

# Literary Analysis

## L2 S2



Dr. AMEL RAHMOUNI

ABU-BEKR BELKAID  
UNIVERSITY- TLEMCEN

FACULTY OF LETTERS  
AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

e - m a i l :

[amelrahmouni89@gmail.com](mailto:amelrahmouni89@gmail.com)

5.0

18/02/2022

# Table of contents

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>I - Colonial Literature in America</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Exercice : Pre-test .....	5
2. Introduction .....	5
3. Captain John Smith's The General History of Virginia .....	7
3.1. <i>Captain John Smith</i> .....	7
3.2. <i>The General History of Virginia: the Text</i> .....	7
3.3. <i>Exercice : Choose one of the three answers according to what you have seen in class</i> .....	9
<b>Exercises solution</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Web bibliography</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Resource credits</b>	<b>14</b>

# Objectives

The three chapters of this course introduce three periods of American Literature to L2 students of English. They define, discuss, identify, and clarify the characteristics of Colonial, Revolutionary, and Romantic texts. They also enable students to obtain necessary knowledge about the budding and development of American literature, and assure a better understanding through linking the chosen sample-texts with their socio-political and cultural contexts. More specifically, the lectures mainly aim to:

- Introduce American literature to L2 students of English.
- Identify the characteristics of colonial literature, the literature of revolution, and romantic literature.
- Differentiate between the characteristics of colonial literature and the literature of revolution
- Associate different authors with colonial, revolutionary, and romantic discourses
- Define the difference between American romanticism and British romanticism
- Explain the reasons behind the creation of each studied text
- Apply the principles of literary criticism into excerpts chosen from the studied texts
- Analyze a literary text by examining its type and context.
- Evaluate texts related to John Smith, Thomas Paine, and Washington Irving.

# Introduction



Lecture Mind Map

## Pre-requisites:

In order to better understand the three chapters in this lecture, students should be *familiar* with:

- A background knowledge of the *American War of Independence*.
- The principles of European *Enlightenment*.
- A basic knowledge of *literary analysis*.

# I Colonial Literature in America

## 1. Exercise : Pre-test

[solution n°1 p.10]

Based on your basic knowledge of British history, what are the circumstances that led people to think about finding new places of settlement?

- Suffering from tyranny in their original places
- looking for better economic, social, and political conditions
- all above

## 2. Introduction

### Definition: Settlers' Reports

The growth of **colonial America** into the United States is recorded in a literature that began as **reports of exploration and settlement**. Early colonial writers were mostly **adventurers and settlers** who did not think of themselves as American but as Europeans, and who recorded their **voyages, exploration** and **conquest** of territories in the New World discovered by Christopher Columbus.

Records of these early encounters thus exist, in prodigious variety, in most European languages: telling of wonders seen, dangers risked, coasts charted, hopes justified or dashed, souls saved or lost, tributes taken or evaded, treasures found or missed. From the European point of view, these are the first American books. Often these are practical reports or exhortations to colonization

\*

### Fundamental: First Explorers

The first document to be written in America about America is "the Columbus Letter" in 1493. The Spanish conquest of the land they called "Las Indias" resulted in enriching Spain in the 16th century and firing the envy of other European nations to take possession of streams of gold, silver and jewels.

In 1497, King Henry VII of England sent John Cabot\* to discover "regions or provinces of the heathen or infidel, whatsoever they be\*". Cabot, seeking what Columbus had hoped to find, a sea route to India, discovered North America instead. Then in 1584-85, Sir Walter Raleigh\* organized two expeditions to Virginia named in honour of Elizabeth I, England's virgin queen.

In 1606, James I granted a royal charter allowing two companies of "Knights, Gentlemen, Merchants and other Adventurers" \* to plant colonies in England's North American territories. They landed in Virginia and established the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown. However, the settlers soon faced hardships. Jamestown was laid on swampy, unhealthy ground. The colony lacked strong leaders. They neglected to build houses or fortifications, wasting time in searching for gold. Having failed to plant a crop, they were soon without food. During the first winter, more than half of them died from Indian arrows, sickness or starvation. Fortunately for the colony, Captain John Smith (1580 - 1631) was among the survivors.



*colonial America*

## 3. Captain John Smith's The General History of Virginia

### 3.1. Captain John Smith

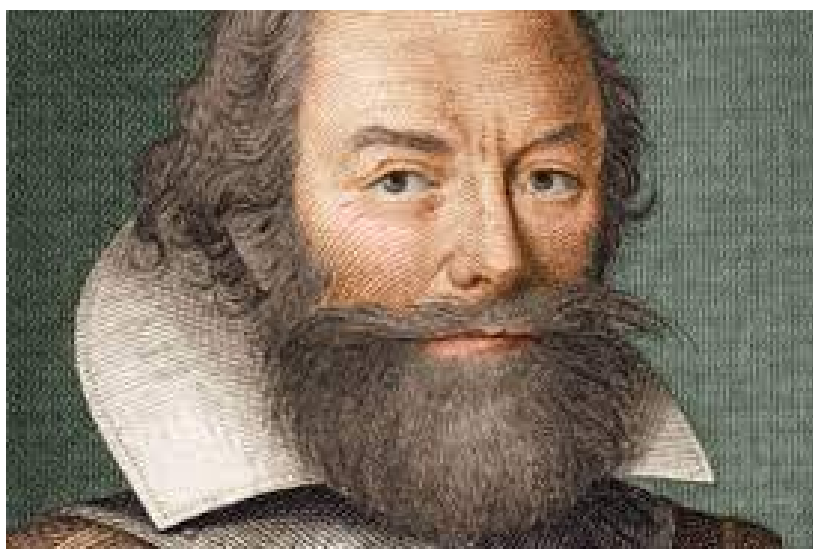
#### Definition

A mercenary **soldier**, he emerged as a leader and saved the colony. He made the settlers build defenses and plant crops, traded for food with the **Indians** and learned their ways. He was named president of the colony in 1608.

His reports of **exploration** are the **first** American literary texts to be written in English.

Smith's first published work was a letter sent from Virginia to a friend in England where it was printed as "A True Relation of Occurrences and Accidents in Virginia". Among his other important writings are

- A Description of New England.
- The General History of Virginia.



*John Smith*

### 3.2. The General History of Virginia: the Text

#### Fundamental

This text is John Smith's longest and most influential work. It was written not merely to record the settlement of North America but also to serve as propaganda or **advertisement** for the lands he had explored. Smith **described America** as a land of abundance, **wealth and freedom, as a paradise** which attracted thousands of settlers, including the Pilgrims and the Puritans who used Smith's maps to seek a new Eden in New England. His life has become a legend including his rescue by Princess Pocahontas<sup>\*</sup>. It gave birth to a popular literary genre "Indian captivity narrative".

Settlers' reports were written:

- To justify their enterprise
- To take possession of the new lands in the name of the monarchs who had sponsored their expeditions
- To describe the geographic and economic conditions for the future settlers

- And mainly to attract the greatest number of emigrants.

See ""The General History of Virginia" Cornell Notes"

## Example: An excerpt from *The General History of Virginia*

---

Analysis of an excerpt from *The General History of Virginia* by Captain John Smith

From *The General History of Virginia* by Captain John Smith

The Third Book Chapter I

It might well be thought a country so fair (as Virginia is) and a people so tractable (as the Indians are) would long ere this have been quietly possessed, to the satisfaction of the adventurers and the eternizing of the memory of those that effected it. But because the world does see a default, this following treatise shall give satisfaction to all indifferent readers how the business has been carried whereby no doubt they will easily understand an answer to their question...

Captain Bartolomeo Gosnold, one of the first movers of this plantation, having many years solicited many of his friends but found small assistance, at last prevailed with some gentlemen, as Captain John Smith, Master Edward Maria Wingfield, Master Robert Hunt, and divers others, who depended a year upon his projects; but nothing could be effected till by their great charge and industry it came to be apprehended by certain of the nobility, gentry and merchants, so that his Majesty by his letter patent gave commission for establishing councils to direct here, and to govern and to execute there.

On the 19th of December, 1606 we set sail from Blackwall ...

We watered at the Canaries; we traded with the savages at Dominica; three weeks we spent in refreshing ourselves among these West India isles; in Guadaloupe we found a bath so hot as in it we boiled pork as well as over the fire. And at a little isle called Monito, we took from the bushes with our hands nearly two hogsheads full of birds in three or four hours. In Nevis, Mona and the Virgin isles, we spent some time, where, with a loathsome beast like a crocodile, called an iguana, tortoises, pelicans, parrots and fishes, we daily feasted.

Gone from thence in search of Virginia ... the first land they made they called Cape Henry, where thirty of them recreating themselves on shore were assaulted by five savages who hurt two of the English very dangerously.

Newport, Smith and twenty others were sent to discover the head of the river. By divers small habitations they passed; in six days they arrived at a town called Powhatan, consisting of some twelve houses pleasantly seated on a hill, before it three fertile isles, about it many of their cornfields; the place is very pleasant and strong by nature; of this place the prince is called Powhatan and his people Powhatans. To this place the river is navigable, but higher within a mile, by reason of the rocks and isles, there is not passage for a small boat; this they call the Falls. The people in all parts kindly entreated them, till being returned within twenty miles of Jamestown.

Chapter II

The new president and Martin, being little beloved, of weak judgement in dangers, and less industry in peace, committed the managing of all things abroad to Captain Smith, who, by his own example, good words, and fair promises, set some to mow, others to bind thatch, some to build houses, others to thatch them, himself always bearing the greatest task for his own share, so that in short time he provided most of them lodgings, neglecting any for himself.

The Spaniards never more greedily desired gold than he (Smith) victual, nor his soldiers more to abandon the country than he to keep it. But (he found ) plenty of corn in the river of Chickahominy, where hundreds of savages in divers



places stood with baskets expecting his coming. And now the winter approaching, the rivers became so covered with swans, geese, ducks, and cranes that we daily feasted with good bread, Virginia peas, pumpkins, and persimmons, fish, fowl, and divers sorts of wild beasts as fat as we could eat them, so that none of our tuftaffaty humorists desired to go for England.

**3.3. Exercice : Choose one of the three answers according to what you have seen in class** [p.107]

the First type of literature in American was aiming at:

- Calling for America's independence
- Encouraging European people to settle in America
- In the shape of descriptive letters to family and friends

# Exercises solution

## > **Solution n° 1**

Exercice p. 5

Based on your basic knowledge of British history, what are the circumstances that led people to think about finding new places of settlement?

- Suffering from tyranny in their original places
- looking for better economic, social, and political conditions
- all above

The correct answer is number three. many people in Britain specifically, and Europe generally wished to start a new life in America for the sake of escaping the tyrannical rule and in order to find better economic conditions, as well as a more democratic life.

In case of failure to answer the question, go back to S2 lectures, especially the political conditions, the class-based system, and tyrannical rule in Great Britain.

## > **Solution n° 2**

Exercice p. 9

the First type of literature in American was aiming at:

- Calling for America's independence
- Encouraging European people to settle in America
- In the shape of descriptive letters to family and friends

# Glossary

**John Cabot**

An Italian navigator and explorer

**Pocahontas**

A Native American woman, belonging to the Powhatan people, notable for her association with the colonial settlement at Jamestown.

**Sir Walter Raleigh**

an English statesman, soldier, writer and explorer. One of the most notable figures of the Elizabethan era.

# Bibliography

Bradbury, Malcolm, Richard Ruland. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. Viking, 1991.

# Web bibliography

<https://books.google.com/books?>

[id=HJEOAQAAMAAJ&q=Concise+Anthology+of+American+Literature&dq=Concise+Anthology+of+American+Literature](https://books.google.com/books?id=HJEOAQAAMAAJ&q=Concise+Anthology+of+American+Literature&dq=Concise+Anthology+of+American+Literature)

# Resource credits

**colonial America** p. 6

*[nationalgeographic.com](http://nationalgeographic.com)*

**John Smith** p. 7

*[chesapeakebay.net](http://chesapeakebay.net)*