

AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

The Romantic Movement
in American Literature

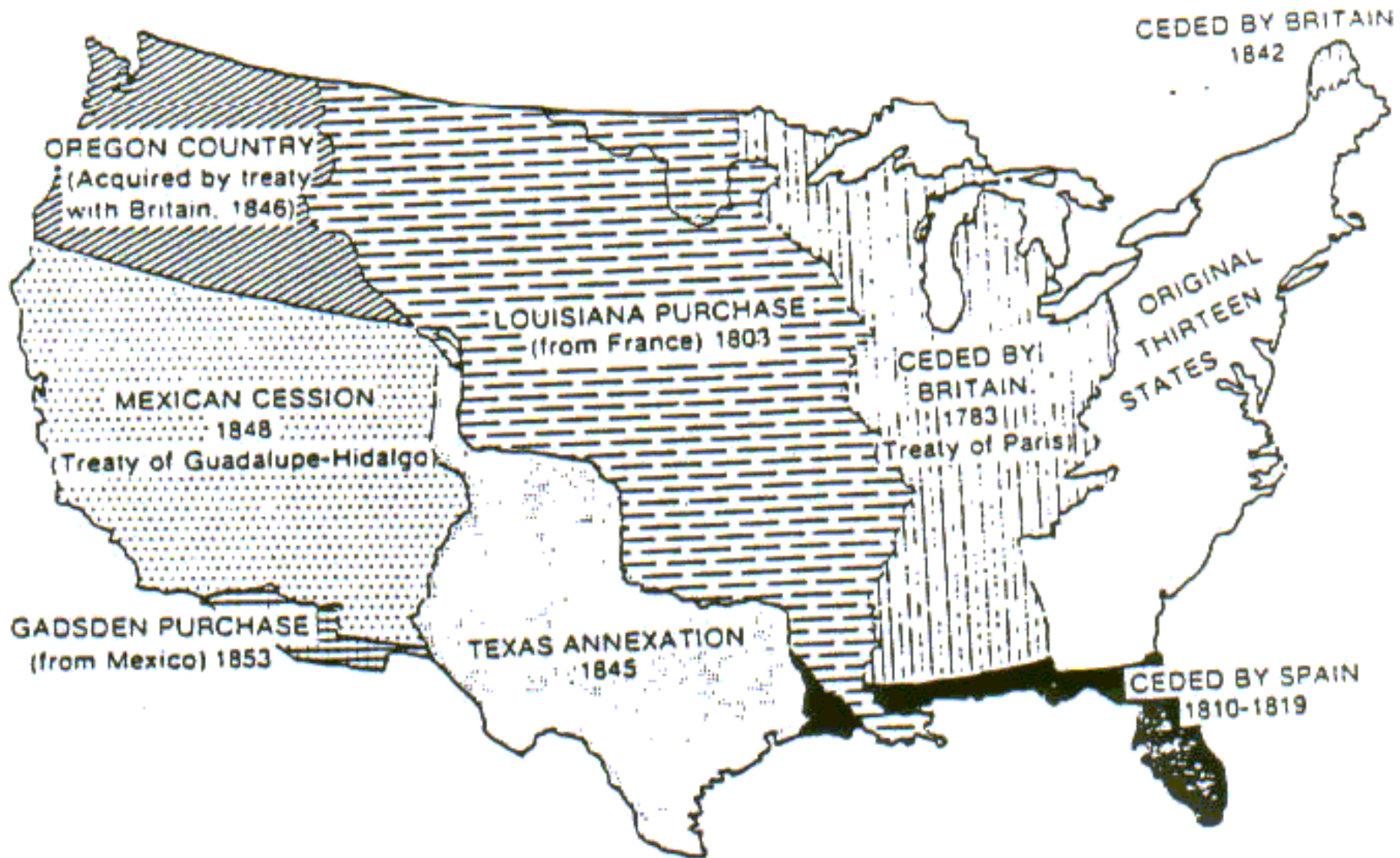
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

19th Century America

- Rapid and Unrestrained growth in U.S.
- http://www.the-map-as-history.com/demos/tome07/02-territorial_expansion_1783_1861.php

A Growing America

- Westward expansion
- Technological innovations
 - John Deere's steel plow, Samuel Morse's telegraph, Eli Whitney's cotton gin
- Improvements in Transportation (canals, railroads)



LITERATURE AND LITERACY

- ✗ Newspapers
- ✗ Lyceum Movement
 - + Part education, part entertainment
 - + Debating societies
 - ✗ Issues of the day such as manifest destiny, slavery, voting rights

RELIGION

- ✘ Protestant Christianity provided certain common assumptions, a vocabulary and a set of images and allusions to the majority of Americans in the early nineteenth century.
- ✘ Writers could depend on their audience to recognize and respond to Biblical and other religious allusions and quotations.

SLAVERY

- ❖ The central issue of the 19th century
- ❖ Divided the country between abolitionists and pro-slavery
- ❖ The debate was directly related to the issue of states rights

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- ✘ More women attended school; some went on to college
- ✘ More women were able to take up teaching and writing as their professions.
- ✘ By the end of the 19th century, higher education particularly was broadened by the rise of women's colleges and the admission of women to regular colleges and universities.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- ✘ The first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848.
- ✘ Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Lucretia Mott wrote the *Declaration of Sentiments* for the convention, deliberately modeling it on the *Declaration of Independence*.
- ✘ *“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...”*

NATIVE AMERICANS

- ✘ With the expansion of white settlers westward, Native Americans faced intense pressure.
- ✘ With westward expansion came displacement of Native Americans.

THE TRAIL OF TEARS



The Indian Removal Act of 1830

[VIDEO](#)

THE TRAIL OF TEARS

- ✘ President Andrew Jackson (“Sharp Knife” to the Cherokee) was convinced that the only solution to the Indian “problem” was the complete removal of all natives beyond the Mississippi River.
- ✘ The Cherokees were one of the richest and most advanced of all Indian tribes
- ✘ They endeavored to live in peace with their white neighbors

THE TRAIL OF TEARS

- ✘ The Indians took their case to the Supreme Court and the Court declared that the Cherokee people were of a “domestic, dependent nation” and that the state of Georgia had no right to extend their laws over them.
- ✘ President Andrew Jackson ignored the Court’s decision.

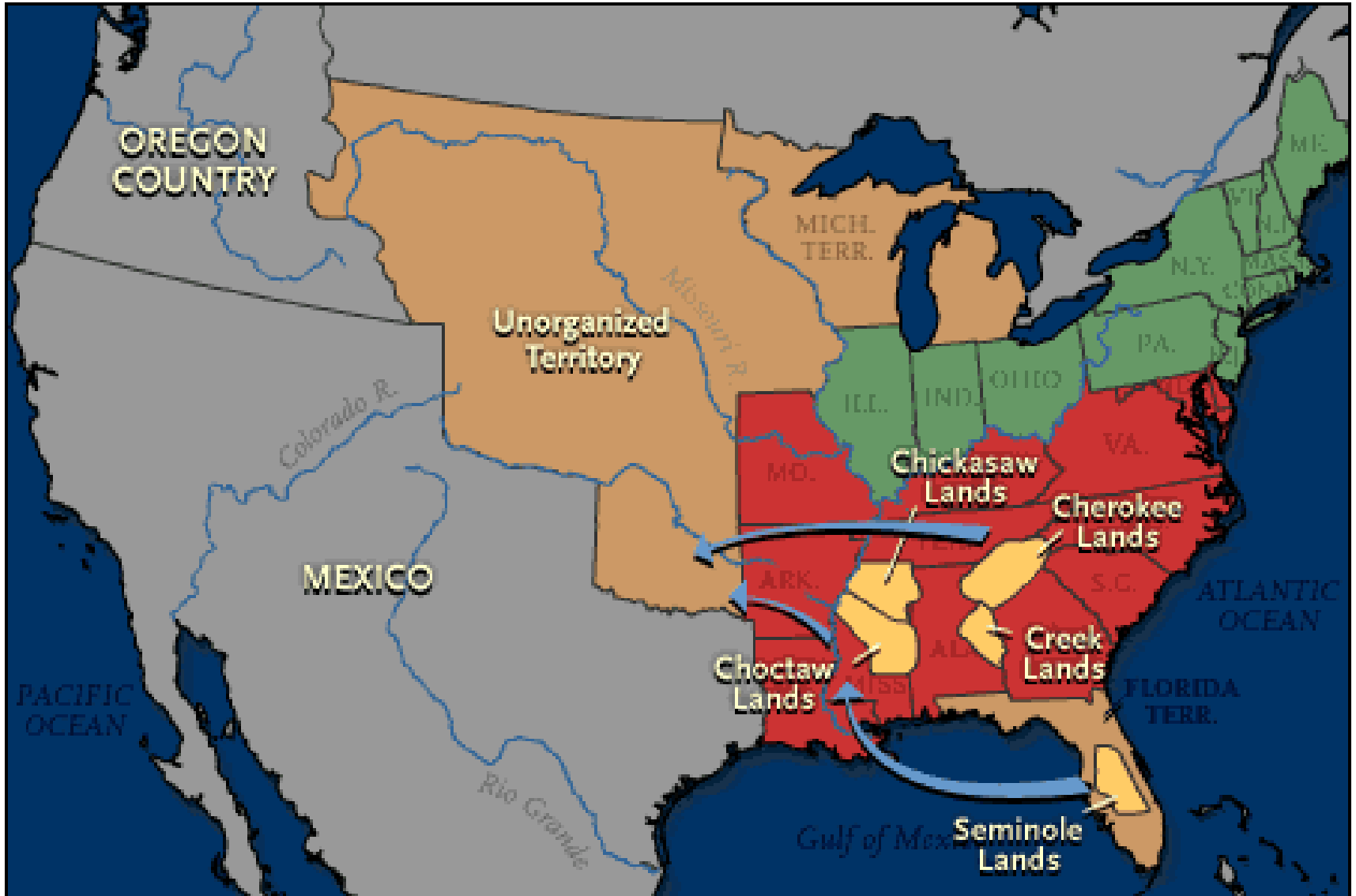
THE TRAIL OF TEARS

- ✘ In the fall of 1838, the Cherokees were forced to relocate from their homelands in Georgia to the state of Oklahoma.
- ✘ The trek to Oklahoma was over about a thousand miles of inhospitable terrain.
- ✘ About 4,000 of the 16,000 Cherokees died on the road.
- ✘ The trek was to become known as the Trail of Tears.

Trail of Tears



THE TRAIL OF TEARS



Speckled Snake

A Creek man more than a hundred years old, named Speckled Snake, reacted to Andrew Jackson's policy of removal:

“Brothers: We have heard the talk of our Great Father; it is very kind. He says he loves his red children.

Brothers, when the white man first came to these shores, the Indian gave him land and kindled fire to make him comfortable. When the Pale Faces of the South would have taken his scalp, our young men drew the tomahawk and protected him.”

“But when the white man had warmed himself at the Indian’s fire, and had filled himself with the Indian’s hominy, he became very large. He stopped not at the mountaintops, and his foot covered the plains and valleys. His hands grasped the eastern and western seas. Then he became our Great Father. He loved his red children, but said, ‘You must move a little farther, lest by accident I tread upon you.’ With one foot he pushed the red man across the Oconee, and with the other he tramped down the graves of our fathers. But our Great Father still loved his red children, and soon made them another talk. He said much, but it all meant, ‘Move a little farther; you are too near me.’”

“Brothers: I have heard many talks from our Great Father, and they all began and ended the same. When he made us a talk on a former occasion, he said, ‘Get a little farther; go beyond the Oconee and the Ocmulgee,—there is a pleasant country.’ He also said, ‘It shall be yours forever.’

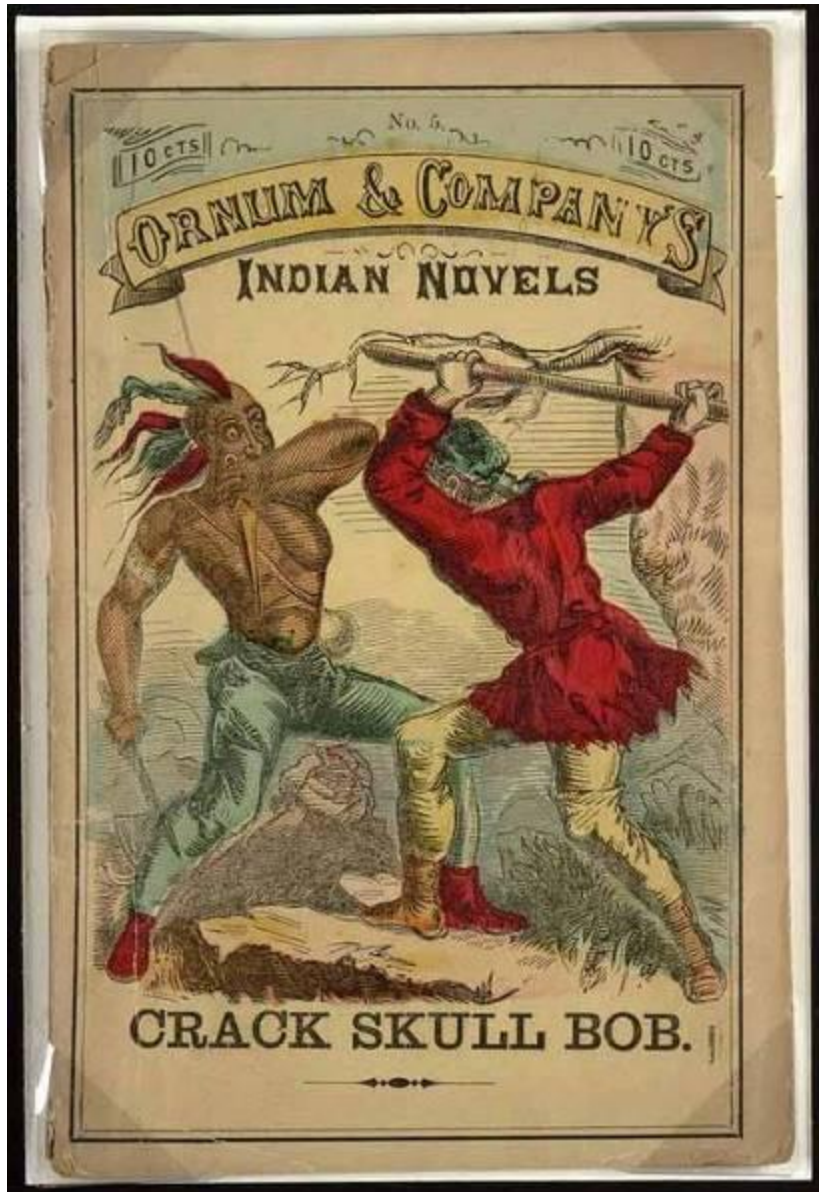
Now he says, ‘The land you live upon is not yours. Go beyond the Mississippi; there is game; there you may remain while the grass grows and the rivers run.’

Brothers: Will not our Great Father come there also? He loves his red children, and his tongue is not forked.”

Literature and Dime Novels

- ✘ Most fiction perpetuated the image of Native Americans as the “noble savage” or simply savage
- ✘ “Dime Novels” each contained a short work of fiction with a sensational and melodramatic plot, usually patriotic tales of encounters between Indians and backwoods settlers that were highly nationalistic in spirit.
- ✘ The cover illustration, as much as the low price, attracted readers and sold the books

Dime Novels

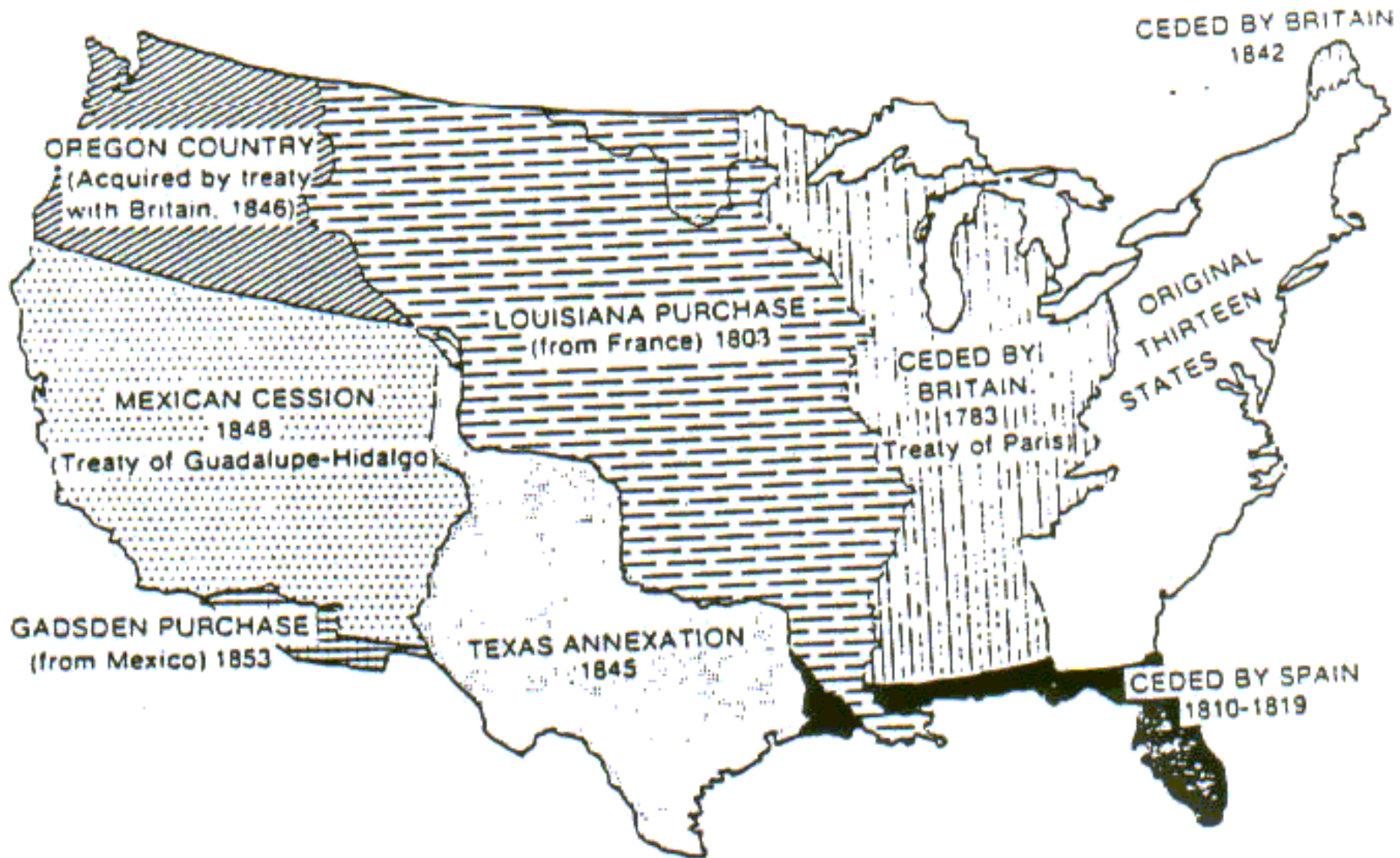


MANIFEST DESTINY

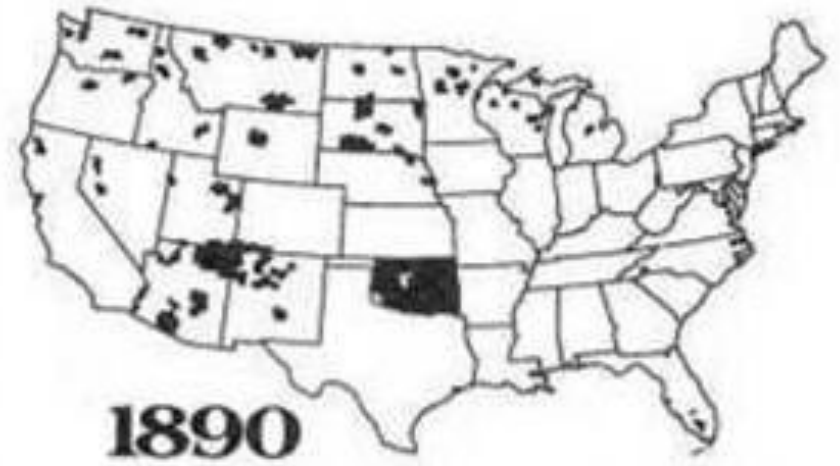
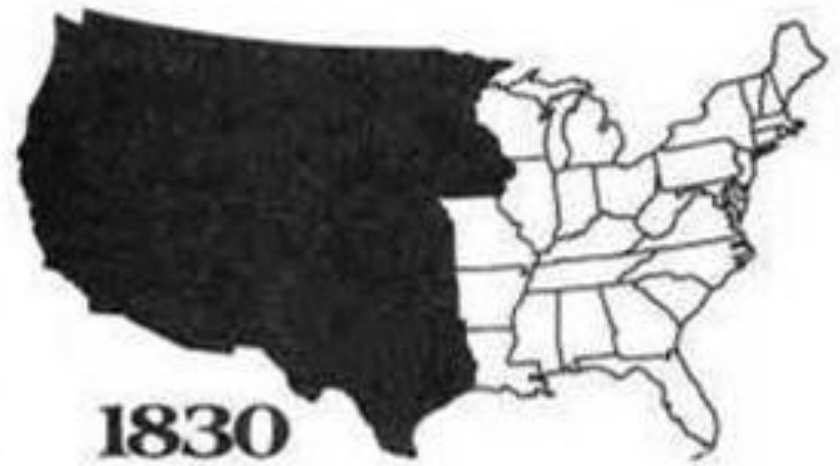
- ✘ America's westward expansion generated political prose, especially in light of *manifest destiny* – a belief that the country's territorial expansion was not only inevitable but also divinely ordained.

MANIFEST DESTINY

- ✘ The term *manifest destiny* was coined by writer John Louis O'Sullivan in 1845.
- ✘ “...*our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our multiplying millions.*”



Shrinking Indian Lands



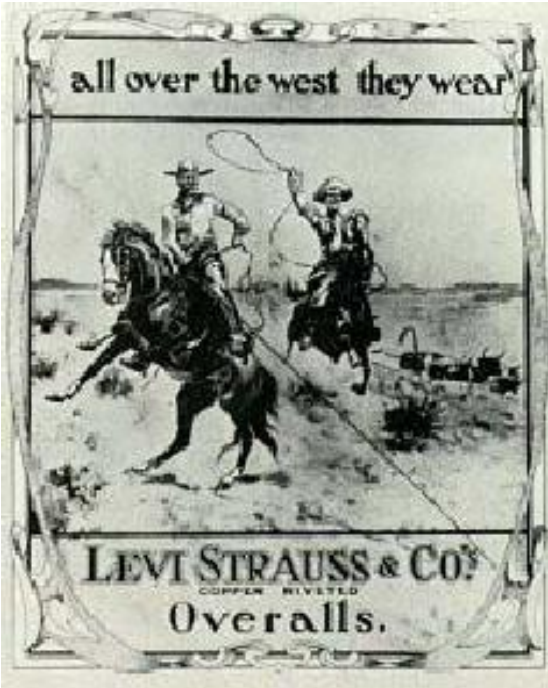
"AMERICAN PROGRESS" JOHN GAST 1872



- ✘ An angelic woman adorned with the “Star of Empire” and representing America floats from the east coast across the continent toward the Pacific.
- ✘ In her right hand she carries a schoolbook—a representation of enlightenment.

- ✘ Around her right elbow and delicately flowing through her left hand, are the telegraph wires that will connect the great nation.
- ✘ As she progresses, farmers plow the fields, the railroad and stage coach bring new settlers further west, and the Indians, buffalo, wild horses, and game animals flee—or are pushed—off the edge of the continent.

THE GOLD RUSH



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CALIFORNIA!
DIRECT

EXTRAORDINARY INDUCEMENTS!!
THIRTY-FIVE DAYS TO THE GOLD REGIONS!

The "California Steam Navigation Co."
Will dispatch their first vessel from New-York, the NEW and SPLENDID

STEAM SHIP!
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DAVID JERROLD, Master, positively
On FRIDAY, MARCH 23d, 1849,
Via the River St. Juan and Lake Nicaragua, across the Isthmus of Leon.

Capt. HOBSON, of the U. S. Topographical Engineers.

200 JACK ASSES!

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Price of Passage Through Ninety Dollars!
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THE GOLD RUSH

- ✘ At least 250,000 “Forty-Niners” sought gold in California from 1848-1853, extracting in excess of \$200 million of the metal.
- ✘ The original discoverer of the gold was James W. Marshall, a carpenter who was building a mill for J.A. Sutter, on whose land the gold was discovered.

Levi Strauss



- ✘ Trained as a tailor, he planned to manufacture tents and wagon covers for the Forty-niners, but finding no market for these items, he instead used the stout canvas he had brought with him to make especially durable pants, which miners found perfect for their close-to-the-ground line of work.
- ✘ He quickly began selling these "wonderful pants of Levi's" as fast as he could make them.
- ✘ Strauss opened a factory and began adding copper rivets at the stress points in his pants and switched from canvas to a heavy blue denim material called genes in France, which became "jeans" in America.

Mining Towns in the West



The Gold Rush

- ✘ Roughly two-thirds of the Forty-niners came from the United States and two thirds of them were from New England.
- ✘ But the miners also included slaves, free blacks, even Cherokees, forced out of Georgia twenty years earlier when gold had been found on their land.
- ✘ The rest of the miners, one American wrote, "came from every hole and corner in the world."

Anti-Foreigner Sentiment

- ✘ California now had more immigrants than any other part of the United States.
- ✘ In 1850, American miners pressured the California legislature into enacting a monthly tax of \$20 on all miners who were not United States citizens.
- ✘ Thousands of foreigners were forced to leave the gold fields; the tax was far more than they could pay.

Anti-Foreigner Sentiment

- ✘ When the Chinese paid the miners tax and refused to leave their claims, Americans resorted to intimidation.
- ✘ They hacked off the Chinese miners' queues, burned down their shacks, beat and flogged and murdered them

“As mining became more difficult, as the claims became more difficult to find because there were more miners than there were workable claims, everyone competing and fighting for his smaller and smaller opportunity to strike it rich, you became, therefore... desirous of finding an excuse for your failure, or desirous of finding a way to get an advantage. Well one of the ways was to say, I'm an American; What are the Mexicans doing here? What are the Indians? We don't need the Indians, we can certainly get rid of them. What are the Chinese doing here? Those people shouldn't be here... This isn't their land, this is my land! This belongs to us!”

- Historian **J. S. Holliday**

MEXICAN AMERICANS

- ✘ Anti-Mexican sentiment was common in the West but Mexican land was valued.
- ✘ *“The ill will of the Yankee rabble... against sons of other nations was rising... This mutual bad feeling explains the bloody hostilities and atrocities we witnessed every day in this land of gold and hope.” - Vicente Perez Rosales*

The Corrido

- ❖ The Mexican “**corrido**” finds its origins in a rich oral tradition.
- ✘ The traditional historical *corrido* told about actual events, especially the exploits of famous heroes or the tragic deaths of individuals fighting unjust authorities.

CHINESE AMERICANS

- ✘ Chinese came to America after the discovery of gold in California (1848).
- ✘ Large numbers of Chinese men worked on the transcontinental railroad (completed in 1869).

CHINESE AMERICANS

- ✘ After the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, Californians faced tough economic times.
- ✘ Most of the gold in California had already been mined.
- ✘ Many businesses closed, and few jobs were available.

CHINESE AMERICANS

- ✘ As frustration levels among Americans began to rise in California, the Chinese became targets for discrimination.
- ✘ Americans blamed the Chinese for the lack of jobs in California.
- ✘ Anti-Chinese sentiments spread throughout the state.



The Hypocrisy of Democracy

The most idealistic nation in the world (“All men are created equal”) was committing national sins: institutionalized slavery of African Americans, the near-genocide of Native Americans, discrimination against immigrants, and the treatment of women.

ROMANTICISM & THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

The Literature

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

- ✘ During the Industrial Revolution an intellectual and artistic hostility towards the new industrialization developed.
- ✘ Its major exponents in English included the artist and poet William Blake and poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley.
- ✘ Called the Romantic Movement

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

- ✘ The movement stressed the importance of "**nature**" in art and language, in contrast to 'monstrous' machines and factories;
- ✘ Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* reflected concerns that scientific progress might be double-edged.

AN “AMERICAN” LITERATURE

- ✘ America began developing its own distinct literary tradition.
- ✘ American writers were naturally influenced by their English and European heritage and thus not totally original in form or content; however, there was an elusive "American" quality about the new literature.

AN “AMERICAN” LITERATURE

- ✘ Herman Melville (author of *Moby Dick*), commenting on the risks American writers must take, stated:

"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation."

AMERICAN VOICES

AMERICAN VOICES



Noah Webster

- ✘ led a call for uniquely American traditions in language and literature,
- ✘ published a dictionary in 1806
- ✘ included “Americanisms”- American variations in usage
- ✘ included 5,000 words not previously recognized by English dictionaries

RECENT ADDITIONS TO WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY

mouse potato (n) 1993: slang: a person who spends a great deal of time using a computer

ringtone (n) 1983: the sound made by a cell phone to signal an incoming call

google (vt) 2001: to use the Google search engine to obtain information about (as a person) on the World Wide Web

himbo (n) 1988: an attractive but unintelligent man

- ✘ **soul patch** (n) 1991: a small growth of beard under a man's lower lip
- ✘ **supersize** (vt) 1994: to increase considerably the size, amount, or extent of
- ✘ **drama queen** (n) 1979: a person given to often excessively emotional performances or reactions
- ✘ **unibrow** (n) 1988: a single continuous brow resulting from the growing together of eyebrows
- ✘ **bling-bling** also bling (n) 1999: flashing jewelry worn esp. as an indication of wealth; broadly: expensive and ostentatious possessions

FIRST AMERICAN VOICES

Washington Irving
and
James Fenimore Cooper

WASHINGTON IRVING

- ✘ Irving was one of the most influential American authors of the first half of the nineteenth century
- ✘ He was the first American writer to achieve international fame
- ✘ Wrote satires, sketches, short stories



WASHINGTON IRVING

- ✘ While living in Europe, Irving, studied European folklore, including Faust and the Brothers Grimm.
- ✘ This research influenced his writing greatly.
- ✘ Romantic writers felt that folklore contained the secret and primitive dreams of the people and also intriguing elements of the supernatural.



WASHINGTON IRVING

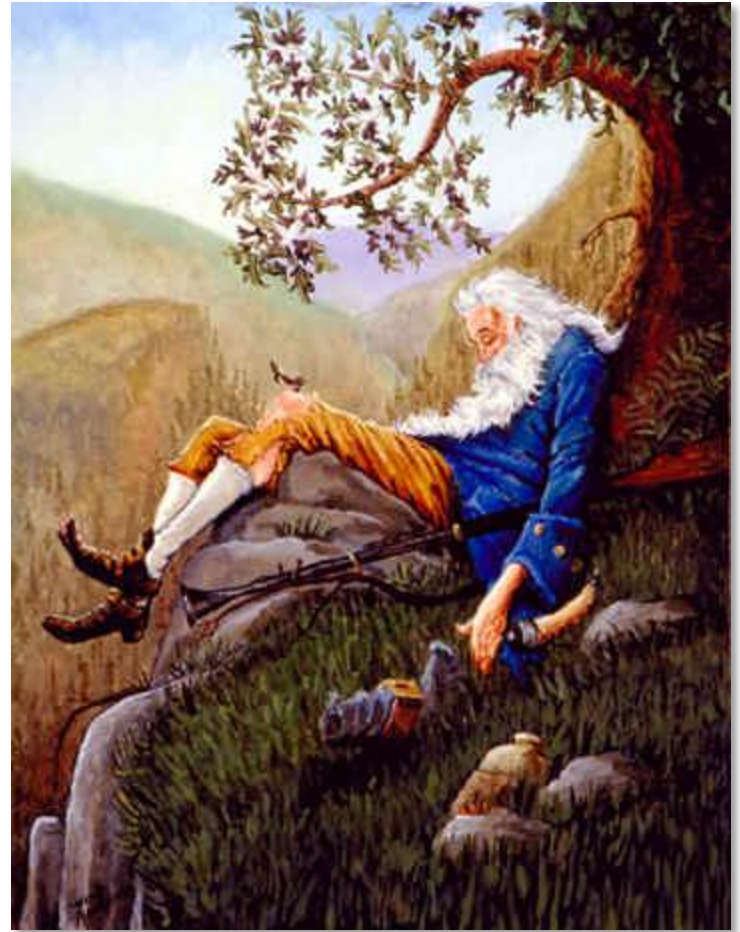
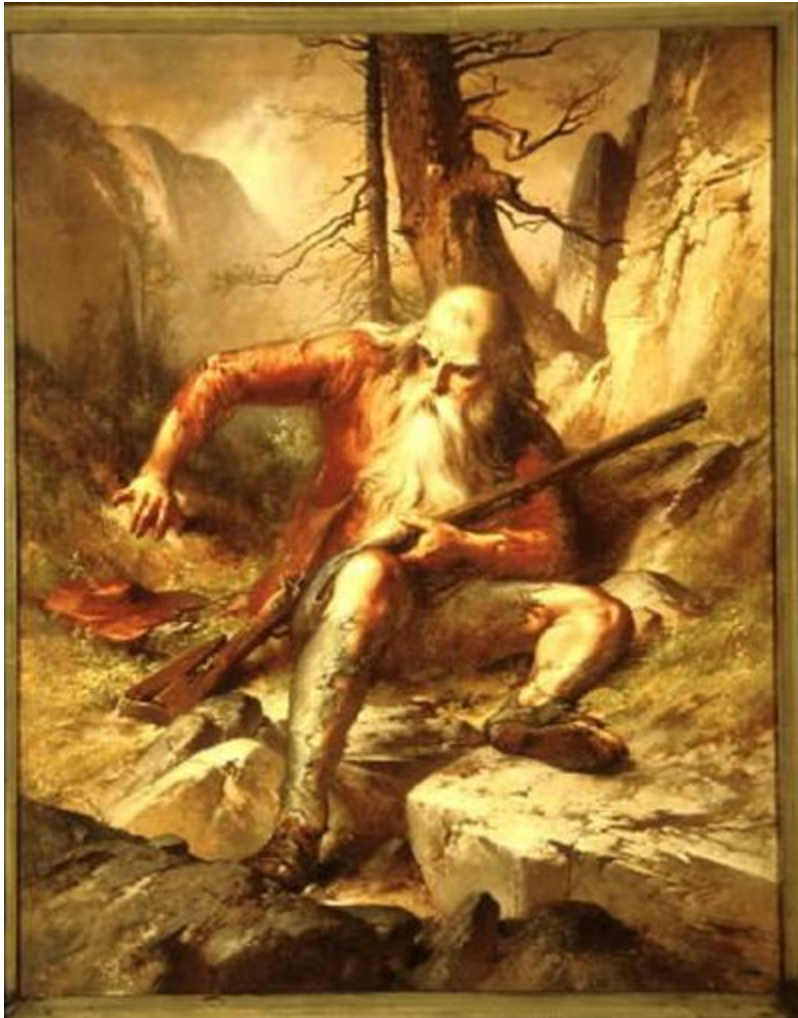
✘ Two of his best-known stories are

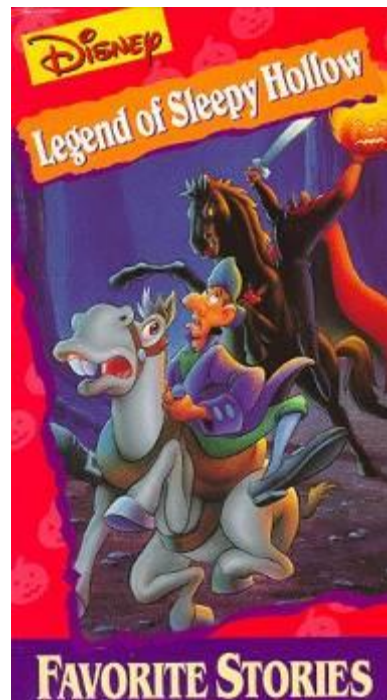
“Rip Van Winkle” and
“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,”

both appearing in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819-1820).

✘ These stories and others like them provided American legends and helped shape an American folklore.

RIP VAN WINKLE





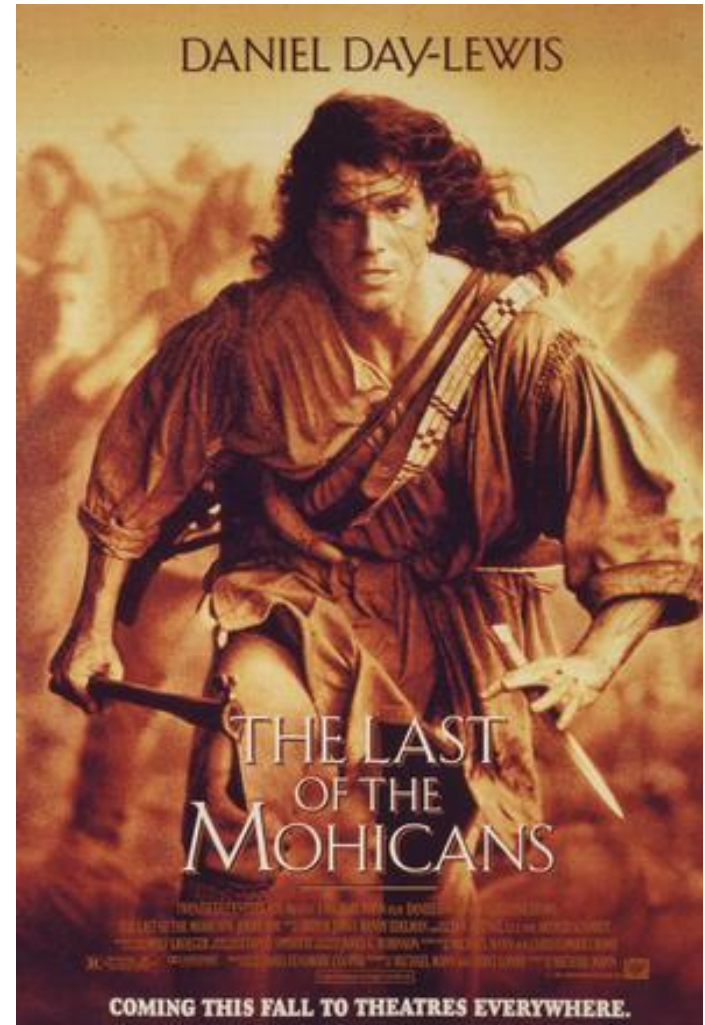
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

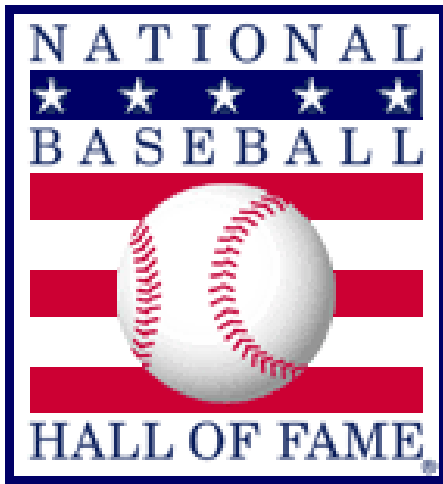
- ✘ James Fenimore Cooper was a master of historical fiction
- ✘ Along with Irving, he was one of the few writers who could make a living by writing.



JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

- ✘ Cooper wrote a series of five novels called the *Leatherstocking Tales*, which includes *The Last of the Mohicans*, focusing on the adventures of Natty Bumppo, a white man living among Native Americans in the forests of the American Northeast
- ✘ Native Americans are portrayed as “noble savages” in Cooper’s work.





Cooperstown, NY—home of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, was named after the father of James Fenimore Cooper.

COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK



AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

- ✘ “romanticism” refers to a set of loosely connected attitudes toward nature and humankind (NOT romantic love).
- ✘ The movement known as romanticism sprang up in both Europe and America as a reaction to everything that had come before it:
 - The rationalism of 18th-century Age of Reason
 - The strict doctrines of Puritanism

AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

- ✘ During the late 1700s and early 1800s, romanticism was the dominant literary mode in Europe.
- ✘ In reaction to the Enlightenment and its emphasis on reason, romanticism stressed **emotion**, the **imagination**, and **subjectivity** of approach.

AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

- ✘ Romantic artists, philosophers, and writers saw the limitations of reason and celebrated instead the glories of the **individual spirit**, the **emotions**, and the **imagination** as basic elements of human nature.

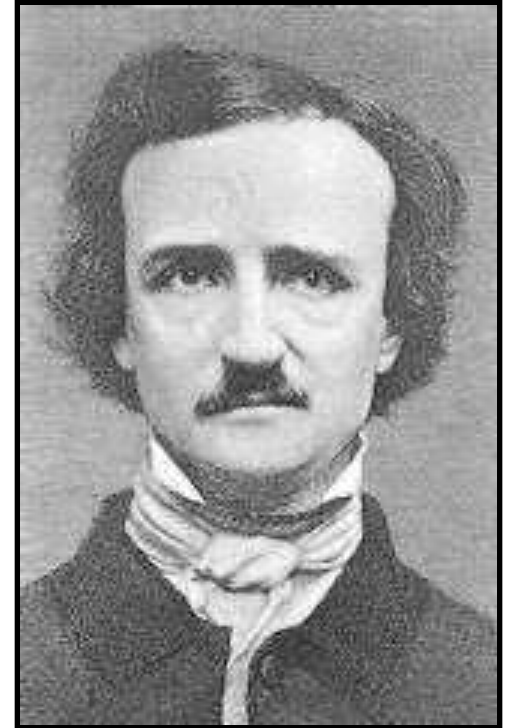
AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

- ✘ The splendors of **nature** inspired the romantics more than the fear of God, and some of them felt a fascination with the **supernatural**.
- ✘ Romantic works exhibit a preoccupation with **atmosphere**, **sentiment** and **optimism**.

AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

- ✘ Until about 1870 romanticism influenced the major forms of American prose: transcendentalist writings, historical fiction, and sentimental fiction
- ✘ Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Edgar Allan Poe all incorporated romantic elements in their fiction.

HAWTHORNE, MELVILLE, POE



THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

- ✘ 1840 to 1855, in New England and especially in Boston
- ✘ A group of American writers produced a remarkable body of "classic" American literature.
 - Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)
 - Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851)
 - Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854)
 - Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855).

CLASSICISM & ROMANTICISM

Classicism

(The Age of Reason)

- ✗ Reason dominates nature & human nature
- ✗ Objectivity
- ✗ Scientific in nature; governed by fixed, unchanging laws
- ✗ Reason
- ✗ Common over individual
- ✗ Upholds tradition; resists change
- ✗ Rational thought & logic:
 - + “I think; therefore, I am.”

Romanticism

- ✗ Greater personal freedom for the individual
- ✗ Emphasis on emotions
- ✗ Subjectivity
- ✗ Intuition (inner perception of truth)
- ✗ Imagination
- ✗ Social progress & spiritual growth
- ✗ Humanitarian reform (abolition, feminism)
- ✗ Change, growth, development

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTIC FICTION

- ✘ **NATURE:** Celebration of natural beauty & the simple life (also the sublime in nature)
- ✘ **THE PAST:** Interest in the picturesque past
- ✘ **THE SUPERNATURAL:** Concern with a world of mystery; morbid, melancholy
- ✘ **HUMAN NATURE:** Exploration of human emotion and individualism

AMERICAN ROMANTICISM ART & ARCHITECTURE

- ✘ The Hudson River School
- ✘ The Gothic Revival

