

Puritanism in american literature assignment

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Puritanism in American Literature The Puritans had a large influence in American literature and still influence moral judgment and religious beliefs in the United States to this day. Puritan writing was used to glorify God and to relate God more directly to our world. Puritan literature was commonly a realistic approach to life. “ Puritanism as a historical phenomenon and as a living presence in American life has enriched American literature in ways far too numerous to detail here. ” (G. Perkins B.

Perkins Phillip Leininger 888) Puritanism is a collection of many different religious and political beliefs. Common styles of Puritan writing are protestant, Calvinist, purposiveness, and the writings also directly reflected the character of the readers who were literate and strongly religious. Pragmaticism and both political and religious Idealism are frequently themes in Puritan literature. Puritanism thus laid the basis for Americanism. It did so on the basis not of philosophical or legal argument, but of Christian belief based on the Bible. Gelernter 25)The Calvinist ideology, which was popular in Puritanism was based off of the Five Points, which are total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the “ saints. ” Total depravity is the idea that all humans are born sinful. Unconditional election means that God chooses who he wants to save and also contains the concept of predestination, which is an ideology that God damns certain individuals for the salvation of others. This also ties in with limited atonement, the ideology that Jesus only died for a selected group of individuals, not for everyone.

The ideology of irresistible grace is that “ the saving and transfiguring power of God,” cannot be either earned or denied. Perseverance of the “ saints” is

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the ideological belief that elected individuals have the power to interpret the will of God and to live in an upright fashion. The Puritans had secular concerns as well as religious. Puritans believed in working hard, and doing selfless things to help others. Puritans also believed in typology, the belief that God's intentions are present in human action and in natural phenomenon.

Failures to understand these intentions are human limitations. (" American Puritanism: A Brief Introduction") In 1620, William Bradford formed the Plymouth Plantation with a group of Europeans that came with him to America. In only a year, their number of survivors decreased by half. Bradford kept a journal that chronicled the first 30 years of Plymouth Colony. Plain speech was the high literary value of this society, as expressed by William Bradford, who enjoined " a plain style, with singular regard to the simple truth in all things. (" The Influence of Puritanism on American Literature") In this journal, he exhibited diplomacy and integrity, the ability to assure the colony's survival, and made a contribution in avoiding potential disasters. His principles established religious freedom and self-government that later shaped American colonial government. John Winthrop wrote A Modell of Christian Charity either before he crossed into America in 1630 or along his journey to the New World. In this book, the struggles that were to be faced in the New World are discussed along with Winthrop's ideas and plan's to overcome them.

Winthrop was considered to be a contributor to the concept of American exceptionalism, the idea that the New World is unique to other countries by ideology based on laissez-faire and egalitarianism along with liberty.

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Winthrop has also portrayed that Puritans were neither visionaries nor self-conscious heroes. They were a part of society that believed in solid work such as building homes, trading, farming, and government. Anne Bradstreet was unique to authors of her time because her work had literary creativity and artistic merit and was written for literature.

In contrast, works of Winthrop and Bradford were written for historical purposes and to express their positions and political beliefs on certain positions. In England in 1650, some of Bradstreet's poems compiled together by her brother-in-law who named them *The Tenth Muse*. The first of these poems was the *Four Elements*, which are fire, water, earth, and air. The *Constitutions* were the four temperaments of man kind as they were seen by medieval and Renaissance physiology, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic, and sanguine.

The four *Ages of Man*, which are child, teen, adult, and elder as *Seasons of the Year* which are Fall, Spring, Summer and Winter were described and explained. Bradstreet was better with her knowledge of literature rather than her own personal opinions directly. In some poems, Bradstreet displays deep affections of the patriarchal Puritan household and a sensuous response to nature. Bradstreet's literature showed both sides of the spectrum by upholding puritan beliefs as well as creating artistic merit. The American writings of the seventeenth century possess as a whole no great artistic merit.

They are valuable chiefly as a study in origins and as a complex mirror of early American experience. The world that they reflect is that of the

Renaissance and Reformation, of Raleigh and Calvin and Cromwell, modified by its contact with the American wilderness. (" American Literature Lectures, Part I") They are valuable in the sense as it is a study in origins of popular religious and political ideology of the early American experience that helped shape present day America. This experience was one that reflected the Renaissance and Reformation of individuals such as Calvin and Bradstreet.

The branch of Reformation in Puritan ideology was one of the main topics of early American literature. In this Puritan literature, the mind of the a Puritan is shown through its consciousness of sin, Calvinistic beliefs, superstitions, contradicting beliefs of orthodoxy and nonconformity, and its preference to moral value over aesthetic value. Puritan tradition was a major influence in our nations government through establishments of principles such as the relationship between church and state and government's popular sovereignty.

Puritanism has contributed to the way our day-to-day lives are carried on. It has also contributed the way literature has transformed over the years. Many political and religious ideologies from Puritan literature are still upheld today. Works Cited Gelernter, David. " Puritanism lives. " The American Enterprise 17. 4 (2006): 25+. Student Edition. Web. 18 Dec. 2011. " Puritans and Puritanism. " Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature. George B. Perkins, Barbara Perkins, and Phillip Leininger. Vol. 1. New York: HarperCollins, 1991. 888. Student Edition.

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