Encounters and Foundations to 1800

La Relacion (excerpt 1542). The Spanish explorer Cabaza de Vaca journeyed through the Southeast and documented his different encounters with native Indian tribes.

The Journals of Robert Juet (1607). A seaman documents Henry Hudson's journey to find a Northwest Passage from Europe to Asia. Hudson's discoveries were the basis for the Dutch colonization of the Hudson River and for English claims to much of Canada. Juet later led a mutiny and cast Hudson adrift in a boat. He was never heard from again.

The Dutch government issues direction to explorers (1614.)

An Earnest Exhortation to the Inhabitants of New England. Increase Mather (1676). Read the introduction to learn about the Puritan minister; then read Mather's own introduction to his work.

The Selling of Joseph (1700). Samuel Sewall was the only judge to apologize for his role in the Salem Witch Trials and later published this anti-slavery pamphlet. Despite Sewall's compassionate views toward blacks, he was not as [radical] as later abolitionists. He believed that slaves "can seldom use their freedom well," and also saw the black population as a threat to the purity of Puritan culture. He also believed that slaves already in the country should remain as slaves. Sewall's solution to the slavery problem was to stop the importation of slaves. Ultimately, Samuel Sewall got New Englanders thinking more critically about slavery. He, along with other similar-thinkers of the time, laid the foundation for later social reform. (PBS SoCal, Africans in America)

Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank of the United States (1791). Alexander Hamilton is one of the Founding Fathers and an author of the Federalist Papers. He is one of the great interpreters of the U.S. Constitution.

Alien and Sedition Acts (1798). The United States stood on the brink of war with France. The Federalists believed that Democratic-Republican criticism of Federalist policies was disloyal and feared that aliens living in the United States would sympathize with the French during a war. As a result, a Federalist-controlled Congress passed four laws, known collectively as the Alien and Sedition Acts. These laws raised the residency requirements for citizenship from 5 to 14 years, authorized the President to deport aliens, and permitted their arrest, imprisonment, and deportation during wartime. The Sedition Act made it a crime for American citizens to "print, utter, or publish . . . any false, scandalous, and malicious writing" about the Government. The laws were directed against Democratic-Republicans, the party typically favored by new citizens, and the only journalists prosecuted under the Sedition Act were editors of Democratic-Republican newspapers. Sedition Act trials, along with the Senate's use of its contempt powers to suppress dissent, set off a firestorm of criticism against the Federalists and
contributed to their defeat in the election of 1800, after which the acts were repealed or allowed to expire. The controversies surrounding them, however, provided for some of the first testings of the limits of freedom of speech and press. (ourdocuments.gov)

“Our Hearts are Sickened” (1836) Letter from Chief John Ross of the Cherokee, Georgia.

Romanticism: 1812-1860

“More Like A Pig Than a Bear” (1846) Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo Is Taken Prisoner During the Bear Flag Revolt.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) was signed after Mexico lost the Mexican-American War. The treaty added an additional 525,000 square miles to United States territory, including the land that makes up all or parts of present-day Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. The claim to Texas was given up by Mexico and the Rio Grande became the border.

The Squatter and the Don (1885) María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, descendant of a well established Baja California land-owning family, married Colonel Henry Burton, an officer in the U.S. army. Ruiz de Burton was sharply critical of the failure of the state to readily recognize Spanish and Mexican land grants after the war with Mexico ended in 1848. In her 1885 novel she offered a harsh indictment of the impoverishment and dispossessions of many "Californios." (Huntington Library)

Humorous Miner's Ten Commandments (1853) The great California gold rush began on January 24, 1848, when James W. Marshall discovered a gold nugget in the American River while constructing a sawmill for John Sutter, a Sacramento agriculturalist. News of Marshall’s discovery brought thousands of immigrants to California from elsewhere in the United States and from other countries. In addition to massive emigration from the eastern US, the California gold rush triggered a global emigration of ambitious fortune-seekers from China, Germany, Chile, Mexico, Ireland, Turkey, and France. The influx of Chinese and other foreign laborers led to ethnic tensions in California, especially as gold grew scarce. In 1850, the California legislature enacted the Foreign Miners Tax, which levied a monthly $20 tax on each foreign miner. The tax compelled many Chinese to stop prospecting for gold. The Foreign Miners Tax was the opening act in a campaign by native-born white Americans to restrict the entry of Chinese laborers into California to compete with them for jobs and wages. In 1882, the campaign to restrict immigration to California reached its first climax with the federal Chinese Exclusion Act, which effectively halted Chinese immigration for ten years and prohibited Chinese from becoming US citizens. Despite the ethnic tensions it engendered, the Gold Rush forever changed the demographic face of California by making it one of the most ethnically diverse states in the Union by the middle of the 19th century. (Harvard University Library Published Materials Digitized for Immigration to the US)
Disappointment is the Lot of Women (1855) Lucy Stone. Stone was an abolitionist and a feminist. She gave this speech at the Women's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, NY.

**Realism: Civil War-1914**

**Chinatown, San Francisco (1890)**

**Anti-Slavery Tract (1860) Lydia Maria Child.** No other nineteenth-century American writer personifies as well the link between the world of literature and that of reform. (poetryfoundation.org)

A "broadside" encouraging settlement of the west (1872)

**Song "I Will Go West" (1875).**

**Horatio Alger's American Fable: "The World Before Him" (1880).** The ideology of success—the notion that anyone could make it with enough hard work—was widely promoted in Gilded Age America. One of its most famous proponents was the author Horatio Alger, whose novels showed how poor boys could move from "rags to respectability" through "pluck and luck." (HistoryMatters)

**A Sunday Evening Talk (1895) Booker T. Washington.** Washington, born a slave, was the most famous black man in America between 1895 and 1915. He was also considered the most influential black educator because he controlled the flow of funds to black schools and colleges. Washington publicly accepted disfranchisement and social segregation as long as whites would allow black economic progress, educational opportunity, and justice in the courts. (PBS, Rise and Fall of Jim Crow)

**The Souls of Black Folk (1903) W.E.B. Du Bois.** Du Bois, a college professor, came to the conclusion that the only effective strategy against racism was agitation. He challenged the dominant ideology of black accommodation as preached and practiced by Booker T. Washington, then the most influential black man in America. Washington urged blacks to accept discrimination for the time being and elevate themselves through hard work and economic gain to win the respect of whites. In his famous book THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK, Du Bois charged that Washington's strategy kept the black man down rather than freed him. This attack crystallized the opposition to Booker T. Washington among many black intellectuals, polarizing the leaders of the black community into two wings — the "conservative" supporters of Washington and his "radical" critics. (PBS, Rise and Fall of Jim Crow)

The School Days of an Indian Girl (1900) Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) Writer, musician, educator, and Indian rights activist, Zitkala-Sa (or Red Bird) was born on the Sioux
Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. After her white father abandoned the family, she was brought up by her Indian mother in traditional Sioux ways. At the age of eight, white missionaries convinced her to enroll in a boarding school in Indiana. Part of a movement to "civilize" Indian children by removing them from their native culture and indoctrinating them in Euro-American ways, the school trained Indian pupils in manual labor, Christianity, and the English language. Zitkala-Sa found it a hostile environment and struggled to adapt. (Annenberg Learner)


**Moderns: 1914-1939**


Ellis Island (1910-1940). Located in New York Bay, millions of immigrants landed here from the late 1800's-1950's. As ships sailed to Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty was seen from the decks. Pick a recording and listen to an immigrant's story.

The New Colossus (1883). Emma Lazarus wrote the poem on the base of the Statue of Liberty. The descendant of immigrants, she was among the first poets to write about her Jewish-American identity.

A Bintel Brief (1914) Advice to a Jewish immigrant from the newspaper the Jewish Daily Forward.

The Americanese Wall political cartoon (1916)

Interview with Ernesto Galarza, author of Barrio Boy, who came to the U.S. from Mexico in (1913). Go to p.21.

My Antonia (1918) Willa Cather. A novel about immigrant families who move to rural Nebraska.

Fireside Chat on the New Deal (1933) President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The President speaks to the American people during the Great Depression.

Brother, Can You Spare A Dime? (1931) Harburg and Gorney. This song became the anthem of the Great Depression.

Jose Yglesias remembers the cigar makers and their lectors (readers) during the Great Depression. (1930's)
Contemporary: 1939-

Japanese relocation (1942) newspaper article San Francisco Chronicle.

A Nation of Immigrants (1963) speech by President John F. Kennedy.

The American Promise (1965) President Lyndon B. Johnson asks Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.


Bharati Mukherjee (1989) interview with the author.


Renewing Our American Dream After 9/11. Enter the website and pick a story.