

**Teacher's Guide For  
Great American Authors Since 1650  
Program 7: 1950 - 1957**

**For grade 7 - College**

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| <b><u>Table of Contents</u></b>              | <b><u>Page</u></b> |
|--|--------------------|
| Table of Contents and Rights.....            | 2                  |
| Links to Curriculum Standards.....           | 2                  |
| Materials in the Program.....                | 3                  |
| Instructional Notes.....                     | 3                  |
| Introduction and Summary of the Program..... | 3                  |
| Summary of Program 7: 1950 – 1957.....       | 4                  |
| Answers to Blackline Master Quiz 7A.....     | 6                  |

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**LINKS TO CURRICULUM STANDARDS**

The design for this program was guided by the National Center for History in the Schools, United States History curriculum Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation-Standards 1 and 3 for grades 5-12, Era 9 Postwar United States -Standard 4 for grades 5-12, and the California Public School Standards for Historical Content, Grade 8 - Standards 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 (#4 - #7), Standard 8.8 (#1) and Grade 11, Standards 11.1 (#2, #3), 11.3 (#5), 11.5 - (#3, #4) and 11.10 (#2, #3) and Grade 12, Standards 12.1, 12.4 and 12.5; and the California State Board of Education English Language Arts Grade 8, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis;

Grades 9 and 10, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis; and Grades 11 and 12, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis.

### **MATERIALS IN THE PROGRAM**

**Teacher's Guide** -This Teacher's Guide has been prepared to aid the teacher in utilizing materials contained within this program. In addition to this introductory material, the guide contains the following:

- *Suggested Instructional Notes*
- *Student Learning Goals*
- *Test Questions on Blackline Masters Quiz for duplication and handout to students.*
- *Gallery of Great American Authors*

### **INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES**

It is suggested that you preview the program and read the related Student Goals and Teacher Points. By doing so, you will become familiar with the materials and be better prepared to adapt the program to the needs of your class. Please note that this show is set up to be played continuously and you will probably find it best to follow the program in the order in which it is presented, but this is not necessary. The program can be divided into chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. It is also suggested that the program presentation take place before the entire class and under your direction. As you review the instructional program outlined in the Teacher's Guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, deletions, or additions to fit the specific needs of your students. After viewing the programs you may wish to copy the **Test Questions on Blackline Masters 7A** and distribute to your class to measure their comprehension of the events.

### **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRAM**

*A DVD of Great American Authors Since 1650, Program 7: 1950 - 1957* is a new approach to presenting in an exciting way the great literary tradition of the United States. The program is designed to present American authors and literature in a way that promotes successful student learning. The program looks at the changes that came to America's literary scene following WWII. It begins with the change that evolved in black literature through poet Gwendolyn Brooks, whose unique insights changed the way blacks felt about themselves, and Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin who gave voice to the frustration and anger of blacks toward the white controlled system that oppressed them. The theme of insecurity was also emphasized by J.D. Salinger and Sylvia Plath, who voiced the feelings of the youth generation that gave rise to the baby boomers. At the same time, Beat Generation authors Kerouac, Ginsburg, Ferlinghetti, Burroughs and Kesey, eloquently told about the system beating down the people. The program ends with Dr. Seuss, the baby boomer's favorite children's author.

The program is laid out so that it can be viewed in its entirety, or by individual chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. Each chapter presents a complete story of an exceptional American literary figure, as well as themes of American literature: the unique and innovative American voice, women authors, ethnic authors and poets. The chapters show how American authors told the story of America as its chroniclers and

interpreters. Most importantly, historical themes and figures are clearly presented using state of the art visuals.

Below is a list of the program and its chapters. Using this program, teachers can create a lesson plan to cover the specific issues, themes and historical figures mentioned.

## **Great American Writers Since 1650**

### **Program 7: 1950 - 1957**

1. 1950 - Gwendolyn Brooks Wins the Pulitzer Prize
2. 1951 – Salinger and Plath Set the Stage for the Baby Boomer Generation
3. 1952 – Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin Speak for the American Black Male
4. 1957 - Jack Kerouac Begins the Beat Generation in American Literature
5. 1957 – Dr. Seuss Writes *The Cat in the Hat*

### **SUMMARY OF PROGRAM**

#### **Program 7: 1950 – 1957**

Program seven examines writer's reactions to World War II and how they challenged mainstream America's every norm, assumption and idea.

Chapter one shows how black poet and short story writer Gwendolyn Brooks kicked off the 50's civil rights movement with her anthem of 'black is beautiful.'

Chapters two looks at the way novelist J.D. Salinger and poet Sylvia Plath spoke to the insecurities and problems of America's youth generation.

Black G. I.s returned from WWII to a country that still treated them as second-class citizens. Chapter three examines how black writers Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin captured black males' frustration and anger.

The Beat Generation's impact on American culture and literature is discussed in chapter four.

Chapter five looks at the art and writing of America's best loved children's book author, Dr. Seuss.

#### **1950 - Gwendolyn Brooks Wins the Pulitzer Prize**

##### **Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- Poet Gwendolyn Brooks was a child of the Lost Generation and the Harlem Renaissance
- Brooks won a Pulitzer Prize in 1950 for her book of poems, *Annie Allen*
- Brooks inspired three generations of black writers

#### **1951 – Salinger and Plath Set the Stage for the Baby Boomer Generation**

##### **Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- A new culture was rising in the U.S., a youth culture that would eventually be called the baby boomers
  - America experienced mass marketing of ideas through inexpensive paperback books
  - Paperbacks, affordable to anyone, made new authors and new ideas available to

- anyone
- A fresh generation of writers was emerging – men and women who saw their own lives and the country in a new way
- They saw themselves alienated from the rest of the country
- They saw the country as not living up to its dreams
- J. D. Salinger was the first of this new generation of writers
  - He wrote *The Catcher in the Rye*, which would become an anthem for the baby boomers
  - No author had ever written for young people like this before
  - No author had ever captured what it meant to grow up in an America ruled by people who did not understand you
- Like Salinger, Sylvia Plath spoke to America's baby boomer generation, emphasizing the painful feelings that young women, artists, misfits and rebels felt while growing up
  - Like Salinger, Plath would be a harbinger for the baby boomer era

## **1952 – Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin Speak for the American Black Male**

### **Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- Black servicemen returning from WWII faced the same old problems of intolerance, segregation and racism
  - As a result, a new black writer emerged – an outspoken and forceful black man
  - Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin were the first of these powerful new black writers
  - Ellison and Baldwin were the literary descendants of the Harlem Renaissance led by Alain Locke
- In his novel *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison wrote about his alienation, disenfranchisement and invisibility as a black man in very frank terms
  - *Invisible Man* became one of the most influential books in American literature and history
- Baldwin spoke openly about racial conflict and injustice in the United States
  - Baldwin's novels, essays and dramas made him the major literary interpreter of the struggles of black Americans

## **1957 - Jack Kerouac Begins the Beat Generation in American Literature**

### **Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- The mass media society arrived in the U.S. in the 1950s
- Television and paperback books made knowledge available to everyone
- At the same time, a new group of writers saw this mass media society as a society that beat people down, tried to force them into thinking alike
  - This new group of writers would take a name that reflected this beat down by the establishment
  - They called themselves the Beat Generation
  - The Beat Generation authors were characterized by their feeling of alienation from America's mass media dominated society and their contempt for that society
  - Their literature celebrated spontaneity and stylistic freedom
  - The Beat generation set the stage for the free speech and civil rights movements and later for the peace movement to end the Vietnam War
- Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* epitomized the style, purpose and voice of the Beat Generation

- Other Beat Generation authors that captured the mood against what they saw as the dull conformity of American life, were Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Ken Kesey

### **1957 – Dr. Seuss Writes *The Cat in the Hat***

**Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:**

- Dr. Seuss wrote a delightful series of children’s books for the baby boomer generation
- His books were a counter current to the dark times of World War II, the Korean War, the McCarthy Era and the Vietnam War
- Dr. Seuss’ most famous book, *The Cat in the Hat*, was written to help children learn to read

### **Answers to Blackline Master Quiz 7A, Great American Authors Since 1650, Program 7: 1950 – 1957**

1-a; 2-c; 3-d; 4-c; 5-a; 6-b; 7-b; 8-c; 9-d; 10-a; 11-b