

Puritan/ Pre-Colonial Literature
"The Age of Faith:

Important Dates:

1492: Columbus

1607: Founding of Jamestown

1620: Mayflower on Plymouth Rock

1636: Harvard College founded

1692: Salem Witch Trials

1740's: Great Awakening

Puritans

"Pilgrim" --somebody who goes on a journey for a religious reason...

ex: Canterbury Pilgrims
Pilgrimage to Mecca

"Puritan" --one who lives in accordance with Protestant precepts; especially one who regards pleasure or luxury as sinful.

--Webster's dictionary

Puritans = RELIGIOUS

Puritan Principles

--Puritans sought to have their lives changed through God's grace:
--wanted to be cleansed of envy, vanity, and lust

--Puritans valued plainness & simplicity; in church and in daily life

--Puritans wanted to be an example for others:

John Winthrop:

“We shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through all the world.”

Adjectives to describe Puritans???

Puritan Values

1) Religion/ Faith:

--sought to glorify God in all they said and did, both in their day-to-day life, and in what they wrote...

Because of Adam and Eve, everybody is born "sinful"

God "saves" those he wishes

--only a few are selected for salvation

--("Predestination")

"God Fearing":

**God was angry at sinners, and full
of vengeance, rather than merciful:**

ex: sermon--

("Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God")

"Great Awakening" --(1740's)

A series of religious revivals, begun by "old school" Puritans (Jonathan Edwards), who sensed a decline in morals/principles. Tried to get people to embrace their beliefs again.

--last ditch effort

--"hellfire and brimstone" sermons

-- scare tactics

Salem Witch Trials--(1692)

religion and superstition played a huge role

government system was Theocracy ("rule on behalf of God")

2) Hard Work:

- Believed that hard work was good for the soul.
- Idle hands lead to the devil's work
- "Protestant Work Ethic" --Term used to describe anyone who values hard work
- 90-hour work week (12-14 hrs a day)

3) Education:

- Established Harvard College in 1636, only 16 years after settling in Mass.
- originally was a seminary
- created free public education system

Puritan Literature Characteristics:

*Major Themes:

--Religion: the pursuit of high/noble principles, purposes, goals...

--Practicality: writing for a purpose:

1) edification (glorify God)

2) self-examination (sermons)

3) expression of emotion (poems)

*Generally speaking, it was frowned upon for a woman to be a writer... should be busy in the home, not "wasting time" writing.

ex: Anne Bradstreet's poetry was not published until she was an old woman, and even then it was published by her brother--in England! disclaimer, too...

***Acceptable genres:**

- history/biography (William Bradford)
- poetry (Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor)
- sermons (Jonathan Edwards, Cotton Mather)

***NOT Acceptable:**

- fiction
- drama *WHY??*

***1st Best-Seller in America:**

- "The Day of Doom" (1662)
 - extended poem about Judgement Day

***Style: KNOW THIS!!!**

--"Puritan Plain Style"--

--not fancy, ornate

--written about everyday items, tasks

--idea was to convey information as simply and clearly as possible

--DO NOT DRAW ATTENTION TO THE WRITER!!!! (vanity)

--(contrast this style to the Renaissance writers like Shakespeare and Marlowe, who viewed writing as an art form...)

Summary:

"Puritan writing reflected the character and scope of the reading public, which was literate and well grounded in religion, and had an obvious reverence for the Bible."

YouTube Video...