

What to Focus on for the English Midterm

- Individualism with the Puritanical thinking
 - Idea of Protestant was the self first, the others later
 - Fascination with the Interior life – **All literature is a search for the self**
 - 2 waves of Puritans than come ashore – **2nd wave (Radicals, Separatists – Mass. Bay Colony) is more important** than the 1st because they were **more intellectual** – they set up the printing press and they **were setting up the colonies, but weren't propelling education or writing literature at all**
 - **2nd wave sets up Harvard and the Printing press – why important**
 - Tension was brewed between the two waves
- Americans being fascinated with verbalizing their own experience
 - Beginnings of monologue – most of 19th century Am. Lit. written in that format
- **Puritans Bring**
 1. High Regard for Literacy
 2. Endless Search for the Ideal
 3. Fascination with self improvement
 4. Pragmatism
 5. **Experience –ultimate criteria for truth**
- American Enlightenment
 - Ult. Criteria for truth shifts from experience to reasoning
 - **Why and when images changed from religious to secular?** – tied up with idea of authority
 - **3 Big ideas from Enlightenment**
 1. Progress in Inevitable
 2. Human Institutions can always be improved
 3. Skepticism with authority is a virtue
- Ben Franklin – Great secular figure
 - Transformed sin into a mistake
 - Fascinating – self-made man, scientist, philosopher, ambassador, good business man
 - **Difficult to study b/c he had major contradictions in character** - ex. was extraordinary generous, but at same time extraordinary cheap (frugal).
- **19th Century**
 - In 50 years - America doing the unthinkable (mind-boggling)
 - Winning the Revolution
 - Creating the Declaration of Independence
 - Starting a successful rotation of presidents
 - Best constitution made in history
 - Stop Revolution on a dime
 - Export idea of democracy to rest of world

- Revolution exports idea of democracy to rest of world
- Unusual for America to produce so many poets during this time – makes sense when we look back b/c they were going through hard times and had desire to verbalize their experiences.
- Salvation System
 - Salvation system for Puritans – go to church, read bible
 - From Enlightenment on Education (Literature) becomes new salvation system
- Wanted to do different than the monarchy and aristocracy – Big question in 19th Century – **Can we produce great art? – If you don't you are not a civilization** and the rest of the world will marginalize you.
 - **Am. started to produce great art**, not just replicating great art
- During Puritan era, we have a major restriction on drama
 - Puritans did not like drama because you are pretending to be something that God did not make you to be
 - Washington believed that drama was informative, instructive, and was entertaining
 - Post Enlightenment and Washington, we see art and drama flourish
- **Americans aren't Puritans anymore, but they have inherited the residue of the Puritanical thinking, specifically, the idea of individualism.**
 - Individualism is reinforced in a more contemporary way in our society by capitalism – face free markets alone.
- **Passion for Freedom in 19th Century**
 - **Not tied up w/ our tribal identity anymore**
 - **Toqueville made observations about people being lonely and restless.**
- **19th Century American Literature**
 - **3 Characteristics**
 1. Centered on self
 2. Alone in Nature
 3. Prepubescent Mindset -Did not focus on relationships
 - Frontier in American changes from the geographical frontier to the physiological frontier.
 - Am. geniuses at conquering space (land)
 - Not bridging gap of space between two people
 - 1st Major Work of Fiction was Rip Van Winkle
 - Used to illustrate major ideas of 19th Century
 1. On periphery of society
 2. Focus was on himself – self-centered

3. Doesn't care about wife, but everyone else and Revolution has occurred and they have a President.
 - **Big focus with Irving was how quickly change occurs**
 - 1st Major Work of Autobiography was Franklin
 - Cooper – had a slow style, characters wimpy and went through passage of time -> Natty Bumppo novels including Deerslayer.
 - Bryant – Thanatopsis – Secular view on death
 - Transcendentalism
 - Emerson – Self Reliance
 - Thoreau
 - Dark Side of 19th Century
 - Poe - poems
 - Melville – Bartleby
 - Hawthorne – Scarlet Letter
 - **Have to come to terms with what you have done in your life/made of your life – True of most characters in Scarlet Letter**
 - **Hawthorne and Poe are alike because they believe you are bound to your past**, and you can't get over your past – both are very clear about that. You have to come to terms with past.