its characterizations, it is not at all clear that this is the lesson that all young women readers would have taken from this book. Since freedom of personal choice and responsibility to community values are issues of enduring interest in democratic society, *The Coquette* continues to provide a provocative and entertaining reading experience.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. As with other epistolary novels, readers must work a little harder than with an omniscient narrative to extract the plot from the text. In addition, a single plot event might be described more than once by different writers, and new pieces of information may be added by later writers. Students interested in narrative structure might wish to begin an exploration of the special characteristics of epistolary form by mapping out the events of the novel in two ways: once in chronological order, and once in the order (including repetition) in which they appear in the letters. By comparing the two outlines, students can then identify those areas where they differ; discussion of these episodes in the plot might proceed to analysis of the functions of the repetitions or the changes in

chronology that are enabled by the epistolary form. Is the reader's reaction to an event different when it is narrated by one character than when it is narrated by another? How are the descriptions of each event shaped not only by the writer of the given letter but also by the identity of the person to whom the letter is addressed? By assuming that the repetitions of the epistolary novel are intentional rather than accidental, readers can begin to appreciate the artistry of a novel that appears to have no narrator.

2. Perhaps more than any other American sentimental novel, *The Coquette* has been identified by critics as addressing not merely personal freedom but issues of rights and liberty for women and for citizens generally. (For examples, see the essays by Brown, Dillon, and Harris in the annotated bibliography.) As with other sentimental novels, critics have read *The Coquette* as both feminist and antifeminist, liberal and conservative. How we read the political message of the novel depends in part on how we view Eliza's fate: Is she herself ultimately responsible for what happens to her or does the social structure make it inevitable that someone with her personality would come to this kind of sad end? Discussion of the relationship between Eliza's personal struggles and larger political principles should take into consideration eighteenth-century political and social theory; Dillon's chapter in *The Gender of Freedom* provides useful background.
3. More specifically, of course, *The Coquette* raises questions about property rights for women, the laws regarding marriage, and social customs around marriage. Students interested in the historical conditions around marriage may wish to look up the terms "coquette" and "rake" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in order to learn what those terms meant in the eighteenth century. Research is also recommended on contemporary laws regarding marriage and the legal principle called coverture, by which women's property was transferred to their husbands after marriage. Laura Korobkin's essay provides some excellent background; students might also wish to consult Marylynn Salmon's *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) for an overview of the legal situation. Discussion of these specific rights in relationship to Eliza's desire for "liberty" can lead to historically focused analyses of the novel.
4. One of the most prominent features of the newspaper accounts and sermons about Elizabeth Whitman was the emphasis on her reading of fiction as part of the cause of her mistakes. In *The Coquette,* these concerns arise again: Lucy tells Eliza that her letters sound like a novel (and that is not meant as praise), and Eliza asks her to send some novels. Later however, when Eliza is depressed, she finds no books of use, including novels. In a very different vein, on first meeting her, Selby notes with approval that Eliza has "a fund of useful knowledge and extensive reading." Readers interested in the debates over books and reading should isolate these and other references to reading in *The Coquette* for discussion and analysis. Readers may also wish to consult Carla Mulford's introduction to *The Coquette* and *The Power of Sympathy* for an accessible overview of those debates and their relationship to this novel. Discussion should ask whether individual writers in the story have a position

about novel-reading, and if that can be reconstructed, discussion of a perspective that emerges from the book as a whole can be pursued. Finally, readers (or essay writers) should consider whether *The Coquette* suits any particular theory of novel-reading presented within its own pages.

5. *The Coquette* is frequently discussed in classrooms and by literary critics in relationship with *Charlotte Temple* (1791) and *The Power of Sympathy.* Although all three share the theme of seduction, there are other more specific reasons to group these novels together. *The Coquette* and *Charlotte Temple* are generally considered the only two best sellers written by Americans in the early period of the novel. *The Power of Sympathy* makes use of the same true story of Elizabeth Whitman that forms the core of *The Coquette.* So comparison and contrast with either or both of these novels is an important aspect of fully considering *The Coquette.* Note that despite their similarities, *The Coquette* and *Charlotte Temple* make use of very different narrative strategies. Discussion of the effects of this difference on the reading experience is essential. Comparative approaches might also examine characterization (analyzing, say, female characters across two or three of the novels) or any of the other thematic issues recommended here for discussion (for example, the attitude toward fiction taken in each of these three novels). These relatively brief and accessible novels are ideal for students who wish to have a basis broader than a single book for making claims about cultural ideas expressed by the early American novel.

RESOURCES

Criticism

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, "Contracting Marriage in the New Republic," in her *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 117–196.

Examines marriage and social life in *The Coquette* in relation to liberal theories of the contractual nature of society and government. Recommended for advanced students with interest in political theory as it relates to sentimental fiction.

Sharon M. Harris, "Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette*: Critiquing Franklin's America" in her *Redefining the Political Novel: American Women Writers, 1797–1901* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), pp. 1–22.

Argues that *The Coquette* makes a case for greater liberty for women and that the novel, in its use of a series of distinctive voices, imagines (and allows readers to imagine) alternatives to marriage as a woman's only career option.

Laura H. Korobkin, "'Can Your Volatile Daughter Ever Acquire Your Wisdom?' Luxury and False Ideals in *The Coquette*," *Early American Literature,* 41, 1 (2006): 79–107.

Beginning from the position that what Eliza really craves is the ability to live a life of luxury without having to work hard, Korobkin examines contemporary lawsuits for breach of promise to marry and for seduction to demonstrate that Foster carefully depicts Eliza's situation as not fitting the legal standards for either type of lawsuit, thus locating responsibility for her situation with Eliza herself.

Carla Mulford, Introduction to *The Power of Sympathy* and *The Coquette* (New York: Penguin, 1996), pp. ix–lviii.
Outlines the debates about fiction and morality as well as the topics at issue in popular British and American fiction.

Gillian Brown, "Consent, Coquetry, and Consequences," *American Literary History,* 9, 4 (1997): 625–652.
Analyzes Eliza's behavior in light of Lockean theory about consent; an excellent example of a frequent critical move, connecting *The Coquette* to contemporary political theory.

Benjamin Franklin
The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, A Genetic Text

Edited by J. A. Leo Lemay and P. M. Zall
(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981)

(For more biographical information on Franklin, see the entry on his "Speech in the Constitutional Convention.")

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was a leading figure in the American Revolution and an author, printer, scientist, inventor, political theorist, and public planner. Franklin's *Autobiography,* for many readers both in the United States and abroad, has been one of the defining texts of the American identity. Franklin's practicality, his energy and work ethic, his belief in progress and the possibility of self-improvement come vividly to life in this memoir; the persona Franklin presents here has stood as a model of the ideal American personality since its publication. This achievement is even more remarkable considering that Franklin was not able to complete the autobiography before his death or to see it through publication. The autobiography as it is known today contains four parts and covers Franklin's life through about 1757.

Parts 1 and 2 are the most famous. Part 1, written in England in 1771 in the form of a letter to Franklin's son, William, then the royal governor of New Jersey, describes Franklin's ancestors, his birth and youth in Boston (including his search for a profession, his indenture to his brother to learn the printing business, and his abandonment of his indenture and flight to Philadelphia), his first trip to England, his return to Philadelphia, and the early events of his establishment of his career there. Part 2 was written in France in 1784, when Franklin evidently resumed the project. Between the writing of parts 1 and 2, major events, both political and personal, occurred: Franklin and the son to whom he addressed part 1 suffered a permanent estrangement, and the Revolutionary War was fought and won. This second section is prefaced by letters from friends encouraging

Franklin to continue writing his memoirs and arguing that his life will make a good example for young people. In part 2, Franklin presents a plan he formed early in life for "perfecting" his own character, along with his list of virtues. This project for perfecting his character has become for many the emblem of Franklin, inspiring both imitation and mockery in the centuries since its writing. Whether one admires or deplores Franklin's audacious plan, it remains as an emblem of the Enlightenment belief in self-improvement and self-creation and of Franklin's secular approach to virtue. Franklin wrote parts 3 and 4 in Philadelphia in the late 1780s; they narrate his business and political affairs through 1757. Franklin's outline for his autobiography indicates that he planned to continue the narrative as far as the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War.

The first publication of Franklin's memoir was a French translation of part 1; the first English publication was, ironically, a translation from the French version rather than a transcript from the original manuscript. In 1818 Franklin's grandson, William Temple Franklin, edited the most complete version thus far (Benjamin Franklin, *Memoirs,* Parts One, Two, and Three [London: Henry Colburn]). That was the version read for decades; a more reliable edition, including part 4, appeared in 1868. The most accurate version based on Franklin's manuscripts appeared in 1981. The publication history of the *Autobiography* is worth considering, since the text was so influential in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; as the impact of the text over the centuries is considered, students need to be aware that the text read today is not necessarily the same text encountered by earlier readers.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. One common approach to Franklin's *Autobiography* is to consider it within the context of the autobiographical tradition. When considered this way, in relationship especially with earlier texts starting with Augustin's *Confessions* (circa 398), one characteristic of Franklin that stands out is the focus on the self as a worldly entity rather than a spiritual one. Though Franklin briefly acknowledges a Diety, his account focuses largely on his development in worldly affairs; even his "Art of Virtue" focuses on the practical benefits of the virtues he chooses to study rather than pursuing virtue for spiritual reasons. Students interested in Franklin's place in the history of the genre of autobiography or in Franklin's secularization of the genre might wish to compare his approach to virtue with the attitudes expressed in other roughly contemporary autobiographies, such as those by Jonathan Edwards or Elizabeth Ashbridge.
2. Another frequent observation about the *Autobiography* is the way Franklin equates writing about his life to "living it over." The connection between writing and living is both an extended metaphor (with important implications) that can be traced through the text and something more: in some ways, it seems, writing one's life really is living it over and really does allow one to correct "errata" (notice, for example, that the narrative does not account for the birth of Franklin's illegitimate son). Discussion of the relationship of writing to living is strongly recommended. Consideration might begin with the religious implications of the

metaphor: Franklin, not God, is the "author" of his own life. Are there differences between the way Franklin "authors" his life in its first draft (that is, when he is actually living it) and when he "revises" it by writing it? Can his theories of how to live well be related with his theories of how to learn to write? Is learning to write different in some way from learning to live? Students interested in pursuing this line of discussion further might wish to investigate the theories of writing current during the eighteenth century. (A good starting place is Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,* 1793.)

3. Franklin's construction of self is often held up as a model of American individualism. Certainly Franklin presents himself as very self-directed and self-reliant, but close readers might seek to find ways in which his success was supported by others. (They might also consider whether he sometimes ignores or downplays the roles played by others in his success.) Fruitful discussion might also ask whether Franklin's individualistic model was applicable to people who were not, like Franklin, white, male, middle-class, and educated. Such discussion might focus on comparison, by examining narratives of women, slaves, and Native Americans, but it could also be useful to look closely at Franklin's own account for evidence of the ways in which his race, class, and gender enabled his success.
4. As former slave Olaudah Equiano notes at the beginning of his autobiography, "it is difficult for those who publish their own memoirs to escape the imputation of vanity." Franklin faces a problem here: famous and successful far beyond what most people can ever expect to achieve, how can he recount his life without giving the appearance of vanity? Indeed, humility is one of the virtues he admits to never having achieved, though he believed he had been able to achieve the *appearance* of humility. First-time readers of the *Autobiography* are often struck by what today might be termed Franklin's egotism. Even in the narrative of his life, however, Franklin does strive to minimize the appearance of vanity, acknowledging "errata" or errors in his early life that he regrets. Readers who are interested in this subject can use it as a starting point for several kinds of investigations. The question of humility might be used to focus a comparative analysis of other autobiographies. Particularly interesting points of comparison might be found in Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and others. Another fruitful area for investigation would be discussions of humility and vanity in magazines and newspapers during the years Franklin was composing the *Autobiography.* How did Franklin's claim that vanity could be "often productive of Good to the Possessor & to others" compare to the attitudes of his contemporaries?
5. Readers familiar with Franklin primarily through history are often surprised to find that the *Autobiography* does not deal with the Revolution. On one hand, this could be considered simply a historical problem: Franklin planned to continue the narrative but did not live long enough. On the other hand, the parts of the narrative were written around the Revolutionary years; in fact, Franklin writes into his text that it was interrupted by the Revolution. Fruitful topics for discussion, research and writing might consider what impact the "missing" war has on the narrative as it exists today. Is Franklin

somehow outlining a revolutionary way of life? How are the ideas about government that were circulating at the time he was writing reflected in Franklin's descriptions of the ways he learned to interact with other people? Given that Franklin is writing at the end of the eighteenth century about earlier decades, does his *Autobiography* offer any interpretation of colonial history? Readers interested in thinking about the relationship between the *Autobiography* and the Revolution should begin with Christopher Looby's chapter on Franklin in *Voicing America.*

RESOURCES

(For more reading suggestions, see the entries on Franklin's "Speech in the Constitutional Convention.")

Primary Works

First French Edition: *Mémoires de la Vie Privée de Benjamin Franklin* (Paris: Chez Buisson, 1791); first English-language edition: *The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin, LL.D.* (London: J. Parsons, 1793); first complete American edition: *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin,* edited by John Bigelow (Philadelphia: Lippincott / London: Trübner, 1868). Definitive edition: *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, A Genetic Text,* edited by J. A. Leo Lemay and P. M. Zall (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–). Digital edition by the Packard Humanities Institute: <http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/> [accessed 13 July 2009].

While the Yale print edition of the *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* sponsored by the American Philosophical Society and Yale University has reached only 1782 as of this writing, the electronic edition presents letters as well as published and unpublished papers papers up to 1792. There is a useful introduction to Franklin by historian Edmund S. Morgan. The electronic version is fully searchable.

Biography

James N. Green and Peter Stallybrass, *Benjamin Franklin: Writer and Printer* (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2006).

An excellent overview of Franklin's career as a writer and printer; the second half covers the complex publication history of the *Autobiography*. Includes over 150 color illustrations.

Criticism

Betsy Erkkila, "Franklin and the Revolutionary Body," *ELH,* 67 (Fall 2000): 717–741.

Considers Franklin's *Autobiography* as a text deeply concerned with self-fashioning of the body in terms of control and shaping of bodily desires and functions. Takes

previous analyses of Franklin's secular life-writing a step further by arguing that for Franklin, the self is intrinsically of the flesh and therefore worldly rather than godly.

Nancy Glazener, "Benjamin Franklin and the Limits of Secular Civil Society," *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography,* 80, 2 (2008): 203–231.

Considers Franklin's attitude toward secularism in civil society, highlighting Franklin's conception of the self as an interest-seeking entity participating in society both for capitalist purposes of market exchange and for creative purposes of reimagining and improving society. An excellent source for readers interested in understanding both Franklin's religious attitudes and his approach to religious pluralism.

J. A. Leo Lemay, "The Theme of Vanity in Franklin's *Autobiography*," in his *Reappraising Benjamin Franklin: A Bicentennial Perspective* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), pp. 372–387.

A detailed consideration of the way Franklin negotiates his high self-esteem throughout the *Autobiography.*

Christopher Looby, "'The Affairs of the Revolution Occasion'd the Interruption': Self, Language, and Nation in Franklin's *Autobiography.*" *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 99–144.

Discusses Franklin's depiction of language acquisition as a part of the process of personal development and, by metaphorical extension, as part of the process of national development. Argues that the absence of the Revolution from Franklin's text reflects his desire to suppress the disruptions, both social and personal, that occurred.

Benjamin Franklin
"Speech in the Convention at the Conclusion of Its Deliberations"

1787. *The Papers of James Madison,* volume III (Washington, D.C.: Langtree & O'Sullivan, 1840)

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was a leading figure in the American Revolution and an author, printer, scientist, inventor, political theorist, and public planner. His essays and political writings were both popular and influential during his lifetime; his *Autobiography* was widely read after his death and had an important influence on multiple generations of readers. Born in Boston, the son of a candle-maker, Franklin received only a short period of formal education; he continued his education through extensive reading, as described in his *Autobiography.* As an adoles-

cent, Franklin was apprenticed to his brother James to learn the printing business. Franklin abandoned his apprenticeship at age 17 and ran off to Philadelphia. He soon traveled to England, where he worked as a printer in a large printing house. In 1726 he returned to Philadelphia where he worked as a clerk and bookkeeper, later setting up his own printing business and becoming the publisher of a newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. He also began an intellectual club called the Junto; out of this group eventually sprang the idea for the Library Company of Philadelphia, the first subscription lending library in North America. In 1730 he established a common-law marriage with Deborah Read, with whom he had two children, only one of whom, Sarah (Sally) survived to adulthood. Franklin also acknowledged a son born before his marriage, William, who was raised in the Franklin home and as an adult would become the last crown-appointed governor of New Jersey.

In the decades before the Revolution, Franklin established himself as an internationally recognized scientist and public planner as well as a successful businessman and writer. His accomplishments are so numerous and so varied that readers today can find it hard to understand how one person could do so much. Although Franklin's accomplishments were certainly remarkable in the eighteenth century, the variety of his fields of endeavor would have been less surprising; he embodied the Enlightenment ideal of the *philosophe,* an accomplished thinker who worked in many areas. In science, Franklin is notable for important discoveries about electricity; as an inventor, he contributed important innovations, including bifocal glasses and the Franklin wood stove; in public planning, he instituted such fixtures of modern society as insurance companies, lending libraries, and volunteer fire companies, in addition to making the first proposal for a union of the American colonies. Franklin was also a distinguished printer and a writer, a successful businessman, a diplomat, and a politician. In 1757 he was appointed Pennsylvania's agent to the British government. When the tensions that led to Revolution began, it was natural that Franklin would be involved; he was active in various ways, notably in securing the crucial alliance with France and serving as the consul to France.

One of Franklin's last acts of service to the United States was his service as a delegate to the 1787 Constitutional Convention. Franklin was 81 years old, with his long and distinguished career, including his service during the Revolution, behind him. The Convention presented the kind of diplomatic and rhetorical challenges that Franklin had already faced many times in his long life of public service. The 1780s were a turbulent time regarded by people of the day as a period of crisis. The Articles of Confederation, agreed to in November 1777 and ratified in March 1781, had held together the union of colonies, but it became increasingly apparent during this decade that the articles were inadequate to the needs of the new nation. Conflicts focused on financial issues led to an armed revolt in Massachusetts in 1786. The states were not uniformly abiding by the articles of the peace; the federal government could not levy taxes or regulate interstate commerce. If the new nation was actually to be a unified nation, a stronger federal government was required, but there was little consensus about just how strong this new federal government should be.

The Constitutional Convention that convened in Philadelphia in 1787 had to resolve a number of crucial questions that divided the public and the delegates who represented them. How powerful should the federal government be? How much power should be reserved to the individual states? How could the rights of individuals be protected with a stronger federal government? How much ability to limit, regulate, or abolish slavery should the federal government have? How should the office of an executive (the president) be structured? How much power should this one individual have, and how should he be elected? Delegates to the convention debated these matters for months, and when the Constitution as ratified was finally presented, it was the product of many compromises—hardly the document that any individual member of the convention would have produced. This was the context in which Benjamin Franklin addressed the convention to argue that it was imperative that the Constitution be approved with the *appearance* of unanimity; no matter what the objections he or any other member might have to the document as written, it was the best constitution likely to be presented and the public needed to see that the convention had approved it unanimously.

Franklin's brief speech was made before a motion was put forward to approve the Constitution by the unanimous agreement of the *states* present, rather than the delegates (since it was clear that all of the delegates would never agree). That motion was carried, and the unanimous approval that Franklin argued for became reality. Franklin's speech in the convention is important both for its historical role and as a remarkable example of Enlightenment rhetoric. What is perhaps most remarkable is that in such a short speech Franklin brings in so many of the themes and rhetorical moves typical of the Enlightenment generally and Franklin specifically: experience as an important teacher of rationality, religious pluralism, reasoned opinion, a vision of the nature of man and the nature of society, a high consciousness of public appearances, and a confidence that humankind would continue to approve its systems and ideas in the future.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Because Franklin's "Speech in the Convention" takes up so many themes found elsewhere in his writing, discussion and research based on comparison of the speech with other works, notably the *Autobiography,* should be fruitful. One of Franklin's primary concerns in the speech is the difference between the convention's private discussions and the need for a public appearance of unity; this theme could be compared usefully to Franklin's concern in part 2 of the *Autobiography* about the difference between genuinely possessing a virtue and appearing to possess it. Discussion of Franklin's approach to public seeming and private being might be developed into a fuller understanding of a Franklinian theory of the difference between public and private. Students interested in the public/private dichotomy should examine Michael Warner's work in *Letters of the Republic;* Warner's theory, influenced by the work of philosopher Jürgen Habermas, should offer an interesting point of comparison for Franklin's approach to public and private both in the "Speech in the Convention" and elsewhere.

2. Another important Enlightenment concern reflected in the "Speech in the Convention" is a theory of the nature of man and society. Discussion of Franklin's ideas about the social contract and the future of democracy as reflected in the "Speech in the Convention" is recommended. Although the optimistic Lockean view of the possibilities of democracy is most generally associated with the American Revolution, in Franklin's speech hints of Thomas Hobbes's more pessimistic view can be heard. Students interested in social theory might want to trace ideas about the social contract in the speech and compare them to the theories of Locke and Hobbes; a further step in analysis might be to ask whether the speech reflects a change in Franklin's thinking about social theory from his earlier writings, such as the 1754 *Albany Plan of Union.*
3. Yet another standard Enlightenment concern found in the speech is the theme of religious pluralism, which might at first glance seem to be an unusual topic in a speech about voting on an avowedly secular Constitution. Franklin implies that people who believe their religious beliefs to be the only correct ones suffer from a limited perspective, and that a similar limitation of vision might prevent delegates in the convention from realizing that the greater good lay in unanimous ratification. Readers interested in Franklin's use of religion in this speech might want to read one of Franklin's earlier speeches from the convention, in which he requested that the delegates pray for divine guidance (June 28, 1787), and then compare the attitudes toward religion expressed here with Franklin's attitudes toward religion as indicated in the *Autobiography.*
4. Another useful touchstone from the *Autobiography* that might assist in analysis of the "Speech in the Convention" would be Franklin's warnings in his memoir about the dangers of arguing too strenuously or of expressing yourself as knowing that you are in the right while others are wrong. How does Franklin's attitude toward rhetoric seem to be at work in this speech? What attitude toward his own knowledge and judgment does Franklin display in the speech? Does he follow his own advice about argument? Students interested in Franklin's rhetorical strategy should consult Barbara Oberg's article on the speech in the volume *Reappraising Benjamin Franklin,* as well as Christina Lupton's article on sincerity and language. (Both sources are found in the annotated bibliography below.)
5. Readers primarily interested in the Constitutional Convention may be interested in considering this speech at the conclusion of the deliberations in connection with Franklin's speech about one of his specific areas of disagreement with the Constitution he ultimately voted to ratify: his earlier argument that the president should not receive a salary. In both speeches, Franklin makes predictions about the future of the United States and its government. Discussion of the extent to which Franklin's predictions did or did not come true could be a useful starting point for thinking about the political implications of Franklin's argument that it was better to agree on a flawed Constitution than to delay ratification waiting for an improbable "perfect" system of government. Robert Ferguson's essay "Ideology and the Framing of the Constitution" could assist students in thinking through how that compromise was accomplished

and what has been the ultimate effect on later understandings of the Constitution and its establishment. Was it good for the public to see a "unanimous" decision, and has it changed how we today think about the U.S. Constitution, for good or for ill?

RESOURCES

(For additional reading suggestions, see the entries on Franklin's *Autobiography*.)

Criticism

Robert Ferguson, "Ideology and the Framing of the Constitution," *Early American Literature,* 22, 2 (1987): 157–165.

Considers Franklin's speech in the context of what he argues is a growing uncertainty among the Founders about the "self-evidence of truth" while they continued to believe that texts could and should be the basis of agreement.

Christina Lupton, "Sincere Performances: Franklin, Tillotson, and Steele on the Plain Style," *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 40, 2 (2007): 177–192.

Examining several essays about literary style, including Franklin's essay "On Literary Style," Lupton demonstrates that eighteenth-century writers were consciously concerned about sincerity in language; but they also recognized that even in their texts advocating plain and sincere language they were aware of the limits of language to reliably reflect external reality. A useful starting point for anyone interested in Franklin's attitudes toward writing, language, and politics.

Barbara B. Oberg, "'Plain, Insinuating, Persuasive': Benjamin Franklin's Final Speech to the Constitutional Convention of 1787" in *Reappraising Benjamin Franklin: A Bicentennial Perspective,* edited by J. A. Leo Lemay (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), pp. 175–192.

The most detailed analysis of Franklin's speech. Oberg analyzes the stylistic achievement of the speech as well as its position in the democratic process.

Philip Freneau, *Poems*

(1786–1815)

Early collections include *Poems of Philip Freneau written . . . during the late war* (Philadelphia: F. Bailey, 1786), *Poems Written between the Years 1768 and 1794* (Monmouth, N.J.: Printed by the author, 1795), and *A Collection of Poems, on American Affairs* (New York: Published by David Longworth, 1815)

Born into a well-to-do New York mercantile family, Philip Freneau (1752–1832) was a poet and newspaper writer and, at times during his life, a sailor and ship's captain, a civil servant, a translator, an editor and publisher, and a farmer. Educated at Princeton, Freneau briefly studied for the ministry but gave that study up while

apparently developing a radically skeptical attitude toward religion. He served in the New Jersey militia during the Revolution and was taken prisoner in 1780 and held for six weeks, an experience he used in a propaganda pamphlet, *The British Prison-Ship* (1781). A Jeffersonian Republican-Democrat, and in his later life by turns a deist and a Swedenborgian, Freneau's political and social writings are generally liberal and intellectual. At the urging of Thomas Jefferson, Freneau served from 1791 to 1793 as editor of the *National Gazette,* a Republican-Democratic newspaper founded to counter the Federalist press. One of Freneau's collaborators on the *National Gazette* was his college roommate, James Madison, later the fourth president of the United States. Although the *National Gazette* was short-lived, Freneau's work on this publication demonstrates his strong political ties to the party of Jefferson, political inclinations that are evident in much of his poetry.

In other elements of his thought as revealed in his writing, notably his religious skepticism and his intense interest in nature as a mirror and emblem of the human condition, Freneau among American poets of the early Republic most resembles the British Romantic poets who were his biographical contemporaries. While literary critics of earlier eras have made much of Freneau as a "pre-Romantic" poet, current critical trends suggest that Freneau's poetry is best viewed not as a precursor of some other movement but rather as a reflection of a wide variety of influences, including the neoclassical tradition that continued to dominate American letters during most of Freneau's years of literary productivity and the extensions of Enlightenment thinking that surrounded the French Revolution, of which Freneau, like most Jeffersonians, was a supporter.

The themes of Freneau's poetry ranged broadly throughout his career; as Emory Elliott points out, critics have often viewed his earlier poetry as superior to his later poetry, but that preference clearly reflects a twentieth-century reading preference for personal lyric poetry. Viewed in terms of Freneau's own lifelong vision of the writer as a political and social actor, his literary career can be viewed as a unified whole, with social progressiveness at its center. For his commencement exercises at Princeton, September 1771, Freneau collaborated with Hugh Henry Brackenridge on "A Poem on the Rising Glory of America," which took a progressive view of the European colonization of the Americas, tracing a westward course of progress from the Old World to the New (and setting the stage for further westward colonization). Other overt political statements can be found in Freneau's antislavery poems, such as "The Island Field Negro" (1791) and his poems that lament the losses incurred by Native Americans as a result of the colonization of their land, such as "The Prophecy of King Tammany" (1782). More opaque to readers not steeped in the political debates of Freneau's day, but valued during his life, were partisan poems of political or social theory, such as "On Mr. Paine's Rights of Man" (1795) or "On the Causes of Political Degeneracy" (1798).

More immediately accessible to contemporary readers are the lyric poems, with their sharp imagery and philosophical musings. "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" (1779), describing the island of St. Croix, extols the Eden-like qualities of the West Indies and contrasts them to the war being waged in the northern colonies. "The House of Night" (1779) and "The Dying Indian" (1784) both take on the problem of death (and the afterlife), expressing a religious skeptic's attitude toward death,

leading to what some critics have called Freneau's nihilism. "The Wild Honey Suckle" (1786) is among the lyrics most widely read and reprinted today; in this brief poem, Freneau takes the approach to nature as an outward expression of inner states of being that make his work remind many of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Compared to Wordsworth's daffodils, however, Freneau's ode to the honeysuckle has a dark subtext. While celebrating the beauty of the flower, Freneau in his final stanza also laments the brevity of the flower's existence and, by implication, the shortness of human life: "From morning suns and evening dews / At first thy little being came: / If nothing once, you nothing lose, / For when you die you are the same; / The space between, is but an hour, / The frail duration of a flower." Lyrics like "The Wild Honey Suckle" demonstrate the qualities of Freneau's poetry that continue to attract readers today.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Like other writers of the era, Freneau makes repeated use of Native Americans in his writing, sometimes as his primary subject, other times as a foil for consideration of Anglo-American society. While Freneau's attitude toward Native Americans (as toward enslaved Africans) is generally sympathetic, that does not necessarily mean that his depiction of them is accurate or even politically neutral. Students interested in examining images of Native Americans in Freneau's poetry should consult Eric Wertheimer's book and Phillip Round's article and might also be interested in Brian W. Dippie's *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), which investigates the relationship between literary depictions and government policies.
2. As noted above, some critics have considered Freneau as a "precursor" of Romantic poetry; others (notably Robert Arner) have argued that neoclassicism, dominant in American poetry of the early Republic, is a better framework for understanding Freneau's work. Students who wish to consider how Freneau's poetry relates to one or both of these modes might wish to use specific British neoclassical and Romantic poets as points of comparison. If Freneau's works seem to challenge the neat separation normally made by literary critics between these two movements, this suggests some of the limitations of the concept of literary periodization. Students interested in this subject should see David Perkins's *Is Literary History Possible?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) for a variety of approaches to this subject.
3. In poems such as "Lines written at Port-Royal," and, perhaps most famously, "To Sir Toby," Freneau paints in sympathetic terms the apparent evils of slavery and suffering of the enslaved. He was not alone in opposing slavery at this early period of the nation. Students interested in the early history of the abolitionist movement might wish to consider Freneau's abolitionist poems in relationship to Sarah Wentworth Morton's "The African Chief" (1792), which was reprinted by abolitionists well into the nineteenth century, but they might also wish to consider how Freneau's work relates to eighteenth-century understandings of race (see the study guide on writing about race and gender) or to compare Freneau's work to that of African Americans such as Phillis Wheatley or Lemuel Haynes.

4. Freneau was both a poet and a journalist, and as Marcus Daniel has described in *Scandal and Civility,* he was among the partisan journalists who played a central role in the development of party politics in the early Republic. Students interested in political history might want to consider Freneau's poetry in light of his Republican-Democratic political commitments. With Brackenridge, Freneau authored "On the Rising Glory of America," which might seem more in line with Federalist politics but also seems to anticipate the Louisiana Purchase. Exploration of the complications of the political implications and contexts of the era could usefully begin with Emory Elliott's chapter on Freneau in *Revolutionary Writers* in tandem with Daniel's chapter on Freneau in *Scandal and Civility.*
5. Freneau's position in literary criticism has risen and fallen over the years; along with other early American poets, in general, study of his work has been largely neglected, especially in the last few decades. Students seeking paper topics might wish to analyze the trends in criticism of Freneau and especially to consider why so little has been written on Freneau in recent decades. College students with training in literary criticism and theory should consider the recent history of theory and criticism for an explanation of the critical neglect of Freneau. Beginning students might still find profitable topics here, by considering what about Freneau seems modern and what does not. Comparison with Phillis Wheatley might also be useful: Regardless of the differences in their backgrounds, how different or similar are Wheatley's and Freneau's poetry? How might those points of comparison help us understand the relatively low level of critical attention Freneau has received compared to Wheatley?

RESOURCES

Criticism

Robert D. Arner, "Neoclassicism and Romanticism: A Reading of Freneau's 'The Wild Honey Suckle,'" *Early American Literature,* 9, 1 (1974): 53–61.

Using "The Wild Honey Suckle" as a case in point, argues that the search for Romantic tendencies in Freneau's writing obscures his real accomplishments, and that understanding Freneau's work in relationship to neoclassicism yields a more favorable assessment.

Marcus Daniel, *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Origins of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Chapter 2 treats Freneau's political journalism.

Emory Elliott, "Philip Freneau: Poetry of Social Commitment," in his *Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic 1725–1810* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 128–170.

A comprehensive consideration of the shape of Freneau's career; argues that, considered in its own terms, Freneau's poetry after 1790 is not a degeneration but a maturation into a fully social poetry.

Phillip Round, "'The Posture That We Give the Dead': Freneau's 'Indian Burying Ground' in Ethnohistorical Context," *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory,* 50, 3 (1994): 1-30.
Analyzes "The Indian Burying Ground" in relationship to burial customs among Anglo-Americans and among the Delaware and in the context of English graveyard poetry. Argues that the poem demonstrates the negotiation of multiple cultural contexts in the invention of American identity.

Eric Wertheimer, *Imagined Empires: Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771–1876* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
Considers Freneau's treatment of South American indigenous identities as part of a nineteenth-century evolution of American attitude toward the historical legacy of the Incas and Aztecs.

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay
The Federalist

(New York: J. & A. McLean, 1788);
Revised and corrected edition (New York: George F. Hopkins, 1802)

The essays known collectively as the Federalist Papers had an important influence on the writing and ratifying of the U.S. Constitution. Following the Constitutional Convention of 1787, when the Constitution (without the first ten amendments, called the Bill of Rights) was drafted and approved by delegations from the states, each state had to ratify it, and in some states this was a very controversial process. One of those states was New York, where several writers published articles in periodicals objecting to the proposed Constitution and the strong federal government it would establish on the grounds that it would infringe too much on the rights of individuals and create an aristocratic ruling class. Three advocates of the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804), James Madison (1751–1836), and John Jay (1745–1829), published essays in favor of the Constitution, writing under one pseudonym, Publius. Seventy-seven of these articles appeared in New York publications before they were collected, with the addition of several others, in a book called *The Federalist* in 1788. The Federalist Papers helped achieve the ratification of the Constitution by the states; they have remained important because they continue to be used by historians and legal scholars as an aid to understanding the intentions of the framers of the Constitution.

All three authors of the Federalist Papers supported the Constitution, which was strongly associated at the time with the Federalist party and the strong central government favored by that party. However, a brief overview of the careers of the three writers demonstrates that their political positions were somewhat more diverse than might be expected. Hamilton, coordinator of the project and author of the greatest number of the Federalist Papers, was a New York attorney

and politician, a member of the New York state legislature, and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Both before and after the Constitutional debates, Hamilton consistently advocated a strong central government, including such institutions as a central army and central bank. An important political player in what became the Federalist Party, Hamilton later served as the first secretary of the treasury under President George Washington. James Madison, responsible for writing over a third of the essays, was a member of the Virginia legislature and also a delegate to the Constitutional Convention; Madison is known today as the "Father of the Constitution" because his draft, known as the Virginia Plan, became the basis for the Constitution as it was adopted. Madison was later responsible for the first ten amendments to the Constitution, written largely to appease the Constitution's opponents. Madison broke with Hamilton and the Federalists later, aligning himself with Jefferson (under whom he served as secretary of state) and, with Jefferson, helping to found what was at first called the Republican or Democratic-Republican Party (the forerunner of today's Democratic Party). As a member of this party, Madison was elected the fourth president of the United States (1809–1817). Finally, John Jay, author of the smallest number of Federalist Papers, was a New York attorney who had been active in the Continental Congress, where he developed a reputation as a moderate, and was responsible for drafting the New York constitution. Jay was later the first chief justice of the United States (1789–1795) and the second governor of New York (1795–1801).

How much the Federalist Papers might really have affected the vote for ratification is difficult to determine. What is clear, however, is that the content of the essays was designed to explain the Constitution and to justify it. The essays begin by arguing that the union of the states was essential and that the current governing document, the Articles of Confederation, was inadequate to maintain the political union. The essays go on to discuss the provisions of the Constitution in detail and to explain how those provisions, including all the components of the federal government, were compatible with a republican form of government. (It is important to keep in mind here that "republican" in the 1780s and 1790s refers to a form of government, not a political party; a republic, not a democracy, was the form of government revolutionary Americans believed they had fought the war to attain, and the form that protected the rights of individuals the most.) Because the essays go into such detail explaining the various components of the Constitution, they have been used by historians, legal scholars, and the Supreme Court as guides to the intentions of the framers of the Constitution. While the Federalist Papers have no status as law, they have been cited hundreds of times in supreme court decisions. Most certainly, they allow the general reader to come to a far more complex understanding of the problems, issues, and controversies that went into the construction of the document on which the U.S. government is based.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Although the authorship of most of the individual essays has been mostly established, there has been some controversy over authorship: for twelve of the essays, both Hamilton and Madison claimed authorship. Both historians and

literary critics generally side with Madison, partly as a result of stylistic analysis. This conflict points to an interesting issue for discussion: distinguishing the voices of the Federalist Papers' three authors. Discussion and study of the style of the various authors might proceed purely from the point of view of the prose style of the essays; Albert Furtwangler's book *The Authority of Publius* is recommended reading for students interested in stylistic analysis of the essays. Analysis of the topics addressed by each of the writers and the politics of the essays could also be fruitful; in this case students would do well to begin with biographical study of the three authors to assist in understanding the evolution of these thinkers' political views.

2. Rhetorical analysis is another fruitful approach; analysis of the logical forms in which arguments are cast, the use of emotional appeals, and the ways in which the authors create authority for the speaking voice of the essays is recommended. Once again, Furtwangler's *Authority of Publius* is a useful jumping-off point; Furtwangler argues that authority is created through the use of a particular style and speaking voice. Discussion or writing might focus on testing out Furtwangler's argument: Can other sources of authority be found in the essays? Is the style consistent enough from one author to another to be identified definitively as the source of authority? How does the style Furtwangler describes interact with emotional appeals used in the essays? Another useful way to proceed with a rhetorical analysis would be comparatively: interesting points of comparison might be found in the rhetoric of the opponents of the Constitution (often called Anti-Federalists) or in the Constitution itself or the Declaration of Independence.
3. A rhetorical analysis might also consider the audience assumed by the essays. Discussion might begin by examining the inferences that can be drawn from the way in which the essays are written, but a more detailed study could proceed to a broader examination of the newspapers in which the essays originally appeared. (See the Library of Congress electronic edition for a listing of the papers in which the essays first appeared.) By reading other articles in these newspapers, students could begin to construct a broader sense of the reading public whom Hamilton, Madison, and Jay imagined as their readers. Basic demographic factors such as race, age, and gender all affect how readers might respond to a work, but so do factors that are more difficult to predict: level of education, social class, and perhaps most important, prior attitude toward the issues being discussed.
4. As already noted, the Federalist Papers are often viewed as a supplement in understanding the Constitution. For students interested in the political theory of the founding era, then, these essays are an essential primary text. The political theories of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Baron de Montesquieu, among others, should be studied as background to understanding the social and political theories at work in the Federalist Papers. Often, readers who have not studied the political rhetoric of the Revolution assume that the Founders were a relatively consistent group in their politics and that the political ideas behind the Revolution were fairly straightforward. These assumptions could be complicated considerably by a careful comparison of the Federalist Papers

to rhetoric from the beginning of the Revolution, such as Paine's *Common Sense* or the Declaration of Independence. In making this analysis, the difference in the political contexts of 1776 and 1787 should be taken into account.

5. Finally, the Federalist Papers, while planned and coordinated by Hamilton as a coherent project, were still published as separate essays, and among those essays, certain individual ones stand out as particularly worthy of extended attention. Number 54, for example, deals with slavery and representation in the federal government; it could profitably be studied in relationship to other contemporary writings about slavery. Number 10, which deals with the dangers of factions (what we would today call political parties), is crucial because of the arguments it presents for the possibility of maintaining a large republic; students might wish to consider this essay in light of later debates around the Louisiana Purchase or literature that deals with the frontier, such as Hugh Henry Brackenridge's novel *Modern Chivalry.* As a final example, number 84, which explains why an enumeration of individual rights is not necessary, could be compared with any number of writings treating individual rights (for example, the Declaration of Independence or *Common Sense*).

RESOURCES

Primary Work

The Federalist Papers <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html> [accessed 26 June 2009].

Provides text of all 85 essays with original date and place of publication.

Biography

Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

The most accessible of the many available Hamilton biographies.

Garry Wills, *James Madison* (New York: Times Books, 2002).

A brief biography that focuses on Madison's presidency and also provides a succinct account of his involvement with the framing of the Constitution.

Criticism

Albert Furtwangler, *The Authority of Publius: A Reading of the Federalist Papers* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

Argues that the style of the Federalist Papers is the source of its authority. While the claim is difficult to prove conclusively, this volume is useful to students interested in undertaking stylistic study.

Michael Warner, "Textuality and Legitimacy in the Printed Constitution," in his *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Analyzes the importance of print culture to the Constitution, and of the printed Constitution to U.S. culture.

Lemuel Haynes
Liberty Further Extended: Or, Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-Keeping

Circa 1776. First published as "'Liberty Further Extended': A 1776 Antislavery Manuscript by Lemuel Haynes," edited by Ruth Bogin, *William and Mary Quarterly,* 40, 1 (1983): 85–105

Lemuel Haynes (1753–1833) was an African American minister who argued against slavery. Born in Connecticut, evidently to an interracial couple, Haynes was given up by his parents, indentured as an agricultural worker in his youth, and educated as a Calvinist Christian. From 1774–1776 he served in a local militia, taking part in several Revolutionary campaigns. By the 1780s he was established as a Calvinist minister in Vermont, and he had married a white woman. Haynes served as minister to predominantly white congregations in New England for over thirty years. Middlebury College awarded him an honorary degree in 1804, the first such award to an African American on record. Between 1792 and 1821 Haynes published essays, sermons, and poems. Additional manuscripts, discovered after his death, were not published until the twentieth century; these include the long essay *Liberty Further Extended.*

In politics, Haynes was a republican, but as John Saillant has demonstrated in his recent biographical study, Haynes's version of republicanism differentiated itself from Jefferson's; what Saillant calls "black Republicanism" advocated the peaceful coexistence of the races, as opposed to the Jeffersonian republicans' desire to keep the races separate. In religion, Haynes was an orthodox Calvinist who argued against the emerging doctrine of universal salvation. Although *Liberty Further Extended* is one of his earliest writings and predates his full development of both his political and theological thought, this early essay does demonstrate the important interconnections of Haynes's religious and political thought. Using more detail than that in the Declaration of Independence, Haynes traces the origins of natural liberty to a divine power in order to demonstrate the incompatibility of Christianity and slavery or any other form of involuntary subjugation. Haynes follows a strictly logical form of argument, laying out his proposition clearly at the beginning of the essay and following it with clear arguments; yet many of these arguments invoke Biblical authority. Thus, his essay is allied both with the sermon form and with secular forms of argument. Throughout, although the essay is focused on secular rights, Haynes appeals to religious authority, as we see in his summation where he discusses politics in strongly religious terms: "I would solicit you Seriously to reflect on your conduct, whether you are not guilty of unjust Oppression. Can you wash your hands, and say, I am Clean from this Sin? Perhaps you will Dare to Say it before Men; But dare you Say it Before the tremendous tribunal of that God Before Whome we must all, in a few pre-

carious moments appear?" Haynes's essay and his life present important evidence for understanding the political and cultural development of African American Christianity as well as the political origins of the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. An obvious starting point for discussion and analysis of *Liberty Further Extended* is to compare it to the Declaration of Independence. Haynes clearly has the arguments made in the Declaration in mind as he writes his essay. On which points do Haynes and Jefferson make nearly identical arguments? Where, if anywhere, do they disagree? Where do they use different kinds of evidence to make the same argument? In particular, students are encouraged to consider the sections of the Declaration of Independence as Jefferson drafted it that were deleted by the Continental Congress and that dealt with the slave trade. (See the bibliography for the entry on the Declaration of Independence for sources). How do Jefferson's arguments about slavery in his original version of the Declaration compare to Haynes's arguments about slavery? Students who have read both texts might start their analysis by attempting to put the arguments of Haynes and Jefferson in dialogue with each other.
2. One observation readers might make after comparing Haynes's arguments with Jefferson's is the greater importance given to religious arguments in Haynes's essay. The Revolution is often regarded and discussed as a social movement that was largely secular in orientation, but Haynes's essay demonstrates that for many Americans, religion played an important role in the rationale for revolution. John Saillant's recent biography of Haynes explores both his theological and political thought thoroughly; readers interested in the relationship between Calvinist theology and human rights discourses will also want to explore more of Haynes's writings, available in Richard Newman's edition of his works. Remember that while many white Revolutionary leaders were deists, the African American voices that have been transmitted through the historical record tend to be strongly evangelical in nature. (In addition to Haynes, think of Phillis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano.) Discussion of the possible causes of this difference is strongly recommended.
3. On the other hand, conventional references to God as the foundation of human rights permeate pro-Revolutionary propaganda so strongly that readers may find less difference than they might anticipate between Haynes's essay and the work of a well-known deist such as Thomas Paine. After the Declaration of Independence, *Common Sense* is the next best-known source for discussion of human rights as a basis for the Revolution. Students are encouraged to compare Haynes's essay with Paine's to examine not only the use of religion and attitudes toward slavery but also the general grounds of argument about human rights. Students also are encouraged to consider the relationship between Paine's and Haynes's arguments by finding passages in each text that speak to the same issues and to consider whether they agree or disagree and on what grounds. Using the same lines of argument, discussion might proceed by attempting to

extend Haynes's and Paine's arguments to predict, on the basis of what they say in their texts, how the two authors might respond to each other.

4. As does Wheatley, Haynes speaks generally to an audience that is substantially more powerful than he is. Since he is asking his audience to reflect on their behavior and move for social action, this creates a difficult rhetorical situation. Readers are encouraged to consider how Haynes creates a position of authority for himself within his text. This examination should include the tone of his argument, the structure of the essay, and the specific claims Haynes makes. Nonetheless, as far as we know, Haynes's essay was not published in his lifetime. Based on historical and cultural history, students might wish to attempt to predict how white readers would have been likely to respond to the essay. If Haynes did not attempt to place the essay for publication, why might that have been? If he did and editors turned it down, why might they have done so?

RESOURCES

Criticism

Richard Newman, ed., *Black Preacher to White America: The Collected Writings of Lemuel Haynes, 1774–1883* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1990).

A reliable edition of most of Haynes's written works.

Rita Roberts, "Patriotism and Political Criticism: The Evolution of Political Consciousness in the Mind of a Black Revolutionary Soldier," *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 27, 4 (1994): 569–588.

A comprehensive critical study and biography that traces the complexities of Haynes's religious, social, and political thought.

John Saillant, *Black Puritan, Black Republican: The Life and Thought of Lemuel Haynes, 1753–1833* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Uses Haynes as a model for understanding the development of African American political consciousness as a result of blacks' participation in the Revolution.

Washington Irving
"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*

(New York: C. S. Van Winkle, 1819–1820)

Washington Irving (1783–1859) was a celebrated and prolific author of fiction, essays, biographies, and histories; in his lifetime, Irving was recognized as a major writer both in Europe and in the United States. While his position in the literary canon has declined somewhat in recent years, he has long been recognized as one of the most important writers of the post-Revolutionary generation. Born

in New York City, the son of Scotch-English immigrants, just weeks after the ceasefire at the end of the Revolution, Irving was named for George Washington. As a young man, Irving began writing about theater and social issues in a New York newspaper and began to earn a literary reputation. His family sent him to Europe in 1804; he spent over two years touring, writing, and meeting writers and other artists. When he returned home, he studied law and was admitted to the bar in New York, but his literary career remained a driving interest. In 1809 he published the satirical *History of New-York.* The War of 1812 interrupted both Irving's writing career and his family's business; after brief service in the New York militia, Irving began working to try to restore the health of his family's business but was forced to declare bankruptcy. In 1815 he returned to Europe, where he remained for seventeen years.

In 1819–1820, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* was published first in the United States and in 1820 in England. The success of the *Sketch Book* established Irving with an international reputation. He followed it with similar collections of short stories, *Bracebridge Hall* (1822) and *Tales of a Traveller* (1824). After spending some time in Spain, Irving published a series of works on Spanish topics, beginning with the immensely popular *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828). In 1829, Irving began a career in public service, accepting an appointment as secretary to the American legation in England. In 1832 he published another book with Spanish topics and settings, *The Alhambra.* In the same year, he returned to the United States, where he spent several years continuing to write and publish; his literary reputation remained high, and aspiring writers, including notables such as Edgar Allan Poe, often sought him out for advice and assistance with their careers. From 1842 to 1846, Irving served as U.S. Minister to Spain. After his return, he continued to write; major projects included revisions of his own earlier works for an edition with Putnam and a five-volume biography of George Washington, completed shortly before Irving's death.

The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon includes two of the stories for which Irving remains famous today, but "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" are not wholly representative of the volume. The work (published in seven installments in the United States and in two volumes in England) contains other stories like these as well as sketches and essays, with the essays mostly addressing the experience of an American traveler in Britain and Europe. Sketches are a genre that has lost popularity, but at the time Irving was writing, sketches that delineated a character or drew a picture of a scene that expressed some particular emotion were enjoyed by readers as much as stories with plots. In *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* Irving uses story, sketch, and essay to vary the mood and pace of his collection. Although "sketches" might seem like filler to readers today, because they were enjoyed by early-nineteenth-century audiences, they suggest how much literary taste has changed over time.

The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon was well received both in the United States and in England, where it helped to break the stereotype that American writers were not worth British readers' attention. Notable British figures who admired the volume included George Gordon, Lord Byron; William Godwin; and Sir Walter Scott. The stories that are remembered today ("Rip Van Winkle" and "The

Legend of Sleepy Hollow") were singled out by critics for attention, but they also responded very positively to sentimental sketches that are now largely forgotten, notably "The Widow and Her Son" and "The Broken Heart." We can see *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* as a bridge of sorts between eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century taste and literary styles.

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is one of the stories that Irving claims was "found among the papers" of his character Deidrich Knickerbocker, an old-fashioned Dutch version of the con man. In "Sleepy Hollow," schoolmaster Ichabod Crane comes from Connecticut to a New York town with Dutch inhabitants, where he keeps school and becomes a rival for the affections of Katrina Van Tassel. Brom Bones, a local man who also wants to marry Katrina, uses a local legend about a Hessian soldier who lost his head during a Revolutionary War battle to terrify the superstitious Ichabod Crane into leaving town. Although cartoon and film versions of the story often accept the headless horseman as a "real" ghost, in Irving's version the truth is clear: Brom Bones has played a prank on Crane in order to frighten and embarrass his rival. He succeeds, perhaps even beyond his own expectations; Crane is never seen in Sleepy Hollow again, and Bones and Katrina marry. The story thus pits New Englanders against New Yorkers and the superstitious against the fearless. Unlike his earlier work *The History of New York,* in which the New York Dutch are often mocked for their superstitions, in "Sleepy Hollow" the outsider is taken in by the local legend, but the Dutchman himself merely uses it to his advantage. The enduring appeal of ghost stories, however, is demonstrated by the fact that versions of the story that accept the "reality" of the headless horseman have been so popular that it is often difficult for readers of Irving's tale to recognize the story they thought they knew.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. As noted, Ichabod Crane, a schoolteacher from Connecticut, is an outsider in Sleepy Hollow. Specifically, he is a New Englander, coming into a New York Dutch community. He reads, we are told, Cotton Mather—a Puritan minister famous from the founding days of Massachusetts. He comes to Sleepy Hollow, assumes a role in the community, and then is run off. The regional issues in the story are worth attention. What regional differences between New Yorkers and their near neighbors in Connecticut and elsewhere in New England does Irving identify? Students interested in these questions might want to start by reading at least part of Irving's *History of New York.*
2. Several critics have raised issues related to masculinity in the story. Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones certainly seem to represent distinctly different versions of masculinity, so students might want to start with a careful reading of the characterizations of these two characters before considering the cultural history of masculinity in the early Republic. David Anthony's essay on "Sleepy Hollow" brings together images of manhood with questions of the economic panics of the postwar era. David Greven's essay considers Crane's character in the context of male friendship and heterosexual romance. Students interested in early American models of masculinity should consult chapter 1 of Michael

S. Kimmel's *Manhood in America,* second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

3. For readers outside the New York area, New York's Dutch heritage is often lost in the bigger picture of early American history. For New Yorkers in the post-Revolutionary United States, however, cultural differences between colonies were obvious. For an American writer such as Irving, in particular, the relationship to England was complicated. Not descended from English colonists, Irving nonetheless inherited an English literary heritage on which to build his American literary career. The use of New York Dutch characters and settings in an American story that he hoped would sell well in England is thus a complicated ethnic issue. Students interested in considering this topic further should consult McLamore's essay.
4. The postscript of the story is meant to be humorous, teasing out the jokes that have already been made in the *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* around the figure of Deidrich Knickerbocker. Does the postscript serve any other purposes? Since it comments on both believing (or not believing) and liking (or not liking), the story, one possible way to read the postscript is as commentary on the act of reading fiction. Students who are interested in reading and the history of reading might be especially interested in pursuing this possibility. Exploration of this topic could move backwards from the postscript to a consideration of how the story itself guides (and models) reading or interpretation.
5. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is quite possibly the most-filmed piece of early American literature. As noted earlier, many film (or cartoon or comic-book) versions of the story change the plot, often considerably. That does not mean that comparative studies of the film and original versions might not be worthwhile. No matter how adaptations deal with the horseman and Ichabod, they often are dealing with some of the same thematic issues as the original story. The changes the adapters choose to make tell us something about their attitudes toward those thematic issues. A particularly fruitful analysis might come from consideration of the 1999 Tim Burton film *Sleepy Hollow* (starring Johnny Depp). Many aspects of the plot have been changed dramatically: To take just two examples, Ichabod Crane is a police investigator rather than a schoolteacher, and he has been sent to investigate a series of murders. Nonetheless, the themes of the film mirror many of the concerns of the story. An analysis of how various social and cultural concerns are dealt with in Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* as compared with Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" could illuminate cultural differences and continuities between post-Revolutionary America and the present day.

RESOURCES

Biography

Andrew Burstein, *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).

An accessible biography that situates Irving's works in terms of its relationship to the social and cultural trends of Irving's times.

Criticism

David Anthony, "'Gone Distracted': 'Sleepy Hollow,' Gothic Masculinity, and the Panic of 1819," *Early American Literature,* 40, 1 (2005): 111–144.

Connects "Sleepy Hollow" to the financial panic of 1819 and the anxiety over an economy based on paper money. Highly recommended for readers interested in political implications of Irving's work.

David Greven, "Troubling Our Heads about Ichabod: 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,' Classic American Literature, and the Sexual Politics of Homosocial Brotherhood," *American Quarterly,* 56, 1 (2004): 83–110.

Considers the character of Ichabod Crane in the context of models of masculinity in the early nineteenth century, with particular emphasis on the relations of men with other men and the role of women as eternally mysterious in the masculine imagination.

Richard V. McLamore, "The Dutchman in the Attic: Claiming an Inheritance in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon,*" *American Literature,* 72, 1 (2000): 31–57.

Examines the gestures in *The Sketch Book* toward British literary culture as an American inheritance in the complicated post-Revolutionary cultural moment.

Laura Plummer and Michael Nelson, "'Girls Can Take Care of Themselves': Gender and Storytelling in Washington Irving's 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,'" *Studies in Short Fiction,* 30, 2 (1993): 175–184.

Considers storytelling as a dimension of gender and power in "Sleepy Hollow"; argues that Ichabod is an intrusive male in a female-dominated community in which women tell the stories and thus determine the truth.

Washington Irving
"Rip Van Winkle," *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*

(New York: C. S. Van Winkle, 1819–1820)

Washington Irving (1783–1859) was one of the first American writers to achieve an international reputation. He was living in England when he published the collection of short stories, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon,* in which his most famous short stories appeared. Like "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," "Rip Van Winkle" has taken on a life of its own; the story has been adapted and revised in cartoons, films, and plays, often with important changes from the original version. The first thing an attentive reader must do, then, is to differentiate the story as Irving wrote it from other versions available.

A simple villager, Rip Van Winkle is characterized as happy-go-lucky, but also lazy and unwilling to work, the likable but shiftless husband of a shrewish wife. Indeed, Dame Van Winkle's nagging and scolding drive Rip to spend as

much time as possible at the inn or in the mountains hunting. During one such outing, Rip encounters some strange men, dressed in old-fashioned Dutch clothing playing a strange game; Rip drinks some of their liquor, and, as just about everyone knows, falls asleep for twenty years. When he returns home, his wife has died—at which he breathes a sigh of relief. Rip has also missed the American Revolution, and has to have all the events he has missed explained to him. There are plenty of hints in the story that we are not to take Rip's story seriously, but that he has simply abandoned his family and now, in his old age, has decided to return, using the story about the supernatural Dutchmen and his twenty-year sleep as an explanation for his absence.

The story is clearly meant to be entertaining, and it succeeds on several levels; readers can enjoy the fairy-tale quality of the story while still getting a laugh out of Rip's lies and his neighbor's responses, as well as Knickerbocker's flawed reasoning and bombast. In addition, dealing as it does with the rapidity of change occasioned by the American revolution, the story deals, in a light way, with various social issues: the new culture of electioneering and representative government, factionalism, and social mobility in the wake of the war. In the continually shifting landscape of American society, this theme may be the central reason that Rip Van Winkle has remained such a central story: whether they like it or not, Americans often feel that their cultural landscape has changed dramatically overnight.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. In cartoon versions and other versions designed for children, "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" have been treated as if they are essentially fairy tales—stories that take seriously the existence of supernatural phenomena. When reading the stories as Irving wrote them, however, there is significant evidence that, even within the world of the story, the reader is not supposed to take the "supernatural" elements seriously. Careful reading of these two stories must include a sensitivity to irony (that is, when the narrator says one thing, there is the possibility that the reader is supposed to understand him as meaning something different). Once discussion has located the various elements of the texts that hint at an ironic attitude toward the supernatural events of the tales, discussion and analysis can turn to the question of why Irving includes these hints, rather than simply telling supernatural stories in a straightforward way, as a true fairy tale would do. (Why, for example, hint that Rip Van Winkle is lying? Readers presumably know that the story is not "true" without these hints.) Folklore, superstition, and the supernatural, in other words, become one of the themes of these stories, so analysis of the treatment of these elements as themes is encouraged.
2. *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* includes several stories that are notable and continue to be studied today, but the relationship of tales within the collection is also worthy of consideration. The familiar story "Rip Van Winkle," for example, appears in the collection between a sketch titled "The Wife" and an essay on "English Writers on America." These two sketches can and should influence readers' understanding of "Rip Van Winkle." "The Wife,"

which precedes "Rip," presents a wife who is a striking contrast to Dame Van Winkle. The title character of "The Wife" is so superhumanly supportive of her husband as to be considered by him "a very angel." When we consider "Rip Van Winkle" as a counterpoint to this sketch, the role of Dame Van Winkle is emphasized, possibly suggesting that the story is more about "petticoat government" than about supernatural events in the Catskill Mountains. Students seeking a new perspective on familiar stories would be well advised to examine "Rip Van Winkle" and "Sleepy Hollow" in terms of their relationships to other stories and sketches in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon.*

3. As the relationship between "The Wife" and "Rip Van Winkle" suggests, gender is a category of analysis that can fruitfully be brought to bear on these tales. Judith Fetterley's reading of "Rip Van Winkle" in *The Resisting Reader* is a classic of feminist criticism. Fetterley points out that stories like "Rip Van Winkle" ask the reader to sympathize with a point of view that sees women (in the form of Dame Van Winkle) as the enemy. While this reading has been influential in asking critics to rethink basic assumptions about how readers relate to fiction, there are other ways to bring gender to bear on Irving's writing. Aside from Dame Van Winkle, what role models does Irving offer women? ("The Wife" is a good place to start, but there are many other female figures to consider in the collection.) Do any of the stories suggest that the roles available to women are limiting, or are the feminine ideals presented here separate from any sense of critique?
4. During Rip Van Winkle's absence, many of his friends leave or die, his wife dies—and the united American colonies band together to throw off the government of the British and establish a democracy. The story shows us both that things have changed and that some things have not changed (the picture of King George outside the inn has simply been changed to George Washington). What kind of attitude does the narrative encourage us to take toward the new culture of democracy? How are the people gathered for the election depicted, and what conclusions do you think a reader of the story might be expected to draw about the nature of democracy in the new nation?
5. "Rip Van Winkle" has both a postscript and a note. The note, in particular, is often ignored in interpretations of the story. Since it does not deal with the central story but presents yet another folktale, it is easy to ignore the note. Students who are interested in narrative form, or the structure of the short story, though, might want to investigate the role of the note and the postscript in more detail. Also, the note uses indigenous people's stories, and this is also different from anything that has gone before in the story. What is the effect of this accumulation of cultural and ethnic storytelling traditions? What does it say about Irving as an American author?

RESOURCES

Criticism

Andrew Burstein, "Rip Van Winkle Awakens" in his *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), pp. 109–132.

Describes the writing of the story, the folklore sources that Irving drew on, and the context of American history in 1819, as well as introducing a variety of ways to interpret the story. A good starting point for students looking for essay topics.

Judith Fetterley, "An American Dream: Rip Van Winkle," in her *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 1–11.

This important feminist interpretation demonstrates the implicit gender values embodied in "Rip Van Winkle" and examines the reader's experience of those gender values.

Robert A. Ferguson, "Rip Van Winkle and the Generational Divide in American Culture," *Early American Literature,* 40, 3 (2005): 529–544.

Considers the satirical treatment of Rip as referring specifically to changes in American society in the post-Revolutionary generation.

Thomas Jefferson
The Declaration of Independence

(Philadelphia: Second Continental Congress, 1776)

Although the Declaration of Independence today is often regarded as a symbol of the entire Revolution, at the time it was written in 1776, the shooting war had already begun, and publication of the declaration, though important, was just one in a series of rapidly developing events. As described in the general introduction to this volume, during the 1760s and early 1770s the thirteen British colonies in North America presented a variety of forms of resistance to laws enacted by the British Parliament to tax the colonists. Tensions mounted after the citizens of Boston dumped British tea into the bay, and Parliament passed a series of laws, collectively known as the Coercive Acts, to punish Massachusetts. The colonies responded with solidarity and, through the Continental Congress, committed collectively to a trade embargo against British goods. Fighting began in Massachusetts in 1775; rhetoric grew heated, with Paine's *Common Sense* appearing at the beginning of 1776. By the spring, a formal declaration of independence was considered necessary in order to solicit foreign aid. A committee composed of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Roger Sherman was charged with drafting the document. Jefferson was assigned the task of writing the first draft. He did so; the committee made some alterations; and their draft was presented to Congress and approved on July 2. After approving the document in principle, Congress revised it again before accepting the declaration on 4 July 1776. The most important change was the deletion of a large portion of the original text, including a passage critical of the slave trade.

The Declaration of Independence, then, clearly was collaboratively written; but it is generally attributed to Jefferson (1743–1826), who throughout his life continued to resent the editing of the Congress. Jefferson was later the third president of the United States; he was also a writer, philosopher, architect, and inventor. Born into a prominent planter's family in Virginia, Jefferson received a classical preparatory education and studied philosophy, mathematics, and metaphysics at the College of William and Mary. After graduating with highest honors, he studied law and was admitted to the bar in Virginia in 1767; in 1769 he entered the Virginia colonial legislature, just as tensions between the colonies and Great Britain were mounting. Historians have disagreed about the influences that had the most impact on Jefferson as he was drafting the Declaration of Independence, but several sources seem clear: the Bill of Rights enacted by Parliament in 1689 and the political theories of John Locke, especially his *Second Treatise of Government* (1690).

The Declaration of Independence as adopted by Congress can be divided in various ways, but at its most basic, it consists of three parts: the introduction or preamble, which asserts several claims about human rights and the basic principles of government; the main body, which lists the colonies' complaints against the king and demonstrates that the colonists have attempted all nonviolent means of redress, without success; and the final paragraph, which actually declares the thirteen colonies independent of Great Britain. In this broad outline, we can see Jefferson's reliance on syllogistic reasoning: he begins by stating his assumptions (among other things, that government depends on the consent of the people and that all people are endowed with a set of rights), lays out a set of specific facts (the king's tyranny and the failure of the colonists' attempts at reconciliation), and draws a conclusion based on the relationship of the specific facts to the general principles (the Americans must separate from Great Britain in order to restore a proper government).

After its adoption by the Congress, the Declaration of Independence was printed, and copies were distributed throughout the colonies. There were also public readings of the document throughout the colonies. Washington had the document read to the army, and Massachusetts required ministers to read it to their congregations. In some places, after hearing the document read, crowds tore down signs and symbols that referred to royal authority. In the centuries since its adoption, the Declaration of Independence has been revered as a statement of core principles of U.S. government and social theory. However, the Declaration of Independence is not U.S. law (although some states have incorporated it into their state constitutions). It stands as both a central artifact of the Revolution and its ideals and a symbol of Americans' belief in democracy and in government founded in written, shared statements of political philosophy.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. One of the first observations that strikes many readers of the Declaration of Independence is the contradiction between the historical fact of slavery and the declared "self-evident" principle that "All men are created equal" and

indeed that the right of liberty is "inalienable." While it may be tempting to simply indict the founders as hypocrites and let the matter rest, the truth is more complex, and textual analysis can provide the basis for constructing a somewhat fuller picture of both the ethical and political situation. Jefferson, a southerner and a slaveholder, wrote a longer critique of the institution of slavery as part of his original draft of the Declaration of Independence, but the Congress deleted it. Students interested in this subject should compare Jefferson's draft with the Congress's revised version. (A convenient parallel text is offered as an appendix in Jay Fliegelman's *Declaring Independence,* and the manuscript of Jefferson's original draft can be viewed on the Library of Congress's Declaration website.) Notes from the debates should also be considered. Students might also be interested to examine later texts by African Americans, women, and others that take up the Declaration as a model. (See, for a Revolutionary-era example, Lemuel Haynes's *Liberty Further Extended.*) Again, it is simple enough to say that these writers felt the founders were hypocrites and wanted to correct their mistakes, but a consideration of how and why the Declaration of Independence would be used as a model for those who felt the Republic had not yet liberated them can lead to a more nuanced analysis.

2. A related topic for discussion is the question of how the states and the union of those states are represented in the Declaration of Independence. Our present-day assumption tends to be that the "nation" of the United States was always conceived as one unified country. However, the Articles of Confederation and the debates that surrounded the Constitution make it clear that there was not a single unified vision of how the states would or should be related to each other, even after the successful achievement of independence. Students interested in the question of the union and a vision of nationalism as reflected in the Declaration of Independence are encouraged to begin with a close reading of the document, paying attention to the representation of "the people" and "the states," followed by a similar analysis of related texts such as the Constitution. Jennifer Kennedy's article about the 1826 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence will be useful in understanding the growth of nationalism.
3. As noted in the study guide on novels, critics often interpret early American fiction as allegorical, implying attitudes toward political freedom through stories about the struggles for independence, security, and virtue of individual characters. Rather than starting with novels, students interested in this relationship might wish to begin with the Declaration of Independence and look for parallels between it and novels of the time, beyond the simple use of terms like liberty. Do early American novels (such as *Charlotte Temple, The Coquette, The Power of Sympathy,* or *Modern Chivalry*) rely on syllogistic reasoning, as the Declaration of Independence does? Do novels reflect on the specific principles discussed in the preamble? Do they present figures who, like the king of England, are depicted as carrying out a series of tyrannical acts? Beginning with a close analysis of the parts of the Declaration of Independence can allow a more direct study of the influence of political rhetoric on novels.

4. In the last few years, critics have paid a great deal of attention to the role of print culture and speech in the American Revolution. Many have argued that without a strong sense of the importance of print as a way of spreading political ideas, the Revolution could not have happened in the way that it did. The Declaration of Independence, which was preserved as a handwritten document, distributed in printed form, and publicly read all over the colonies, is a particularly interesting example. Students interested in the written and oral aspects of political discourse in relationship to the Declaration of Independence should examine Michael Warner's *Letters of the Republic* and Christopher Looby's *Voicing America* as well as Fliegelman's *Declaring Independence*. These three scholars frame an interesting set of questions about the role of language in American politics. Students interested in these questions might wish to pursue comparative studies that look at contemporary political speech and writing. Does the growth of the Internet affect politics in any way that parallels the use of print or oratory during the Revolution? A close analysis of the relationship of print and oratory in the Revolution can provide new perspectives for examining contemporary changes in communications.
5. Jefferson wrote and spoke several times about the process of composition of the Declaration of Independence. Clearly he thought his original draft was superior to the Congress's version. A consideration of the two versions might proceed by attempting to reconstruct the principles by which Jefferson would have considered his version superior and the principles on which Congress seems to have edited. Examining Jefferson's accounts of the process could also lead to a study of his attitudes toward writing. Fliegelman's *Declaring Independence* is a useful resource for such study.

RESOURCES

Biography

Noble E. Cunningham Jr., *In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

A concise biography, ideal for students beginning research on Jefferson.

Kevin J. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

A biography that focuses on Jefferson's intellectual history, especially his reading, the formation of his various libraries, and the notes he left in the books he read. Useful for students interested in making connections between Jefferson's thinking and his writing.

Criticism

Declaration of Independence Web Guide <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/DeclarInd.html> [accessed 26 June 2009].

An outstanding collection of resources for research, including images of the manuscripts of the Declaration and of the first printed edition, related papers from the Continental Congress, and helpful time lines.

Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1993).
Situates the Declaration of Independence in important cultural contexts that were in flux in the Revolutionary period: the teaching of rhetoric and speech, the understanding of the nature of authorship, and the emergence of the concept of personality. Overall, this study emphasizes performance as an essential category for understanding the Declaration of Independence.

Jennifer T. Kennedy, "Mourning at the Jubilee Celebration of the Declaration of Independence," *PMLA,* 115, 5 (2000): 1108–1112.
Examines the 1826 celebration of the Declaration of Independence and the deaths of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson on that anniversary in the context of an emerging sense of nationalism and the literary sublime.

Stephen E. Lucas, "Justifying America: The Declaration of Independence as a Rhetorical Document," in Thomas W. Benson, ed., *American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).
A close analysis of the language and rhetoric of the Declaration; a good starting place for anyone interested in stylistic analysis.

Thomas Jefferson
Notes on the State of Virginia

(Paris: Privately printed, 1785; Philadelphia: Prichard & Hall, 1788)

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), third president of the United States, is also notable as a writer, philosopher, architect, and inventor. Jefferson was born and raised among the plantation gentry of Virginia and educated at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. After graduation, he studied law and entered the Virginia legislature in 1767. In 1774 Jefferson wrote a response to the Coercive Acts titled *A Summary View of the Rights of British America,* which referred to the idea that the colonists had a right to self-government. As a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Jefferson was appointed to the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Jefferson continued to serve in the state legislature until 1779; from 1779 to 1781 he was governor of Virginia. After the end of the war, Jefferson served as ambassador to France (1785–1789), as secretary of state under Washington (1790–1793), as vice president under John Adams (1796–1800), and as president for two terms (1801–1809). Notable events during his presidency include the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Notes on the State of Virginia was the only book-length work Jefferson published. It was written in response to a questionnaire sent by François de Barbé-Marbois, secretary to the French legation in Philadelphia while Jefferson was governor of Virginia. The questions were the types one might expect to find

answered in an encyclopedia entry: What are the crops, the mineral reserves, the notable geological features? Jefferson's answers to the queries are far more than an encyclopedic listing of facts, however. The book entered into several important rhetorical situations. First, the answers were crafted to build confidence in the French about the value of their alliance with the new nation. Second, the book attempted to counter arguments by European scientists who believed that the climate of the American South would cause European animal and plant species to lose their strength and become smaller. Third, Jefferson tried to deal with the social questions of racial differences, offering observations on Native Americans and slaves as well as the white colonizers. As many readers pointed out in the twentieth century, his attempts in *Notes on the State of Virginia* to work out a theoretical position on race yields no coherent theory; rather, Jefferson seems to have used whatever ideas about race suited his argumentative goals at a particular time.

Notes on the State of Virginia had a complicated early publishing history. Jefferson received the questionnaire that prompted the writing of the book in 1780; his later account of the writing suggests that he used notes he had been making over the course of years to compose his responses. The year 1780 was a difficult one for Jefferson, who was then governor of Virginia. The state was invaded by British forces in the spring of that year, and Jefferson was forced to flee to avoid capture. In the midst of Revolution, however, Jefferson did find time to work on the French questionnaire; in December 1781, he forwarded a preliminary set of answers. In 1785, Jefferson had two hundred copies of the book printed (in France, because it was cheaper) for distribution to a selected group. A copy made its way to a French printer who published an unauthorized translation, which angered Jefferson; he felt the translation had too many errors and had distorted his meaning. Jefferson agreed to a larger public edition by an English printer in 1787, in order to counteract what he thought was the damage done to his reputation by the French translation. An edition printed in the United States did not appear until the following year.

In reading *Notes on the State of Virginia* today, keep this publishing history in mind. Jefferson was writing initially for a very limited audience (the French government, who had requested the information), then for a slightly larger audience (friends and associates who were interested), and then finally for a large public audience. Some things that might seem puzzling about the text (why, for example, Jefferson even answered Query 3, which asks about the state's seaports, of which Virginia has none) are less confusing when considered in context (although it is also worth considering Kevin J. Hayes's analysis of Query 3 in *The Road to Monticello*). Jefferson's genius can be more fully appreciated in view of the fact that this elaborate book full of science, history, archeology, and philosophy was written hastily in the midst of war, and that Jefferson was clearly taking opportunities to engage in scientific and historical debates when he could have simply chosen to answer Barbé-Marbois with a bare minimum of data. Like so many of the major pieces of writing of the era, *Notes on the State of Virginia* does not fit neatly into any single literary genre. It is fitting that Jefferson, who wrote the document that declared the United States independent,

should also write a book that created its own reason for being and stands in a category of its own.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. How could the man who wrote that "all men are created equal" own slaves and profit from their labor? Readers are often interested in this apparent paradox and in the related issue of Jefferson's sexual relationship with Sally Hemings, a slave at Monticello. That controversy began at the time he was elected to office as president, when rumors appeared in print alleging that Jefferson kept one of his slaves as his "concubine" after the death of his wife. In recent years, DNA testing has established that Jefferson almost certainly fathered children with Sally Hemings. The DNA testing could not, however, resolve questions about Jefferson's political thought and writing that must be asked in the face of this biographical information. On one hand, Jefferson argues that slavery is a terrible institution that damages society; he also argues for the superiority of whites, an argument that would seem to support slavery. Students interested in this topic should focus on Queries 14 and 18 for discussions of slavery; they may also wish to consult Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration of Independence. (See the entry on the Declaration of Independence.)
2. Those interested in questions of race in Jefferson's thought as it relates to Native Americans should examine closely Queries 6 and 11. Discussion may focus solely on Anglo–Native American relations or on depictions of indigenous peoples, or students might consider all the discussions of race to attempt to derive a Jeffersonian theory of race that accounts for native peoples, Europeans, and Africans and that considers the roles of both heredity and environment. Critics generally agree that Jefferson's racial theories as expressed in *Notes on the State of Virginia* and elsewhere are not particularly coherent, but students should try to locate the specific elements that present contradictions and problems; analysis can proceed with a reading of *Notes on the State of Virginia* as rhetoric to attempt to understand why these areas are so problematic. Thorough discussion of these matters will lead through all the major questions at issue regarding race in the post-Revolutionary period: the mutability or permanence of those physical characteristics identified with race; the origins of races; and the future prospects for racial conflict or harmony within a society composed of peoples from all over the world.
3. *Notes on the State of Virginia* focuses, on one hand, specifically on Virginia. On the other hand, many of its sections can be read as a commentary on democracy and the future of the United States. Students interested in early American understandings of democracy should consider carefully Queries 14 ("Laws"), 16 ("Proceedings as to Tories"), 17 ("Religion"), and 22 ("Public Revenue and Expenses"). Discussion might begin by comparing Jefferson's answers with the answers a U.S. citizen might be likely to give if asked to describe these components of American society today. Certain aspects of Jefferson's description of early Virginia society are likely to be surprising to contemporary readers; these are the aspects that should be traced carefully through the text. These parts of

Notes on the State of Virginia can also productively be read in relationship to the Declaration of Independence and the Federalist Papers. Students interested in Jefferson's conception of citizenship should also consult Matthew Cordova Frankel's article cited below.

4. Given that *Notes on the State of Virginia* was written in response to a set of questions, it might not be expected to exhibit a unified structure. However, other important texts from the post-Revolutionary period are structured as a series of essays, largely because of the influence of magazine-essay series like *The Spectator* on British and American literature. Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer,* Paine's *Common Sense,* and the Federalist Papers are prominent examples. Discussion of the effect of this kind of structure on readers is highly recommended and could lead to productive essay topics. Students who have read any picaresque novels of the era (*Female Quixotism* or *Modern Chivalry* among the contemporary American versions) may wish to consider episodic structure in novels as well when thinking or writing about how Jefferson's readers would have been likely to approach the reading of *Notes on the State of Virginia.*
5. Jefferson, like Benjamin Franklin, is often described as a polymath, someone who is very knowledgeable in a variety of areas. In *Notes on the State of Virginia,* many of Jefferson's interests and areas of knowledge are displayed. Perhaps most prominently, Jefferson mixes literary and scientific writing. Students interested in exploring these connections should consult Kevin Hayes's intellectual biography and Chiara Cillerai's article on the relationship between eloquence and science in *Notes on the State of Virginia.*

RESOURCES

Primary Works

Matthew Cordova Frankel, "'Nature's Nation' Revisited: Citizenship and the Sublime in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia,*" *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography,* 73, 4 (2001): 695–726.

Examines the treatment of the Romantic concept of the sublime in *Notes on the State of Virginia* and argues that Jefferson uses the experience of the sublime in the geography of North America as the basis for a conception of citizenship.

Thomas Jefferson Papers: An Electronic Archive <http://www.thomasjefferson-papers.org/> [accessed 30 June 2009].

Provides images of manuscripts in Jefferson's handwriting, usually with typed transcripts. Resources include Jefferson's farm and garden books (in which he kept notes about his agricultural activities on the plantation and in formal gardens), his architectural drawings of Monticello and other buildings, and a pre-Congressional editing draft of the Declaration of Independence. When complete, the site will also offer an electronic edition of *Notes on the State of Virginia.*

Biography

Kevin J. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

An intellectual biography that relies heavily on research in Jefferson's library to indicate his reading and his response to his reading. An excellent biocritical study for students interested in the intellectual history behind Jefferson's own writing.

Criticism

Chiara Cillerai, "The Eloquence of Nature in *Notes on the State of Virginia*," *Early American Literature,* 41, 1 (2006): 59–78.

Analyzes the paradoxical relationship between science and literature in Query 6, in which Jefferson argues against Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon's theory that the climate in the warmer parts of North America will cause physical degeneration. Specifically, Cillerai shows, on one hand, that Jefferson attempts to establish a clear separation between literature and science, painting Buffon as fictionalizing while he himself sticks to the facts, and on the other, that Jefferson's own use of eloquence simultaneously blurs that distinction.

John Marrant
A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black

(London: Gilbert & Plummer, 1785)

John Marrant (1755–1791), one of the first African American ministers and known for his autobiographical narrative, was born into a family of free African Americans who lived during his youth in New York, Florida, and Georgia. As an adolescent he was sent to live with his sister in Charleston, South Carolina, where he studied music and both performed and gave music lessons. Several years after his arrival in Charleston, he encountered the evangelical Methodist minister George Whitefield and became a convert to Methodism. In the early 1770s he ran away from his family and traveled in the South Carolina back country, where he eventually became a captive of the Cherokee; in his autobiographical narrative, Marrant claims to have escaped captivity by preaching to and converting the Cherokee, and then to have preached among other groups of native peoples in South Carolina before returning to Charleston. Marrant worked as a carpenter and then served in the British navy during the Revolutionary War from 1775 to 1782, moving to England following his service, where he was ordained as a Methodist minister; in the 1780s, he was sent to preach in Nova Scotia, where many Loyalists, both black and white, had fled after the Revolution. He moved to

Boston in 1787 and in 1788 became the chaplain of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, a Masonic and antislavery organization. In 1790 Marrant traveled to England, where he died the following year.

During his brief life, Marrant published three texts: an autobiography of his early life (1785), a sermon on the equality of mankind as a religious principle (1789), and a spiritual journal covering the years 1785 to 1790 (*A Journal of the Reverend John Marrant,* 1790). The best-known of these texts is his *Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black,* which was popular for several decades and reprinted more than a dozen times. Marrant's narrative recounts the events of his early life, with particular attention to the most dramatic events: his conversion to Methodism, his wandering in the wilderness of South Carolina, his captivity among the Cherokee, and his evangelism among them. The narrative thus bears similarities to texts in both the traditions of captivity narratives and conversion narratives. In addition, the narrative offers insight into the charismatic nature of the early Methodist movement: The adolescent Marrant enters a congregation gathered to hear Whitefield with the intention of playing a prank; instead, he is struck unconscious by the power of the preaching he hears, taken with a lingering illness that is dispelled only upon his conversion. The narrative also offers a vision of the social possibilities for free blacks in the early republic; although Marrant speaks little about his race, his various career options and his family's physical mobility suggest both that middle-class life was not an impossible aspiration for free blacks at the time.

Marrant's narrative indicated on its title page that the story had been "taken down from his [Marrant's] own relation, arranged, corrected, and published" by the Reverend William Aldridge, a Methodist minister. Aldridge wrote a preface to the volume in his own voice in which he says of his transcription and editing: "I have always preserved Mr. Marrant's ideas, tho' I could not his language; no more alterations, however, have been made, than were thought necessary." The practice of transcription of a narrative by a marginally literate person is a tradition that can be found in many earlier texts; when the texts have a religious tenor, the transcriptionist is almost always a minister. While some readers tend to react to such texts by assuming that the white transcriptionist would have manipulated the black man's words, it is probably more accurate to think of the result as collaborative: since Marrant was a willing convert to Methodism and aspiring to a position of authority similar to Aldridge's, Marrant would naturally have wanted to tell his life story in a way that would be appealing to the readership he hoped to reach and would likely have seen Aldridge as a good guide in how to shape his narrative. It is also worth noting that Aldridge attests in the preface to his belief that the events Marrant describes are true, even though "the novelty or magnitude of the facts contained in the following pages, may dispose some readers to question the truth of them." The editing hand of the well-known white minister must also have been seen as a way to lend credibility to a story that readers might justifiably have considered as fictionalized. While much of the material included in Marrant's narrative is unverifiable, the narrative offers readers today insights into the conditions and possibilities for the life of free blacks in the early Republic,

the appeal of the evangelical Methodist movement, and the enduring popularity of narratives of Indian captivity.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Although Aldridge in his preface frames Marrant's narrative as primarily an account of the work of religious faith, the narrative clearly combines the characteristics of a variety of genres. Marrant's narrative can, of course, profitably be compared with other narratives of religious conversion in a tradition that dates back to St. Augustine. Among his contemporaries, Olaudah Equiano, who begins his life as a slave, would likely be a useful point of comparison. However, a generic approach should also consider the relationship of Marrant's narrative to other accounts of captivity. Readers familiar with John Smith's account of Pocahontas's intervention to save his life (as he claims) or with Cabeza de Vaca's account of his development of an evangelical following among the natives who hold him captive will find useful parallels in Marrant's account. Mary Rowlandson's narrative, although written a century earlier, was still being reprinted during the Revolutionary era, and would have been the most familiar such account for Marrant's English readers. Students interested in writing about genre in Marrant's narrative should consult Cedrick May's essay, which adds another dimension to this consideration by examining the narrative as an ordination sermon.
2. Because Marrant describes a variety of economic, career, and social changes in his life, his narrative can help students understand the social and political world inhabited by free blacks in Revolutionary America. Since Marrant served in the British navy and later as a minister in Nova Scotia, his narrative provides insights into the situations that led to free American blacks siding with England during the Revolutionary conflict. Students interested in the social and political implications of Marrant's narrative should begin with Philip Gould's essay. A useful historical account of the experiences of black loyalists is Mary Louise Clifford's *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists After the American Revolution* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006).
3. Contemporary readers are often surprised at how little Marrant discusses race in his narrative. Nevertheless, as a free black taken captive by the Cherokee and later serving in the navy alongside white Englishmen and preaching to groups of whites and to racially mixed congregations in Nova Scotia, Marrant inhabits and describes a racially mixed world. Benilde Montgomery has argued that Marrant's narrative demonstrates the emergence of a polyethnic society, and Karen Weyler has argued that Marrant is able, because race was less important as a category than class, to construct an identity for himself as an "English Christian." Students interested in the implications of Marrant's narrative for eighteenth-century racial theory should begin with Montgomery's and Weyler's articles and also see the sources listed in the study guide on "Writing about Race and Gender," especially Bruce Dain's *A Hideous Monster of the Mind.*

4. Christian evangelizing among native Americans has a long history among the various European groups that colonized the Americas. Marrant's description of his own preaching among them features some unique characteristics. Marrant does not seek the native peoples out to preach to them; he is merely adrift in the wilderness when he encounters the Cherokee. In a way, his preaching serves as another element in his own conversion narrative. Along the way, however, his narrative necessarily demonstrates attitudes toward and beliefs about the native peoples. Students interested in the history of Native Americans and in the relationships among the multiple faith traditions in the early Republic should examine Marrant's attitudes toward his converts. Useful comparisons might be found in earlier colonial texts, such as those of Christopher Columbus, Cabeza de Vaca, or the French Jesuit Relations.
5. As noted above, Marrant's narrative was written "as told to" William Aldridge. Students interested in the relationship between Marrant and his ghost author might wish to compare Marrant's narrative and situation with similar ministerially recorded narratives, like Hannah Dustan's narrative of Indian captivity as told to Cotton Mather. Students might also wish to compare the style and tone of Marrant's narrative with his later writings to see whether differences in style are discernible. For scholarly considerations of ways of thinking about the "authenticity" of Marrant's narrative, see the articles by May, Gould, and Weyler.

RESOURCES

Criticism

Philip Gould, "Free Carpenter, Venture Capitalist: Reading the Lives of the Early Black Atlantic," *American Literary History,* 12, 4 (2000): 659–684.

Reads Marrant's narrative, along with *A Narrative of the Life of Venture, a Native of Africa* (1798) in relationship to debates over liberal political terms, with particular attention to the ambiguity of the authorship of both texts.

Cedrick May, "John Marrant and the Narrative Construction of an Early Black Methodist Evangelical," *African American Review,* 38 (Winter 2004): 553–570.

Considers Marrant's *Narrative* as an ordination sermon and situates Marrant in relationship to eighteenth-century theological debates.

Benilde Montgomery, "Recapturing John Marrant," in *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote: African-Native American Literature,* edited by Jonathan Brennan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), pp. 158–167.

Argues that Marrant's narrative is part of an emerging "polyethnic" vision of America.

Karen A. Weyler, "Race, Redemption, and Captivity in *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black* and *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man,*" in *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic,* edited by Vincent

Carretta and Philip Gould (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), pp. 39–53.

Argues that Marrant (like Briton Hammon) creates in his narrative a "portable identity" for himself as a Christian Englishman by using his Indian captors as a foil and reading slavery as analogous to sin.

Judith Sargent Murray
The Gleaner: A Miscellaneous Production

(Boston: Thomas & Andrews, 1798)

Judith Sargent Murray (1751–1820) was a poet, essayist, playwright, and fiction writer, often identified as one of the first feminist writers in the United States. Born into a prominent Gloucester, Massachusetts, family of merchants, Murray was married twice, first to ship's captain and merchant John Stevens, who died in 1786, and then to Universalist minister John Murray, recognized as one of the founders of Unitarian Universalism. Although Murray's literary career began during her first marriage, her greatest productivity in publishing occurred during the 1790s. In 1790 she published the essay for which she is best known, "On the Equality of the Sexes," a feminist treatise that argued for women's social equality to men and the need for them to be educated comparably. In 1793 the Murrays moved to Boston, where Murray wrote plays that were produced in Boston's Federal Street Theater and became a regular contributor to *The Massachusetts Magazine,* often publishing under the pen name Constantia. In the *Massachusetts Magazine,* Murray also began an essay series called "The Gleaner," whose narrator was a male persona. In 1798, Murray published a three-volume collection of "The Gleaner," essays. After publishing this major work, Murray turned her literary efforts to assisting John Murray with his biography and the editing of his religious writings. Following John Murray's death, she moved to Natchez, Mississippi, where her only daughter, Julia, was settled with her husband, and where Judith Sargent Murray lived out the remainder of her life.

During the years of her greatest literary productivity, Murray was well received as a poet, playwright, and essayist. Her three-volume collection, *The Gleaner,* represents the wide range of genres in which she worked; although this is an essay series, it incorporates poetry, drama, and fiction as well as nonfiction essays. Murray's alter ego and the narrator of *The Gleaner,* Mr. Vigillius, tells a story about his adopted daughter, Margaretta, which employs many of the conventions of sentimental fiction; he also reprints two of Murray's plays, and many of his essays begin with poetry. *The Gleaner* includes essays on literary criticism, education, history, the Constitution, philanthropy, debt, and the proper management of families, among other topics. With her plays, *Virtue Triumphant* and *The Traveller Returned,* along with the fictional story of Margaretta, Murray mixed entertainment and instruction in ways typical of many conservative writers. Politically aligned with the Federalists,

she was conservative in terms of government but relatively liberal in religion. Thus, her essays on women and women's education might be characterized as both feminist and conservative: Murray argues that women's souls and minds are naturally the equal of men's, but she defends the need for families to be based in hierarchy in which the head of household is normally male.

In addition to taking on a male persona to narrate the Gleaner essays, Murray incorporates fictional letters from supposed readers, representing comic types of men and women; at the end of the three volumes she concludes with an essay, "The Gleaner Unmasked," in which she states her reasons for using a male persona for the essay series. Had she written in her own name, she says, readers would have assumed that a man, probably her husband, was really the author—if they thought the work had merit—or they would have condemned the work out of hand. While it is true that many cultural critics suggested that women should "know their place" and that certain kinds of writing were the province of men, it is also true that other women (such as Bostonians Sarah Wentworth Morton and Mercy Otis Warren) were well-received writers. In part, then, Murray's use of a male persona must be seen as a rhetorical exercise and as a publicity stunt designed both to illustrate female abilities and to draw attention to her performance as an author. More than any other American woman publishing in the era, Murray was committed both to arguing for women's rights and to demonstrating their literary ability.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Murray's essay "On the Equality of the Sexes" appeared two years before Mary Wollstonecraft's better-known *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Although Wollstonecraft's essay achieved a broader readership and has acquired a wider reputation as an early classic of feminism, Murray and Wollstonecraft make many similar arguments. Students interested in women's writing in the Revolutionary era should compare these two early feminist classics. *Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: A Sourcebook,* edited by Adriana Craciun (New York: Routledge, 2002) provides valuable background material that will illuminate the philosophical and literary influences on both Murray and Wollstonecraft.
2. One shared aspect of the arguments of Murray and Wollstonecraft is the importance to both writers of expanded educational opportunities for women. The writings of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau provide important background for the educational theories at work in Murray and Wollstonecraft's writings. In addition, the question of women's education is important in the work of other early American writers, especially but not exclusively women. Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* and *The Boarding School* provide useful points of comparison, as does Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* and Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism.*
3. Viewed rhetorically, Murray's work offers a broad field for analysis. Students might begin by simply identifying Murray's many rhetorical strategies for proving women's equality. How does her approach differ in "Observations on Female

Abilities" compared to "On the Equality of the Sexes"? What is the purpose of the postscript about Adam and Eve attached to "On the Equality of the Sexes"? Why does it matter that it is an extract from a private letter? For further consideration of the use of the male persona as narrator in *The Gleaner,* see Kristin Wilcox's article. How does the story of Margaretta argue for women's equality? Students are urged to consider *all* of the methods of proving women's equality Murray uses and to consider the effect of this collection of rhetorical strategies. Students interested in women's rhetoric will find useful historical information on early American women's rhetorical instruction and practice in Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen's *Imagining Rhetoric: Composing Women of the Early United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).

4. Historians have sometimes spoken of a concept called "Republican motherhood," the idea that women in the early American Republic were encouraged to participate politically by being good mothers, since mothers helped to create the next generation of citizens and political representatives by educating children. Other historians have critiqued the concept of Republican motherhood as overly simplified and have argued that many women did not accept motherhood as the limit of their political activity. In her combination of conservative, hierarchical Federalist politics with feminism, however, Murray is probably the best early American spokeswoman for the notion of Republican motherhood. For a consideration of Murray's handling of this concept in her plays, see Amelia Howe Kritzer's article. Students are encouraged to use Murray's *The Story of Margaretta* as a source for describing her vision of Republican motherhood, with Mrs. Vigillius representing a Republican mother in action and Margaretta a Republican mother in training.
5. Students interested in fiction should consider *The Story of Margaretta* in relationship to other sentimental novels. Unlike Eliza Wharton in *The Coquette* or Charlotte Temple, Margaretta resists seduction. Can a seduction tale be entertaining or interesting if the seduction never happens? What happens with the plot in that case? Perhaps most important, students should, if they have access to a complete version of *The Gleaner,* consider the embedding of the story of Margaretta into the essay series, noting that the story is interrupted by seemingly unrelated essays. Keeping in mind that Murray did revise the essays from their magazine to their book publication, readers must view these interruptions as intentional on Murray's part. Why did she choose to embed her "novel" within the essay series, rather than separating it out and publishing it as a novel on its own?

RESOURCES

Editions

The Gleaner, introduction by Nina Baym (Schenectady, N.Y.: Union College Press, 1993).

The only complete reprinting of the three-volume publication of *The Gleaner.*

Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray, edited by Sharon M. Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

With an excellent introduction, this volume presents Murray's best-known essays, a selection of her letters, her play *The Traveller Returned,* and the "novella" known as *The Story of Margaretta,* extracted from *The Gleaner*.

Biography

Sheila L. Skemp, *First Lady of Letters: Judith Sargent Murray and the Struggle for Female Independence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

The most comprehensive biography of Murray to date, making use of a large number of newly discovered personal papers documenting her life.

Criticism

Amelia Howe Kritzer, "Playing with Republican Motherhood: Self-Representation in Plays by Susanna Haswell Rowson and Judith Sargent Murray," *Early American Literature,* 31, 2 (1996): 150–166.

Reads Murray's plays along with Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* as attempts to renegotiate gender roles and claim a public space for women in the new Republic.

Kristin Wilcox, "The Scribblings of a Plain Man and the Temerity of a Woman: Gender and Genre in Judith Sargent Murray's *The Gleaner,*" *Early American Literature,* 30, 2 (1995): 121–144.

Analyzes the rhetorical function of the frames and personae employed in *The Gleaner* as an effort to create a space in the public sphere for women's voices.

Thomas Paine
The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology

Part One: (Paris: Barrois; New York: Birdsall & Hyer, 1794);
Part Two: (Paris: Printed for the author, 1795; Philadelphia: Printed by Benjamin Franklin Bache for the author, 1795)

(For more biographical information on Paine, see the entry on *Common Sense.*)

Thomas Paine (1737–1809) was an international revolutionary thinker, active in the American and French Revolutions. As the author of *Common Sense* (1776), he had become famous in the United States as a prominent supporter of the Patriot cause. After the war, he returned to Europe; he became a propagandist for the revolutionary cause in France, but in the swift changes of power that followed the revolution, during 1793 and 1794, he was imprisoned. During these years, he also published *The Age of Reason,* a book that attacked organized religion and professed and defended deist beliefs. Paine remained in France through 1802,

criticizing Napoleon's seizure of power. In 1802 he returned to the United States, where he lived in New Rochelle, New York.

When Paine returned to the United States, his reputation had been damaged by the furor that surrounded *The Age of Reason.* Dozens of books and pamphlets arguing against *The Age of Reason* appeared in the first decade or so after its publication; ministers preached against the book and its author, and Paine's name became associated with an immoral lifestyle and atheism. The furor may have been spurred as much by Paine's association with the French Revolutionaries as by anything he said in the book; *The Age of Reason,* as any attentive reader will see, is deistic rather than atheistic. Paine begins by asserting his belief in a divine power that created the universe and set it in motion; his argument is against the infallibility of sacred texts, including the Bible, and against the value of organized religion. Many members of the wealthy and educated classes in Europe and in the United States were deists; what Paine did in *The Age of Reason* was to make those ideas accessible to the average reader, just as he had popularized a set of political beliefs in *Common Sense.* In Part One, Paine lays out his own personal religious creed and his basic arguments, beginning with an argument against the concept of revelation: if God speaks to man, Paine argues, it is a revelation; but when the human who received the revelation passes it along to another human being, the message becomes hearsay, and there is no way for others to know that the message, supposedly revealed, really comes from God. Reasoning that a loving deity would not behave in this way, Paine rejects the notion of revelation altogether, which entails rejecting both sacred texts (which he argues should be treated as literature) and churches founded on the authority of those texts. In Part Two, Paine turns to analysis of the Old and New Testaments and argues from internal evidence that neither part of the Bible could be divinely inspired. *The Age of Reason* did not need to be atheistic to upset Christian readers since it attacked the foundation of Christian faith.

At this distance from the text, however, it is important to note how and why deism would have been important to Paine's political beliefs. In France, especially, the Catholic Church had continued to hold tremendous wealth and power until the Revolution. Even in Protestant countries, churches continued to wield political power in ways that Paine found oppressive to the individual. Attacking monarchy and attacking organized religion were part of an overall political program that vested rights in the individual and placed the burden of responsibility on each individual to use his or her reason to responsibly participate in political life and to follow his or her own spiritual credo.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Many of the most-respected Revolutionary leaders, such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, were either clearly deists or strongly influenced by deist philosophy. Yet when Paine published *The Age of Reason* and openly avowed deism, his reputation was ruined in the country where he won his first fame. To explore this paradox, students may wish to read Shirley Samuels's

article on Paine and the concept of infidelity. The extent of deist influence among the founding fathers is also a matter of debate for historians and biographers. Students of Revolutionary literature could use *The Age of Reason* as a point of departure to explore the influence of deist ideas in the texts of the Revolutionary generation: Franklin's *Autobiography* (use 1981 edition), the Declaration of Independence (1776), Paine's *Common Sense* (1776); and *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785). Research might also encompass earlier tracts of deist philosophy, such as Lord Edward Herbert's book *Of Truth* (1624) to understand where *The Age of Reason* fits in the deist tradition.

2. Since *Common Sense* had such a strongly positive reception while *The Age of Reason* was much more controversial in the United States, comparative analysis of the two works is recommended. One natural topic for discussion would be to trace the religious references in *Common Sense* to see how they seem to fit with the explicit religious beliefs described in *The Age of Reason.* Students might also wish to compare Paine's argumentative method, to see whether he uses essentially the same techniques, or whether his argumentative methods are different. Are there any basic principles shared by Paine's argument for independence from England and his argument for independence in religious thought? Comparison of the prose style is also worth consideration; did it change during the years Paine was involved in the French Revolution?
3. *The Age of Reason* is not an autobiography; yet, its opening pages have a strongly autobiographical flavor. Notice how often Paine returns to the idea of the self and self-reliance in the work. Famous phrases like "my own mind is my own church" suggest how important the self is in Paine's philosophy. What is this self and where does it get its authority? Students interested in psychology and philosophy may want to try to derive a theory of the mind from Paine's work to better understand the full implications of his argument for societies like the United States, where the work created such controversy. If *Common Sense* argued for the independence of nations, *The Age of Reason* argues for the independence of individuals, a common enough theme in American literature. The radical nature of Paine's sense of the limits of communication (as in his argument against revelation) and of the separation of individuals in matters of faith suggests that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for a nation full of people to share any beliefs. Fruitful topics for debate and writing may be found in this conflict between the individual and the idea of the nation.
4. As noted above, Paine's argument against religious revelation suggests an argument against the possibilities of communication. Yet, Paine clearly had great faith in the possibilities of print culture, working as he did to create best-selling books that would forward his own philosophy and help spur readers to political action. Close attention to the role of print culture and books in *The Age of Reason* is recommended. If readers cannot trust the Bible, why should they trust other books, including Paine's own? What, in other words, is the difference between Paine's book and the sacred books he critiques?
5. Readers intrigued by Paine's loss of popular stature as a result of the publication of *The Age of Reason* will want to read Samuels's article. In addition, an

examination of some of the responses to the work by Christian writers can help to frame the many issues raised by Paine's work. Two prominent responses are readily available on Google Books: Elias Boudinot's *The Age of Revelation, or, The Age of Reason Shewn To Be an Age of Infidelity* (1801) and Richard Watson's *An Apology for the Bible, in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine* (1808). Looking at these responses as if they really were a debate, readers are encouraged to look for points of agreement between Paine and his opponents as well as points of disagreement. Is there any common ground? If so, what are the key issues that cause disagreement? Do the writers seem to misunderstand each other at any point in their arguments? A rhetorical analysis of the relationship between Paine and his critics can uncover some of the important cultural issues at stake in the debate.

RESOURCES

(For more suggestions for reading on Paine, see the entry on *Common Sense.*)

Criticism

Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation, or, The Age of Reason Shewn To Be an Age of Infidelity* (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickens, 1801).

A reply to *The Age of Reason* that takes seriously Paine's assumption that reason precedes faith and mounts a reason-based defense of Christianity and organized religion. Includes commentary on the French Revolution and its relationship to deism.

Edward Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

An examination of Paine's literary career that pays special attention to the development of his prose style. Chapter 4 treats *The Age of Reason* in relationship to the scientific method.

Shirley Samuels, "Infidelity and Contagion: The Rhetoric of Revolution," *Early American Literature,* 22, 2 (1987): 183–191.

Demonstrates how *The Age of Reason* and its author became associated in the popular imagination with adultery and other forms of "infidelity."

Richard Watson, *An Apology for the Bible, in a Series of Letters, Addressed to Thomas Paine* (London: Scatcherd & Letterman et al., 1808).

A response to *The Age of Reason* by an Anglican bishop. Watson avowedly attempts to write, like Paine, in "a popular style" in order to attract and address the same broad audience Paine reached. One of the most influential responses to *The Age of Reason.*

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

(Philadelphia: R. Bell, 1776)

Thomas Paine's (1737–1809) works of political theory and philosophy were widely influential before and during both the American and French revolutions. Born in England the son of a corset maker, Paine apprenticed with his father and became a master corset maker himself, but later made a living in civil-service posts and teaching school. In 1774 he was dismissed from his civil-service job, formally separated from his wife, and introduced to Benjamin Franklin, who was apparently impressed with Paine, recommending that he immigrate to North America and giving him a letter of introduction. Arriving in Philadelphia late in 1774, Paine quickly established himself as a writer while editing the *Pennsylvania Magazine*. His pro-Revolutionary pamphlet *Common Sense* was a best-selling work on a scale rare for anything printed in the colonies. After the war began, Paine continued working as a propagandist in the Revolutionary cause, publishing the series *The Crisis.* He also served as an aide on the staff of General Nathanael Greene and accompanied Henry Laurens on his fund-raising trip to France in 1781.

In 1787, Paine returned to England to raise funds for a building project, but soon became enmeshed in the developing French Revolution. In 1791 he published *Rights of Man,* summing up the political principles he espoused and defending the French Revolution. *Rights of Man* was banned in England because of its antimonarchical arguments. In 1792, Paine was elected to the French National Convention, but in the swift changes of power that followed the revolution in France, he found himself on the wrong side of Robespierre's faction and in 1793 he was imprisoned. Despite the failure of the United States government to intercede, Paine was released in 1794. That year, he published *The Age of Reason,* a book that attacked organized religion and professed and defended deist beliefs. Perhaps Paine's most controversial work, it damaged his reputation among some Americans. He remained in France through 1802, criticizing Napoleon's seizure of power. In 1802, at Thomas Jefferson's invitation, Paine returned to the United States; he lived the remainder of his life in New Rochelle, New York.

Common Sense was Paine's first major work. Recent scholarship has argued persuasively that some historians' estimates of the number of copies printed at 100,000 to 150,000 is artificially inflated (see Trish Loughran's "Disseminating Common Sense"). Nonetheless, the more conservative estimate of 70,000 copies, reprinted at least twenty-five times in fourteen different locations, still indicates that *Common Sense* was a publishing sensation, being reprinted more times, more quickly, and in more locations than any other American publication of its time. Throughout New England and the middle states, the reading public seems to have been saturated with this one work; none of the other influential pro-Revolutionary publications came close to the wide distribution of *Common Sense*.

The title indicates Paine's most striking rhetorical strategy in this work: he presents his arguments as simple, logical, and clear, aiming to be persuasive to the broadest possible readership—and not, as other pro-Revolutionary writers did, relying on the audience to possess an in-depth knowledge of political theory

or law. The work's four parts develop a straightforward argument in favor of American independence. In the first part, Paine argues, as did other Enlightenment philosophers, that there was no such thing as a natural right to rule, but that governments existed because citizens agreed to submit to them. Paine also examines the British governmental system and argues that although it was more enlightened than other monarchies, the power of the monarch and the aristocracy constituted an unreasonable kind of tyranny. In the second part, Paine makes a more detailed argument against monarchy, using the Bible to argue for the original equality of all men and using history to contend that kings have, over time, caused more problems than they have solved. Having cleared the way for his argument about American independence by presenting a clear and comprehensible argument against monarchy, in the last two sections Paine turns to the situation of the North American British colonies. In the third part he reviews the hostilities that have occurred up to the time of his writing, proposes the formation of an American congress, and argues directly for independence. In the final section, he counters fears that the colonies are not strong enough to contend against Great Britain by arguing that the strength of natural resources and labor in the colonies will allow them to rival the British military.

Notable features of the content and style of *Common Sense* include the use of generally accessible vocabulary; striking uses of figurative language, often drawing on nature for points of comparison; use of Biblical evidence to support political argument; and sentences that, despite the relatively simple vocabulary, make use of sophisticated rhetorical patterns that make the language powerful and vivid. This striking and accessible style has made *Common Sense* memorable for readers across the centuries. For readers today, Paine's first major work reflects both the specific political sentiments of 1776 and many of the basic beliefs about politics and society that continue to underpin much social thought in the United States.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. *Common Sense* often figures in the history of printing in America as the first domestically produced best seller. *Common Sense* certainly was unusual in early America; twenty-five American editions were printed in seven of the colonies, so that distribution of the pamphlet was remarkably widespread compared to anything else published in North America at the time. Since important writers (notably Michael Warner in *The Letters of the Republic*) have argued that print culture was an essential precondition for the revolution, *Common Sense* can be a good test case for those interested in studying the relationship between printing and political action in Revolutionary America. Students interested in these questions should begin their investigation with Eric Foner's biography, which makes strong claims for Paine's influence, and Trish Loughran's article "Disseminating Common Sense," which argues that the influence of *Common Sense* has been overstated. A study of *Common Sense* as a best seller might proceed by comparing it to other books that sold very well, such as Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1791). Those with access to the electronic databases Early American

Imprints or American Periodical Series might use these primary sources to investigate references to Paine and responses to his work in the months and years following the first publication of *Common Sense*.

2. Because it is an overtly political text, *Common Sense* is often approached by first-time readers primarily in terms of its effectiveness in its historical context. As an example of rhetorical nonfiction prose, the book also presents a variety of thematic and stylistic issues that allow analysis of the work in ways that might also be useful when reading more traditionally "literary" texts. For example, throughout the text, nature and reason appear both as abstract concepts and in personified ways, so that they could be considered as characters. Tracing these concepts through the text could allow for readings that might connect *Common Sense* to ideas about nature and reason as they appear in the work of eighteenth-century philosophers or as they emerge in the works of later writers called Romantic, both in England and the United States.
3. In some ways, the pairing of nature and reason might be seen to parallel the twin rhetorical appeals of *Common Sense,* which consistently endeavors to engage the reader both in terms of logic and emotion. Robert Ferguson's discussion in "The Commonalities of *Common Sense*" points out the various rhetorical strategies of the book. Students interested in rhetoric might want to compare the logical and emotional appeals of *Common Sense* to those in other pro-Revolutionary pamphlets, such as James Otis's *Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (1764), John Dickinson's *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1768), or Jefferson's *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774).
4. Comparative analysis using other political rhetoric could also be useful for those interested in analysis of Paine's style. Readers today are sometimes surprised that Paine claims his writing will be simple and clear, since the formality of even *Common Sense* makes the text seem less than straightforward to twenty-first-century readers. Comparing Paine's work here to that of John Adams's *A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law* (1768) or the pamphlets of Otis, Dickinson, and Jefferson noted above should make more obvious the ways in which Paine actively worked to make his writing accessible to the eighteenth-century common reader. Stylistic analysis, whether comparative or not, might focus on sentence structure, vocabulary, figures of speech, repetition (of words, phrases, and sentence structures), and even punctuation (Paine's frequent use of the dash, for example, deserves attention).
5. As Elizabeth Barnes has noted, metaphors of family pervade *Common Sense,* as they also pervade other discussions around the conflict between the colonies and the "mother country." Social historians have noted changes in the structure of families that occurred in the decades around the Revolution (see especially Jay Fliegelman, *Pilgrims and Prodigals*). An investigation of the relationship of the family metaphors in *Common Sense* might proceed comparatively. Issues of family structure could be analyzed by comparing Paine's use of family metaphors to those in other political writings (such as *The Federalist Papers* [1788] or Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*) or in novels (sentimental novels such as *Charlotte Temple* and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* [1797] routinely deal with troubled families) or in autobiographies (Benjamin Franklin's

Autobiography [1981 edition], with its various problems between fathers and sons and between brothers, would be a potentially productive point of comparison).

RESOURCES

Biography

Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Originally published in 1976, this is a classic biography, updated in 2005, that considers Paine's role in the American Revolution in the context of social thought of the time in North America, Great Britain, and France.

Criticism

Elizabeth Barnes, "Affecting Relations: Pedagogy, Patriarchy, and the Politics of Sympathy," *American Literary History,* 8, 4 (1996): 597–614.

Analyzes *Common Sense* in terms of the family metaphors at work in Paine's depiction of the relation between Americans and Great Britain, in the context of both the shift in attitudes toward patriarchy and the literary and social theories of sentimentality.

Robert A. Ferguson, "The Commonalities of Common Sense," *William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History and Culture,* 57 (July 2000): 465–504; reprinted in his *Reading the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 84–119.

Analyzes the text of *Common Sense* and its context to elucidate why the work was able to garner such a large audience so quickly and to argue that the book played an important role in generating a sense of American nationhood through political consensus. An excellent example of a reading that combines close attention to the stylistic qualities of the text with historical context.

Trish Loughran, "Disseminating Common Sense: Thomas Paine and the Problem of the Early National Bestseller," *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography,* 78, 1 (2006): 1–28.

Provides the most careful and complete account of the distribution of *Common Sense* in Revolutionary America. Argues that previous historians and literary critics have relied on a mythic sense of the work's popularity that began with Paine himself. Essential reading for anyone interested in *Common Sense* as a best seller or in the history of printing and the role of print culture in the American Revolution.

Susanna Rowson
Charlotte Temple

originally published as

Charlotte, A Tale of Truth

(London: Printed for William Lane, 1791;
Philadelphia: D. Humphreys, for M. Carey, 1794)

Susanna Haswell Rowson (1762–1824), although English-born, is recognized as one of the first best-selling authors in the United States. Her sentimental novel *Charlotte Temple* (first American edition, 1794) was frequently reprinted throughout the nineteenth century and inspired what might today be regarded as a cult following. Rowson first came to North America as a child with her father, a British naval officer. During the Revolution, her father was placed under house arrest; the family was first moved inland and later returned to England, where Susanna worked as a governess. In England, Susanna began writing novels and married William Rowson. The couple embarked together on acting careers, and in 1793, as members of a theater group, they returned to the United States, where they continued acting and Rowson continued writing plays and novels. After ending her acting career, Rowson opened a girls' boarding school and continued writing prolifically. Her works included novels, plays, poetry, essays, and textbooks.

Charlotte Temple was both the novel that helped Rowson establish her literary reputation and the one that is best remembered today. The basic plotline is one that shares elements with many British novels of the eighteenth century: an inexperienced young girl is seduced away from her family by a young man who cannot marry her because she is not wealthy; the seduction ends in a pregnancy and the death of the young unwed mother. Rowson worked these elements into a fast-paced novel designed to work on readers' emotions, and, as she claimed, to educate young women. Her packaging of what was not a particularly unusual plot was particularly attractive to readers: *Charlotte Temple* has been in print virtually continuously since its first publication in 1791. Throughout the nineteenth century, the novel remained popular, and many people believed that Charlotte Temple had been a real historical figure; a grave in New York City thought to be hers was visited by readers of the book who came to pay their respects. (As of this writing, you can still visit Charlotte Temple's tombstone at Trinity Church in Manhattan; in 2008 the burial slab was raised in order to determine whether there was a burial vault underneath it; there was not. It remains unclear whether anyone is buried under the slab and if so, who that person might be.) Rowson fed the belief that the novel was based on a true story, and several historical candidates for the various roles of the main characters have been proposed.

The purported truth of the novel matters to readers today for several reasons. First, the sentimental mode in which *Charlotte Temple* is written does not mirror the psychological realism readers have grown accustomed to since the nineteenth century, so it can sometimes be difficult to take the plight of a character like Charlotte Temple seriously. Recognizing both that readers at the time believed in the reality

of the people represented by the characters and that events similar to those in the book are known to have occurred should help readers to enter into the spirit of the novel. The "truth" of the novel is also important when considering Rowson's stated purpose: to educate young women. Although readers may justifiably be skeptical of that claim, it has more credibility in the context of a world in which premarital sex and pregnancy could have the severe social consequences depicted in the novel.

Although *Charlotte Temple* does not make use of the extensive subplots common in many other eighteenth-century novels, it does incorporate the stories of multiple generations: Charlotte's father was disinherited because he married for love rather than money; the father of Charlotte's seducer, Montraville, lectures his son extensively on the subject. In addition, both Charlotte and Montraville have a supposed friend who actually is a secret enemy (Charlotte's French teacher, Madame La Rue, and Montraville's friend Belcour). Minor characters span the social classes, from high society to humble farmers. The novel also features settings on both sides of the Atlantic, beginning in England and ending in America. Although it is ostensibly about one naive young girl, then, *Charlotte Temple* cuts a wide swath through the social realities of Anglo-America. The diversity of settings and characters in a short novel makes it lively reading as well as a fascinating site to study a wide variety of cultural attitudes and phenomena.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. One notable feature of *Charlotte Temple* is its narrator's tendency to speak directly to the reader, pointing out the moral issues at stake in the novel. Combined with the preface, in which Rowson claims that her purpose in writing is to save other young women from a fate like Charlotte's, these moments of moralizing can support a reading of the novel as didactic—that is, as having moral instruction rather than entertainment as its primary purpose. Some readers agree that the novel is primarily an opportunity for Rowson to moralize and lecture against premarital sex. Others, however, argue that in spite of the narrator's moralizing, the novel actually provides young people, especially young women, an opportunity to read about forbidden topics—such as premarital sex and running away from home—under the cover of an "instructive" text. Discussion of this debate can help readers attempt to reconstruct the novel's original reading situation. In addition, the controversy can yield topics for research and writing. The reactions of the nineteenth-century readers who mourned Charlotte Temple at her "grave" in New York, for example, could be analyzed in terms of whether the novel seems to have served an instructive purpose. Readers interested in this topic might wish to begin by reading Andrea Hibbard and John Parry's essay about the uses of *Charlotte Temple* in the nineteenth-century trial of a seduced servant accused of trying to murder her seducer.
2. A related debate is whether *Charlotte Temple* can be read as "feminist" in the sense that the novel tends to question the sexual double standard and women's legal status in early America. If readers take Rowson at her word,

the novel is supposed to help young women avoid a fate like Charlotte's by behaving properly, implying that what happens to Charlotte is her own fault and that young women can control whether or not they find themselves in similar situations. Some readers find that the sympathy the novel seeks to elicit for Charlotte and the culpability of both her seducer and the others who collude against Charlotte (La Rue and Belcour) tend to act on readers to excuse Charlotte and indict instead the social system that produces her situation. Discussions of the novel's relationship to ideas about womanhood should begin with a thorough understanding of the paradoxical situation of women in the post-Revolutionary era. (See Mary Beth Norton's *Liberty's Daughters* [1980] and Linda Kerber's *Women of the Republic* [1980] for a thorough grounding.) A useful comparative study might seek differences and similarities in the representation of women in order to achieve nuance in the understanding of the possibilities of what we now consider feminist thinking in novels of the era. Novels by Charles Brockden Brown, Hannah Foster, and Rebecca Rush could serve as significant touchstones.

3. Related to the question of feminist representation is the characterization of the major characters. What kind of heroine is Charlotte? Specifically, students are encouraged to undertake a comparison of the narrator's assertions about Charlotte's character on one hand and the conclusions that can be drawn from Charlotte's speech and action on the other. Do the two suggest roughly similar characterizations, or are there significant differences? How difficult or easy is it for readers to develop a judgment of Charlotte's character that is independent of the narrator's claims? (See Marion Rust's essay "What's Wrong with Charlotte Temple?" for a good example of an independent reading of Charlotte's character.) A parallel analysis of Montraville's character would also be fruitful. Discussion could then proceed to a consideration of the extent to which Charlotte's character fits or does not fit traditional understandings of a heroine and similarly the extent to which Montraville's character is or is not a villain. Despite the brevity of the novel, careful reading can uncover a fair amount of complexity in the characterization of the two protagonists.
4. Character analysis can be useful in an examination of the functions of sympathy in the novel. As background, students may wish to read the introductory chapter of Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs* (1985), in order to gain a fuller understanding of the political and gender issues involved in sentimental fiction (and the history of literary study of sentimentality). Not all critics agree with Tompkins's assessment of the value of sentimental fiction, however; some have argued that although the novels encourage sympathy for the marginalized and powerless, they do not actually encourage social change, instead channeling the anger that might fuel social resistance into a romanticized sympathetic grief. In the case of Charlotte, for example, they might argue that the cult of sympathy that brought mourners to visit a fictional grave in New York and deposit poems that they had written to Charlotte diverted energy that might otherwise have been used to resist the social restrictions that determined the fate of real women in Charlotte's situation. Students

interested in this topic might wish to compare *Charlotte Temple* with similarly popular novels of the present day.

5. Somewhat paradoxically, *Charlotte Temple,* a novel featuring English and French main characters, was one of the first best sellers in U.S. history. Given the aid the French provided the Americans during their Revolution, it might be surprising to some readers that a Frenchwoman is arguably the most culpable villain in the novel. Discussion of the ethnic depictions in the novel should take into consideration the author's emigrant status and her history of trans-Atlantic crossings as well as the American response to the French Revolution. After developing a descriptive analysis of the depictions of ethnic identities in the novel, students might consider whether this novel presents any coherent theory about ethnicity as a determining factor in personality and character. In particular, in a novel with few identifiably American characters, even though most of it takes place in America, an important question to consider would be whether there is a representation of an American ethnic identity in the novel and if so, what that identity is and how it is presented.

RESOURCES

Criticism

Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America,* expanded edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter 6.

Provides important context for American sentimental literature, including *Charlotte Temple.* While Rowson's work is discussed in many chapters, see especially chapter 6 for a discussion of gender issues.

Andrea L. Hibbard and John T. Parry, "Law, Seduction, and the Sentimental Heroine: The Case of Amelia Norman," *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography,* 78, 2 (2006): 325–355.

Demonstrates that literary depictions of seduction, especially *Charlotte Temple,* were used in the trial of a seduced servant girl accused of attempted murder in the 1840s. Argues that sentimentalism was vulnerable to manipulation from a variety of political positions. Essential reading for anyone interested in the political dimensions of sentimental fiction.

Marion Rust, "What's Wrong with Charlotte Temple?" *William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History and Culture,* 60, 1 (2003): 99–118.

Argues that seduction is not really what *Charlotte Temple* is about, but rather that the disasters by which Charlotte is overcome result from her inability to direct her own desire and will.

Rebecca Rush, *Kelroy*

(Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskeep; New York: Inskeep & Bradford, 1812)

Rebecca Rush (1779–?) was the author of *Kelroy,* a novel of manners. Little is known of her life. She was a member of a prominent Philadelphia family: her father, Jacob Rush, was an attorney and judge, while her uncle Dr. Benjamin Rush was a noted physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Rush's mother was known as a painter of miniature portraits, but she gave up painting after her marriage. It is not known whether Rebecca Rush ever married, but she appears to have been single at the age of thirty-two or thirty-three when she sold her novel *Kelroy* to its printers for $100. No other pieces of writing have been definitively attributed to her. What we know about the author, then, is little: that she was a woman, probably unmarried, from a prominent family, who wrote a remarkable novel that can be seen as a bridge in American literature between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

Kelroy takes its title from the name of the male protagonist, a sensitive young poet. The story, however, really centers on the heroine's family: Mrs. Hammond has been widowed and has learned that her husband had overextended their family financially. In order to secure the financial future of herself and her two daughters, Mrs. Hammond undertakes a mercenary plan to marry her daughters to wealthy men. An essential part of her plan is keeping her daughters in ignorance of the family's financial situation. She moves them to the country where it will be cheaper to complete their education; when they are old enough to marry, she moves the family back to the city and puts her daughters, blithely unaware of their financial peril, on the marriage market. Thought to be wealthy as well as beautiful and accomplished, the sisters are sought after. The younger of the two girls, Emily, falls in love with Kelroy, who has also been left destitute by an overextended father who has died. Mrs. Hammond uses forged letters to break up the love affair and successfully marries Emily to an older man with money. When Emily and Kelroy learn of the deception that Mrs. Hammond used to drive them apart, they each die of grief.

Although money in its relationship to marriage is a frequent motif in sentimental novels from the 1790s onward, in *Kelroy* the conflict between financial considerations and romantic love takes center stage and plays itself out as an intergenerational conflict. Kelroy and Emily Hammond both inhabit a fallen world that is not of their own making. Social and economic standing are not so much inherited as individually shaped by one's parents. In the case of the Hammonds, the parents sequentially shape their children's fate: Mr. Hammond loses their money and Mrs. Hammond manipulates them in order to try to restore their financial safety. In addition to the intergenerational conflict, however, the novel also presents a divide between people of sensibility and those who are both more practical and more ruthless. Mrs. Hammond, obviously, is driven primarily by financial motives, but it is also true that Emily's older sister does not experience the conflicts and qualms Emily does about marrying for money rather than love. Emily and Kelroy both represent the finely tuned emotional reactions that

are characteristic of what people in the period called sensibility. While this high degree of sensibility allows them to recognize each other as kindred souls and fall in love, it is also true that each character is more vulnerable (heartbreak is enough to kill them) and their judgment, as Dana Nelson points out, is by no means superior. (Both are easily fooled by Mrs. Hammond.)

Kelroy has been called a novel of manners, that is, a novel in the realist mode that focuses on a specific social class and its customs and typical behavior. Published in 1812, at a time when Americans' confidence in the brightness of their national future had been shaken by ongoing conflicts with Great Britain that led to the War of 1812, *Kelroy* can be seen as expressing a low level of confidence on the home front as well. If the scheming Mrs. Hammond and the vulnerable Emily and Kelroy represent the social realities of American society, Rush's novel is certainly not a flattering portrait of her class.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Much discussion of *Kelroy* has focused on whether the novel presents a case for social reform and, if so, what that reform might be. Analyses of the novel by Cathy Davidson and Karen Weyler present two differing perspectives on this question. Discussion of this topic should begin with a close and careful reading to consider where the problems in the novel come from and how they are resolved. When novels do push for social reform, it is often the case that the novel carefully presents a world in which characters are forced into bad situations because they have no socially acceptable alternatives. Readers interested in social critique in the novel must ask whether the society as presented in the novel offers Mrs. Hammond (or any of the other major characters) choices other than the ones she makes. In the world as Rush presents it, could different decisions made by any of the characters have led to better outcomes? Students may move on to comparative analysis of the worldviews presented in American novels that deal with similar subjects (such as Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* [1791] or Tenney's *Female Quixotism* [1801]).
2. Part of the worldview of this novel has to do with a perceived conflict between genius and common sense, as the substantial discussion of the topic in the early portion of the novel indicates. Students are encouraged to explore the full implications of this theme. Kelroy's vocation as a poet, for example, makes writing and literary art a part of the discussion (which presumably indirectly reflects also upon the novel *Kelroy* itself). What value does the novel present for art, specifically literary art? Are art and "common sense" necessarily opposed to each other? It is worth noting that Rush, a female writer, makes the male protagonist rather than the heroine a writer. A careful consideration of the relationships among gender, art, sensibility, and common sense could yield interesting interpretations of the novel.
3. As noted in the overview, *Kelroy* turns in part on a conflict between generations. Two fathers in the novel have left their families without adequate financial resources to maintain their social status, and Mrs. Hammond, arguably the novel's central character, attempts to manipulate the younger characters into restoring

the family's fortunes. In *Prodigals and Pilgrims* (1982), Jay Fliegelman has argued that the Revolutionary generation demonstrated changing ideas about family structure, what Fliegelman calls a "revolt against patriarchy." The idea that fathers did not have absolute authority over their families reflects a general social move toward equality and independence. *Kelroy,* like many other early American novels, can thus be read allegorically, as being about social relations on a larger scale than merely one family. Students interested in this kind of reading may want to compare the novel with other early American novels in which the relations between the generations of a family figure prominently, for example William Hill Brown's *Power of Sympathy* (1789) or Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798).

4. Many critics have noted the centrality of Mrs. Hammond in *Kelroy.* Generally, it is accepted that Mrs. Hammond is the villain of the novel. Karen Weyler has argued that Mrs. Hammond's status as villain is at least in part conditioned by her gender. We might, then, consider her in a broader category: the ambitious woman. Students interested in the social and economic possibilities for women in this era might wish to begin their research with social histories such as Mary Beth Norton's *Liberty's Daughters* (1980) and Linda Kerber's *Women of the Republic* (1980). Comparative analysis of Mrs. Hammond's character might use other novels as points of comparison (such as *Female Quixotism*) but might also consider writings such as the letters of Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren. Attention to the comments of women writers about their own writing could also be useful. (See, for example, the preface to Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* and Warren's preface to her history of the Revolution.) Finally, students are encouraged to consider the relationship between the overly ambitious Mrs. Hammond and her creator, the at least mildly ambitious writer Rebecca Rush.
5. When surveying American novels from the 1790s on, one thing many readers note is that the structure of early novels seems uneven, less focused on a central plotline than the Victorian novels, which for many critics and readers constitute the standard against which other novels are judged. *Kelroy* is one of the first American novels to exhibit the more regular structure associated with the novels of Jane Austen, for example, which were published in the same decade as *Kelroy.* Comparison of *Kelroy* to Austen's novels could begin with the structural similarities and move on to the important differences. If Austen and Rush are taking similar approaches to social realism in different places, their novels might demonstrate important differences in British and American society in the early nineteenth century. In addition, Rush and Austen, both unmarried women writing about the marriage habits of the world around them, might be expressing different personal views about the financial and personal issues involved in negotiating the social worlds they depict. The significant differences in the endings of their novels would be an important factor to consider.

RESOURCES

Biography

Dana D. Nelson, "Introduction," in Rebecca Rush, *Kelroy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Documents Nelson's attempts to learn more about Rush's life and includes some information about her family. Argues that Rush's novel presents a society in which the restrictions on women produce moral monstrosities, such as Mrs. Hammond's behavior.

Criticism

Cathy N. Davidson, "Early American Gothic," in her *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America,* expanded edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter 8.

Argues that Kelroy "Gothicizes" the novel of manners and contextualizes the novel in terms of the British writers who appear to have influenced Rush (both novelists of social reform and of manners).

Kathryn Zabelle Derounian, "Lost in the Crowd: Rebecca Rush's *Kelroy,*" *American Transcendental Quarterly,* 47–48 (1980): 117–126.

Argues that *Kelroy* combines characteristics of the novel of manners and the romance (with Emily and Kelroy representing the romance and Mrs. Hammond representing the novel of manners). Essential reading for anyone interested in genre studies in relationship to this novel.

Karen A. Weyler, "A Speculating Spirit: Economic Anxieties and Opportunities in Early American Fiction," in her *Intricate Relations: Sexual and Economic Desire in American Fiction, 1789–1814* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), pp. 105–139.

Argues that *Kelroy* reinforces gender roles in regard to economics by suggesting that only men should attempt to improve their economic condition and that it is inappropriate for women to attempt to do so.

Tabitha Tenney
Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon

(Boston: Thomas & Andrews, 1801)

Tabitha Gilman Tenney (1762–1837) was a novelist, author of the parodic *Female Quixotism* (1801) and an advice writer. Born in New Hampshire into a politically prominent family, Tabitha Gilman married Samuel Tenney, a physician, in 1788. She published her first book, *The New Pleasing Instructor: or, Young Lady's Guide to Virtue and Happiness,* in 1799; it was a textbook and literary anthology designed for use in private girls' schools. In 1800 Samuel Tenney was elected to Congress as a member of the Federalist party (which became the opposition party upon Jefferson's election to the presidency), and the Tenneys moved to Washington, D.C. Tabitha Tenney's novel *Female Quixotism* was published in Boston in 1801

and reprinted several times during the first decades of the nineteenth century. The Tenneys remained in Washington, D.C., until Samuel Tenney's death in 1816; Tabitha Tenney returned to New Hampshire where she lived the remainder of her life.

Although Tenney's first book was a textbook and literary anthology and her second book was a novel, the two works share much in their purpose and method. *The New Pleasing Instructor* was a textbook for young women, but in the preface Tenney indicated that she had chosen literary works intended both to instruct and to entertain. In her novel *Female Quixotism,* Tenney entertains the reader while satirizing the pretension to educational merit in sentimental novels (which appear here as nothing but entertainment of the most deluding kind). The novel's central character, Dorcas Sheldon, has been educated by her father, whose approach to raising her was benevolent but essentially laissez-faire. Since Mr. Sheldon did not see that reading novels had ever hurt him, and since Dorcas wanted to read them, he allowed her to read as many novels as she wished. The result is that, like Don Quixote before her, Dorcas comes to believe that the world is just the way it is depicted in the novels she reads. She attempts to shape herself and her life according to those books, beginning with renaming herself Dorcasina to sound more romantic. Dorcasina turns down a reasonable marriage proposal early in life because she has not experienced love at first sight, and romance novels have taught her that true love always occurs at first sight. Throughout the rest of the novel, Dorcasina engages in many farcical adventures focused on a series of figures she determines to be her "true love." Many of these men are duplicitous, playing into Dorcasina's delusions while having no interest in anything except procuring her fortune. Dorcasina, her so-called lovers, her servant Betty, and slave Scipio all become involved in a variety of ruses (impersonating one another, disguising themselves, etc.) in order to forward the progress of the nonexistent love affairs between Dorcasina and a series of charlatans. Eventually, even Dorcasina's respectable friend and neighbor, Harriot Stanly, is drawn into the web of disguise and imposture, dressing as a man to try to present a rival for Dorcasina's affections. Dorcasina continues her fantasy life well past the age at which women normally married. The last of her "suitors" convinces her that she is deluded to believe that any man will want to marry a woman of her age, and at the novel's end, she finally loses her delusion. This is by no means a happy ending: the only consolation Dorcasina can take is that perhaps her story might serve as a cautionary tale for young women.

To focus on the ending, however, is to lose sight of the fact that, like *Don Quixote,* Tenney's *Female Quixotism* appeals to readers with broad humor generated by presenting absurd behavior in a realistic world. No matter how silly Dorcasina's behavior, or how ridiculous it might seem that her servants and friends play along with her schemes, eventually the disguises and subterfuges are revealed for what they are, and the reader is invited to laughter at the expense of Dorcasina and other characters. If Tenney intended the novel as educational, she also designed it to entertain.

Dorcasina is not the only figure satirized in the novel: the deceitful suitors and even some of the innocent bystanders represent various social figures who

are also being critiqued in Tenney's novel. Social climbers in general appear as ludicrous and dangerous. Like many picaresque novels, then, *Female Quixotism* takes on social issues that extend through race, class, and gender, and Tenney's best-known work can be seen as an index of social attitudes at the end of the eighteenth century.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. As with other novels dealing with women's roles and with women's marriage choices, *Female Quixotism* has been read by critics as both feminist and antifeminist. Because Samuel Tenney was a Federalist, one understandable tendency is to assume that Tabitha Tenney shared with him a set of conservative social values, and that those conservative values must be reflected in her novel. Because the picaresque mode generally mocks those with pretensions to (even delusions of) grandeur, it also lends itself to a conservative reading that argues that the point of Dorcasina's embarrassment is to demonstrate that women need to be realistic, stick to their assigned social place, and accept the guidance of well-meaning authority figures. One can also argue that the novel encourages fathers to be more patriarchal, since Mr. Sheldon's leniency seems to have a lot to do with his daughter's delusions. Cathy Davidson has argued that the politics of *Female Quixotism* are basically conservative, although she sees the ending as questioning social assumptions about marriage. Sarah Wood, on the other hand, has argued that Tenney's novel can be read as social critique. Students interested in considering the implications of *Female Quixotism* for feminism and for women readers should consider both Davidson's and Wood's arguments. They might also find it useful to develop context for thinking about ideas related to women's education and women's rights by reading contemporary works on women's rights, most notably Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which was widely read and debated in the United States. The essays of the American author Judith Sargent Murray will also provide useful context.
2. The picaresque mode, as noted earlier, in general allows the hero to move around geographically as well as socially; this can be seen in a novel like Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones* (1749) or Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* (1792–1797). With a female as the central character, however, traveling independently in the same way would almost necessarily make the novel more scandalous. (As an example, consider Daniel Defoe's 1722 *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders.*) In *Female Quixotism,* Tenney chooses instead not to take her heroine far from home. Students are encouraged to discuss the effect of this variation from generic conventions. Is *Female Quixotism* limited in the kind of social critique it can offer because its heroine is limited in her travels? Does Tenney manage to bring the same social world to Dorcasina's doorstep that she might have seen had she, like Tom Jones, been free to travel at will? Students who are familiar with any picaresque novel with a male protagonist might wish to compare the experiences of a female and male protagonist to examine what

difference gender might have made in the way *Female Quixotism* embodies the picaresque genre.

3. In addition to gender issues, questions of race should be addressed. In a chapter on this novel in her book *Executing Race,* Sharon Harris has argued that *Female Quixotism* reinforces racist stereotypes. Students might wish to examine the treatment of both the slave Scipio and the Irishman O'Connor in relationship to the treatment of white Anglo-Americans in the novel. Paying attention to the stereotypes that are reflected in the depictions of Scipio and O'Connor, readers might also wish to consider whether those characters demonstrate any traits that do not correspond to stereotypes as well as considering whether there are any negative traits associated with whiteness.
4. Although *Female Quixotism* presents itself as didactic fiction (fiction meant to educate its readers), it features scenes of cross-dressing and physical intimacy between disguised people—precisely the kinds of racy scenes that presumably we might find in the romance novels to which Dorcasina is addicted. Students might find interesting topics for discussion and writing by considering the extent to which these scenes are suggestive. Might adolescent readers have marked these scenes as "the good parts"? Would more worldly readers have seen even more titillating implications in some of these passages? Discussion or essays might consider how such sexually charged scenes interact with the supposed educational purpose of the novel: do the juicy parts undercut the novel's message? Do they help to keep readers reading, so that they do not notice they are reading an instructive book? In general, discussion of the presence of these romantic elements in a book that purports to be against the romance is encouraged.
5. Novels that argue for the danger of novel-reading are a staple of early American literature. This presents a set of questions for discussion and writing. Students might wish to make a list of the characteristics presented in the novel of the dangerous reading that Dorcasina pursues and then compare that list to the characteristics of *Female Quixotism* to see how the novel does or does not successfully differentiate itself from the novels it critiques. These characteristics of "the romance" might also be tested against popular novels of the day, such as *Charlotte Temple* or *The Coquette*, keeping in mind that those novels also claimed to be didactic. Do the sentimental novels like *Charlotte Temple* that claim to be educational and Tenney's picaresque educational novel present different models of education or educational reading? Does either type of novel encourage a kind of reading that might influence readers differently? Readers interested in this topic should see Stephen Carl Arch's essay, which sees the novel as in part an allegory about reading.

RESOURCES

Criticism

Stephen Carl Arch, "'Falling into Fiction': Reading *Female Quixotism,*" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction,* 14, 2 (2002): 177–198.

Disavowing the attribution of the novel to Tenney, Arch argues that if we read the novel in light of its "implied author," the politics become more comprehensible.

Argues that there is no single allegorical key to the novel, but demonstrates that the novel may be read as an allegory of madness, of liberty, and of reading.

Cathy N. Davidson, "The Picaresque and the Margins of Political Discourse," in her *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America,* expanded edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter 7.

Argues that *Female Quixotism* is basically conservative in its politics, with the exception of its ending, which questions the value and real nature of marriage.

Sharon M. Harris, "Lost Boundaries: Carnivalizing Race and Sexuality in Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism,*" in her *Executing Race: Early American Women's Narratives of Race, Society, and the Law* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), pp. 131–149.

Argues that Tenney uses the picaresque form to challenge social constrictions on white women, but that her text reinforces racist stereotypes that identify whiteness with superiority, and that the novel is therefore aligned with the conservative politics of the turn of the century.

Sarah F. Wood, "Nobody's Dulcinea: Romantic Fictions and Republican Mothers in Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism*," in her *Quixotic Fictions of the USA, 1792–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 164–198.

Claims that, paradoxically, *Female Quixotism* argues both that failing to distinguish between imagination and real life can ruin a young woman's life and that the "real life" possibilities for women in the early Republic are so limiting that living in a fantasy world might actually be preferable.

Royall Tyler
The Contrast, A Comedy, in Five Acts

(Philadelphia: From the press of Prichard & Hall and published by Thomas Wignell, 1790)

Royall Tyler (1757–1826) was an attorney and judge, a playwright, poet, novelist, travel writer, and newspaper columnist. Born in Boston, Tyler attended both Yale and Harvard, where he was reputedly both witty and a spendthrift. After graduation, he studied law and was admitted to the bar; after marrying he moved to Vermont, where he became a judge on the state supreme court and later, chief justice. Writing was a longtime avocation for Tyler. He published his play *The Contrast,* often recognized as the first American play to be professionally performed, in 1787; a novel, *The Algerine Captive,* in 1797, and a travel book, *The Yankey in London,* in 1809. He also published other poems and sketches, often in collaboration with Joseph Dennie, editor of *The Port-Folio,* and wrote at least four other plays, one of which was performed in Boston and in New York in 1797.

The Contrast was written and performed in April 1787 in New York City. At the time, there was no theater in Boston, and Tyler reported that he had seen his first play, Richard Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* (performed 1777) only a few weeks earlier. (It should be noted that it is highly unlikely that this was Tyler's only knowledge of theater; he had almost certainly read important English plays, as most men educated like him would have done, even in Boston.) The circumstances under which Tyler visited New York and began his dramatic career would not seem particularly conducive to writing a play in just a few weeks: Tyler was serving, for a brief time, in the Massachusetts state militia, which was engaged in suppressing Shays's Rebellion, an armed rebellion by farmers (many of them Revolutionary War veterans). As aide to the commander of the militia, Tyler had been sent to request assistance from the state of New York, because the Massachusetts rebels had crossed the state border into New York. During a stay of a few months there, Tyler managed to write and see produced his first play not surprisingly in the style of the British comedy of manners, the dominant mode of comedy at the time.

Although some readers may be tempted to see the "contrast" represented in this play as a contrast between Old World and New, careful reading can demonstrate that the contrast here is between two sets of values that might be generally identified with the United States and Europe, but which can also be distinguished from them. In fact, the two main contrasting characters are both Americans, Colonel Manley and Billy Dimple (although Dimple has been influenced by a desire to emulate European culture). Colonel Manley, a gentleman farmer and veteran of the Revolution, is presented as a paragon of virtue, while Dimple appears as contriving and deceitful, plotting to marry Letitia for her money. Both the colonel and Dimple have echoes, of a sort, in the figures of their servants. Manley's servant Jonathan has been viewed by many as one of the first in a literary type, the New England bumpkin, and his dialogue is credited as being one of the earliest literary representations of New England dialect. In general, Colonel Manley may be seen as a spokesman for dominant post-Revolutionary values in the play, giving soliloquies in which he denounces "luxury" and argues for the importance of citizens focusing on the "common good." By the end of the play, the "good" characters have been rewarded: Manley achieves his goal and marries Maria, and Manley's servant Jonathan resists the temptations presented to him by Dimple's servant Jessamy. The "bad" characters are unable to achieve their goals or to change.

Like other early American novels, *The Contrast* often suffers in its reputation because readers expect it to meet the aesthetic standards of twentieth-century drama, on which most readers' expectations are first formed. Because Americans were not writing many comedies, *The Contrast* tends to be studied in isolation from its peers, such as *The School for Scandal*. Taking into consideration that theatergoers at the time would have been more than comfortable with stock characters and weak plots, and recognizing that witty dialogue was the prime attraction of these plays, *The Contrast* can be approached with expectations that more closely mirror those of its author and original audience in order to appreciate it within its genre.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Many of the virtues extolled in *The Contrast* will be familiar to readers of Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography:* hard work, economizing, and a sober and serious lifestyle. We also find these characteristics praised in novels, such as *Kelroy* and *The Coquette*. *The Contrast* through its title specifically invites the reader, or viewer, to examine and compare individuals on both sides of any given virtue or vice. Students interested in concepts of virtue in the early Republic may wish to make charts in which the virtues and vices and the examples of each are listed, first for *The Contrast* and then for any other text that seems to deal with the same virtues. Out of such a graphic mapping, a comparative analysis would emerge that could begin to identify areas of similarity and difference. Another strategy would be to try to create a list of virtues with their appropriate descriptions in the same way Franklin lists them in his *Autobiography,* but using quotations from *The Contrast* to supply the descriptions. Either way, the point is to notice that although there is a great deal of overlap in discussions of virtue, writers did have areas of disagreement. By finding such points of divergence in discussions of virtue, readers can pinpoint areas of social life about which early Americans were especially anxious.
2. One area of debate in the play is the matter of dress and appearance. Contemporary readers are often surprised at how much early Americans debated the appropriateness of individuals' clothing. Indeed, sumptuary laws (laws that restricted the consumption of luxury goods, including certain kinds of clothing) were much debated in the years after the revolution. On one hand, the concept of individual liberty suggested that sumptuary laws were antidemocratic. On the other hand, many people in early America were concerned that class differences could damage the social fabric, and conspicuous consumption would only make class differences more visible, so that sumptuary laws might actually be a good thing for a democracy. (See chapters 2 and 3 of Drew R. McCoy's *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980] for some discussion of these debates.) Students interested in this subject will benefit from Cynthia Kierner's edition of the play and particularly the contemporary documents it provides. For images of early American clothing, students might wish to consult Linda Baumgarten's *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). As clothing relates closely to issues of class, students interested in dress may also find Richard Pressman's article useful.
3. Where early American novels often seem to place the appropriate roles of women at center stage, in *The Contrast* we are clearly asked to consider the proper conduct of men. Colonel Manley's name, of course, invites us to consider him as a paragon of masculine behavior (in contrast to Billy Dimple). Like womanhood, manhood was a socially constructed category, and there was more than one model available to help men decide how to conduct themselves. Students interested in manhood in early America will be interested in chapter 1 of Michael S. Kimmel's *Manhood in America* (second edition, Oxford University Press, 2006). In addition to discussion of the contrast between Manley and

Dimple, students may wish to compare the ideal of masculinity in *The Contrast* with the ideals that emerge from other contemporary texts. Particularly useful points of comparison would be Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer.*

4. The topic of masculinity might also be relevant to a consideration of the military backdrop of *The Contrast:* the suppression of Shays's Rebellion. Although Tyler was by no means a career soldier, he was serving as an aide to the commander of the Massachusetts militia during the suppression of the rebellion and at the time he wrote *The Contrast,* so we might expect both the values of the military and the specific conflict that generated the rebellion to have some impact on the play. The articles cited below by Pressman and John Evelev both provide some backgound and analysis of the relationship of the play to this political crisis. Readers interested in a detailed account of the rebellion should consult Leonard L. Richards's *Shays's Rebellion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
5. In terms of the study of drama, students may be interested in the relationship of *The Contrast* to the English tradition in comedy. Kierner's edition and Donald Siebert's article will provide useful background on this matter. In addition, students should consult the study guide on plays in Part II of this volume for general works on American drama in the period.

RESOURCES

Biography

G. Thomas Tanselle, *Royall Tyler* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

Still the standard biography.

Edition with Supplementary Materials

Royall Tyler, *The Contrast: Manners, Morals, and Authority in the Early American Republic*, edited, with an introduction, by Cynthia A. Kierner (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

This new edition of the play includes a historical introduction, useful annotations for the modern reader, and a wide variety of supporting documents from the period of the play's composition and original performance. Highly recommended for students interested in a historical approach to Tyler's major play.

Criticism

John Evelev, "*The Contrast:* The Problem of Theatricality and Political and Social Crisis in Postrevolutionary America," *Early American Literature,* 31, 1 (1996): 74–97.

Argues that *The Contrast* reveals the conflicts in post-Revolutionary American culture and is both more complex and potentially more negative than critics have traditionally considered it.

Richard S. Pressman, "Class Positioning and Shays' Rebellion: Resolving the Contradictions of *The Contrast,*" *Early American Literature,* 21, 2 (1986): 87–102.
Traces the relationship among Tyler's own class experiences, his participation in the suppression of Shays's Rebellion, and the characterization of various class positions in *The Contrast.*

Donald T. Siebert, "Royall Tyler's 'Bold Example': *The Contrast* and the English Comedy of Manners," *Early American Literature,* 13, 1 (1978): 3–11.
Argues that, contrary to many readers' assumptions, *The Contrast* does not denigrate all things European; also argues that despite reliance on the tradition of English comedy of manners, Tyler did attempt originality in the play.

Mercy Otis Warren
History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations

(Boston: Manning & Loring, 1805)

Mercy Otis Warren (1728–1814) was an important pro-Revolutionary propagandist, a poet, and author of one of the first histories of the American Revolution. Like many of the women who played important roles in the Revolutionary cause, Mercy Otis Warren was related by blood, marriage, and friendship to politically active men. Warren's father was a Massachusetts attorney and a longtime opponent of the Crown-appointed state government. Warren's brother James Otis Jr., was also an early leader in the Revolutionary cause, though his career was cut short by injuries that left him physically and mentally incapacitated. Her husband, James Warren, served in the Massachusetts state legislature both before and after the war. In the years leading up to the full-fledged military conflict, the Warrens' home frequently served as a meeting place for colonial activists, including the Warrens' friend John Adams. During those volatile years, Warren wrote a series of plays that criticized the royal governor and his administration and encouraged the emerging resistance. Some evidence suggests that these plays rank second only to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* in terms of the breadth of distribution of pro-Revolutionary writings. Both Warren's husband and future president John Adams encouraged her in these literary activities.

After the war, Warren continued writing. During the controversies over the ratification of the Constitution, she published *Observations on the New Constitution* (1788). As an Anti-Federalist (or Jeffersonian), Warren had serious reservations about the Constitution, and her pamphlet reflected these. She also continued less-political writing, publishing *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* in 1790, which collected poetry and plays she had written over a period of years,

some of them already published in newspapers or magazines. The work she probably spent the most time and labor on, however, was her multivolume history of the Revolution, begun during the war. Warren had many sources of firsthand information and used her family and friends to help her collect information from other sources. She also developed a friendship and correspondence with the well-known English historian Catherine Macaulay, who mentored Warren in her work on the history. (This relationship is outlined in fascinating detail by Kate Davies; see citation below.)

Based on the title, a reader today might expect Warren's history to end with the peace treaty. Like many members of the founding generation, though, Warren did not define the Revolution narrowly in terms of war. She began with a summary account of the settling of New England by Europeans and ended with the election of the third president, Thomas Jefferson, in 1801. Warren thus participates in the creation of a story about the Revolution that sees it as a natural part of a broad change in political and social thought. In addition to the war itself, postwar politics are treated in some detail: the Articles of Confederation, rebellion in Massachusetts, postwar financial crises, the Constitutional Convention, and the Washington and Adams administrations all are included in the history. Moreover, because historians of the age believed that commenting on the morals of historical actors was part of their job, Warren's history has a clear political position: Jeffersonian (also known as Anti-Federalist or Democratic-Republican). Warren's critical comments about the administration of John Adams led to a rupture in their friendship that lasted until 1812.

The publication of Warren's history was ill-timed; David Ramsay's history of the Revolution had already appeared, to positive reviews. A multivolume biography of Washington by John Marshall had also come out recently, clearly taking away some of Warren's potential market. So, despite its warm reception by Jeffersonians, the work did not find the success that Warren might have hoped, given the earlier enthusiastic public reception of her work and the privileged position from which she wrote. Nonetheless, Warren's history is valuable to readers today because it demonstrates the attitude toward these historical events of a representative member of the founding generation, and specifically a Jeffersonian, Anti-Federalist point of view on the Constitution and federal government. In addition, as a major political and social work by a woman, Warren's history demonstrates that women's access to writing and print was by no means as limited as twenty-first-century readers generally expect. The history is also a good example of the moralistic attitude historians of the period took to their writing.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. As noted above, Warren's history will seem strange to readers accustomed to today's ideal of history as politically neutral. For Warren (and for her readers), it was the job of the historian to make moral and ethical judgments about historical figures and their actions as well as to offer insight into how the readers should conduct themselves. For the historian of early America, this meant offering les-

sons to the public about how to conduct themselves as citizens of a republic and how to keep the new democratic forms of government alive. Readers who wish to explore Warren's moral and ethical "observations" might wish to begin by reading Lester Cohen's essay on the history (cited below) as well as Davies's account of Warren's relationship with another moralizing historian, Macaulay. Essay topics about this aspect of historical writing might be found by trying first to derive a definition of virtue from Warren's *History;* the virtues implicit in Warren's work could be compared with the virtues made explicit in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* or Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer.* Students interested in the development of the field of history might wish to compare Warren's history of the Revolution with the history written by David Ramsay.

2. Specific sections of Warren's *History* can be studied in relationship to other accounts of history. The early sections of Warren's narrative briefly treat the religious issues at stake in the early settlement of English people on the east coast of North America. How does Warren's account differ from the accounts of colonial writers like William Bradford? How does her treatment of religion compare with that of Franklin, who ran away from Calvinist Boston to Quaker Philadelphia? Discussion or writing about this aspect of the *History* might also investigate the relationship of Warren's account of early New England with popular versions of that history in circulation today, in textbooks and in popular culture. How would Warren likely react to the popular image of "the Pilgrims" and their religious attitudes?
3. The final chapter of the *History* presents an Anti-Federalist account of the constitutional conventions and the Constitution itself. Students interested in the constitutional debates could read this essay without reading the rest of the history; it stands on its own as a contribution to the historiography of the immediate post-Revolutionary years. Questions that might be addressed include: How does Warren's account of the debates about the Constitution compare with the images portrayed in the *Federalist Papers*? How does Warren's attitude toward ratification compare with Franklin's pragmatic view in his "Speech at the Conclusion of the Convention"? Again, how does this view of the Constitution and its creation compare with the views of this foundational document presented in twenty-first-century textbooks or popular culture? Specifically, students should consider this paradox: as an Anti-Federalist, Warren could be said to have been on the "losing" side in the debate over the Constitution; yet, she ends her history on an optimistic note. How can she be so hopeful about the future of the country under a Constitution that she believed was flawed?
4. In the preface, Warren addressed briefly the question of whether people might think it was improper for a woman to write a history of war. Obviously, she must have thought it was proper, but readers sometimes mistake Warren's comments here as expressing a real sense of inadequacy. A familiarity with Warren's letters and her biography will help to dispel the sense that she truly thought she was not up to the task; moreover, of course, the three volumes of the history themselves stand as a testimony to her sense that she was justified in undertaking the project. Students interested in women's writing

and women's ability to make their voices heard in the political realm can use Warren as an interesting test case. Nina Baym's book *American Women Writers and the Work of History* provides an excellent background for understanding the role of history in women's authorship specifically and includes discussion of Warren. Readers might also wish to consider Warren's entire writing career prior to the publication of the *History* in order to consider how a well-educated woman like Warren would have viewed the vocation of authorship.

5. Warren is in many ways not typical of women of her generation: her education far exceeded the education of most women, even many wealthy women, and her ties to Revolutionary leaders gave her more access than most people would have had to printing her work. Still, for readers interested in the possibilities of women's lives and in the education of women, Warren's biography will be of interest. Fortunately, works by Rosemarie Zagarri and Jeffrey Richards provide an accessible introduction to Warren's life and work; the collection of letters edited by Richards and Sharon Harris allows access to Warren's life through the original documents. In terms of historical or cultural study, students might ask why Abigail Adams, who wrote little other than letters, is so much better known among the general public as a "woman writer" of the founding era. Comparative biographical study of Adams and Warren will engage many central issues in Revolutionary women's history. Judith Sargent Murray, whose politics opposed Warren's but who helped her in her literary career, also serves as an interesting point of comparison.

RESOURCES

Biography

Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris, eds., *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

Collects over one hundred of Warren's letters, mostly unpublished, including many letters to other women, to provide a unique window into her life and thought.

Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1995).

A brief and accessible biography; an excellent starting place for research.

Criticism

Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790–1860* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

Argues that history was of prime importance to women writers in the United States before the Civil War because of its connection to the kind of education considered appropriate for "Republican Mothers," who were expected to be the first educators of new citizens. Both reading and writing history were activities that were considered suitable for women. Reviews many writers, including Warren; an excellent starting place for those interested in the genre of historical writing or in women writers.

Lester H. Cohen, "Explaining the Revolution: Ideology and Ethics in Mercy Otis Warren's Historical Theory," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 37 (April 1980): 200–218.
Argues that Warren understood better than other early historians of the Revolution the historian's role as social critic and that her history shows signs that she also understood the historian's mission as an ethical one.

Kate Davies, *Catherine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
A biocritical study of Warren and her friend the famous radical English historian Catherine Macaulay. Drawing on manuscript letters between the two historians, Davies argues that the Revolutionary experience shaped the work of both writers as well as modern conceptions of gender.

Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne, 1995).
A concise and accessible introduction to Warren's writing.

Noah Webster
Grammatical Institutes of the English Language

Volumes 1 and 2 (Hartford, Conn.: Hudson & Goodwin, 1783–1784);
volume 3 (Hartford, Conn.: Barlow & Babcock, 1785)

Noah Webster (1758–1843) wrote dictionaries, textbooks, and treatises on language that influenced successive generations of American students. The son of a Connecticut farmer, Webster was educated at Yale and later studied and practiced law. In the late 1780s and 1790s, Webster edited several New York publications, including *American Minerva,* a Federalist magazine. Webster found his greatest commercial success as a newspaper editor, political essayist, journalist, and textbook writer. In politics as well as in linguistics, Webster was above all a nationalist, always interested in the development of a uniquely American culture and language.

Although he was not an author of novels, Webster holds an important place in the development of authorship as a profession in the United States. Webster was active in promoting a national copyright law and took a lifelong interest in the protection of intellectual property rights, a natural interest considering both his politics and his status as one of the earliest Americans to earn a living as a writer. Webster also was a pioneer in book promotion. He not only sought celebrity recommendations for his works but also went on lecture tours to promote his books and donated his books to schools.

Webster's *Grammatical Institutes of the English Language* was designed to be a specifically American text and consisted of three volumes, a guide to spelling (1783), a manual for grammar (1784) and an anthology for reading practice

(1785). The title of the work changed as numerous editions were published, but volume one was reprinted frequently as *The American Spelling Book*, and the popular name for the work was the "Blue-Backed Speller," because of its blue cover. By the beginning of the 1860s, the speller sold one million copies a year. In 1806 Webster published his first dictionary. In order to expand the dictionary and make the etymologies more complete, Webster studied twenty-six languages. Webster's goal, as with the *Grammatical Institutes,* was to establish a more American English and to standardize American speech, spelling, and usage.

Webster's dictionary may be his longest-lasting legacy, but his *American Spelling Book* was in use for at least a hundred years (and appears to be in use at the beginning of the twenty-first century among some students who are home-schooled). Part of what made Webster's spelling book particularly American was his incorporation of simplified spelling rules. Many of the differences between American and British spelling today can be traced back to Webster's reforms. He aimed to simplify English spelling and make it more logical; because of the popularity of his textbooks and dictionary, those spellings (like *color* rather than *colour*) have become standard in American English. However, it is also important to understand that when Webster began publishing his speller, and throughout the time it dominated American schools, a "spelling book" was understood to be first and foremost a book to teach children to read. The popular understanding of reading instruction (which can be seen as far back in American literature as the *New England Primer,* first published in 1690 and popular in many editions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) was that children learned to read by first learning the alphabet, then learning to pronounce syllables based on combinations of letters, then learning to recognize combinations of syllables as corresponding to words. Then, finally, words could be combined into sentences and sentences into paragraphs (or verses of poetry). Learning to spell, then, meant not so much learning to avoid spelling errors (as we might mean today) as it meant learning to construct words out of letters, learning to read.

Volumes two and three of the *Grammatical Institutes* did not have the same amazing popularity as did the speller; other writers' grammar books and readers became more popular in schools. Nonetheless, Webster's grammar and reader were influential on those works. They also demonstrate a coherent project on Webster's part to create an American version of English that would be both particularly American (that is, recognizably different from British English) and national (Webster deplored regional differences in pronunciation). In these two characteristics, Webster's linguistic project mirrored the Federalist political project of nationalism with a strong central government. Through long labor on his linguistic project, Webster made himself an authority on language; through his public relations work and the popularity of his dictionary and speller, he created a national standard of the English language.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Only a few years before the Revolution, English colonists would not have thought of themselves as "American" but rather as Englishmen or as residents

of a particular colony: Virginians, Pennsylvanians, or New Yorkers. While some language commentators noted regional differences in pronunciation then, the notion of American English was one that would not have a reason to exist until the political changes of the Revolution. As noted above, Webster promoted "Americanness" of English in two ways: through reforms that would differentiate American English from British English and through opposition to regional variations in usage and pronunciation. Linguists today would argue that Webster's approach to language, what is called a prescriptive approach, had no real chance of standardizing English, especially in its spoken form, since the daily usage of speakers who perceive no problem with their language is not likely to change because of a textbook. In the context of the post-Revolutionary period and from the point of view of Federalist politics, however, Webster's efforts were very logical. Americans needed a new national identity to replace their old identity as Englishmen, and that identity needed to be shared, truly national, in order to help Virginians and New Yorkers begin to think of themselves as Americans first. Students interested in the political implications of language study might wish to compare Webster's writing (particularly the prefaces to the three volumes of the *Grammatical Institutes*) with twentieth- and twenty-first-century writings about English-only education or about African American English. The political issues have changed in some ways and in other important ways they have remained the same; students are encouraged to keep in mind that Webster's work was generated out of a particular political point of view in order to think productively about the politics of language debates throughout the country's history.

2. Students who wish to confine their historical study of Webster to his own era can find interesting primary historical sources through the Library of Congress's American Memory Website (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html). By searching the "Literature" collection for "Noah Webster," one can find and read nineteenth-century reviews of Webster's dictionary, reviews of other works by Webster (such as his version of the Bible), obituaries, and more. These articles should help to clarify some of the political issues at stake in Webster's career. Searching the entire American Memory collection from the front page of the site will yield even more material, including letters to and from famous people such as George Washington, which may be of interest to those studying Webster's career as an author or his biography.
3. Students interested in the history of education in the United States will naturally find Webster's textbooks of interest. To fully grasp the way these textbooks worked in a child's education, however, it is necessary to have an understanding of the basic instructional techniques in use in American schools in the nineteenth century. A good overview can be found in Clarence Karier's *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), especially the early chapters. Later nineteenth-century educational reformers would argue against Webster's method of teaching reading (the idea that spelling was the key to learning to read), in a process that leads to today's whole-language theories of teaching language arts. Consideration of these theories in relationship to the theories

of psychology popular at the time is recommended. Students who are pursuing American literature into the later nineteenth century might wish to read the radical treatises on education by Bronson Alcott as representing the far end of the spectrum from Webster and as a form of education influenced by the philosophy of Transcendentalism as opposed to the strong influence of Federalism on Webster.

4. Turning to specific volumes of the *Grammatical Institutes* and specific parts of those volumes, readers will find a variety of issues worth discussion and research. Volume three, for example, gives directions for students on speaking or reading aloud, including directions on how to demonstrate emotion, down to detailed descriptions of how the speaker should move various parts of his or her face or body to represent confusion or amusement or fear, etc. Students who have read some sentimental fiction will be familiar with the idea that emotions should be visible on the face or body. Webster's directions for demonstrating emotion as a reader, however, might stimulate thought about the relationship between sentimentality and writing. Consider the personae used by Benjamin Franklin in his satires, for example; can one extract from Franklin's writing guidelines for how to express certain attitudes in writing, even if they are not the attitudes you actually feel? Imitation as a value in literature was quickly displaced in the mid nineteenth century, but to understand the early Republic, it is necessary to understand the many ways in which the concept of imitation as a positive good played out in literature and culture.
5. In volume three of the *Grammatical Institutes,* Webster states his aim as providing a uniquely American set of readings for students. Yet, a content analysis of that volume will quickly demonstrate that plenty of the selections are from British authors, most notably William Shakespeare but also including later writers. Students interested in how literature reflects cultural values are strongly encouraged to analyze the values expressed by these readings. Ideas of patriotism, family, proper gender roles for men and women, appropriate consumer behavior, and work ethics will be especially interesting to consider. Students might also wish to carry out a comparative analysis of the British and American authors included; what guidelines for selecting his texts do you think Webster followed? Anthologies like this one educated the next few generations of Americans, those who would become the reading audience for Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, so understanding the kinds of readings given to young people can help us understand that later literary culture.

RESOURCES

Biography

Harlow Giles Unger, *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* (New York: Wiley, 1998).

A comprehensive biography that relies on Webster's own papers. Because of the book's strong sympathies toward Webster's politics, students interested in that aspect of Webster's life should balance this work with other readings in cultural and political history.

Criticism

V. P. Bynack, "Noah Webster's Linguistic Thought and the Idea of an American National Culture," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 45 (January–March 1984): 99–114.

Traces the growth of Webster's interest in a specifically American language to his Federalist politics and the fear that an uneducated, unruly public would be the downfall of the new Republic.

David Micklethwait, *Noah Webster and the American Dictionary* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2005).

Tells the story of Webster's creation of his dictionary, with special attention to the competition among early dictionary authors and Webster's relationship to earlier dictionaries.

Mason Locke Weems
A History of the Life and Death, Virtues, and Exploits of General George Washington

(George-Town, S.C.: The author, 1800)

Mason Locke Weems (1759–1825) was a minister, bookseller, and author who wrote and distributed didactic literature that influenced the education of generations of Americans. Born in Maryland the nineteenth child of a Scottish farmer, Weems spent years in England as a young man, where he first studied medicine and later prepared for the ministry. He was ordained as a minister in the Anglican Church in 1784 and returned to the Maryland area, where he served congregations for a few years. By the early 1790s, however, Weems no longer held a fixed post with a specific congregation, and he earned his livelihood as a traveling book salesman.

Weems's ministerial background as well as his awareness of popular reading tastes strongly inform the works (mostly biographies) he authored himself. Weems adapted the material of the lives of popular heroes to the instructional needs and interests of middle-class and working-class readers. The most famous and enduring of his biographical works was his life of Washington, published first in a short, eighty-page edition in 1800, shortly after the first president's death. Weems's moralistic and inspiring version of the life of the country's first commander in chief drew on the national hero worship that had begun during the Revolutionary years but also on an emerging vision of American society. Unlike other biographers of Washington, Weems dealt in loving detail on Washington's childhood and formative years. Although there is some debate among critics as to whether Weems "invented" or simply borrowed the story of Washington and the cherry tree (as well as other instructive anecdotes), the simple truth is that in

the interest of a good (and moral) story, Weems never seemed to have a problem with fabricating incidents.

Weems's *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues, and Exploits of General George Washington* sold well, and he continued to rewrite and expand it over the twenty-five years between its initial publication and the year of his death. The book tripled in size over the years and went through more than thirty editions (including two translations into German). The emphasis on childhood reflects a vision of both children and parenting that was still emerging at the beginning of the nineteenth century, an affectionate ideal that was less tied to notions of original sin and more influenced by Locke's ideas about education: Washington's father appears as affectionate and attentive, and the young Washington's errors are corrected in order to form the man who later appears as a national role model.

Although literary critics have had little good to say about Weems, the influence of his popular biography is difficult to overestimate. Another national hero, Abraham Lincoln, later spoke of the influence Weems's biography had on him as a young man, and excerpts from the volume appeared in the popular McGuffey's readers that were used to teach several generations of Americans to read. Other popular works that Weems both authored and sold included a *Life of Benjamin Franklin, Written Chiefly by Himself* (1815), and *Life of William Penn* (1822).

Biography was a popular genre in the early republic, and long before Washington's death, a subgenre of poems and essays in praise of the first president was instituted, so it is not terribly surprising that a book-length biography of Washington would have sold well after his death. What is notable about this best-known work of Parson Weems and what makes it perhaps the first of its kind is the extent to which it combines patriotism with piety and the life of a great man with instruction for the common man, a combination that is nicely summed up in the epigraph that appeared in later editions of the biography: "A life how useful to his country led! / How loved while living! How revered now dead! / Lisp, lisp his name ye children yet unborn! / And with like deeds your own great names adorn."

Weems's biography of Washington had another advantage in the earliest years of its circulation. Chief Justice John Marshall had written a strongly Federalist biography of Washington (in five expensive volumes). Treating Washington as somehow removed from the fray of party politics in a more accessible (and cheaper) single volume, Weems created a biography calculated to have broad appeal to Americans of many political leanings. While staunch Federalists with the time and money for Marshall's biography likely would still have read it, the more numerous members of the public who wanted something shorter, less partisan, or cheaper would have been inclined to read Weems's work, even though some contemporary reviewers noted that it was not clear whether the work was fiction or nonfiction.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

1. Weems positions his biography of Washington as focusing on the "private" Washington. Other biographies, he says, have focused only on Washington as

a hero, not "Washington the dutiful son—the affectionate brother—the cheerful school-boy—the diligent surveyor—the neat draftsman—the laborious farmer—the widow's husband—the orphan's father—the poor man's friend." In emphasizing the importance of the work and family life of the great man outside his role as national hero, Weems is taking a position in a debate with other writers about the role of biography. Scott Casper's book has outlined this debate. Students interested in biographical writing and the history of this genre should consider Casper's argument and might wish to use this as a starting point for comparative analyses of Weems's biography of Washington in relationship with other popular biographies or autobiographies.

2. The most obvious point of comparison—but one rarely taken up by critics—would be with Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography.* Like Weems's biography of Washington, Franklin's autobiography sold well in many editions and influenced several generations of readers. The exemplary lives depicted in these two texts have some important similarities but important differences, too. Hard work is extolled in both books, and childhood lessons are recounted. The role of Washington's father in Weems's narrative compared to Franklin's father in his own is worth special attention. Do the two texts suggest different visions of what makes a good man? A good father? A good son? Critics have noted the nearly complete absence of women in Franklin's account of his life: What role do women play in Weems's biography of Washington? (See Casper for a consideration of why Martha Washington is treated as she is in Weems's work.)
3. At least one of the contemporary reviewers of Weems's life of Washington could not decide whether the book was a biography or a "novel, founded on fact." Readers of other biographies and autobiographies from the early Republic have had similar problems. Twenty-first-century readers have fretted over the possibility that Olaudah Equiano fictionalized the story of his own childhood (see the entry on Equiano in this volume), and readers of Crévecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) have taken the work as autobiographical despite the fictionalizing of the narrator, whose farm is in a different state and whose ethnicity is different from those of the author. Comparison of these various texts might help to illuminate some of the questions about truth and fiction in life writing that continue to be vexing. What difference does it make to call a text biography, autobiography, or novel? Do we read the texts differently if we have those expectations? How and why?
4. Authorship as a lucrative field was only beginning to develop in the United States at the time of Weems's death. Like other authors who made a living in the book trade, Weems did more than write; his primary employment was as a book distributor. In many ways, though, Weems pioneered the kind of market research that book publishers and agents use today to predict what will sell well (and therefore what to publish). Students interested in the development of the publishing industry and in Weems as a particularly commercial and responsive writer might pursue these questions from two distinct angles. First, reading Weems's correspondence provides many opportunities to see his thinking about the needs and wants of readers firsthand. (If Emily Skeel's volumes containing

Weems's letters are not easily accessible, students can still learn much from Ronald Zboray's article, which mines the letters well. The article by Christopher Harris will also provide important insights into Weems's efforts to shape his text to please his readers.) Second, readers might analyze the biography itself for internal evidence of Weems's attempts to fulfill his reader's desires.

5. As noted above, Weems's life of Washington takes part in a new discourse about parenting and childhood. Washington's father plays an important role in the biography, and his formation of Washington's character is depicted as highly successful. Students familiar with the sentimental novels written beginning in the 1790s might explore the ways in which parenting is depicted in those novels (predominantly, of course, parenting of young women) to compare the attitudes toward raising the young as presented in this life of a hero as compared to the lives of average young women. Does Washington's father as portrayed by Weems manage to avoid errors made by the parents of young people in novels such as William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism* (1801), or Rebecca Rush's *Kelroy* (1812)?

RESOURCES

Biography

Emily Ellsworth Ford Skeel, ed., *Mason Locke Weems: His Works and Ways,* 3 volumes (New York: s. n., 1929).

A wealth of primary materials, including Weems's letters and extracts from reviews of his works.

Ronald J. Zboray, "The Book Peddler and Literary Dissemination: The Case of Parson Weems," *Publishing History,* 25 (1989): 27–44.

Discusses Weems's correspondence with Philadelphia publisher Matthew Carey about the business of bookselling in the Southern states. Fascinating insights into the way in which the bookseller helped the publisher select what books to print and sell.

Criticism

Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Outlines the debate over the function of biography in the nineteenth century, including discussions of Weems and his role in these debates.

Christopher Harris, "Mason Locke Weems's Life of Washington: The Making of a Bestseller," *Southern Literary Journal,* 19, 2 (1987): 92–101.

Traces Weems's responsiveness to the interests of readers as he learned about the market through his bookselling activities and describes the textual strategies of Weems's biography of Washington that were designed to accommodate popular reading tastes.

Part IV
Annotated Bibliography

Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, *A History of the Book in America: Volume 1: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
A comprehensive guide to the history of printing, reading, and the book trades in early America; chapters 5–13 deal with the eighteenth century.

Jennifer J. Baker, *Securing the Commonwealth: Debt, Speculation, and Writing in the Making of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
A study of the intersection of credit and public attitudes toward financial speculation and American literature from the 1690s to the 1790s. Baker argues that by the 1790s fears about the dangers of speculation were replaced with an optimistic hope that public credit would help bind society together.

Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680–1820* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005.)
A study of the manuals that taught literate people how to write letters in the British empire, including North America. Bannet argues that letter writing was an essential component supporting the empire, and that letter-writing manuals can therefore help us understand the colonial and imperial project of Britain.

Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
A study of sympathy in American novels from the 1790s through the nineteenth century. Barnes examines connections among reading, seduction, and democracy to demonstrate how all these concerns converge in sentimental fiction.

Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
A useful guide to travel writing by Americans in response to exploration at home and travel abroad; the first two chapters deal with the earliest periods of American literature; later chapters treat writing about specific places or by specific groups of writers.

Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
A study of geographic texts in early America and a developing awareness of geography. Argues that geographic literacy improved dramatically through the eighteenth century and that by the 1820s the idea of national expansion was a commonly held part of many Americans' worldview.

Bruce R. Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).
Traces the debates over the causes and significance of racial differences in American discourse from the Revolution through the mid nineteenth century.

Marcus Daniel, *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
A study of leading Federalist and Democratic-Republican journalists of the 1790s and their impact on the political debates of their day.

Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; expanded edition, 2004).
An essential and comprehensive overview of the development of the novel in America in the context of the rise of democracy, the growth of cities, and industrialization. Davidson's volume pioneered history of the book in American literary studies and spurred a revival of interest in early fiction.

William Merrill Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
A careful consideration of letter writing as a literate activity that straddles the boundary between literature and practices of everyday life, with special attention to letter writing in America from the earliest colonists to the end of the nineteenth century.

Peter Dzwonkoski, ed., *American Literary Publishing Houses, 1638–1899,* two parts, *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* volume 49 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman/Gale, 1986).

Emory Elliott, *American Writers of the Early Republic, Dictionary of Literary Biography,* volume 37 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman/Gale, 1985).

Elliott, *Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic 1725–1810* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).
A study of writers of the Revolutionary era with special emphasis on the humanistic efforts of Timothy Dwight, Joel Barlow, Philip Freneau, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and Charles Brockden Brown.

Robert A. Ferguson, *Reading the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).
Analyzes early American texts with particular attention to the contested political ideals and to how readers in the early Republic would have made meaning out of these texts. Written by a distinguished scholar of law and literature, this volume will be of interest to students interested in understanding the relationship between legal writings of the early Republic and current interpretations of law.

Joseph Fichtelberg, *Critical Fictions: Sentiment and the American Market, 1780–1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).
Argues that sentiment in American literature of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be seen both as a way to describe economic relationships and an attempt to intervene in those relationships. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the early Republican period.

Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
Traces Lockean ideas about the family and education through fiction popular in America (authored by both English and American writers), demonstrating that new ideas about both the family and government influenced American social change.

Jared Gardner, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787–1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

Traces racial theory in early U.S. literature with special attention to the formation of stories of origin that account for white Americans as distinct not only from those of other races but from white Europeans as well. Chapters focusing on Royall Tyler and Charles Brockden Brown will be of special interest to students of the early Republic.

Paul Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).
Argues that rather than reading American literature as influenced by British, we should read the two literatures as mutually explanatory; this volume models that kind of discussion with chapters that pair American and British texts to show how reading them together helps illuminate each.

Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
A history of sexuality in early America; the last section focuses on changes in sexual norms in the Revolutionary era with special emphasis on Philadelphia.

Kevin J. Hayes, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
A useful handbook with chapters on a variety of genres. Parts VI and VII deal with the early Republican era.

Elizabeth Hewitt, *Correspondence and American Literature, 1770–1865* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
Traces correspondence in a variety of forms in relationship to the project of imagining a nation. The early chapters develop two theories of correspondence characterized respectively by Federalist and Democratic-Republican visions of representative government.

Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
A useful handbook with broad coverage of travel writing across time and across locations. Advanced undergraduates will find the final chapter, "Travel Writing and Its Theory," by Mary Baine Campbell a useful introduction to the theoretical issues related to travel writing.

Susan Clair Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency in Eighteenth-Century American Autobiography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998).
Traces autobiographical writings through the century, arguing that an increasing rhetoric of independence emerges at the end of the century.

Imbarrato, *Settlement to the New Republic, 1607–1815, Encyclopedia of American Literature,* revised edition, volume 1 (New York: Facts On File, 2008).

Mark Kamrath and Sharon M. Harris, eds., *Periodical Literature in Eighteenth-Century America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005).
A collection of essays about periodical literature; the second and third sections will provide essential reading for students interested in the role of periodicals in the formation of American culture in the early Republic.

Catherine O'Donnell Kaplan, *Men of Letters in the Early Republic: Cultivating Forums of Citizenship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
Analyzes the relationships among citizenship and writing in the careers of Elihu Hubbard Smith, Joseph Dennie, and the editors of the *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review.* An excellent study of the collective culture surrounding periodicals and literary production.

Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).
Traces changes in women's education and in attitudes toward women, including the growth of the concept of Republican motherhood, during the Revolutionary era.

Bobby Ellen Kimbel and William E. Grant, eds., *American Short-Story Writers Before 1880, Dictionary of Literary Biography*, volume 74 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman/Gale, 1988).

Eve Kornfeld, *Creating an American Culture, 1775–1800: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001).
A brief and accessible introduction to the cultural history of the early Republic.

Amelia Howe Kritzer, *Plays by Early American Women, 1775–1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).
Includes plays by Judith Sargent Murray, Susanna Rowson, and Mercy Otis Warren, along with other women of the era, with a useful introduction and biographies of each playwright.

April C. E. Langley, *The Black Aesthetic Unbound: Theorizing the Dilemma of Eighteenth-Century African American Literature* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008).
Traces the relationship between West African culture and emerging African American literature in the eighteenth century.

Robert Lawson-Peebles, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
Examines images of the landscape and terrain in the work of writers of the early Republic in order to demonstrate that Americans shaped their attitude toward the landscape against images projected by Europeans.

Keith Ljungquist, ed., *Antebellum Writers in the South, Second Series, Dictionary of Literary Biography*, volume 248 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman/Gale, 2001).

Ljungquist, ed., *Antebellum Writers in New York, Second Series, Dictionary of Literary Biography,* volume 250 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman/Gale, 2002).

Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
Argues that the founders saw the new nation as having been created in language, but specifically through speech, and that competition between oral and written culture was a recurrent theme in early American literature.

Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor, eds., *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

Essays in the first half of this volume treat topics in early American drama, including Federalist politics on the stage, the use of Native American imagery in drama, gender roles in early plays, and connections between theater and westward expansion.

Cedrick May, *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic, 1760–1835* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

Argues that the role of religion has been ignored in critical approaches to early African American literature, and demonstrates the pivotal roles of a set of evangelical African American writers, including Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatley, John Marrant, and Prince Hall.

Carla Mulford, ed., *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

A complete edition of Stockton's extant poetry with an introduction that provides rich context for understanding the career of a woman of letters in the late eighteenth century, including attention to Stockton's participation in both print and manuscript culture.

Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980).

A social history of American women in the Revolutionary era. Contends that while women's lives were primarily domestic, attitudes toward women did improve substantially during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

A study of partisan newspaper editors, with special attention to Democratic-Republican editors and with attention to regional differences. Demonstrates that newspapers were core features of political parties beginning in the late 1790s and that politicians saw the control of newspapers as an essential part of political competition.

Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Argues that in its essential form as entertainment and "play," theatre was foreign both literally and metaphorically in early American culture. Situates Republican-era drama within a transatlantic framework, arguing that the quest for specifically "American" theatre is misguided.

Sam G. Riley, *American Magazine Journalists, 1741–1850, Dictionary of Literary Biography,* volume 73 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman/Gale,1988).

Shirley Samuels, *Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early American Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Studies novels from the 1790s through the mid nineteenth century (two chapters focus on Brockden Brown). Argues that the family rather than the individual is the unit of self-fashioning in the early Republic.

Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

Traces the shifting ideological content of English-language theater from the colonial period through the eighteenth century; argues that the patriotism of the Revolutionary era was at once an expression of resistance and an embodiment of characteristics considered recognizably English.

Stephen Shapiro, *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

Argues that the early American novel was not concerned with allegorizing national politics but rather with expressing the concerns of a rising middle class.

David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

Traces to its European origins a culture of civility in early America and describes the relations of coffeehouses, taverns, tea tables, and club culture with literature.

Merril Smith, *Sex and Sexuality in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

A collection of essays covering the years 1492 to 1820; chapters 6 through 12 treat topics in the eighteenth century.

William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

A contextual study of the development of the genre. For Spengemann, the eighteenth-century autobiographer has a specific task: to resolve the conflict between external sources of authority and the individual conscience.

Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English: American Literature and the British Diaspora, 1750–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Studies American literature from 1750 to 1850 as a continuation of English literature rather than a departure from it. An essential discussion of Anglo-American literary relations.

Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

A landmark work of criticism that contributed to the reconsideration of the sentimental novel; Tompkins challenged the conventional wisdom of the 1950s and 1960s that discounted the literary value of sentimental fiction.

Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Adapting the theories of Jürgen Habermas to the early American context, Warner argues that a socially and culturally limited public sphere enabled the rise of Republicanism.

Edward Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).
Argues that early American literature can and should be read as part of a postcolonial culture; pays special attention to Washington Irving's *History of New-York,* Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn,* Judith Sargent Murray's *The Gleaner,* Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry,* and Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive.*

Colin Wells, *The Devil and Doctor Dwight: Satire and Theology in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
A study of the relationship between Timothy Dwight's conservative theology and his use of satire with particular attention to "The Triumph of Infidelity," the complete text of which is included in an appendix.

Karen Weyler, *Intricate Relations: Sexual and Economic Desire in American Fiction, 1789–1814* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005).
Argues that early American fiction, along with other popular genres, connected economic and sexual concerns.

Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby, eds., *Cambridge History of the American Theatre,* volume 1 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
An essential reference work on American theater from the origins through the Civil War.

Sarah F. Wood, *Quixotic Fictions of the USA, 1792–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
Traces the influence of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in early American literature, including Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry,* Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism,* and Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive,* to argue that this subgenre was fundamentally concerned with problems of authority, isolationism, and definitions of Republicanism.

Karin A. Wulf and Catherine La Courreye Blecki, *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).
Primary texts of the writers of the Delaware Valley network along with valuable introductory essays.

Part V
Glossary

Anti-Federalist: This name was given to the political group that opposed the increased power of the federal government proposed in the U.S. Constitution that replaced the Articles of Confederation. The Anti-Federalists generally supported protection of states' rights rather than consolidation of power in the central government.

Deist: A religious belief that generally accepts the concept of a higher power but rejects the notion that God is involved in man's day-to-day life, that God has revealed his or her will in sacred writings, or that formal religion is necessary.

Democratic-Republican: A political party led by Thomas Jefferson, composed largely of those who had been the Anti-Federalists during the Constitutional debates. The Democratic-Republicans generally favored more power for individual states than for the central government (although this did not always hold true in practice in Democratic-Republican presidential administrations).

epistolary: A form of writing in which the narration is in the form of letters.

Federalist: The political party that supported the strengthening of the federal government.

Gothic: In literature, Gothic refers to writing that includes elements of the supernatural and terror and displays an interest in altered states of mind and extreme emotional states.

manuscript culture: A literary culture in which writers consciously choose not to pursue print publication of their work and instead, circulate their manuscripts to known audiences, often called a literary coterie.

philosophe: The word philosophe means "philosopher" in French, but the term has generally been applied to Enlightenment thinkers specifically.

picaresque: A subgenre of fiction that originated in Spain and was popularized by Miguel de Cervantes with *Don Quixote* (1605) in which an antihero travels broadly and has a series of adventures.

republic: A form of government that includes some role of representation for citizens and in which the head of state is not a monarch.

Republican motherhood: A popular ideology of womanhood in the early American republic that argued for women's rights and duties as being centrally connected to their responsibility for providing the earliest education for future citizens.

sentimentality: A network of concepts about emotion and character that included the ideas that emotional responses are the strongest motivators of human action and that the quality and type of a person's emotional responses demonstrate that person's character.

sublime: A quality of greatness or vastness that evokes an intense emotion; in Edmund Burke's formulation of the sublime (in the 1756 *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*), it is opposed to the beautiful, which is pleasing and regular.

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