

Colonial literature

was not American (was written by immigrants from England), nor literature as we know it today (religious writings and travel accounts).

The majority of it was written by Puritans (named so because they wanted to purify the Church of England) settled in New England.

Puritan values: they stressed hard work, thrift, piety, sobriety. They believed that human beings are basically evil, many of them would be condemned to hell

Puritan literature: religious both in the content and the style, no imaginative literature, nothing written for mere amusement; sermons, theological works, religious poems, written in plain style, without poetical figures

RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

William Bradford (1590-1657), sailed on Mayflower in 1620, helped to found Plymouth colony, 1621-1656 governor of Plymouth colony (reelected 30 times); first Thanksgiving celebration was organized thanks to him
History of Plymouth plantation – starts with the flight of Puritans to Holland, their voyage to American and description of their life in Plymouth till 1647. The „Pilgrim story“ became a part of the American myth.

John Winthrop (1588-1649), in 1630 sail to Salem, Massachusetts, governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony (1630-1649).

History of New England

„A Model of Christian Charity“ – a sermon delivered on board the ship which took him to America. In it Winthrop reminded all those on board that they would stand as an example to the world either of the triumph or the failure of this Christian enterprise, they would be „a city upon a hill“.

Anne Bradstreet (1663-1728), sailed to America with Winthrop's fleet

The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America

Cotton Mather (1663-1728), born in America, wrote more than 450 works (he was an example of the Puritan ideal of hard work)

Magnalia Christi Americana, ecclesiastical history of New England, in 7 volumes; myth of a chosen people was expressed very clearly in this work

TRAVEL ACCOUNTS AND CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

John Smith (1579-1631), in 1607 he found Jamestown, organized trade with the Native Americans, led expeditions to explore and map the region surrounding Jamestown, Virginia; in 1614 he explored the coast of New England

General History of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles

Mary Rowlandson (1636-1711), lived in Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1676 Lancaster was attacked by Indians
Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, combination of adventure, heroism and exemplary piety

New England (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut)

Middle colonies (Pennsylvania), society was more tolerant

South (Virginia), rich aristocrats, slaves, white middle class; literature was more cosmopolitan