

A Concise Companion to  
American Fiction 1900–1950

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A Concise Companion to  
American Fiction  
1900–1950

Edited by Peter Stoneley  
and Cindy Weinstein

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# Chronology

- 1890** William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*. Emily Dickinson, *Poems*. Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*. The population of the United States is 63 million; this represents an increase of 25 percent over the preceding decade. More than half the nation's wealth is owned by one percent of the population. The Sherman Antitrust Act is passed to counter the growing power of monopolies. There are nearly 200 lynchings of African Americans each year in the following decade.
- 1892** Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, *A New England Nun and Other Stories*.
- 1893** The stock market crashes; in the course of the year, over 15,000 businesses fail, including 600 banks and 74 railroads. Chicago World Columbian Exhibition.
- 1894** Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. The labor unrest of preceding and succeeding years is especially intense in this year, with the Pullman workers' strike.
- 1895** Booker T. Washington delivers "Atlanta Compromise" speech, urging African Americans to postpone their wish for equality with whites; Washington is sharply criticized by other African Americans, including W. E. B. Du Bois.

## Chronology

- 1896** Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*; Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Supreme Court rules in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that the segregationist policy of “separate but equal” is legal.
- 1897** Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*. Gold rush to the Klondike.
- 1898** The Spanish–American War over the issue of Cuban independence. The United States acquires an empire with Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Haiti.
- 1899** Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman*; Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”; Frances E. W. Harper, *Iola Leroy: Or, Shadows Uplifted*; Henry James, *The Awkward Age*; Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.
- 1900** Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*; Robert Grant, *Unleavened Bread*; Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces*.
- 1901** Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*; Frank Norris, *The Octopus*.
- 1902** Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard’s Spots*, first in a Ku Klux Klan trilogy, to be followed by *The Clansman* (1905) and *The Traitor* (1907); Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove*; Owen Wister, *The Virginian*.
- 1903** Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*; Gertrude Stein, *Q. E. D.* Mother Jones leads children’s march on Washington to protest child labor.
- 1904** Henry James, *The Golden Bowl*.
- 1905** W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; Mark Twain, “The War Prayer”; Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*.
- 1906** Jack London, *White Fang*; Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*; Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*. San Francisco earthquake.
- 1907** Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*; Henry James, *The American Scene*. Immigration reaches a new peak, with over 1,285,000 arriving in this year.

- 1908** Henry Ford announces the Model T.
- 1909** Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*.
- 1910** Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is founded. The census reveals that the population stands at nearly 92 million, with 50 million living in rural areas, 42 million in urban areas. Nearly nine percent of the population has arrived within the decade, with thirty-five percent of New York City being foreign-born. Standard Oil and American Tobacco forced by Supreme Court to divest and restructure under Sherman Antitrust Act.
- 1911** Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*.
- 1912** Theodore Dreiser, *The Financier*; Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage*; James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*; Titanic sinks on maiden crossing of Atlantic.
- 1913** Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*; Edith Wharton, *The Custom of the Country*. The controversial International Exhibition of Modern Art, known as the Armory Show, opens in New York, featuring work by Gauguin, Cézanne, van Gogh, Picasso; Cubist art is the most shocking, with Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase" becoming the most talked of and derided painting.
- 1914** Theodore Dreiser, *The Titan*. Robert Frost, *North of Boston*. War begins in Europe; President Wilson declares United States' neutrality.
- 1915** Theodore Dreiser, *The "Genius"*; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*. D. W. Griffiths' film, *The Birth of a Nation*, premieres; it is based on a best-selling Ku Klux Klan novel by Thomas Dixon, Jr.
- 1916** Easter Rising in Dublin. Federal Child Labor law is passed banning interstate commerce in products made by children under the age of 14. Repeated skirmishing brings the United States and Mexico to the brink of war.

## Chronology

- 1917** David Graham Phillips, *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise*. German U-boat campaign against Atlantic shipping brings United States into the First World War. Margaret Sanger begins publication of *Birth Control Review*. Russian Revolution culminates in abdication of Tsar Nicolas II; he will be executed in the following year.
- 1918** The First World War ends.
- 1919** Sherwood Anderson, *Winesberg, Ohio*. T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The "Red Summer" of riots and lynching begins with trouble in Chicago. Creation of the League of Nations.
- 1920** Zona Gale, *Miss Lulu Bett*; Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*. Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones*. Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. The population stands at 105,710,620, and less than half live in rural areas. The nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote, is ratified. After the passing of the Prohibition Amendment in 1917, and its ratification in 1919, the United States goes "dry."
- 1921** John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers*. Congress passes Emergency Quota Act, which sets a limit of 358,000 immigrants per year. The Italian anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, are found guilty of murder, in spite of a lack of evidence.
- 1922** James Joyce, *Ulysses*. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*.
- 1923** Edith Summers Kelley, *Weeds*; Jean Toomer, *Cane*. Wallace Stevens, *Harmonium*.
- 1925** Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*; John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*; Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy*; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*; Janet Flanner, *The Cubical City*; *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke; Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans*; Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*. The "monkey trial" in Tennessee, in which John Scopes is found guilty of teaching evolution.
- 1926** Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*. Langston Hughes, *The Weary Blues*. Book-of-the-Month Club established.

- 1927** Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry*; Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*. Charles A. Lindbergh becomes the first to fly non-stop across the Atlantic. Sacco and Vanzetti are executed, to international disapproval.
- 1928** Djuna Barnes, *Ladies Almanack*; Jessie Fauset, *Plum Bun*; Rudolph Fisher, *The Walls of Jericho*; Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*; Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*.
- 1929** William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*; Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*; Nella Larsen, *Passing*; Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*. The various strands of crime fiction exemplified in this year with S. S. Van Dine's *The Bishop Murder Case*, Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*, and W. R. Burnett's *Little Caesar*. Wall Street crashes; by 1932, there will be two million vagrants, and unemployment of over five million. Further symptoms of gambling and bootlegging empires with the St Valentine's Day Massacre.
- 1930** The first instalment in John Dos Passos's "U. S. A. trilogy," *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel*, is published, to be followed by *1919* (1932) and *The Big Money* (1937). William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*; Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*. The Agrarian point of view is manifested in *I'll Take My Stand*. The "Scottsboro Boys" are convicted of rape. The Empire State Building is opened. Franklin Delano Roosevelt is elected, promising Americans a "new deal."
- 1932** Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon*; James T. Farrell begins his Studs Lonigan trilogy with *Young Lonigan: A Boyhood in Chicago Streets*, to be followed by *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* (1934), and *Judgment Day* (1935).
- 1933** Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. The end of Prohibition. Judge Woolsey rules in *The United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses"* that *Ulysses* must be allowed into the US.
- 1934** James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*; Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer*; parts of Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio* published in *Partisan Review*; Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep*; Zora Neale Hurston, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*.

### *Chronology*

- 1936** Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*; William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*; Marianne Moore, *The Pangolin and Other Verse*.
- 1937** Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Richard Wright, "Blueprint for Negro Writing."
- 1938** Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom's Children*.
- 1939** John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*; Nathaniel West, *The Day of the Locust*. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." The Second World War begins in Europe, following Hitler's attacks on Czechoslovakia and Poland; the United States declares neutrality.
- 1940** Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Richard Wright, *Native Son*.
- 1941** Eudora Welty, *A Curtain of Green*. The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor; the United States enters the war.
- 1942** The internment of Japanese Americans begins.
- 1944** Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man*. The GI Bill passes into law.
- 1945** Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*; Richard Wright, *Black Boy*. Atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Second World War ends.
- 1946** Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*; Eugene O'Neill, *The Iceman Cometh*. The United States grants independence to the Philippines. The United Nations meets.
- 1947** Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*. W. H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety*. Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Jackie Robinson becomes first African American to play major league baseball.
- 1948** Truman Capote, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*; William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust*. Ezra Pound, *The Pisan Cantos*. The United States recognizes the new state of Israel. Dr Alfred C. Kinsey publishes *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*.



*Chronology*

- 1949** Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*. The North Atlantic Treaty is ratified.
- 1950** The United States enters the Korean War. Senator Joe McCarthy gains more publicity for his campaign against un-American activities, claiming that he has a list of 205 names of communists who are working in the State Department.
- 1951** J. D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye*. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are convicted of espionage.
- 1952** Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*; Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*.
- 1953** Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*. The Rosenbergs are executed.
- 1954** In the case of *Brown v. the Board of Education*, the Supreme Court declares the "separate but equal" policy unconstitutional.
- 1955** Rosa Parks is arrested when she refuses to give up her seat at the front of a bus; this leads to the boycott of Montgomery bus services. The United States sends military advisers to Vietnam.

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