

# American renaissance



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Yet these novels, poems, and short stories utilized native dialect, history, landscape, and characters in order to explore uniquely American issues of the time, such as abolitionism, temperance, religious tolerance, scientific progress, the expanding western frontier, and the Native American situation. Short fiction of the American Renaissance encompassed a broad range of subjects, settings, and styles" including Gothic romance, detective and horror stories, sea tales, historical fiction of colonial America, and progressive social problem tales, among others" all of which contributed to the first generation of great American literature.

Critics consider the shorter work of Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Lydia Maria Child, as well as the posthumously published sensational thrillers of Louisa May Alcott, as representative of American Renaissance short fiction. These authors viewed the short story or novella as a viable form in which to produce parables that explored literary and political concerns.

Critics regard some of the short fiction produced during the American Renaissance as some of the best American fiction ever written. The American Renaissance was closely associated with an intellectual movement known as Transcendentalism, which is a philosophy or system of thought based on the idea that humans are essentially good, that humanity's deepest truths may be formulated through insight rather than logic, and that there is an essential unity to all of creation.

Transcendentalism in the United States became popular among scholars, ministers, and intellectuals in and around Concord, Massachusetts. The

American Transcendentalists advocated the development of a national culture and efforts at humanitarian social reform, as well as debate on such issues as the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, workers' rights, educational innovation, and freedom of religion.

The magazine *The Dial*, founded in 1840 by Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson, served as a forum for the publication of fiction, poetry, and essays by leading American Transcendentalists and writers of the American Renaissance, such as the poet Walt Whitman and the essayists Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, George Ripley, Fuller, and Emerson. "American Renaissance - Introduction." *Short Story Criticism*. Ed.

Janet Witalec Project Editor. Vol. 64. Gale Cengage, 2004. eNotes.

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