

# American literature



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Your American character as American literature presents it While working on Nature, Emerson was convinced that “ history...ought to be written in a settled conviction that no event is casual or solitary, that all events proceed inevitably from peculiar qualities of the national character which are permanent or very slightly modified from age to age” (qtd. in McWilliams 4). The phrase “ national character” served as a main focus through which most of European observers formed their impressions and ideas.

Like other, Emerson defined American character, not as a reality but future vision, the idea that is yet to be defined. It is because American and America were empty reflections of each other. It seemed to be a tussle of who define whom between individual and nation (McWilliams 6).

Henry David Thoreau was a disciple of Emerson and he followed Emerson like no one. His experiment Walden allowed him to manifest Adam. He represented deliberate living and rejected traditional ideas and historical Christianity. He separated himself from the corruption that is believed to be in the roots of 19th century New England. He rediscovered American Adam and the values that he holds important by challenging the old and strongly held beliefs. His masterpiece, Walden is a wakeup call to recover and maintain American Adam's innocence by genuine self-reflection and exploring human nature and of wilderness. It starts with the restrictions imposed on personal freedom and ends with the new and promising future that is waiting for new American (Keenan 37-38).

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau represented American as optimistic innocent who is an authentic man. The figure as Emerson referred, “ the plain old Adam, the simple genuine self against the whole world” (Qtd. in Keenan 37). He is unconventional and free from past limitations. He values

future and optimistic. An American is focused on future and believes in the promise of new America. Innocence is subjected to vulnerability and it changes with experiences as it is with American Adam. Emerson briefly touches this confrontation in terms of “ party of Hope” and the “ party of Memory,” and advocated the former quite enthusiastically. According to his belief, America is a new beginning for men that show a bright future because of an optimistic present. Americans, most notably, are free from past sins. The term ‘ sin’ does not denote spiritual burden from past but it is a term that is subjective (Keenan 37).

Benjamin Franklin was considered to the “ Founding Father” and a model of national character for generations in America. His contributions in shaping American character are immense. His beliefs were paradoxes that attract different people. He strongly believed in the power of individuals and individualism, at the same time he was an ardent believer and advocate of working for community. He presented a new character of American who believes in fierce competition but never reluctant to cooperate with competitors. He could be a supporter of politician and simultaneously the most accommodating for diplomats. Ben never divided things in black and white rather he discovered the shades of grey in every situation and followed his mind. He was a strong believer of leadership skills and following it, his actions influenced global and local affair equally. In his view, America is a place where people are not recognized by what they are but what their skill and talent is. He discovered a uniquely American view of human potential. Just like Emerson and Thoreau, Franklin believes in bright future and optimistic present. He proposed a bright future that an enlightened, knowledgeable and visionary leader can foresee (Uldrich). The three men

characterize American as optimistic and futuristic who belief in him, he is purely genuine, decisive and enlightened. Last but not the least, his strengths are strong character and leadership skill that shapes and transform the world around him.

#### Work Cited

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