

Aula 2

COLONIAL LITERATURE: AN INTRODUCTION

META

Apresentar, de modo crítico, o período colonial da literatura produzida nos Estados Unidos.

OBJETIVOS

Ao final desta aula, o aluno deverá:

- Compreender a divisão periodológica da história da literatura norte-americana, de acordo com o contexto histórico e suas principais tendências;
- Reconhecer e identificar os diferentes gêneros que compõem a literatura norte-americana do século XVII.

PRÉ-REQUISITOS

- Familiaridade com os períodos formativos da literatura inglesa;
- Conceitos-chave da Teoria da Literatura e da história literária.

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INTRODUÇÃO

According to most of the American literary historians, American literature, be it from the North or from the South, has its origin with myths, legends, tales, and lyrics (always songs) of Indian cultures which were transmitted orally, once there was no written literature among the million different Indian languages and tribal cultures that existed in the place which came to be called the United States.

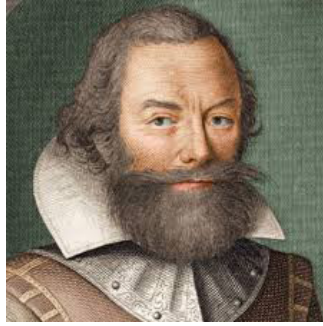
According to VANSPANCKEREN (1994, p. 3), examples of almost every oral genre can be found in American Indian literature: lyrics, chants, myths, fairy tales, humorous anecdotes, incantations, riddles, proverbs, epics, and legendary histories. There are also certain creation stories which became popular. The songs and narratives, in turn, range from the sacred to the humorous, in genres which include lullabies, war chants, love songs and songs for children's games or dance ceremonials. Indian oral tradition only recently was inserted in the study of American literature, although it is considered one of the richest and least explored topics literary history.

DESENVOLVIMENTO

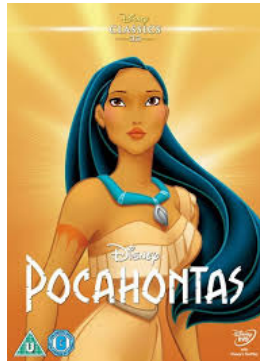
One of the main sources of the Colonial Period are the writings of **Captain John Smith**. To him we owe the famous story of the Indian maiden, **Pocahontas**. The story tells us how the favorite daughter of Chief Powhatan saved Captain Smith's life, when he was a prisoner of the chief. Later, when the English persuaded Powhatan to give Pocahontas to them as a hostage, her gentleness, intelligence and beauty impressed the English, and, in 1614, she married John Rolfe, an English gentleman. The marriage initiated an eight-year peace between the colonists and the Indians, ensuring the survival of the struggling new colony. It is the typical story of an impossible romantic relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. One way the empires found to hide the violence and bloody experience of colonization. The same myth is repeated in the foundation of every postcolonial nation, as we can see in the case of Brazil, *with Iracema*, by **José de Alencar (1)**.

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Captain John Smith (1580-1631), Admiral of New England, was an English soldier, explorer, and author. He was knighted for his services to Sigismund Báthory, Prince of Transylvania, and his friend Mózes Székely. He was considered to have played an important part in the establishment of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in North America. He was a leader of the Virginia Colony (based at Jamestown) between September 1608 and August 1609, and led an exploration along the rivers of Virginia and the Chesapeake Bay. He was the first English explorer to map the Chesapeake Bay area and New England. Fontes: <https://www.biography.com/people/john-smith-9486928>



Pocahontas is a 1995 American animated musical romantic-drama film produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation for Walt Disney Pictures. The 33rd Disney animated feature film, the film is part of the era known as the Disney Renaissance which lasted from 1989 to 1999. Directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, the film is inspired by the known history and folklore surrounding the Native American woman Pocahontas and portrays a fictionalized account of her historical encounter with Englishman John Smith and the Jamestown settlers that arrived from the Virginia Company. The voice cast features Irene Bedard, Mel Gibson, David Ogden Stiers, Russell Means, Christian Bale, Billy Connolly, and Linda Hunt. The musical score was written by Alan Menken, with songs written by Menken and lyricist Stephen Schwartz. Fonte: [https://store.hmv.com/film-tv/dvd/pocahontas-\(disney\)](https://store.hmv.com/film-tv/dvd/pocahontas-(disney))

A good summary of the process through which the first examples of this literature of exploration, that symbolizes the first experience of colonization in North America, but also the first attempts to narrate it from the colonizer's point of view, can be seen in this VANSPANCKEREN's passage (1994, p. 5):

“In the 17th century, pirates, adventurers, and explorers opened the way to a second wave of permanent colonists, bringing their wives, children, farm implements, and craftsmen's tools. The early literature of exploration, made up of diaries, letters, travel journals and reports to the explorers' financial backers – European rulers or,

in mercantile England and Holland joint stock companies – gradually was supplanted by records of the settled colonies. Because England eventually took possession of the North American colonies, the best-known and most-anthologized colonial literature is English. As American minority literature continues to flower in the 20th century and American life becomes increasingly multicultural, scholars are rediscovering the importance of the continent's mixed ethnic heritage. Although the story of literature now turns to the English accounts, it is important to recognize its richly cosmopolitan beginnings”.

As SAID (1994, p. xi) says, European writing on Africa, India, parts of the Far East, Australia, and the Caribbean – in other words, the Africanist and Indianist discourses –, is part of the general European effort to rule distant lands and peoples. According to the author, the notions about bringing civilization to primitive peoples are just a way of legitimizing violence in these unequal relations. Thus, death or extended punishment are required in the process because they always misbehaved or became rebellious, this being the reason why they deserved to be ruled.

The kind of people responsible for the colonial narrative in North America were the **Puritans (2)**. After killing most of the Indians and with the precious help from the African slaves, they could built churches and found universities. Thus, between 1630 and 1690, there were as many university graduates in New England than in the mother country. It was by this time which emerged the myth of “the self-made man”.

Although they could be unified ideologically, taking into consideration their common religious origin, the Puritan literary style varied a lot: from complex metaphysical poetry to simple journals and religious history. Scholars have long pointed out the link between Puritanism and capitalism: Both rest on ambition, hard work, and an intense striving for success (See **WEBER** thesis) **(3)**. They could not know they would be saved or not, but they felt that earthly success was a sign of election.

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Maximilian Karl Emil “Max” Weber (1864-1920) was a German sociologist, philosopher, jurist, political economist and the husband of Marianne Schnitger. His ideas profoundly influenced social theory and social research. Weber is often cited, with Émile Durkheim and Karl Marx, as among the three founders of sociology. He was a key proponent of methodological antipositivism, arguing for the study of social action through interpretive (rather than purely empiricist) means, based on understanding the purpose and meaning that individuals attach to their own actions. Fonte: <http://geteste2010.blogspot.com.br/2014/11/max-weber-resumo.html>

The first Puritan colonists who settled New England exemplified the seriousness of Reformation Christianity. Known as the “Pilgrims”, they were a small group of believers who had migrated from England to Holland in 1608, during a time of persecutions. Like most Puritans, they interpreted the Bible literally.

In its origin, Puritanism was founded as an activist movement within the Church of England. The founders, which were exiled under Mary I, returned to England after the accession of Elizabeth I of England, in 1558. As a religious movement it played a significant role in English history. The most famous puritans of the period were **John Pym**, who took control of the government of London at the time of the Grand Remonstrance of 1641, and **Oliver Cromwell**, who became Lord Protector of England, after leading a successful rebellion in which the king himself was executed, causing terror to the other kings and queens of Europe.



John Pym (1584-1643) was an English parliamentarian, leader of the Long Parliament and a prominent critic of Kings James I and then Charles I. He was one of the Five Members whose attempted arrest by King Charles I in the House of Commons of England in 1642 sparked the Civil War. In addition to this Pym went ahead and started to accuse William Laud (the king's adviser) of trying to convert England back to Catholicism. Fonte: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Pym



Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was an English military and political leader and later Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Fonte: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Cromwell

In general, the Puritans were all related to commerce, presenting a systematic parliamentary opposition to royal prerogatives and privileges. Thus, they became an important political force in England, something which could be shown in the **First English Civil War (1642-1646) (4)**. **After the Restoration (5)**, almost all Puritan clergy left the Church of England after the Restoration of 1660 and the 1662 Uniformity Act, with many continuing to practice their faith in nonconformist denominations, especially in Congregationalist, as well as in Presbyterian churches. The nature of the movement in England changed radically, although it retained its character for a much longer period in New England.

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Being against the Church of England's tolerance with the practices associated with the Catholic Church, I their will of purifying religion, they adopted a Reformed theology. Nevertheless, they were never a defined sect within Protestantism. Some Puritan ideals became incorporated into the Church of England, such as the formal rejection of Roman Catholicism. Some others were absorbed into the many Protestant denominations which emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Among the many authors of this period, it's important to mention two of them: Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa) (c. 1745-c. 1797), an Ibo from Niger (West Africa) who was the first black man in America to write an autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, or Gustavus Vassa, the African (1789), and Jupiter Hammon (c. 1720-c. 1800), a slave on Long Island, New York, who is remembered for his religious poems, as well as for *An Address to the Negroes of the State of New York* (1787), in which he advocated freeing children of slaves instead of condemning them to hereditary slavery. His poem "An Evening Thought" was the first poem published by a black man in America.

CONCLUSÃO

The literature of the United States during the colonial period was written on a land that had not become the United States yet. It began in 1583, the year the earliest English writing explorers started to write about the new continent. According to some historians, the end of the Colonial Period is 1763, because of the start of the French and Indian War, whose results initiated the events that led the colonies to fight for independence against Great Britain. Others say that the year was 1789, because it was then that the U.S. Constitution went into effect. The writing of the period varied in terms of quality and subject, but not in terms of genre. In fact, all of the literature of the period can be broken down into ten genres:

- 1) travel writing, most often written by the explorers themselves to describe the land, indigenous peoples, and log the exploration, starting with preparations for the journey, the voyage, arrival and explorations in the territory and interactions with natives, and the return to Great Britain, if one was made;
- 2) historical writing; historians have written in every age since the Hebrews wrote the Old Testament; these consist of long essays or narratives and relate tell a non-fiction account of what transpired; usually written in the third person, and covering significant events of general interest;
- 3) religious writing, usually written by clergy in the form of journals, sermons, or commentaries on the Bible and religious experiences;
- 4) philosophy, a genre that ranges from pure metaphysical speculation, to early sociology, to transcendentalism; written in the form of long essays;
- 5) natural science writings;
- 6) newspaper, journalism, and political essay writing, covering most recent events to essays and pamphlets written to persuade others to the author's opinion;
- 7) poetry;
- 8) drama;
- 9) humor;
- 10) fiction in the form of short stories and novels.



RESUMO

Colonial American literature emerged from the original U.S. colonies during the period from 1607 to the late 1700s and was influenced by British writers. Many of the characteristics of colonial American literature can be found in the poems, journals, letters, narratives, histories and teaching materials written by settlers and religious and historic figures of the period.



ATIVIDADES

Quais são os gêneros e/ou formas literárias produzidos no período colonial do território que viria a se chamar Estados Unidos da América?

COMENTÁRIO SOBRE AS ATIVIDADES

Esta atividade tem por finalidade principal fazer você construa uma síntese dos principais conteúdos desta segunda Aula, de modo a compreender criticamente o período colonial da literatura produzida nos Estados Unidos da América.



PRÓXIMA AULA

The Invention of the United States of America

GLOSSÁRIO

(1) **Iracema**, originalmente Iracema - Lenda do Ceará, é um romance brasileiro publicado em 1865 e escrito por José de Alencar (1829-1877), fazendo parte da trilogia indianista do autor. Os outros dois romances pertencentes à trilogia são O Guarani e Ubirajara.

(2) **The Puritans** were a group of English Reformed Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries who sought to "purify" the Church of England from its "Catholic" practices, maintaining that the Church of England was only partially reformed.

(3) **Weber's** essay 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', is his most famous work. It is argued that this work should not be viewed as a detailed study of Protestantism, but rather as an introduction into Weber's later works, especially his studies of interaction between various religious ideas and economic behaviour as part of the rationalisation of the economic system. In 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', Weber put forward the thesis that Calvinist ethic and ideas influenced the development of capitalism. He noted the post-Reformation shift of Europe's economic centre away from Catholic countries such as France, Spain and Italy, and toward Protestant countries such as the Netherlands, England, Scotland and Germany. Weber also noted that societies having more Protestants were those with a more highly developed capitalist economy. Similarly, in societies with different religions, most successful business leaders were Protestant. Thus, he argued that Roman Catholicism impeded the development of the capitalist economy in the West, as did other religions such as Confucianism and Buddhism elsewhere in the world.

(4) **The First English Civil War (1642–1646)** began the series of three wars known as the English Civil War (or "Wars"). "The English Civil War" was a series of armed conflicts and political machinations that took place between Parliamentarians and Royalists from 1642 until 1651, and includes the Second English Civil War (1648–1649) and the Third English Civil War (1649–1651).

(5) **The Restoration** of the English monarchy began in 1660, when the English, Scottish and Irish monarchies were all restored under Charles II after the Interregnum that followed the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. The term Restoration is used to describe both the actual event by which the monarchy was restored, and the period of several years afterwards in which a new political settlement was established. It is very often used to cover the whole reign of Charles II (1660–1685) and often the brief reign of his younger brother James II (1685–1688). In certain contexts it may be used to cover the whole period of the later Stuart monarchs as far as the death of Queen Anne and the accession of the Hanoverian George I in 1714; for example Restoration comedy typically encompasses works written as late as 1710.

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