

Characteristics of American Literary

Romanticism

1. INDIVIDUALISM

- Popularized by the frontier tradition
- Jacksonian democracy
- Abolitionism



2. IMAGINATION

- Reaction against the earlier age's emphasis on Reason
- Abandonment of literary tradition in favor of experimentation
- “Organicism”: every idea held within it an inherent structure

3. EMOTION

- Feeling is now considered superior to rationality as the mode of perceiving and experiencing reality
- Intuition leads one to truth
- Truth/reality are now highly subjective

4. NATURE

- The means of knowing Truth
 - God reveals himself solely through Nature
 - Nature becomes a moral teacher
- The actual subject matter of the Romantics

5. DISTANT SETTINGS

- Both in terms of time and place
- Used to comment on attitudes of the time period

The Fireside Poets

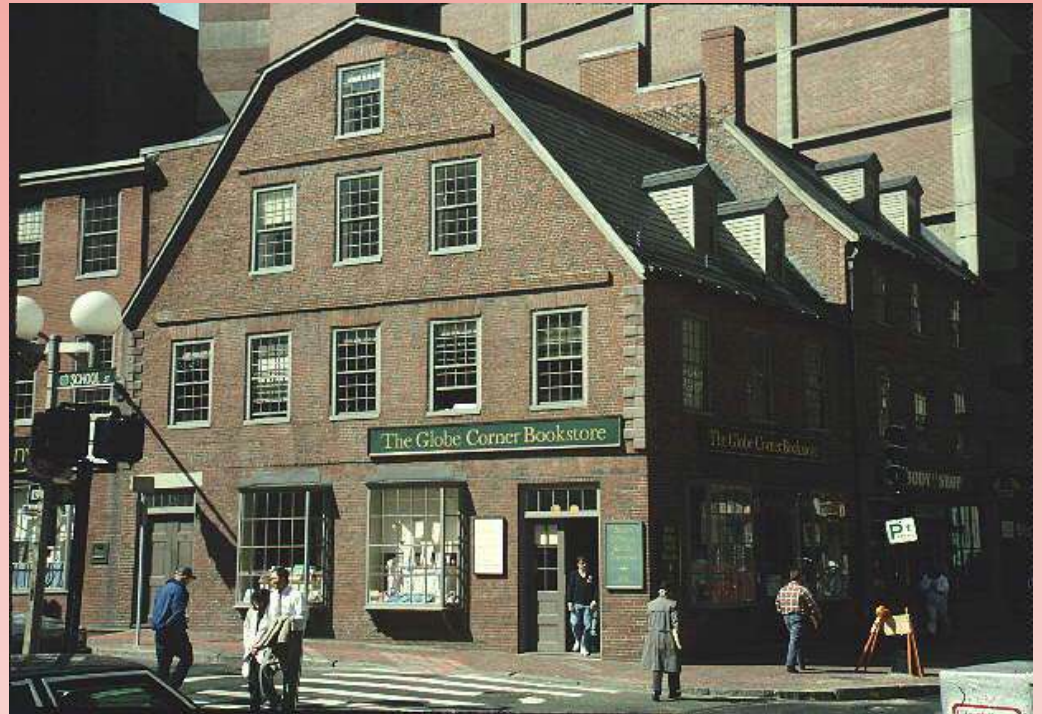
America's First Literary Stars

What are the Fireside Poets?

- First group of American poets to rival British poets in popularity in either country.
- Notable for their scholarship and the resilience of their lines and themes.
- Preferred conventional forms over experimentation.
- Often used American legends and scenes of American life as their subject matter.

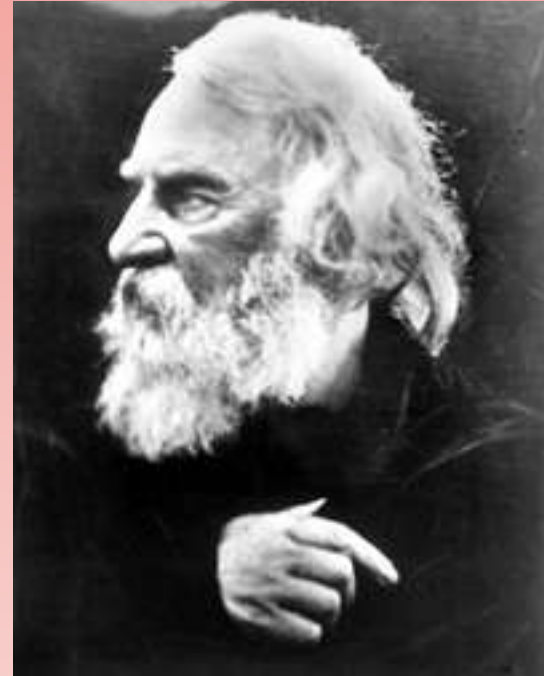
Who were the Fireside Poets?

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- William Cullen Bryant
- James Russell Lowell
- Oliver Wendell Holmes
- John Greenleaf Whittier



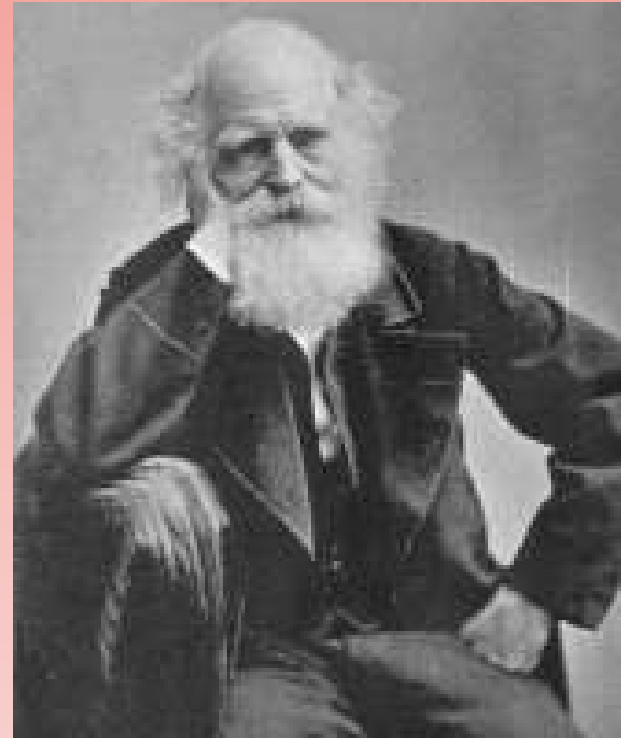
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

- 1807-1882
- Composed “Song of Hiawatha”,
- “Paul Revere’s Ride”
- “Psalm of Life”
- “The Day Is Done”
- Translated Dante’s *Inferno* from Italian into English



William Cullen Bryant

- 1794-1878
- Composed “To a Waterfowl” and “Thanatopsis”
- One of the founders of the Republican party and supporter of Lincoln



James Russell Lowell

- 1819-1891
- Composed “The First Snowfall” and “The Present Crisis”
- Active in anti-slavery causes



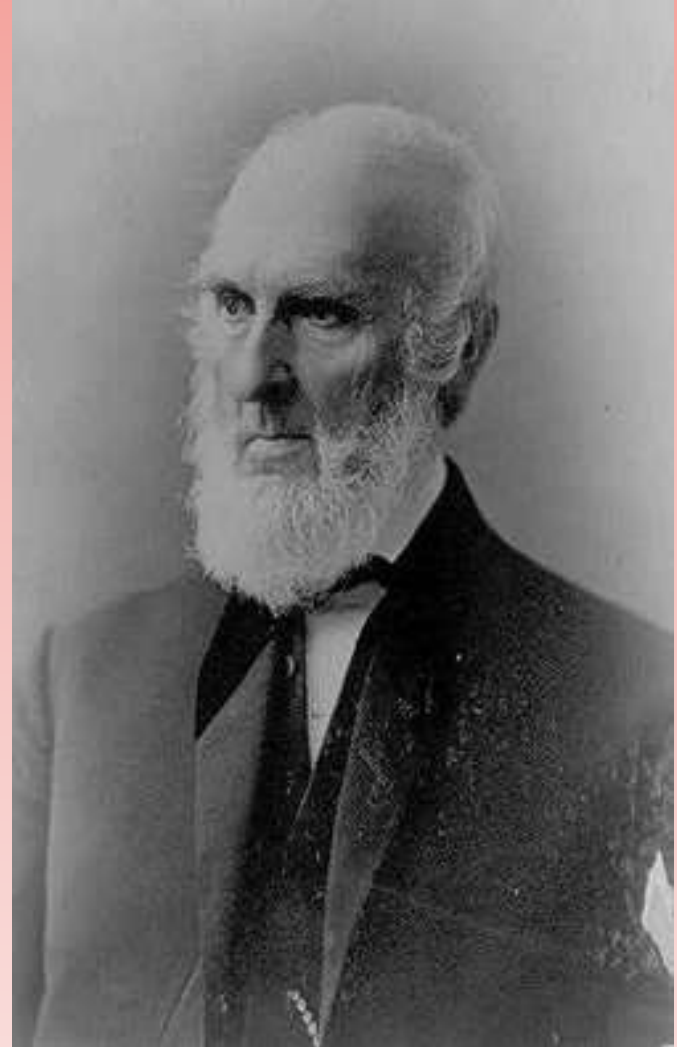
Oliver Wendell Holmes

- 1809-1894
- Medical doctor –
invented the term
“anesthesia.”
- Composed “Old
Ironsides,” which saved
the U.S.S. Constitution
from the scrap yard
- Father of Supreme
Court Justice Oliver
Wendell Holmes, Jr.



John Greenleaf Whittier

- 1807-1892
- Composed *Snow-bound*, “Maude Muller” and “Barefoot Boy”
- Active in anti-slavery movement



Lasting Impact

- Longfellow remained the most popular American poet for decades. When Poe criticized him, he was all but ostracized. Longfellow remains the only American poet to be immortalized by a bust in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner
- They took on causes in their poetry, such as the abolition of slavery, which brought the issues to the forefront in a palatable way.
- Through their scholarship and editorial efforts, they paved the way for later Romantic writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman.