



Intro to American Literature – Syllabus

Course Description: We are surrounded by references to great literature, whether or not we recognize it. By interacting with these works, we not only better understand our world, but we build critical thinking skills and empathy for those around us. In *Intro to American Literature*, we will survey the greatest works of American fiction, providing special focus on literature that has shaped our cultural consciousness like *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Great Gatsby*. Students will be encouraged to interact with the texts on a variety of levels, such as literature analysis, character sketches, creative responses, and close readings.

Course Outline:

Week One: American Foundations – Introduction and Letters of John & Abigail Adams

Week Two: American Romanticism – Selections from *The Scarlet Letter*
and Twain’s “Rules” of Literary Art

Week Three: American Poetry – Poe, Dickinson, Frost, Cummings

Week Four: The Lost Generation - *The Great Gatsby*

Week Five: *The Great Gatsby*, Continued

Week Six: American Theater - *A Raisin in the Sun*

Week Seven: American Identity - *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Week Eight: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Continued & Finals

Grading Information: All assignments will be graded using *The Advanced Writer Rubric* and averaged to receive a final course grade.

Required Texts:

Please note that, on heavier reading weeks, we will have shorter or lighter written assignments. Our goal is that students are understanding and enjoying the texts!

The student should have access to the following works, via internet links provided in each lesson, attached PDF documents provided with some lessons, or hard copies borrowed or purchased. Selections cover as wide a geographical and cultural background as possible, while still including essential works of the American literary canon.

Note on content: *While we always strive to pick clean and uplifting works, some highly valuable texts result from cultural backgrounds that involve some negative or challenging content. Therefore, we recommend that a parent or trusted adult at least briefly review works and reach out if they would like to substitute a work that matches student and/or family values.*

If you have any trouble finding a particular text, please let us know promptly so that we can help!

The student should have access to copies of the following works:

- Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Week 2)
- Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Weeks 4 + 5)
- Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (Week 6)
- Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Weeks 7 + 8)

There is no required edition; the student must simply cite the edition used. **Please make sure that your copy of the text is not abridged.** Other works will be provided in PDF format to the students, although students are more than welcome to find their own print copies!

If possible, we recommend that students interact with the text (highlighting and marginal notes), but students are *not* required to own copies of the works—texts from the library are perfectly all right! If you would like to own a particular text, inexpensive copies can be found online and at used bookstores.

As students tend to experience stronger reading comprehension when not reading on a screen, we would also highly recommend that students have access to a hard copy of the works (a printed out PDF works well, too!).