**Periods of American Literature**

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| **Literary Movement** | **Time Period** | **Characteristics of the Movement** | **Representative Writers** |
| Native American Period | Pre-1620-1840 | Celebrates the natural word | Oral tradition; original authors and words are largely unknown |
| Colonial Period | 1620-1750 | Focuses on historical events, daily life, moral attitudes (Puritanism), political unrest | William Bradford, Anne Bradstreet, Jonathan Edwards, Edward Taylor |
| Revolutionary Period and Nationalism | 1750-1815 | Celebrates nationialism and patriotism and examines what it means to be “American” | Political writings by Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison |
| Romanticism and Transcendentalism | 1800-1855 | Celebrates individualism, nature, imagination, emotions | Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau |
| Realism | 1850-1900 | Examines realities of life, human frailty; regional culture (local color) | Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Henry James, Kate Chopin |
| Naturalism | 1880-1940 | Views life as a set of natural laws to be discovered | Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, James T. Farrell |
| Modern Period | 1900-1950 | Themes of alienation, disconnectedness; experiments with new techniques, use of irony and understatement | T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Ezra Pound, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck |
| Postmodern Period | 1950-present | Nontraditional topics and structures; embrace of changing reality | Norman Mailer, Joyce Carol Oats, J.D. Salinger, Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon, Theodore Roethke, John Barth, the Beat poets |