

# The development of american literature

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



In the years that followed, American businessmen merged the processes and created successful publishing houses which created a need for the development of American literature. In the early 1800s, limited resources such as financial stability and viable transportation made publishing in the United States a less than profitable venture. The mid 1800s, however, generated technology that helped to dramatically increase profitability in the trade.

Progressive methods of transportation such as the opening of the Erie Canal (Gambler; Hooper, Steelmaker), inventions such as "stereotyping, the iron press, the application of steam power, mechanical typesetting/ typesetting, and new methods of producing illustrations created a revolution in book production" that bred competition for imported fiction (Encyclopedia Britannica). American publishers routinely and illegally reproduced copies of British and European text, profiting from readers who were eager for access to foreign fiction.

Copyright laws didn't regulate imported texts; irresistible revenues inspired other companies to begin producing their own editions of popular imported literature. This practice of high profit piracy among American publishers was frustrating to American writers who needed an opportunity to prove their viability (Gambler-Hooper, Steelmaker). British and European authors were established in the American market and (obviously) weren't viewed as a financial risk.

American authors were required to absorb the cost of printing and distribution. Innovative authors such as Washington Irving and James Fenimore

Cooper profited from this practice by arranging to keep a substantial percentage of the revenues. Others such as Henry Headwords Longfellow and Henry Melville purchased their own stereotype plates and rented them to publishers for royalties from printed copies. Authors who were successful in periodical publications now had an opportunity to publish books (Gabbler-Hover, Steelmaker).

Changes to copyright laws forced illegal printing to become legitimate in its association with the international publishing industry. As federal regulations were being enforced, American publishers started to seek out original American text appropriate for publication (Isadora). A marketplace that had been somewhat unavailable was now open to domestic writers. The Philadelphia born publishing house of M. Carrey and Sons was one of the first to promote American literature. Their impressive list Finnier Cooper (The Last of the Musicians).

In Boston, Ticking and Fields listed major American authors that included Nathaniel Hawthorne and his novel, The Scarlet Letter which began as a short story. With encouragement from Fields, Hawthorne expanded his story into an instant best-seller. As a promoter for the company's writers, Fields set a new standard for marketing American literature to the public by offering colorful posters (to bookstores) that advertised Ticking and Field's publications and by cleverly planting favorable reviews of the company's latest releases (Gabbler-Hover, Steelmaker).

Field's methods of promotions and marketing monstrence continued growth and interest in American literature. The introduction of the literary agent

revolutionized the financial climate for publishers and authors. " Because an important element in the agent's value to an author is his capacity to extract better terms than the author would for himself, it is not surprising that publishers have resented the intrusion into personal, and often friendly relationships between themselves and their authors"(Encyclopedia Britannica).

Professional representation meant higher royalties and advances for the writer, but it also meant a decrease in profit for the publisher. Although the use of agents wasn't a welcome practice in the publishing industry, representatives pressing for higher payments to writers may have been indirectly responsible for aggressive marketing and promotions that emerged in the early part of the 20th century (Gabbler-Hover, Steelmaker).