

History of american literature



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[Institute's History of American Literature Since centuries, humans have expressed themselves in different genres and as the human race developed, it brought it along a history of literature involving development in poetry, prose, drama, etc. In specific, this paper will attempt to discuss history of American literature from fifteenth to eighteenth century. Although American literature progressed systematically in the 16th century, however, analysis has indicated that the American literature developed gradually as a Colonial literature that involved letter and pamphlet writings for colonial purposes. In particular, Heman Cortes wrote the first letter of the American literature in the year 1519 to the Spanish Crown, followed by many letters written for similar purposes (WSU, 2009).

In late 1500s, Thomas Harriot wrote a significant piece of literature, ' A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia' that brought the American literature in the 16th century. In the year 1616, Captain John Smith wrote, ' A Description of New England', and he became the founder writer of the American literature as he later wrote some other pieces of work as well. Besides John Smith, some of the other authors of the earliest 16th century were John Cotton, Thomas Morton, and Roger Williams. It is an observation that all the works of this period related primarily to the Colonial arrangements of the British forces, as well as to the discovery of different regions of present-day USA (WSU, 2009).

Besides prose, Anne Bradstreet was one of the earliest poets of the American literature that wrote ' the Tenth Muse' during this period. In the year 1661, John Eliot was the first person to carry out the work of Bible translation in the American literature. In 1662, ' the Day of Doom' became one of the best-

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selling poems written by Michael Wigglesworth that became the inspiration for many poets ahead. In 1666, John Eliot carried out another work, 'the Indian Grammar', and from then, the theme of the American literature shifted from only Colonial to broad perspective, as some writers began to write on history, biography, sovereignty, God, fiction, etc. Interestingly, a number of authors in mid-1600s, as well as in late 1600s emphasized on the works regarding witchcraft, and in 1693, Cotton Mather wrote, 'Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits' on the similar theme (WSU, 2009). In the beginning of the 18th century, Judge Samuel Sewall began a new theme of anti-slavery that later became a revolutionary notion in the American literature, as he wrote, 'The Selling of Joseph' on June 24, 1700. After six years, Cotton Mather once again came up with another work, but this time, he changed his theme from witchcraft to a more social subject, and he wrote, 'The Good Old Way' that conversed different aspects of Puritan influence in the American region. Political works are visible in mid-1700s, as a number of writers came along to write revolutionary writings on the topic of American Crisis, Common Sense, etc in the form of pamphlets (WSU, 2009). In specific, Thomas Paine wrote a series of leaflets that revolved around the theme of American Revolution. 'Common Sense' was also the work of Thomas Paine that was merely an argumentative paper against the British rule.

Another theme observable in the American literature is science and business, as Benjamin Franklin came up with some works on electricity in the year 1751, and he later wrote, 'the Way to Wealth' in 1758. Poems and biographies were famous during mid-18th century, as Phillis Wheatley published a series of poems on various themes in 1773 that inspired Philip

Freneau to publish his poem in 1786. Subsequently, the most popular series of essays of the 18th century was ' the Federalist Essays' that published in two volumes and was the work of Alexander Hamilton along with his colleagues: James Madison and John Jay (Bibliomania, 2009). A number of analysts have termed this series as extraordinary work in the post-independence period.

Conclusively, the paper has discussed some of the significant aspects of the American literature during 15th-18th centuries. It is an expectation that the paper will be beneficial for students, teachers, and professionals in better understanding of the topic.

References

Bibliomania. (2009). Simonds History of American Literature. Retrieved on November 12, 2009: <http://www.bibliomania.com/2/3/270/frameset.html>

WSU. (2009). Brief Timeline of American Literature and Events. Washington State University Press. Retrieved on November 12, 2009: <http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/timefram.html>