



**CollegeBoard**

Advanced Placement  
Program

# English Lit & Comp

Literary Movements Overview

To Prep for Exam



# Why Bother?

- This section will give you the opportunity to review some of the potential content of the exam.
- It can help you gain some insight into the types of poems they use on the exam.
- Read a poem or two from each movement and familiarize yourself with the ideas associated with each movement.



# What's a movement?

- A grouping of writers who share similar aims, years of publication, and a base of operations.

# How can this help me?

- Knowing what movement a poem belongs to can help you recognize certain characteristics associated with the writing.
- Studying within the framework of literary movements may also help you on the multiple-choice section.
  - Knowing a body of work can help you recognize characteristics.
- IE: if you recognize a poem is from the metaphysical tradition, you may have some ready made ideas about form, content, figurative language, and overall meaning.
  - You will know to look for witty, surprising pairings of concrete and abstract ideas.
  - You will expect irony and paradox to brew beneath even the most religious content.

# Metaphysical

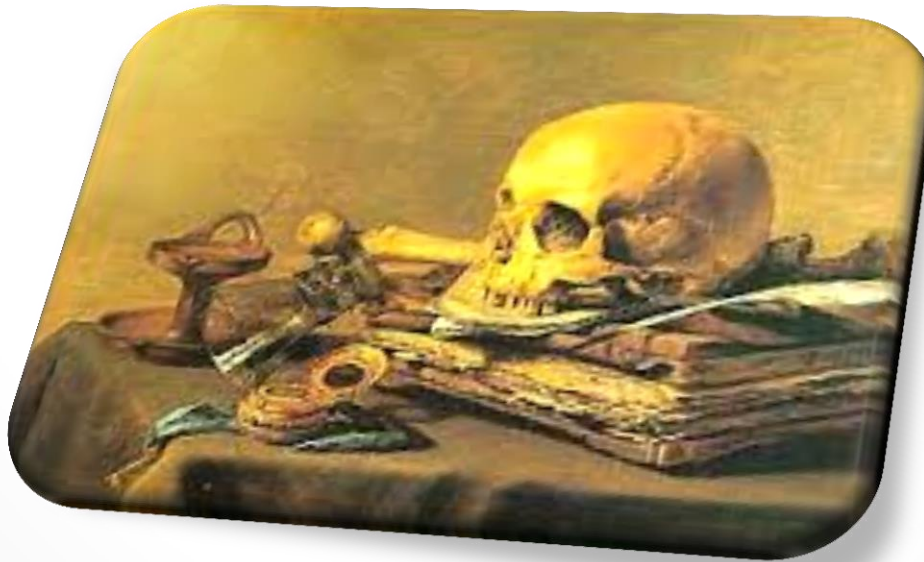
- Mostly 17<sup>th</sup> century English poetic mode
- Exhibit introspective meditations on love, death, God, and human frailty.
- Much more realistic!
- Famous for its difficulty and obscurity (and a favorite of College Board!)

# What to look for:

- Wit, irony, and paradox are paramount
- Wit is often seen in the pairing of dissimilar objects into the service of a clever, ironic analogy or paradoxical conceit.
- Elaborate stylistic maneuvers (ornamental conceits, dazzling rhymes) are pulled off with ease.
- Huge shifts in scale (ie: ants to plants).
- Formal tendencies to talk about deep philosophical issues:
  - the passage of time, the difficulty of being sure of any one thing, the uneasy relationship of human beings to each other and to God.

# Sum it up:

- The beauty of the Metaphysical poetry is in the dramatic unfolding of the truth through irony, conceits, and scale shifts.



# Examples

John Donne (1572-1631)

“A Valediction Forbidding Mourning”; “The Sun Rising”;  
“Death Be Not Proud – Holy Sonnet X”;  
“Woman’s Constancy”; “Love’s Alchemy”



George Herbert (1593-1633)

“Easter Wings”; “The Collar”; “Jordan (I)”; “Love (III)”;  
“The Windows”

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

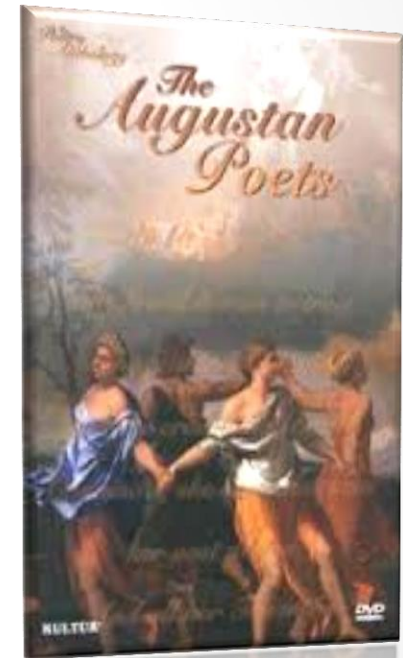
“The Mower’s Song”; “The Mower to the Glo-Worms”;  
“The Mower Against Gardens”; “The Garden”;  
“To His Coy Mistress”





# Augustans

- Rhymed, heroic-couplet satire
- iambic pentameter
- Read it aloud for better understanding
- Wickedly funny!
- They translated Greek and Roman epics into English using heroic couplets, and wrote their own original work based on classical forms



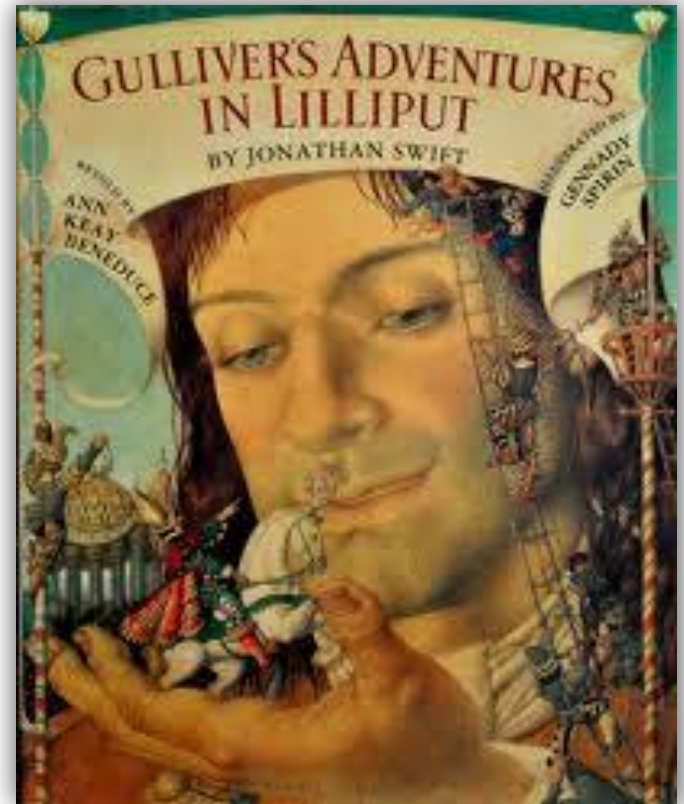
# What to look for:

- Wit, irony, paradox, and brevity. (Think satire! )
- Can be quite long but observations can be quite pithy (sharp).
- Ongoing subject is human frailty but the tone is often mocking.
- Poets were likely to dress absurdly mundane plots (cutting of a noble maiden's hair), in the outward appearance of heroic epic poetry, for comic effect.
- Current events figure into these poems, either allegorically or directly.



# Sum it up:

- Look for a taking of sides in a debate
- Satire - Literary attack on folly or vanity by means of ridicule; usually intended to improve society



# Examples:

## POETS

John Dryden (1631-1700)



“Mac Flecknoe”;  
“Marriage a-la-mode”;  
“Absalom and  
Achitophel”

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)



“The Rape of the Lock”;  
“Windsor Forest”;  
“Epitaph on Sir Isaac  
Newton”

## PLAY

John Gay (1685-1732)



*A Beggar's Opera*

## PROSE

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)



*Gulliver's Travels*  
and  
*A Modest Proposal*

# Romantics

- Mostly a 19<sup>th</sup> century English and American poetic mode
- Specifically emphasizes poems written in the “real language” of men and about common life.
- Emotional and enthusiastic in its embracing of the large, impressive forces of nature and the infinite resources of the human imagination.
- Often used on AP exam because of their strong thematic content.



# What to look for:

- Natural imagery redeems the imagination of the individual stuck in the crowded, industrial torment of the city.
- Human imagination empower the individual to escape for society's strictures, established authority, and even from fear of death.
- The sublime (impressively big, obscure or scary) is the main descriptive mode, rather than the "merely beautiful."
- Transcendence is the ultimate goal of all the romantic poets.



# Sum it up:

- Each finds transcendence (wholeness, divine existence, perfection), in the ordinary.

Through the ordinary you  
become extraordinary!

# Examples

## ENGLISH POETS

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)



“I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”; “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge Sept 3, 1802”; “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey”; “My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold”; “Lucy”

Percy Shelley (1792-1822)

“Ozymandias”; “Ode to the West Wind”; “Adonais – An Elegy on the Death of John Keats”; “The Cloud”; “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty”



John Keats(1795-1821)

“Ode on a Grecian Urn”; “When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be”; “To Autumn”; “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”; “Ode to a Nightingale”

## PROSE

Sir Walter Scott  
(1771-1832)

*Ivanhoe*

Victor Hugo  
(1802-1885)

*Les Miserables*



# Examples con't

## AMERICAN POETS

Ralph Waldo Emerson  
(1803-1882)

“Ode to Beauty”;  
“The World-Soul”;  
“Song of Nature”



Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

“When I Heard the Learn’d  
Astronomer”;  
“A Noiseless  
Patient Spider”;  
“Crossing  
Brooklyn Ferry”;  
“There  
Was a Child Went Forth”;  
“Song on the Open Road”



## PROSE

Nathaniel Hawthorne  
(1804-1864)

*The Scarlet Letter*

Ralph Waldo Emerson  
(1803-1882)

*The Poet*

Henry David Thoreau  
(1817-1862)

*Walking*

# The Symbolists

- The link between romanticism and modernism.
- Yearn for transcendence – but more decadent and sensual.
- Seem obscure in the beginning but contain deep symbols and intuitive associations.
- American Poets tend to show up on the exam (Yeats and Eliot).

# What to look for:

- Deal with the crepuscular (dusk and dawn), and with the time between waking and sleep.
- Dreams or dream states figure prominently in many of the symbolist art
  - Dream experiences afford humans the best opportunity to explore the relationships between states
- Synaesthesia (using one sense to describe another) proved to be a favorite mode.
- The French symbolists were adept at using words with three or four simultaneous meanings, creating a resonance among groups of these words.

# Looking con't

- Poets drawn to the properties of music – attempted to create the same effects in their poems by concentrating on simultaneous effects (like harmony) and by choose mellifluous words meant to inspire a kind of languor in the reader.
- Associated with the “Art for Art’s sake” movement that placed aesthetics and form above political relevance

# Examples – American Poets

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

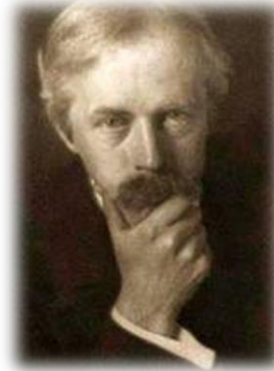


“Chanson”;  
“Impression du Matin”;  
“Harmony”

PROSE

*The Picture of Dorian  
Gray*

Arthur Symons (1865-1945)



“White Heliotrope”;  
“Colour Studies”;  
“Perfume”

W. B. Yeats (1864-1939)



“The Lake Isle of  
Innisfree”; “Towards  
Break of Day”; “Broken  
Dreams”; “Leda and the  
Swan”; “Sailing to  
Byzantium”

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)



“The Love Song of J.  
Alfred Prufrock”;  
“Ash Wednesday”

# Modernism

- 20<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary force
- Questioned what came before
- Willingness to experiment with new forms
- Much more daring than the symbolists

# What to look for:

- Allusions
- Reduce the human experience to fragments
- Influenced by cubism (the reduction and fragmentation of natural forms into abstract, often geometric structures usually rendered as a set of discrete planes)
- They tried to see the world from as many points of view as possible at the same time.
- Concerned with how an individual relates to their environment or how the environment helps to create the individual.
- Efface individuality – focus on machines or other inanimate objects rather than nature or humans



# Sum it up

- Think Picasso!





# Examples - Poets

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)



“Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”;  
“The Snowman”; “Peter Quince at the Clavier”;  
“Anecdote of the Jar”

William Carlos Williams  
(1883-1963)



“Red Wheelbarrow”;  
“This is Just to Say”;  
“Danse Russe”; “Spring and All”;  
“The Great Figure”; “The Yachts”;  
“Desert Music”; “The Descent”

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle)  
(1886-1961)



“Star Wheels in Purple”;  
“Helen”;  
“Heat”

Marianne Moore (1887-1972)  
“Poetry”; “Baseball and Writing”;  
“To a Snail”



# Examples Con't

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)



“The Love Song of J.  
Alfred Prufrock”;  
“Ash Wednesday”

e e cummings (1894-1962)



“anyone lived in a  
pretty how town”; “next  
to of course god  
america i”; “spring is  
like a perhaps hand”; “I  
sing of Olaf glad and  
big”

## PROSE

James Joyce (1882-1941) - *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

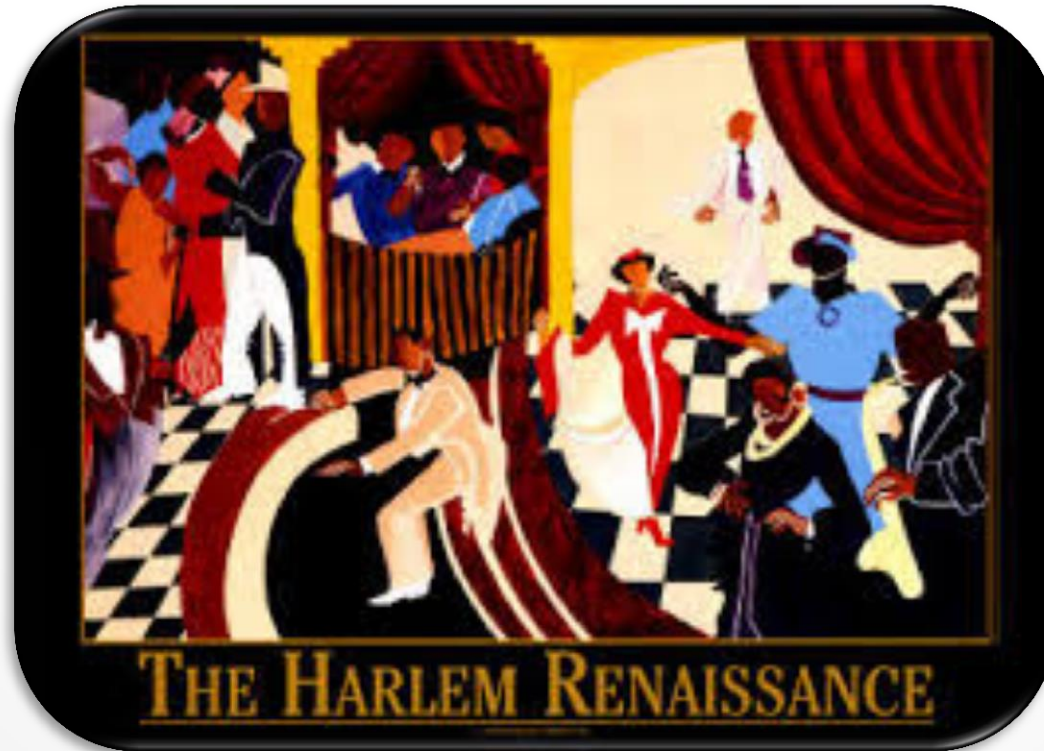
Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) - *Mrs. Dalloway*

William Faulkner (1897-1962) – *As I Lay Dying*

Kate Chopin (1851-1904) – *The Awakening*

# Harlem Renaissance

- Created in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after World War I, during the movement of African Americans to northern industrial cities (called the Great Migration).



# What to look for:

- Directly related to African American concerns and issue of the time.
- Many rely on repetitive structure similar to blues lyrics or on fragmented structure similar to jazz improvisations.
- Several of the poets consciously sought new American idioms alongside other African American artists such as blues singer Bessie Smith.
- Other poets combined European forms like the sonnet with a content and tone more related to African American concerns.



# Examples - Poets

Paul Laurence Dunbar  
(1872-1906)



“Frederick Douglass”;  
“Sympathy”;  
“We Wear the Mask”

Claude McKay (1889-1948)



“If We Must Die”;  
“The White House”;  
“The Tropics of New York”

Langston Hughes  
(1902-1967)



“I, Too Sing America”;  
“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”;  
“Theme for English B”;  
“Montage of a Dream Deferred”

Countee Cullen (1903-1946)



“Incident”;  
“For a Lady I Know”;  
“Yet Do I Marvel”

# Examples - Prose

Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) – *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Nella Larsen (1891-1964) – *Passing*

Richard Wright (1908-1960) – *Black Boy* and *Native Son*

Ralph Ellison (1913-1994) – *Invisible Man*

# Postmodernism

- Developed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Share some of the concerns and motivations of modernists, they often take these principles to a much different end.
- The label “Postmodern” is often rejected by the majority of artists labeled as such.
- Smaller contingents (sub-movements) of writers exist, often in conflict with the postmodern groups, but produced in the same time period:
  - The Beats, the Confessional Poets, the Black Arts Movement, the Black Mountain school and the New York school of poets.

# What to look for:

- Parody, irony, and narrative instability often inform the tone.
- Allusions are just as likely to be made to popular culture as they are to classical learning.
- Strictly binary concepts (hot and cold; black and white) often collapse.
- Ideas that spread across a spectrum predominate.
- There is no real center. (IE: The internet is a postmodern invention!)
- The surface is often more interesting to postmodern artists than any ideas of depth.





# The Beats

- Post-World War II phenomenon
- Used different settings over the years to practice their brand of hallucinogenic, visionary, anti-establishment art.
- Quite good mythologizing themselves and shared a sense of personal frankness with the confessional poets and a sense of interdisciplinary energy with the New York school.
- Buddhism was important to many members.
- Deep connection to nature.
- Tone could be: satirical, angry, and ranting as well as tender and meditative.



# Sum it up:

- “First thought, best thought!” – aesthetic ideal
- Politics directly informs many of the poems, either through specific reference to members of the government or specific references to issues important to them.

# Examples - Poets

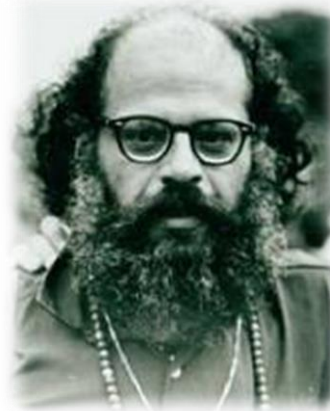
Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919-)

“A Coney Island of the Mind”; “The Changing Light”; “Vast Confusion”; “Wild Dreams of a New Beginning”



Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)

“Howl”; “America”; “A Supermarket in California”; “Kaddish”



Gregory Corso (1930-2001)

“Marriage”; “Bomb”; “The Mad Yak”



Gary Snyder (1930-)

“Four Poems for Robin”; “For All”; “Hay for the Horses”



## PROSE

William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) – *Naked Lunch*

Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) – *On The Road*

# Confessional

- Took the personal pronouns (I, me, my) seriously and explored intimate content.
- Love affairs, suicidal thoughts, fears of failure, ambivalent or downright violent opinions about family members, and other autobiographically sensitive material moved to the front and center.
- They “pried open” their innermost thoughts and opened them for all the world to see, even if it meant sharing one’s troubled feelings or mental health issues.
- Revealed the doubts and anxieties of suburban America.
- Invested a great deal of time and effort into their craft, constructing verse that paid careful attention to rewritten prosody (the science or study of poetic meters and versification).



# Examples

John Berryman (1914-1972)



"Dream Song 1";  
"Dream Song 4";  
"Dream Song 29"

Robert Lowell (1917-1977)



"Skunk Hour";  
"For the Union Dead";  
"Memories of West  
Street and Lepke";  
"Home After Three  
Months Away"

Anne Sexton (1928-1967)



"Wanting to Die";  
"The Truth the Dead  
Know"; "For My  
Lover, Returning to his  
Wife"

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)



"Daddy";  
"Lady Lazarus";  
"Balloons"; "Ariel"

PROSE

*The Bell Jar*

# New York school

- Saw themselves as fellow travelers of the abstract expressionist school of painters.
- Many wrote art criticism.
- Their aesthetic mode overlapped with Beat spontaneity and with the confessional-poet frankness, but was much more ironic, and more interested in the surreal combination of high art and popular art allusions.
- Often saw themselves as helping the reader see the world in new and different ways.
- Wanted to jar the audience's senses by juxtaposing uncommon objects.
- Reveled in the combination of the serious and the silly, the profound and the absurd, the highly formal and the relentlessly casual.



# Examples

Barbara Guest (1920-2006)



“The Blue Stairs”; “Wild Gardens Overlooked by Night Lights”; “Sound and Structure”; “Echoes”

John Ashbery (1927-)



“The Painter”; “The Instruction Manual”; “Daffy Duck in Hollywood”; “The New Higher”

Kenneth Koch (1925-2002)



“One Train May Hide Another”; “Talking to Petrizia”; “To Various Persons Talked to All at Once”; “Variations on a Theme by William Carlos Williams”

Frank O’Hara (1926-1966)



“In Memory of My Feelings”; “The Day Lady Died”; “A Step Away From Them”; “Lines to a Depressed Friend”

# Black Arts Movement

- Often associated with members of the Black Power movement who grew frustrated with the pace of the changes enacted by the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.
- Often politically charged, even aggressive, challenges to the white establishments





# Examples

Gwendolyn Brooks  
(1917-2000)



“The Bean-Eaters”;  
“We Real Cool”;  
“The Lovers of the  
Poor”; “The  
Mother”

Amiri Baraka (aka LeROI  
Jones (1934-)



“Preface to a Twenty  
Volume Suicide Note”;  
“Black Art”; “Ka’Ba”; “In  
the Funk World”

Sonia Sanchez (1934-)



“Ballad”; “Malcolm”; “I  
Have Walked a Long  
Time”; “For Sweet  
Honey in the Rock”

Ntozake Shange (1948-)



“My Father is a Retired  
Magician”; “For Colored  
Girls Who Have  
Considered Suicide  
When the Rainbow is  
Enuf”

# Black Mountain

- All taught at Black Mountain College in Black Mountain, North Carolina.
- Share an abiding interest in process over product



# Examples

Charles Olson (1910-1970)



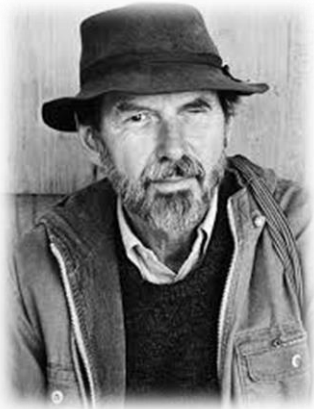
Excerpts from “The  
Maximus Poems”

Denise Levertov (1923-1997)



“The Mutes”; “In  
California During the  
Gulf War”; “When We  
Look Up”

Robert Creeley (1926-2005)



“Age”; “For Love”; “A  
Wicker Basket”;  
“America”

# Other Important Poets



**Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886) Wrote during the transcendental period but does not fit into the rubric. Much more metaphysical with her compressed wit and irony.

- “Because I could not stop for death”; I heard a fly buzz when I died”; “Tell all the truth but tell it slant”; “I measure every grief I meet”



**Robert Frost** (1874-1963) active during the modernism period, but more traditional minded verse forms and locally colored content cloaking a profound philosophical vein.

- “Out, Out”; “Birches”; “The Death of the Hired Man”; “Mending Wall”; “Design”; “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”



**W.H. Auden** (1907-1973) Wrote the first half of his poems as an English citizen before World War II, and the second half as an American citizen after the war. Considered a giant of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. Similar to the modernists, but really transcends labels.

- “As I Walked Out One Evening”; “In Memory of W. B. Yeats”; “The Unknown Citizen”; “Musée des Beaux Arts”



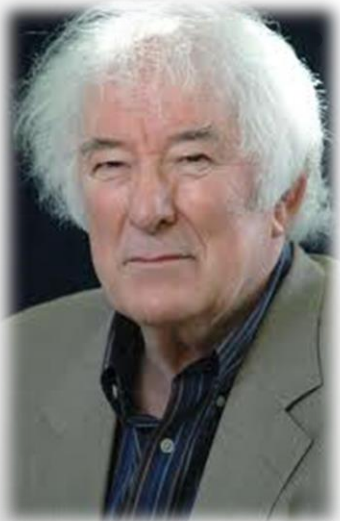
**Elizabeth Bishop** (1911-1979) Sometimes placed with confessional poets because of her friendship with Robert Lowell, she is more reticent than the confessionals.

- “In the Waiting Room”; “Filling Stations”; “At the Fishhouses”; “One Art”; “The Moose”



**Adrienne Rich** (1929-) Important feminist and political poet, she shares some of her background with the confessional poets. But she has taken the role of the poet in society so seriously that she has transcended the personal and become a kind of icon.

- “Diving into the Wreck”; “North American Time”; “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers”; “Miracle Ice Cream”



**Seamus Heaney** (1911-1979) He uses rural imagery to take on issues of identity, from the post-colonial confusion of what it means to be Irish to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century confusion of what it means to be a poet.

- “Digging”; “The Harvest Bow”

# Works Cited

McMullen, Douglas Jr. "An Overview of Literary Movements." *Cracking the AP English Literature & Composition Exam*. New York: 2011.