

Am Lit texts -5

Thomas Jefferson, from *The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America in Congress*, July 4, 1776

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among them, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784)

“On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773)

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted¹ soul to understand [1 ignorant]
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither fought nor knew.
Some view our sable² race with scornful eye, [2 dark]
"Their color is a diabolic die."³ [3 color]
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,⁴
May be refined, and join the angelic train.

4. Cain killed his brother Abel and was “marked” by God for doing so. This mark was believed to be the origin of the black race (Genesis 4.1-15).

Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810)

Edgar Huntly: Or, Memoirs of a Sleep-walker

TO THE PUBLIC.

The flattering reception that has been given, by the public, to *Arthur Mervyn*, has prompted the writer to solicit a continuance of the same favor, and to offer to the world a new performance. America has opened new views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldom furnished themes to the moral painter. That new springs of action, and new motives to curiosity should operate; that the field of investigation, opened to us by our own country, should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe, may be readily conceived. The sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart, that are peculiar to ourselves, are equally numerous and inexhaustible. It is the purpose of this work to profit by some of these sources; to exhibit a series of adventures, growing out of the condition of our country, and connected with one of the most common and most wonderful diseases or affections of the human frame .

One merit the writer may at least claim; that of calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader, by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors. Puerile superstition and exploded manners; Gothic castles and chimeras, are the materials usually employed for this end. The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness, are far more suitable; and, for a native of America to overlook these, would admit of no apology. These, therefore, are, in part, the ingredients of this tale, and these he has been ambitious of depicting in vivid and faithful colors. The success of his efforts must be estimated by the liberal and candid reader.