

I selected the authors for these lists based largely on their historical significance (their historical place in what was once considered ‘canon,’ more recent critical recognition, or critical credit for innovation). Each list ends at some arbitrary point in the twentieth century, as I make no attempt to predict the historical significance of more recent works. The lists offer ‘some’ writers. I make no claim to having identified a contemporary canon.

Appendix 1 – Some Essential British Poets (before 1945) and a Few of Their Works

Geoffrey Chaucer 1343-1400)

The Canterbury Tales; A Parlement of Fowles

Anonymous (14th. Century)

“Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”

Edmund Spenser (mid 1500’s-1599)

The Fairie Queen

Sir Phillip Sidney (1554-1586)

Astrophil and Stella sonnet series; criticism includes *The Defense of Posey*

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

blank verse drama includes *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*; poetry includes “Hero and Leander”

William Shakespeare (1554-1616)

sonnets (“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day”), blank verse drama ranging from *Hamlet* and *King Lear* to *A Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*

John Donne (1572-1631)

his finest poem may be “Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”; others include “The Flea”; “The Ecstasy”; Holy Sonnet 10 (“Death, Be Not Proud”)

Ben Jonson (1572-1637)

“To the Memory of ... Mr. William Shakespeare ...”; “Song to Celia”; “On My First Son”; drama including “The Alchemist”

Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

“To Virgins to Make Much of Time”; “Corinna’s Going A-Maying”

John Milton (1608-1674)

“Lycidas”; the ambitious modern epic, *Paradise Lost*, which ‘justifies the ways of God to man.’

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

“To His Coy Mistress”

John Dryden (1631-1700)

“Absolom and Achitophel”; “Mac Flecknoe”

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

sophisticated verse essays: “Essay on Man” which ‘vindicates the ways of God to man’; “Essay on Criticism”; satire “The Rape of the Lock”

Thomas Gray (1716-1771)

composed a ‘graveyard poem’ that anticipates the Romantic sensibility: “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”

William Blake (1757-1827)

mystical Romantic: *Songs of Innocence; Songs of Experience*

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

“Tam O’Shanter” is one of his delightful Scotts folk and dialect pieces

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

revolutionary Romantic writer of *Lyrical Ballads*, including “Lines Composed Above Tintern Abbey”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

Romantic explorer of the fantastic: “Kubla Khan”; “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”; criticism includes *Biographia Literaria*

Lord Byron (George Gordon) (1788-1824)

“She Walks in Beauty”; “Don Juan”; “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

“Adonais”; “Ode to the West Wind”; “The Cloud”

John Keats (1795-1821)

his verse may be the finest quality of any of the Romantic writers; “Ode on a Grecian Urn”; “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

spouse of Robert Browning; *Sonnets from the Portuguese; Aurora Leigh*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

seemed a perfect representative of the Victorian sensibility; “In Memoriam”; *Idylls of the King*

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

spouse of Elizabeth Barrett Browning; “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”; “Andrea Del Sarto”; “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”; master of the dramatic monologue

Emily Brontë (1818-1848)

“Night Wind”

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

The Strayed Reveler; “Dover Beach”; his criticism included as much social criticism (*Culture and Anarchy*) as literary criticism

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)

brother of Christina Rossetti; Pre-Raphaelite painter and poet: “The Blessed Damosel”; “Jenny”

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

sister of D.G. Rossetti; “Goblin Market”

William Morris (1834-1896)

poet, social reformer, and craftsman: “Defense of Guinevere”

Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909)

“Hymn to Prosperpine”

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

“The Darkling Thrush”

Gerrard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

creator of ‘sprung rhythm’: “The Windhover”; “Pied Beauty”

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

“Second Coming”; “The Isle of Innisfree”; “Sailing to Byzantium”

Ezra Pound (born in the United States) (1885-1972)

“In a Station of the Metro”; *Cantos*

Thomas Sterns Eliot (born in the United States) (1888-1965)

“The Hollow Men”; “The Waste Land”; “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

W. H. Auden (1907-1973)

“Museum Des Beaux Arts”; “Shield of Achilles”

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

“The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower”; “Fern Hill”

**Appendix 2 – Some Essential British Novelists (before 1945)
and a Few of Their Works**

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)

wrote the first English novel, *Robinson Crusoe*; also wrote *Moll Flanders*;
Roxanne

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)

epistolary novels *Pamela*; *Clarissa*

Henry Fielding (1707-1754)

picaresque satires including: *Joseph Andrews*; *Jonathan Wild*; *Tom Jones*

Lawrence Sterne (1713-1768)

a book sometimes called the first post-modern novel, *Tristram Shandy*

Horace Walpole (1717-1797)

wrote the first gothic novel, *The Castle at Ortrando*

Tobias Smollett (1721-1771)

picaresque adventures: *Roderick Random*; *Humphrey Clinker*; *Peregrine Pickle*;
translated Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*

Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823)

gothic novels including *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

Matthew “Monk” Lewis (1775-1818)

gothic novel, *The Monk*

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

adventure novels including *Ivanhoe*; *Rob Roy*

Jane Austen (1775-1817)

the drawing room novel: *Pride and Prejudice*; *Sense and Sensibility*; *Emma*

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)

the satirical *Vanity Fair* is his best-known

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

the preeminent English-language novelist: works include the comic *Pickwick Papers*; melodramatic *Oliver Twist*; autobiographical *David Copperfield*; *Great Expectations*; the masterfully complex *Bleak House*

Anthony Trollope (1815-1862)

many Victorian novels, including *Barchester Towers*

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)

Jane Eyre; *Villette*

Emily Brontë (1818-1848)

gothic romance *Wuthering Heights*

George Eliot (pen name of Mary Anne Evans) (1819-1880)

Mid-Victorian Realistic novelist: *The Mill on the Floss*; *Adam Bede*;
Middlemarch

George Meredith (1828-1909)

Realistic novelist: *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*

Samuel Butler (1835-1902)

Naturalistic novelist: *The Way of All Flesh*; *Erewhon*

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Wessex novels including *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*;
Jude the Obscure

George Gissing (1857-1903)

Realist or Naturalist? *New Grub Street*; *The Odd Women*

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)

amazing stylist: *Lord Jim*; *Heart of Darkness*; *Typhoon*

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

colonial novel *Kim*; British boarding school novel *Stalky and Co.*; good short stories; unforgivable poetry and other works

James Joyce (1882-1941)

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man; stream of consciousness *Ulysses*;
Finnegan's Wake

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

feminist author of *To the Lighthouse*

D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

most famous for the scandalous *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

George Orwell (1903-1950)

wrote the political allegory *Animal Farm* and the dystopia *1984*

**Appendix 3 – Some Essential American Novelists (through the 1970's)
and a Few of Their Works**

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851)

first successful American novelist: The Leatherstocking Tales including
Deerslayer; The Last of the Mohicans

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

The Scarlet Letter; Blythedale Romance

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)

the 'little lady' who wrote the book that 'caused the big war': *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Herman Melville (1819-1891)

his masterwork *Moby Dick* was preceded by travel/adventure novels (*Typee; Redburn; White Jacket*; and others) and followed by a curious array of philosophical novels, posthumously published *Billy Budd, Sailor* the best known)

Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) (born and died with appearances of Halley's Comet: 1835-1910)

humorist, popular novelist, social critic: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Henry James (1843-1916)

brother of psychologist William James; wrote *Daisy Miller; The Turn of the Screw; The Beast in the Jungle*

Kate Chopin (1850-1904)

Southern regional novelist, excellent stylist: *The Awakening*

Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

realistic novelist: *The Red Badge of Courage; Maggie, Girl of the Streets*

Theodore Dreisser (1871-1945)

naturalistic novelist: *Sister Carrie*

Willa Cather (1873-1947)

her *My Antonia*, in the spirit of her pioneer fiction, combines beautiful description with a soft, romanticized plot

Jack London (1876-1916)

social reformer and naturalistic novelist, wrote the canine-centered Arctic adventures *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*

Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951)

less stylistically accomplished than his better-remembered contemporaries, wrote sociologically perceptive novels: *Main Street; Elmer Gantry; Babbit; Arrowsmith*

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

amazing stylist, wrote obsessively about the 'rich and beautiful': *The Great Gatsby*

William Faulkner (1897-1962)

combines experimental style with Southern Gothic content: *Light in August; As I Lay Dying; Sanctuary; The Sound and the Fury; The Bear*; The Snopes trilogy (*The Hamlet; The Town; The Mansion*).

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

combined a clear style with a penchant for 'macho' adventure. Novels include: *For Whom the Bell Tolls; To Have and To Have Not; The Old Man and the Sea*

Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977)

Russian-born novelist whose works include *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*

John Steinbeck (1902-1968)

his best demonstrate his deep social conscience; his novels include a rich metaphoric subtlety with occasional, visible, symbolic excesses. Novels include: *The Grapes of Wrath*; *Cannery Row*; *Of Mice and Men*; *East of Eden*

Nathanael West (1903-1940)

his novels are said to anticipate post-modernism: *Miss Lonelyhearts*; *The Day of the Locust*

Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989)

his *All the King's Men* was based on the rise and fall of politician Huey Long

Richard Wright (1908-1960)

Black Boy; *Native Son*

Ralph Ellison (1914-1994)

his lone completed novel, *Invisible Man*, is one of the finest novels produced in the English language

Saul Bellow (1915-2005)

Henderson, the Rain King, is more fun than his more realistic portrayals of middle class angst

J.D. Salinger (1919-)

his *Catcher in the Rye* had extraordinary influence on a generation of readers

Jack Kerouac (1922-1969)

wrote the mantra of the Beat Generation, *On the Road*

Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007)

counter-cultural icon most known for *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Joseph Heller (1923-1999)

his *Catch-22* offered an existentialist/post-existentialist nightmare taken as an anti-war piece; his other works are of less significance

Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)

her slight output of extraordinarily-constructed fiction includes novels *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear it Away*

Toni Morrison (1931-)

Beloved

John Updike (1932-2009)

works include the Rabbit novels written over his own unfolding lifetime: *Run, Rabbit, Run*; *Rabbit Redux*; *Rabbit is Rich*; *Rabbit at Rest*

Phillip Roth (1933-)

his *Portnoy's Complaint* brought criticism for its sexual honesty

Thomas Pynchon (1937-)

the post-modernist studies of paranoia and purposelessness, *V.*; *The Crying of Lot 49*; *Gravity's Rainbow*

**Appendix 4 – Some Significant American Poets
(through the 1970’s) and a Few of Their Works**

Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)

first significant American poet: “The Author to Her Book”; “On the Burning of Our House ...”; “A Letter to Her Husband Absent on Public Employment”

Philip Freneau (1752-1832)

American Romantic poet: “Sir Toby”; “The Wild Honeysuckle”

Phillis Wheatley (mid-1750’s-1784)

Boston slave who impressed with her Neo-Classical verse: “On Imagination”

William Cullen Bryant (1794-1874)

American Romantic who composed “Thanatopsis”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

writer of American epics “The Song of Hiawatha”; “Evangeline”; also the children’s poem “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere”

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

“Snowbound”; dialect poems including “The Women of Marblehead”

Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849)

“The Raven”; “Annabelle Lee”; criticism includes “The Poetic Principle”

Oliver Wendell Holmes (senior) 1809-1894

“Old Ironsides” and various occasional verse

James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

“To the Dandelion”; a very conventional writer

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

major free-verse poet: *Leaves of Grass*; “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”; “Song of Myself”

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

major innovative poet: “I felt a Funeral in my Brain”; “Because I could not stop for Death” and other untitled masterpieces

Edgar Lee Masters (1868-1950)

Spoon River Anthology combined a brilliant concept and shoddy, hurried execution

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”; “Birches”; “After Apple-Picking”

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

verse extolling the working classes: “Chicago”; also wrote a noted biography of Abraham Lincoln

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

intellectually sophisticated verse: “The Idea of Order at Key West”; “Postcard from the Volcano”; “The Snow Man”

William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

“The Red Wheelbarrow”

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

moved to England. Wrote “In a Station of the Metro”; the *Cantos*

Marianne Moore (1887-1972)

“Bird Witted”; “To a Snail”

Thomas Sterns Eliot (1888-1965)

moved to England. Wrote “The Hollow Men”; “The Waste Land”; “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

“Renascence”; “I Forgot for a Moment”

e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

“Buffalo Bill’s defunct”; “anyone lived in a pretty how town”

Hart Crane (1899-1932)

The Bridge

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”; “The Weary Blues”; “Song for a Dark Girl”

Charles Olson (1910-1970)

founded the Black Mountain school of poetry; *The Maximus Poems*

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)

“The Moose” “The Fish”

Robert Hayden (1913-1980)

his “Middle Passage” is a masterful collage

Robert Lowell (1917-1977)

“The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket”

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919-)

poet, publisher, bookshop owner

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)

Beat writer: *Howl*

Robert Creeley (1926-2005)

Black Mountain writer; *For Love*

John Ashbery (1927-)

Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

Ariel

Amiri Baraka (1936-)

Black writer associated with the Beats; *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note*