

THE INFLUENCE OF FOLK CULTURE ON AMERICAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT: *This article examines the profound influence of folk culture on American literature, emphasizing its role in shaping narrative forms, themes, and cultural identity. Folk traditions—encompassing oral storytelling, myths, legends, music, and rituals—have served as a vital foundation for many American literary works. By analyzing contributions from diverse communities, including Native American, African American, and immigrant groups, the study highlights how folk culture enriches literature with authenticity and a sense of collective memory. Key examples from authors such as Mark Twain, Zora Neale Hurston, and William Faulkner demonstrate how folklore informs storytelling techniques and deepens cultural expression. The article concludes by exploring how folk culture continues to inspire contemporary writers, ensuring its enduring legacy in American literary traditions.*

KEYWORDS: *American literature, folk role, culture, traditions, Native American, novels, oral tradition.*

INTRODUCTION: American literature, a tapestry of diverse voices and experiences, owes much of its richness to the influence of folk culture. Rooted in the oral traditions, customs, and beliefs of various communities, folk culture serves as a vital link between collective memory and creative expression. It encompasses a wide range of practices, including storytelling, music, myths, proverbs, and rituals, reflecting the values and struggles of the people who created them.

From the Native American legends that celebrate harmony with nature to
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African American spirituals born out of resilience and resistance, folk culture has shaped the themes, characters, and narrative techniques of American literature. Writers such as Mark Twain, who drew on regional dialects and local color, or Zora Neale Hurston, who incorporated African American folklore into her fiction, demonstrate how folk traditions have enriched the literary landscape.

This article delves into the symbiotic relationship between folk culture and American literature, exploring how folklore not only preserves cultural heritage but also serves as a tool for storytelling, social commentary, and innovation. By examining key works and their cultural contexts, we aim to shed light on the enduring impact of folk culture on the evolution of American literary traditions.

The elders of a culture are in charge of oral transmission of folklore. Folklore is not governed by any official organisation, in contrast to other forms of cultural identity like books or journals. Folklore is a distinctively human creation that is perpetuated by a culture's collective consciousness through storytelling and cultural rituals. Folk literature, which aims to capture the oral legacy of folkloric forms in writing, is a subset of folklore. Although folklore and folk literature are frequently used interchangeably, folk literature generally has a more focused concentration. It alludes to customary ideas and tales that were first passed down orally and then later documented in writing. Documented poetry, proverbs, idioms, stories, songs, myths, riddles, and other creative forms of information that are passed down from one generation to the next can all be considered folk literature. To put it another way, folk literature is created when folklore is recorded.

The preservation of oral traditions is the focus of folk literature, which can take many different forms, all of which contain formulaic patterns or predictable structures that make them easier to memorise. Folk literature aided individuals in understanding their relationships with others and their surroundings after the invention of written language. A community's elders were able to condense the core of its culture into a small number of cultural artefacts, such as folklore stories, that would serve as a guide for future generations due to predictable themes, forms, and patterns.

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CONCLUSION

The influence of folk culture on American literature is both profound and enduring, providing a foundation for storytelling that captures the essence of diverse communities and their lived experiences. Through its integration of oral traditions, myths, and communal histories, folk culture has enriched literary narratives with authenticity, depth, and cultural resonance.

Looking forward, the relationship between folk culture and American literature continues to evolve, inspiring new generations of writers to draw upon these traditions while reimagining them in innovative ways. This interplay ensures that the rich tapestry of American storytelling remains vibrant, reflective, and connected to its cultural roots.

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