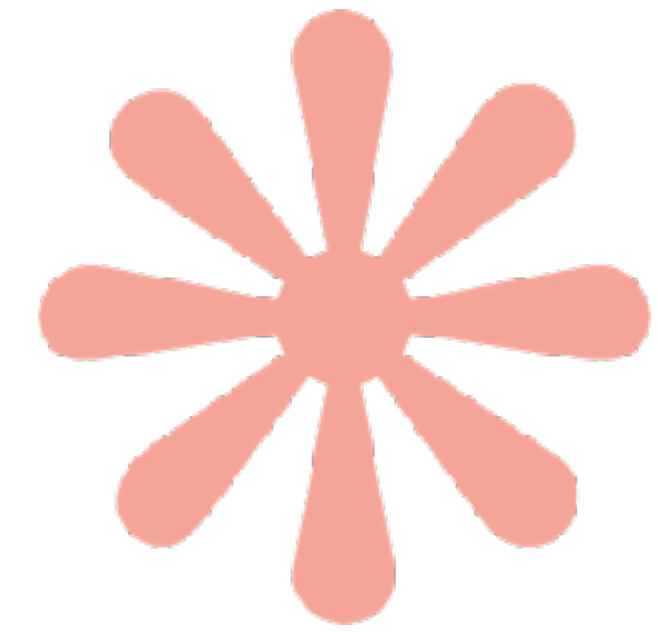

American Literature till 19th Century



DR. KALYANI VALLATH

25 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE



VTES IS NOW
Vallath

American Literature



17th – 19th Century





America

- A mixture of wanderers, explorers, travellers, settlers, religious outlaws, landless, political refugees and natives
- Of these the minority / marginalized is the Natives
- American multiculturalism has a “melting pot” nature

History of American Literature



Beginnings: Pre-Colonial Era

- More than 500 tribal cultures existed in North America
- Tribes maintained their own religions
 - Worshipping gods, animals, plants, or sacred persons
- Various systems of government
 - Democracies
 - Councils of elders
 - Theocracies

Oral Literature

- Native American oral literature is diverse
 - Varies according to tribal cultures
- Includes lyrics, chants, myths, fairy tales, humorous anecdotes, incantations, riddles, proverbs, epics, and legendary histories
- Themes include
 - Origin of the world
 - Histories of tribes
 - Tales of heroes



A Red Indian

Exploration of the American Land

- The first known exploration of America was made by Christopher Columbus
 - An Italian explorer
 - Discovered the "New World" of the Americas on an expedition sponsored by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain in 1492
 - The ships in the expedition were Santa Maria, the Pinta and the Niña
 - Landed in the Bahamas Islands in the Caribbean and misunderstood it to be India

Spanish Settlements

- St Augustine
- Albany
- New Amsterdam
- Main language Dutch
- In 1664
 - The English conquered Amsterdam
 - Renamed it as New York

Arrival of the British



- Initial English attempts at colonization were disasters
 - The first permanent colony was set up in James Town in 1607
- In the 17th century pirates, adventurers, and explorers opened the way to a second wave of permanent colonists
 - They brought their wives, children, farm implements and craftsmen's tools

The Thirteen Colonies (17th and 18th centuries)

- Delaware
- Pennsylvania
- New Jersey
- Georgia
- Connecticut
- Massachusetts Bay
- Maryland
- South Carolina
- New Hampshire
- Virginia
- New York
- North Carolina
- Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Early Literature of Exploration

- The early literature of exploration made up of
 - Diaries
 - Letters
 - Travel journals
 - Ships' logbooks
 - Reports to the explorers' financial backers
- Columbus's journal printed in 1493 recounts the trip
 - The terror of the men
 - They feared meeting monsters
 - Thought they might fall off the edge of the world
- Captain John Smith's accounts gives details about the settlement at Jamestown

Two Early Works

- A True Relation
 - Captain John Smith
 - Semi-historical account
 - About the state of Virginia
- The History of New England
 - John Winthrop
 - Journal

More Developments

- 1630
 - Establishment of printing press in Cambridge New English colonies
 - 1st printed item was a German book in Pennsylvania
- The Power of Sympathy (1775)
 - William Hill Brown
 - First American novel
 - Epistolary novel

The Colonial Period in New England

- The northern side of America was referred as New England
- Many Puritans in New England were university graduates
- For them education was a means to understand and execute God's will
- Puritans tended to feel that earthly success was a sign that they are selected for eternal life
 - Gave importance to hard work, ambition and strived for success
- All of life was an expression of the divine will
 - Even ordinary events reveals some spiritual meaning

The Colonial Period in New England

- According to Puritans good writing gave awareness of the importance of worshipping God
- Puritan style varied enormously
- Consists of
 - Metaphysical poetry
 - Homely journals
 - Religious history
- Themes
 - Life was seen as a test
 - Failure led to eternal damnation
 - Did not draw lines of distinction between the secular and religious spheres

Pilgrim Fathers

- The first Puritan colonists who settled New England exemplified the seriousness of Reformation
- They interpreted the Bible literally
- They read and acted on the text of the Second Book of Corinthians
 - “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord.”
- They had formed churches that swore loyalty to the group instead of the king
- Thus they were called traitors and they were often persecuted

Pilgrim Fathers

- Finally in 1620, about a 100 pilgrims left Jacobean England in a ship called May Flower and reached the New World
- They settled down at Plymouth in Massachusetts in New England
- They sought religious freedom and came to be called Pilgrim Fathers two centuries later

William Bradford (1590-1657)

- Governor of Plymouth
- Travelled in the Mayflower to Plymouth
- Of Plymouth Plantation (1651)
 - Account of the colony's beginning.
- Bradford also recorded the first document of colonial self-governance in the English New World
 - "The Mayflower Compact"
 - Drawn up while the Pilgrims were still on board ship

Anne Bradstreet (1612-72)

- The first American to publish a book of poems
- Inspired by English metaphysical poetry
- The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America (1650)
 - Shows the influence of Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, and other English poets as well

Other Colonial Writers in New England

- Edward Taylor
 - Metrical History of Christianity
- Michael Wigglesworth
 - The Day of Doom (1662)
- Samuel Sewall
 - Diary
 - Often compared to Samuel Pepys's English diary of the same period
 - Records the changes in the Puritan life
 - Was involved in Salem witch trials which he regretted later
- Mary Rowlandson
- Cotton Mather

Southern and Middle Colonies

- Early English immigrants were drawn to the southern colonies because of economic opportunity rather than religious freedom
- Institution of slavery released wealthy southern whites from manual labour
- The southern literate upper class led a more leisure oriented life

Literature in Southern and Middle Colonies

- Pre-revolutionary southern literature was aristocratic and secular
- Writers and works
 - Jupiter Hammon
 - African American poet
 - “An Evening Thought”
 - The first poem published by a black male in America
 - William Byrd
 - Robert Beverley

Colonial Period (1607–1775)



- 1st successful English settlement in Jamestown (in the colony of Virginia) to the outbreak of American revolution
- Writings religious, political or historical
- Journals and travelogues
- Rise of African American writings

Religion in the Colonies

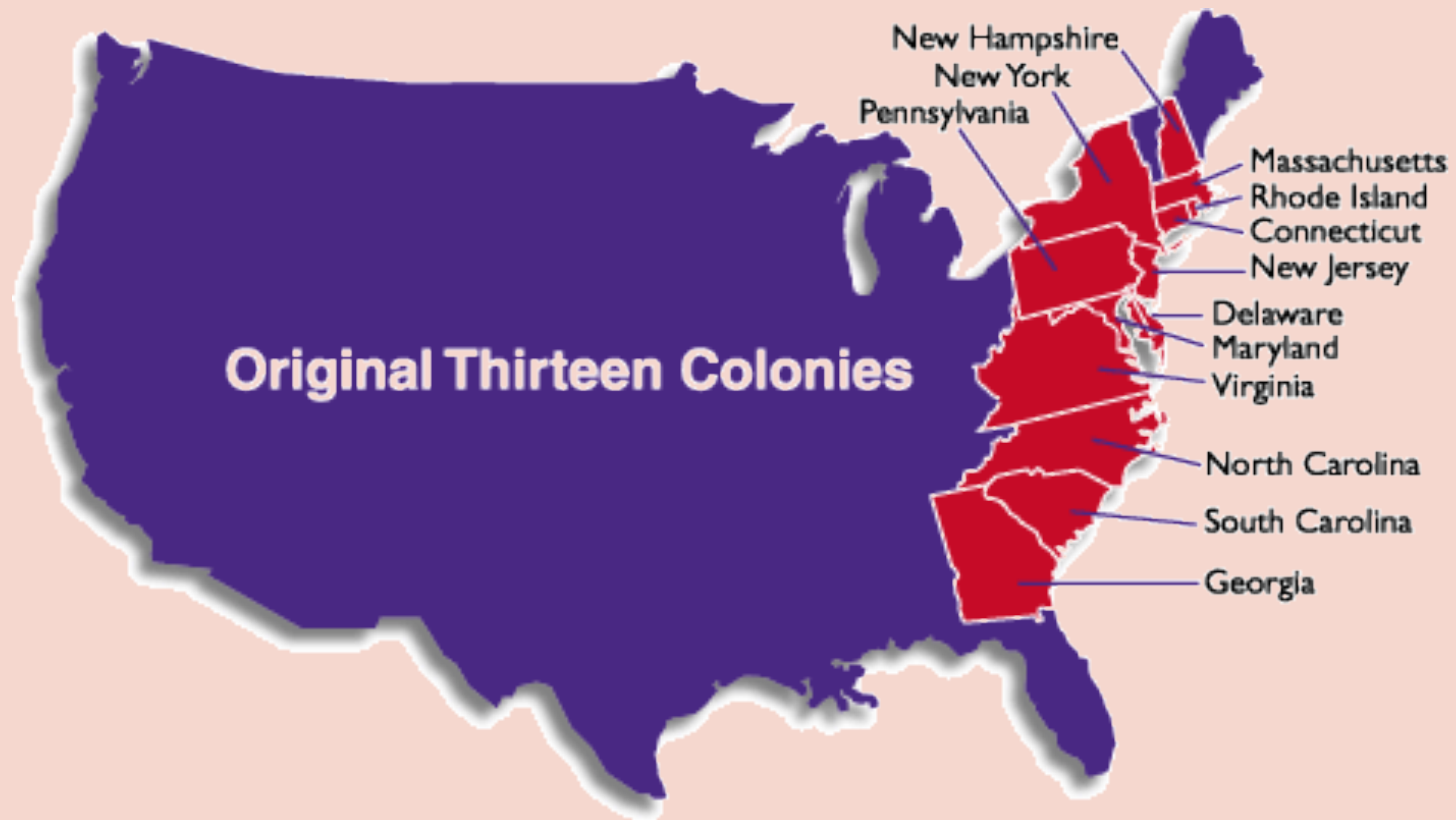
- Christian religious groups played an influential role in each of the British colonies, and attempted to enforce strict religious observance
- However, there was no religious unity
- Between 1680 and 1760 Anglicanism and Congregationalism, an offshoot of the English Puritan movement, were the main organized denominations
- In the 18th century, Protestant movements came into being such as the Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Unitarians and others, referred to as “Dissenters”
- In communities where one existing faith was dominant, new congregations were often seen as unfaithful troublemakers

Salem Witch Trials

- In 1692-93, a series of trials and prosecutions of people took place in colonial Massachusetts
- They were accused of witchcraft
- Twenty people were executed
- This was the result of religious mass hysteria



Settlement in Jamestown, 1607



Protests against Taxes

- In the 1760s and 1770s
- Stamp Act of 1765
- Boston Tea Party 1773
- Led to the American Revolutionary War, 1775–1783
- The Declaration of Independence was made on July 4, 1776

Founding Fathers

- George Washington
- John Adams
- Thomas Jefferson
- James Madison
- Alexander Hamilton
- James Monroe
- Benjamin Franklin

The Declaration of Independence

- When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

The Declaration of Independence

- We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government...

The Great Awakening

- An evangelical movement that swept Protestant Europe and British America, especially the American colonies from about the 1720s to the 1740s
- This movement left a permanent impact on American Protestantism
- Jonathan Edwards was a major figure
- Related to the Enlightenment
- Encouraged the spread of education

American Revolution

- Years of the Revolution 1775-1783
- Revolution to free themselves from the political and cultural dependence on Britain
 - The first modern war of liberation against a colonial power
- Revolution was followed by search for native culture
 - Writers found it difficult to establish their native culture as they had their roots in England

American Revolution and Literature

- Early American writers had no modern publishers and no audience
- The cultivated audience in America wanted well-known European authors
- There were no copyright laws in America
 - Printers pirated the works of well known English writers
 - They refused to publish the work of lesser known writers



Literature of the Revolutionary Period

- Issues related to independence
- Dignified, plain, clear prose
- European influence in early years
- Gradually began to reflect American experiences
- Difference between American and British politics
- Benjamin Franklin
- Thomas Paine
- Thomas Jefferson's "Statute of Virginia"
- Alexander Hamilton & James Madison – Federalist Papers in support of the constitution

Revolutionary Age (1765-1790)



- Between the revolutionary Stamp Act (1765) and the American Revolution
- Revolution (1775-1783); Independence 1776

American Enlightenment

- The 18th-century American Enlightenment was a movement that emphasised on
 - Rationality
 - Scientific inquiry
 - Representative government
- Enlightenment thinkers and writers were devoted to the ideals of justice, liberty, and equality as the natural rights of man.



N North America

Arctic Ocean

GREENLAND

Baffin Bay

Bering Sea

Gulf of Alaska

Labrador Sea

Atlantic Ocean

CANADA

Hudson Bay

Pacific Ocean

ST-PIERRE & MIQUELON

New York State

UNITED STATES

BERMUDA

BAHAMAS

TURKS & CAICOS

MEXICO

Gulf of Mexico

Caribbean Sea

CLIPPERTON ISLAND



***Declaration of Independence*, a painting by John Trumbull depicting the Committee of Five presenting their draft of the Declaration of Independence to the Congress on June 28, 1776. Trumbull's painting appears on the reverse of the United States two-dollar bill.**



One of the “Founding Fathers”

Benjamin Franklin (1706-90)

- Belonged to a working class family
- Franklin's life illustrates the impact of the Enlightenment on the life of individuals
- He read John Locke, Lord Shaftesbury, Joseph Addison, and other Enlightenment writers' works
 - Extensive reading helped him to apply reason to break with tradition
- One of the Founding Fathers of the United States
- Called "the first American" for supporting the cause of colonial unity
- Published the revolutionary newspaper Pennsylvania Chronicle
- Established University of Pennsylvania; later became Governor of Pennsylvania
- Led the protests against the 1765 Stamp Act

Works

- A series of essays called “The Busy Body” followed the Addisonian style
- Poor Richard’s Almanack (1732)
 - His most well-known work
 - Collection of prose pieces
 - Published under pseudonym Richard Saunders
 - Contained the calendar, weather, poems, sayings and astronomical and astrological information in addition to proverbs that later became highly popular
- Invented many gadgets and instruments as well as social innovations

Works

- Mottos in “Poor Richard’s Almanac”
 - Lost time is never found again.
 - A penny saved is a penny earned.
 - Fish and visitors stink in three days.
 - Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.
- The Almanack was a reflection of the societal norms of the time, rather than a philosophical document like other contemporary works by Jefferson, Adams, or Paine

Thomas Paine (1737-1809)

- Born in Britain, on January 29, 1737
- Formal education only until the age of thirteen
- He met Benjamin Franklin while doing low-paid jobs
 - Benjamin Franklin convinced Paine to move to America
 - Paine emigrated to America in late 1774
- Paine became involved in American political life
- Edited Pennsylvania Magazine
 - Argued that the American colonists should seek complete independence, rather than merely fighting against unfair British taxation



Thomas Paine

“Common Sense” (1776)

- Political pamphlet by Thomas Paine
- Anonymously published
- Brought the rising revolutionary sentiment into sharp focus
- Placed blame for the suffering of the colonies directly on the British monarch, George III
- Led to the first successful anticolonial action in American history
- Followed with a series of pamphlets entitled The American Crisis
- Eventually, Paine went on to write The Rights of Man and The Age of Reason

Rights of Man (1791)

- Written during a two-year period, during which Paine participated in the French Revolution as a member of the French National Assembly
- Part 1: Dedicated to George Washington; a reply to the conservative attack on the French Revolution made by British politician Edmund Burke in Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)
- Part 2 is a discussion of the principles of government, advocating the constitutional republic that the French Revolution had sought to establish
- Opposes the idea of hereditary government

The Age of Reason (1794, 1795, 1807)

- “Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology”
- Three parts
- Pamphlet on religion
- Inspired by Freethinkers
- Intellectual Context: 18th century British Deism; freedom of conscience; demand for religious tolerance; opposition to the idea of “Original Sin”
- Objected to organized religion
- Questions the sacredness of the Bible
- Book was condemned by many as atheistic

Neoclassicism: Epic, Mock Epic, Satire

- Many of the writers produced writings which were neoclassical in style
- American literary patriots felt that the great American Revolution is best expressed in epic
- They practised writing long dramatic narrative poems in elevated language that celebrates the feats of a legendary hero

Neoclassicism: Epic, Mock Epic, Satire

- The Conquest of Canaan (1785)
 - Timothy Dwight
 - Based on the Biblical story of Joshua's struggle to enter the Promised Land
 - Dwight cast General Washington as Joshua
- Mock epic was a well accepted literary form
 - M'Fingal (1776-1782)
 - John Trumbull
 - The mock epic derides Tory M'Fingal

Philip Freneau (1752-1832)

- Poet
 - Known as the “Poet of the American Revolution”
 - Wrote a number of literary works against the British
 - Combined neoclassical and romantic elements in his works
- Nationalist
 - Strong believer of democratic ideals

Important Works

- The British Prison-Ship
- “The Beauties of Santa Cruz”
- “The House of Night”
- “The Wild Honey Suckle”
 - A beautiful lyric which established him as an important American precursor of the Romantics

Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810)

- Developed the genre of American gothic
 - Inspired by Mrs Radcliffe and William Godwin
- Dramatized scientific and medical theories
- Developed a well defined theory for fiction writing
 - Novels combine fiction and history
 - It places ordinary individuals in situations of historical importance to make the readers understand the impact of historical events on the life of individuals

Works

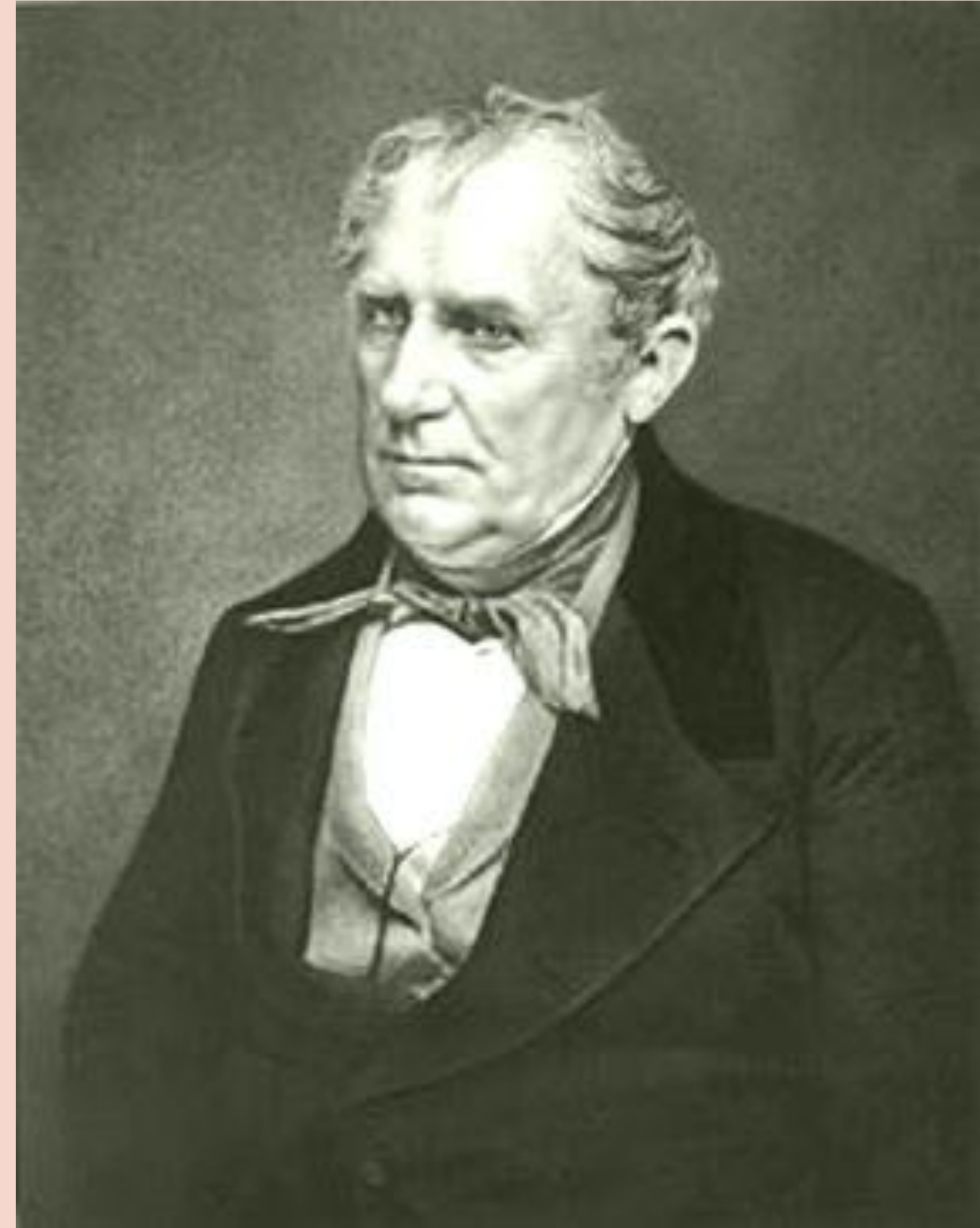
- Expressed in essays like
 - “Walsteins School of History”
 - “The Difference Between History and Romance”
- Works
 - Wieland (1798)
 - Arthur Mervyn (1799)
 - Ormond (1799)
 - Edgar Huntley (1799)

Early National Period (1775-1824)

- Emergence of a national imaginative literature; ended with triumph of Jacksonian democracy
- The Contrast by Royall Tyler – 1st American Comedy; in the tradition of the English Restoration comedies
- The North America Review – 1st enduring American Magazine
- Washington Irving: short stories, biographies, history
 - “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”, “Rip Van Winkle”
- The first major American novelist James Fenimore Cooper: works about frontier life
- Slave narratives – The Life of Frederick Douglass & The Life of a Slave Girl



Washington Irving



James Fenimore Cooper

Washington Irving (1783-1859)

- Known as the father of American short stories
- Occasionally wrote under the pseudonym 'Geoffrey Crayon'
- He understood the desire of the American people living in a raw new nation to have a sense of history
 - Numerous works may be seen as his careful attempts to build the new nation's soul by recreating history and giving it living, breathing, imaginative life
- Through his works he transformed the land into a place of legends

Important Works

- The Sketch Book of Geoffrye Crayon, Gent.
 - Contains two important humorous short stories
 - “Rip Van Winkle”
 - It was adapted for the stage
 - Later went into the oral tradition and was gradually accepted as authentic American legend by generations of Americans
 - “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”
 - The first four lines are taken from The Castle of Indolence
- Also wrote biography of George Washington

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851)

- One of the first American novelists to depict African, African American and Native American characters in his works
- Lived mostly in Cooperstown, New York
- Expelled from Yale University for bad behavior
- Served in the US Navy which influenced his works
- Started his writing career with
 - Precaution (1820)
 - Anonymously published
 - His high-spirited adventure stories are mostly inspired by childhood in the frontier

As a Writer

- Founded the Bread and Cheese Club
- Included painters and writers like William Cullen Bryant
- Lived in France, England, Switzerland and Italy for about seven years before settling back in Cooperstown, US, in 1833
- Was criticized as being reactionary, romantic and pedagogical in tone; Mark Twain attacked his romanticism in the essay “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses” (1895)
- Sometimes Cooper is compared to Walter Scott

The Leatherstocking Tales

- Most famous of his novels are the Leatherstocking Tales
- A series of five novels each featuring the main hero Natty Bumppo, known by European settlers as “Leatherstocking,” “The Pathfinder”, and “the trapper” and by the Native Americans as “Deerslayer,” “La Longue Carabine” and “Hawkeye”

Leatherstocking Tale 1

- The Deerslayer, or The First War Path (1841)
- Set in 1740-1745
- Set on Otsego Lake in upstate New York
- Introduces Natty Bumppo as “Deerslayer”, a young frontiersman in early 18th-century New York

Leatherstocking Tale 2

- The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757 (1826)
- Set in 1757
- Historical novel; the best known of the pentalogy
- Set during the French and Indian War (the Seven Years' War), when France and Great Britain battled for control of North America; French often allied with Native Americans
- Natty Bumppo as a young British Army scout; he is called Hawkeye

The Plot

- The British Fort William Henry (under Scottish Colonel Munro) is attacked by French General Montcalm and his Indian allies, Hurons
- Magua, a Huron, also called The Subtle Fox, brings this news to British General Webb at Fort Edward, 10 miles south of Fort William Henry
 - Webb sends reinforcements to William Henry

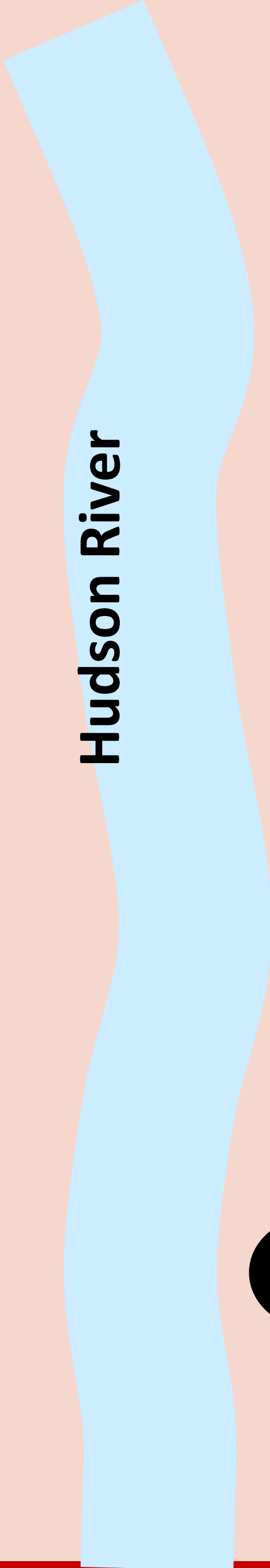
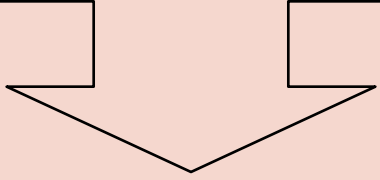
Meeting Hawkeye

- Cora and Alice Munro, who were visiting Webb, leave to see their father
 - Major Duncan Heyward accompanies
 - Magua is guide but is treacherous
- The group is attacked on the way
- They are helped by Hawkeye, a white hunter and Chingachgook, his Mohican ally
 - Uncas, the son of Chingachgook, is the last of the Mohicans

Uncas and Magua

- Uncas is attracted to dark-skinned Cora
- Magua also desires her; makes her a prisoner and after many adventures finally kills her
- Magua and Uncas kill each other

**French (Montcalm) &
Hurons (Mingos / Iroquois)**

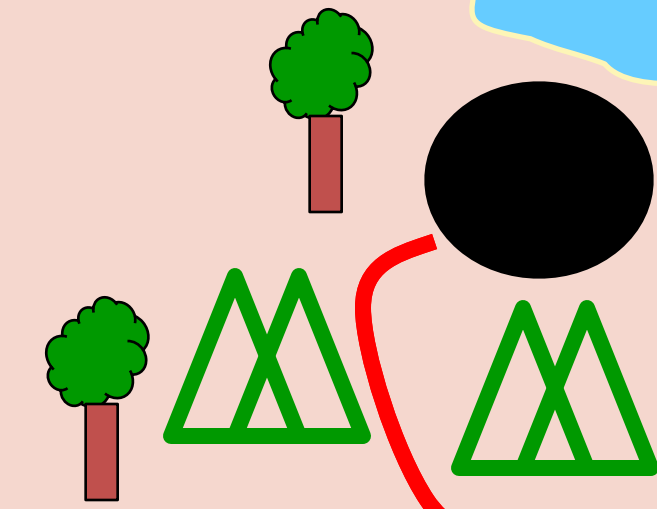
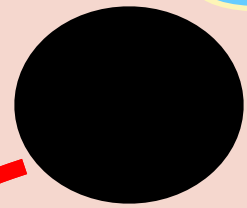


Hudson River

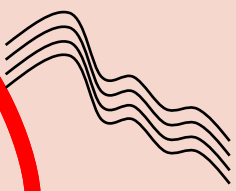


Lake George

**Fort William Henry
(Munro)**



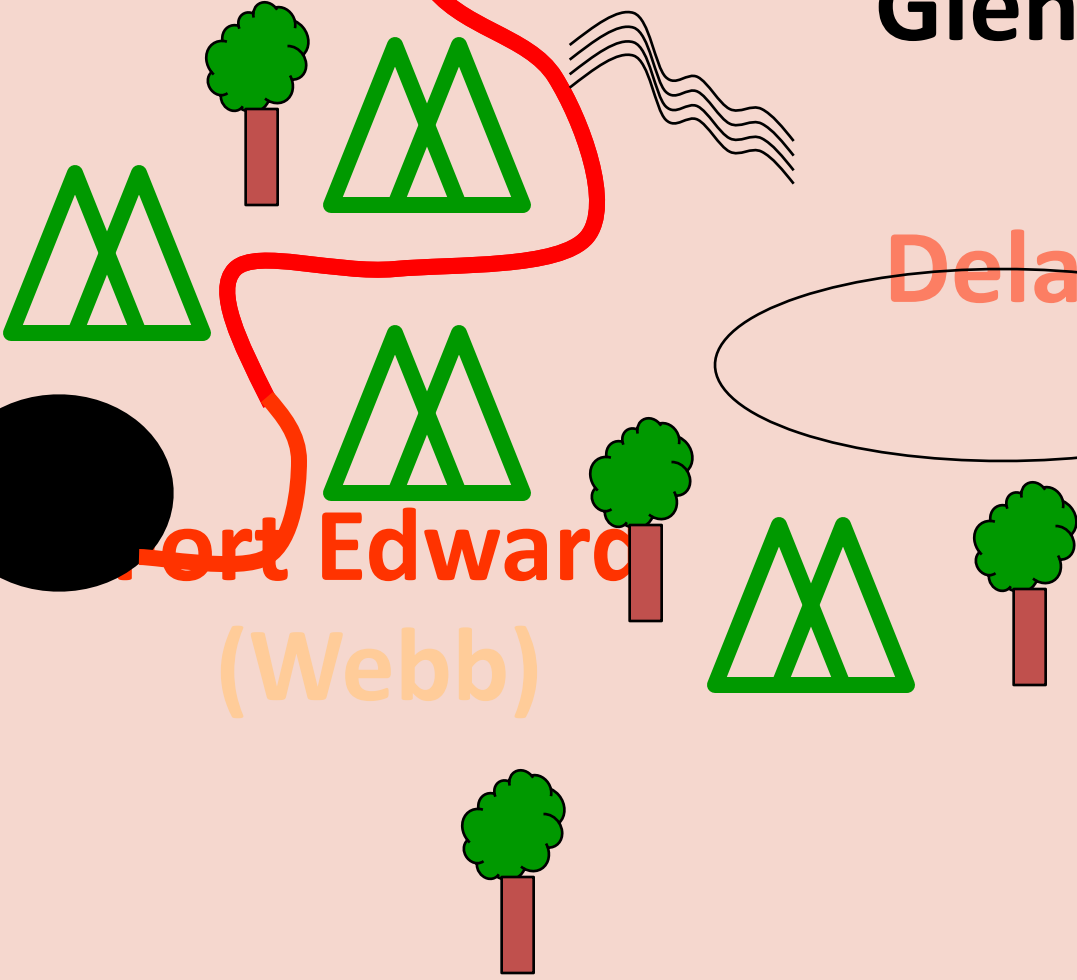
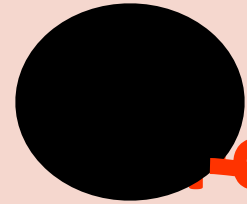
Glenn's Falls



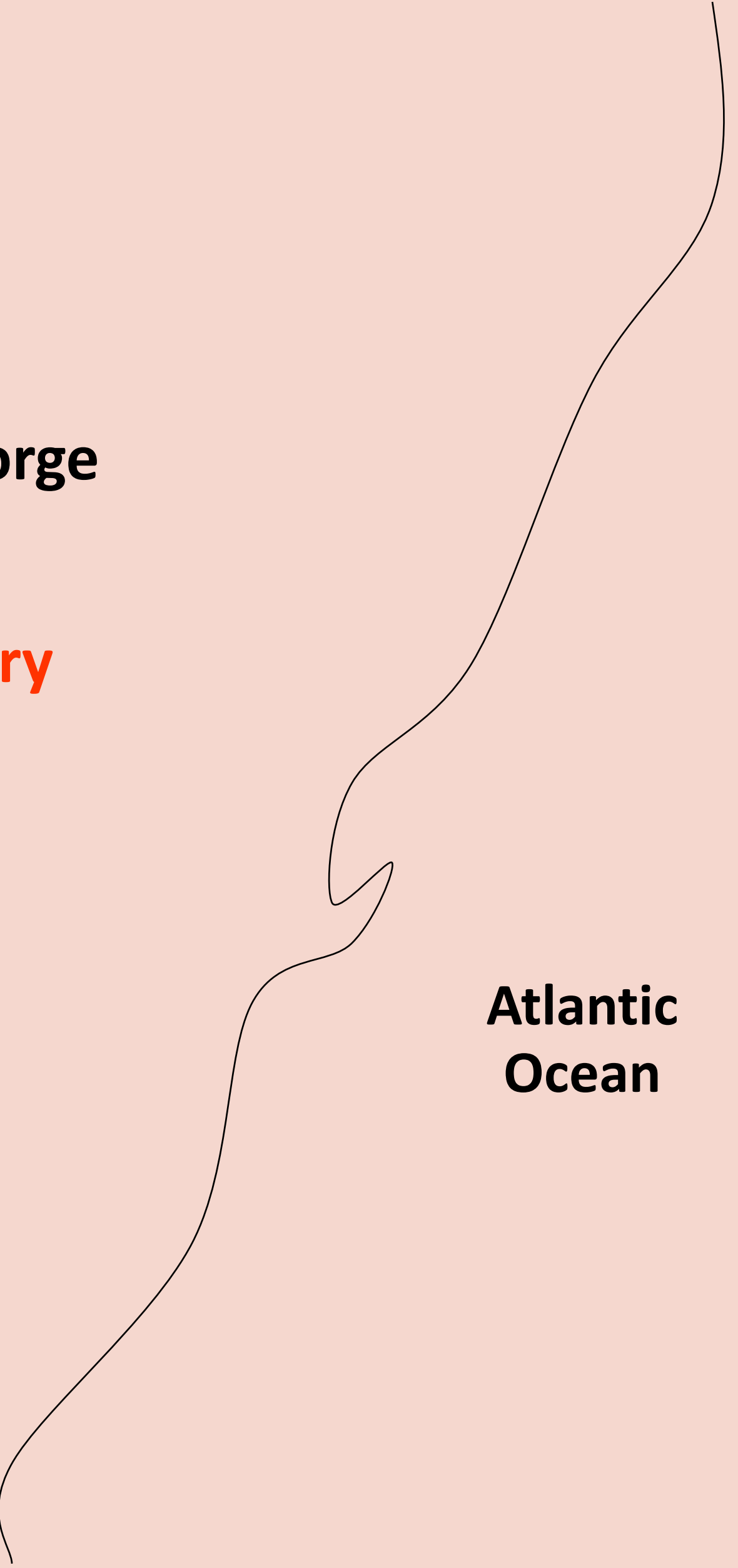
Delaware



**Fort Edward
(Webb)**



**Atlantic
Ocean**





**From the 1992 Hollywood movie
Daniel Day-Lewis as Hawkeye (or Long Rifle)**



Leatherstocking Tales 3 & 4

- The Pathfinder : The Inland Sea (1840)
 - Set in 1750s
 - The inland sea of the title is Lake Ontario
- The Pioneers: The Sources of the Susquehanna (1823)
 - Set in 1793
 - The story takes place in Templeton (modelled on Cooperstown)
 - Natty Bumppo is now elderly

Leatherstocking Tale 5

- The Prairie: A Tale (1827)
- Set in 1804
- Natty as “the trapper” or “the old man”
- Depicts Natty in the final year of his life still proving helpful to people in distress on the American frontier



The American Prairie

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784)

- Poet born in Africa
- Brought to the United States as a slave
- She lived with the Wheatleys
 - Was given an opportunity to learn
- Important Works
- Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral
 - “To S. M., a Young African Painter on Seeing His works”
 - “On Being Brought from Africa to America”

Other Women Writers

- Susanna Rowson (1762-1824)
 - Charlotte Temple
 - Novel
- Hannah Foster (1758-1840)
 - The Coquette
 - Novel
- Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814)