

Biographical Sketches

Fiction Writers

SHERMAN ALEXIE

(b. 1966)

Born on an Indian reservation near Spokane, Washington, Sherman Alexie attended high school in nearby Reardan, where he was the only native American other than the school mascot. Shortly after graduating in American Studies from Washington State University, Alexie received the Washington State Arts Commission Poetry Fellowship in 1991 and the National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship in 1992. The first of nine collections of poetry, *The Business of Fancydancing* (1991) was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year in 1992. *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993), a collection of short stories, received a PEN/Hemingway Award for Best First Book of Fiction. Alexie is also the author of two novels, *Reservation Blues* (1995) and *Indian Killer* (1996), as well as screenplays: *Smoke Signals* (1998) and *49?* (2004) were both featured at the Sundance Film Festival. A stand-up comedian and four-time champion of the World Heavyweight Poetry Bout, he lives in Seattle, Washington.



story collections include *Murder in the Dark* (1983), *Bluebeard's Egg* (1983), *Wilderness Tips* (1991), and *Good Bones* (1992). *Morning in the Burned House* (1995) is her most recent collection of poems. Atwood has also authored two children's books, *For the Birds* (1990) and *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut* (1995), a book of critical essays, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (1995), and *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (2002).

JAMES BALDWIN

(1924–1987)

For much of his life, James Baldwin was a leading literary spokesman for civil rights and racial equality in America. Born in New York City but long a resident of France, he first attracted critical attention with two extraordinary novels, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), drawing upon his past as a teenage preacher in the Fireside Pentecostal Church, and *Giovanni's Room* (1956), which dealt with the anguish of being black and homosexual in a largely white and heterosexual society; other works include the novels *Another Country* (1962) and *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), the play *Blues for Mr. Charlie* (1964), and a story collection, *Going to Meet the Man* (1965). Baldwin is perhaps best remembered as a perceptive and eloquent essayist, the author of *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), *The Fire Next Time* (1963), *No Name in the Street* (1972), and *The Price of a Ticket* (1985).



MARGARET ATWOOD

(b. 1939)

Margaret Atwood spent her first eleven years in sparsely populated areas of northern Ontario and Quebec, where her father worked as an entomologist. Educated at the University of Toronto and Harvard, Atwood published her first poem at nineteen and has won numerous prizes for her poetry as well as her fiction. Her many novels include *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Life before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1982), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace* (1996), the Booker Prize-winning *The Blind Assassin* (2000), and *Oryx and Crake* (2003); her



TONI CADE BAMBARA

(1939–1995)

Born in New York City, Toni Cade Bambara grew up in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, two of New York's poorest neighborhoods. She began writing as a child and took her last name from a sig-



nature on a sketchbook she found in a trunk belonging to her great-grandmother. (The Bambara are a people of northwest Africa.) After graduating from Queens College, she wrote fiction in "the predawn in-betweens" while studying for her MA at the City College of New York, and working at a great variety of jobs: dancer, social worker, recreation director, psychiatric counselor, college English teacher, literary critic, and film producer. Bambara began to publish her stories in 1962. Her fiction includes two collections of stories, *Gorilla*, *My Love* (1972) and *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive* (1977), as well as two novels, *The Salt Eaters* (1980) and *If Blessing Comes* (1987). Bambara also edited two anthologies, *The Black Woman* (1970) and *Stories for Black Folks* (1971).

ANDREA BARRETT

(b. 1955)

Andrea Barrett grew up on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and earned a B.S. in biology from Union College in Schenectady, New York. She didn't start writing in earnest until her thirties, not long after she walked away from a Ph.D. program in zoology. Barrett's fascination with the natural world figures prominently in her fiction. *Ship Fever*, a collection of short stories that interweaves historical nineteenth-century scientists with fictional characters, won the National Book Award for Fiction in 1996. Her novel *The Voyage of the Narwhal* (1998) narrates a nineteenth-century Arctic expedition, and many of its characters reappear in *Servants of the Map* (2002), a collection of short stories that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. She has been a Fellow at the New York Public Library's Center for Scholars and Writers and in 2001 was granted a MacArthur Fellowship (the so-called "Genius Award"). Barrett teaches at Williams College in Massachusetts and at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina.



ANN BEATTIE (b. 1947)

Ann Beattie grew up in the Washington suburb of Chevy Chase, Maryland. She received a B.A. from American University and went on to graduate study in English at the University of Connecticut. After publishing "A Rose for Judy Garland" in 1972, she began placing



stories in such magazines as *The New Yorker*, becoming a kind of spokesperson for the generation that came of age in the 1960s. Many of her stories have been collected in *Distortions* (1976), *Secrets and Surprises* (1979), *Jacklighting* (1981), *The Burning House* (1982), *Where You'll Find Me* (1986), *What Was Mine: Stories* (1990), and *Park City: New and Selected Stories* (1999). Her novels are *Chilly Scenes of Winter* (1976), *Falling in Place* (1980), *Love Always* (1985), *Picturing Will* (1990), *Another You* (1995), *My Life, Starring Dara Falcon* (1997), *Park City* (1998), and *Perfect Recall* (2002). In 2000 Beattie received the PEN/Malamud Prize for Excellence in Short Fiction. She teaches writing at the University of Virginia.

AMBROSE BIERCE

(1842–1914?)

The tenth child of a poor Ohio family, Ambrose Bierce served with distinction in the Union Army during the Civil War, rising to the rank of major.

After the war he worked as a journalist in California and London, where his boisterous western mannerisms and savage wit made him a celebrity and earned him the name "Bitter Bierce." He is probably best known as the author of *The Cynic's Word Book* (1906; later called *The Devil's Dictionary*), but his finest achievement may be his two volumes of short stories, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891; later called *In the Midst of Life*) and *Can Such Things Be?* (1893), and *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* (1892), an adaptation of a German story. Disillusioned and depressed after his divorce and the deaths of his two sons, Bierce went to Mexico in 1913, where he reportedly rode with Pancho Villa's revolutionaries. He disappeared and is presumed to have died there.



JORGE LUIS BORGES

(1899–1986)

Often considered Latin America's foremost author, Jorge Luis Borges was born and raised in Argentina, where he spoke both Spanish and English.

Traveling in Europe, his family was trapped in Geneva at the outbreak of World War I, and Borges attended the Collège de Genève, where he learned French, German, and Latin. He then spent two years in Spain, where he wrote his first poems under the influence of the



Ultraists, an “art for art’s sake” movement that Borges established in Argentina upon his return in 1921. Despite his persistent and outspoken opposition to the military dictatorship of Juan Perón, he eventually became the director of the national library of Argentina. His many publications include *Ficciones*, 1935–1944 (1944), *El Aleph* (1949), *El Libro de Arena* (1955), and *El Libro de los Seres Imaginarios* (1967). English translations of his works include *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (1988), *Ficciones* (1989), *Collected Fictions* (1999), *Selected Non-Fictions* (1999), and *Selected Poems* (2000).

LINDA BREWER (b. 1946)

Western writer Linda Brewer grew up in Oregon’s Siuslaw and now lives in the Sonora Desert of southern Arizona, where she works in a medical lab and writes features and food articles for a Tucson publication, *The Desert Leaf*. A finalist in the World’s Best Short Story Contest, she won the 2002 Raymond Carver Short Story Contest. Her story “20/20” was featured in *Micro Fiction: An Anthology of Really Short Stories* (1996).



A. S. BYATT (b. 1936)

The oldest of four children (and half-sister of novelist Margaret Drabble), Antonia Susan Byatt was born in Sheffield, Yorkshire, graduated from Newnham College, Cambridge, and worked toward her doctorate in seventeenth-century English literature at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania and at Somerville College, Oxford. In 1964 Byatt began teaching at the University of London, the same year she published her first work, *Shadow of a Sun*, a novel about a young woman attempting to escape the influence of her novelist father. Byatt has drawn on her rich academic background in novels such as *The Game* (1967), *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978), *Still Life* (1985), the Booker Prize-winning *Possession* (1989), *Babel Tower* (1996), *The Biographer’s Tale* (2001), and *A Whistling Woman* (2002), and such story collections as *Sugar* (1989) and *Little Black Book of Stories* (2004). She has also published many works of literary criticism, including *Degrees of Freedom* (1965) and *Their*



Time (1970), a study of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Byatt lives in London.

ANGELA CARTER

(1940–1992)

Born in Eastbourne, Sussex, England, Angela Carter chose to work as a journalist rather than attend Oxford University, though she later studied medieval literature at the University of Bristol. Her novels include *Shadow Dance* (1966), *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), *Heroes and Villains* (1969), *Several Perceptions* (1968), *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman* (1973), *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), *Nights at the Circus* (1984), *Black Venus* (1985), *Love* (1988), and *Wise Children* (1991). Her stories are collected in *Burning Your Boats* (1997). Carter’s writing gained widespread popularity after the release of the film *The Company of Wolves* (1984), which was based on a story from *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), a collection of macabre and erotic retellings of fairy tales. Her chief nonfiction work is *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979). When she died in 1992, novelist Salman Rushdie wrote that “English literature has lost its high sorceress, its benevolent witch queen.”



RAYMOND CARVER

(1938–1988)

Born in the logging town of Clatskanie, Oregon, to a working-class family, Raymond Carver married at nineteen and had two children by the time he was twenty-one. Despite these early responsibilities and a struggle with alcoholism that was to continue for the rest of his life, Carver published his first story in 1961 and graduated from Humboldt State College in 1963. He published his first book, *Near Klamath*, a collection of poems, in 1968, and thereafter supported himself with visiting lectureships at the University of California at Berkeley, Syracuse University, and the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, among other institutions. His short-story collections include *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981), *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (1976), *Cathedral* (1983), *My Father’s Life* (1986), and *Where I’m Calling From* (1989). His poetry is collected in *All of Us* (2000).



MICHAEL CHABON

(b. 1963)

Michael Chabon was still a graduate student at the University of California, Irvine, when his MFA thesis became a bestselling novel, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* (1988). Two collections of short stories followed: *A Model World* (1990) and *Werewolves in Their Youth* (1999). Chabon's second novel, *Wonder Boys* (1995), was adapted into a movie starring Michael Douglas. *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000), a novel about two boy geniuses who start a comic-strip business during WWII, earned Chabon the Pulitzer Prize in 2001. His stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Playboy*, *Harper's*, and *Esquire*. In 2002 Chabon wrote a novel for children, *Summerland*. His novel *The Final Solution* appeared in 2004. Chabon lives in Berkeley, California.

**JOHN CHEEVER**

(1912–1982)

John Cheever was born in Quincy, Massachusetts. His formal education ended when he was expelled from Thayer Academy at seventeen; he moved to New York City and devoted himself to fiction writing, except for brief interludes of writing scripts for television and of teaching at Barnard College and the University of Iowa. Cheever published his first story when he was sixteen, and even after his first novel, *The Wapshot Chronicle*, won the National Book Award in 1958, he was known primarily as a prolific writer of superb short stories. Collections include *The Way Some People Live* (1943), *The Enormous Radio* (1953), and *The Stories of John Cheever* (1978), which won the Pulitzer Prize. Known as “the Chekhov of the suburbs,” Cheever was awarded the National Medal for Literature by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1982, shortly before he died.

**ANTON CHEKHOV**

(1860–1904)

The grandson of an emancipated serf, Anton Chekhov was born in the Russian town of Taganrog. In 1875, his father, a grocer facing bankruptcy and imprisonment, fled to Moscow and soon



the rest of the family lost their house to a former friend and lodger, a situation that Chekhov would revisit in his play *The Cherry Orchard*. In 1884, Chekhov received his M.D. from the University of Moscow. He purchased an estate near Moscow in the early 1890s and became both an industrious landowner and doctor to the local peasants. After contributing stories to magazines and journals throughout the 1880s, he began writing for the stage in 1887. His plays, now regarded as classics, were generally ill-received in his lifetime. *The Wood Demon* (later rewritten as *Uncle Vanya*) was performed only a few times in 1889 before closing, while the 1896 premiere of *The Seagull* turned into a riot when an audience expecting comedy was confronted with an experimental tragedy.

KATE CHOPIN

(1850–1904)

Katherine O'Flaherty was born in St. Louis, Missouri, to a Creole-Irish family that enjoyed a high place in society. Her father died when she was four, and Kate was raised by her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Very well read at a young age, she received her formal education at the St. Louis Academy of the Sacred Heart. In 1870, she married Oscar Chopin, a Louisiana businessman, and lived with him in Natchitoches parish and New Orleans, where she became a close observer of Creole and Cajun life. Following her husband's sudden death in 1884, she returned to St. Louis, where she raised her six children and began her literary career. In slightly more than a decade she produced a substantial body of work, including the story collections *Bayou Folk* (1894) and *A Night in Acadie* (1897) and the classic novel *The Awakening* (1899), which was greeted with a storm of criticism for its frank treatment of female sexuality.

**JOSEPH CONRAD**

(1857–1924)

Jozeph Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski was born in Berdyczew, Polish Ukraine. Orphaned at eleven, he eventually made his way to Marseilles and by the age of seventeen had made several trips to the West Indies as an apprentice seaman. After some troubles in France involving gambling debts, he sailed on a British ship, landed in England in 1878, and spent the next sixteen



years in the British merchant service, rising to master in 1886, the year he became a British subject. In 1890, he worked on a boat that sailed up the Congo, a trip that would inspire his best-known work, the novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Although he began writing in 1889, he did not publish his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, until 1896, and enjoyed little popular success until the publication of *Chance* in 1913. Among his major novels are *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1910), *Chance* (1913), and *Victory* (1915).

STEPHEN CRANE

(1871–1900)

One of fourteen children, Stephen Crane and his family moved frequently before settling, after his father's death in 1880, in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Crane sporadically attended various preparatory schools and colleges without excelling at much besides baseball. Determined to be a journalist, he left school for the last time in 1891 and began contributing pieces to New York newspapers. His city experiences led him to write *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, a realist social-reform novel published in 1893 at his own expense. His next novel, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), presented a stark picture of the Civil War and brought him widespread fame; many of his stories were published in the collections *The Open Boat and Other Tales of Adventure* (1898) and *The Monster and Other Stories* (1899). Crane served as a foreign correspondent, reporting on conflicts in Cuba and Greece, and lived his last years abroad, dying of tuberculosis at the age of 28.



EDWIDGE DANTICAT

(b. 1969)

When she was twelve, Edwidge Danticat moved from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to Brooklyn, New York, where her parents had relocated eight years before. Danticat published her first writing in English two years later, a newspaper article about her immigration to the United States that developed into her first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994). Danticat received a degree in French literature from Barnard College and an MFA from Brown University. *Krik? Krak!* (1991), a collection of short stories, was nominated for the National Book Award. Her second novel, *The Farming of Bones* (1998)



is based on the 1937 massacre of Haitians at the border of the Dominican Republic. In 2002 Danticat published *After the Dance: A Walk through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti*, an account of her travels. Most recently she published *The Dew Breaker* (2004), a collection of stories that examine the life of a Haitian torturer. She teaches creative writing at New York University.

LOUISE ERDRICH

(b. 1954)

Born in Minnesota of German-American and French-Chippewa descent, Louise Erdrich grew up in Wahpeton, North Dakota, as a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. She attended Dartmouth College and received an MFA in creative writing from Johns Hopkins University. Her first novel, *Love Medicine* (1984), a collection of linked stories, won the National Book Critics Circle Award. In her subsequent publications—*The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988), *The Bingo Palace* (1993), and *Tales of Burning Love* (1996)—she pursued her focus on the lives of Native Americans in contemporary North Dakota. In 1991, she jointly authored the best-selling novel *The Crown of Columbus* with her husband, Michael Dorris. Her recent works include the novels *The Antelope Wife* (1998), *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2001), *The Master Butchers Singing Club* (2003), *Four Souls* (2004), and a novel for young readers, *The Birchbark House* (2002).



WILLIAM FAULKNER

(1897–1962)

A native of Oxford, Mississippi, William Faulkner left high school without graduating, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1918, and in the mid-1920s lived briefly in New Orleans, where he was encouraged as a writer by Sherwood Anderson. He then spent a few miserable months as a clerk in a New York bookstore, published a collection of poems, *The Marble Faun*, in 1924, and took a long walking tour of Europe in 1925 before returning to Mississippi. With the publication of *Sartoris* in 1929, Faulkner began a cycle of works, featuring recurrent characters and families in fictional Yoknapatawpha County, including *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), *The*



Hamlet (1940), and *Go Down, Moses* (1942). He spent time in Hollywood, writing screenplays for *The Big Sleep* and other films, and lived his last years in Charlottesville, Virginia. Faulkner received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950.

GABRIEL GARCÍA

MÁRQUEZ (b. 1928)

Born in Aracataca, Colombia, a remote town near the Caribbean coast, Gabriel García Márquez studied law at the University of Bogotá and then worked as a journalist in Latin America, Europe, and the United States. In 1967, he took up permanent residence in Barcelona, Spain. His first published book, *Leaf Storm* (1955), set in the fictional small town of Macondo, is based on the myths and legends of his childhood home. His most famous novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), fuses magic, reality, fable, and fantasy to present six generations of one Macondo family, a microcosm of many of the social, political, and economic problems of Latin America. Among his many works are *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981), *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1987), *Of Love and Other Demons* (1994), and *Living to Tell the Tale* (2003), a three-volume set of memoirs. Márquez won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982.



CHARLOTTE PERKINS

GILMAN (1860–1935)

Charlotte Anna Perkins was born in Hartford, Connecticut. After a painful, lonely childhood and several years of supporting herself as a governess, art teacher, and designer of greeting cards, Perkins married the artist Charles Stetson. Following Gilman's suffering several extended periods of depression, her husband put her in the care of a doctor who "sent me home with the solemn advice to 'live as domestic a life as . . . possible,' to 'have but two hours' intellectual life a day,' and 'never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again' as long as I lived." Three months of this regimen brought her "near the borderline of utter mortal ruin" and inspired her masterpiece, "The Yellow Wallpaper." In 1900, she married George Houghton Gilman, having divorced Stetson in 1892. Her nonfiction works,



pringing from the early women's movement, include *Women and Economics* (1898) and *Man-Made World* (1911). She also wrote several utopian novels, including *Moving the Mountain* (1911) and *Herland* (1915).

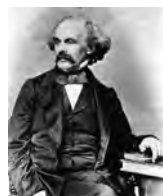
HA JIN (b. 1956)

Born Xuefei Jin, Ha Jin grew up in mainland China. During his teenage years, he served in the People's Army. He then worked for a railroad company while teaching himself English, before receiving degrees from Heilongjiang and Shandong universities in China. While earning his Ph.D. from Brandeis, Jin watched television coverage of the Tiananmen Square massacre and decided to remain, with his wife and son, in the United States, where he now teaches English and creative writing at Emory University. He has published the poetry collections *Between Silences* (1990), *Facing Shadows* (1996), and *Wreckage* (2001); the short-story collections *Ocean of Words: Army Stories* (1996), *Under the Red Flag* (1997), and *The Bridegroom* (2000); and the novels *In the Pond* (1998) and *Waiting* (1999), which won both the National Book Award and the 2000 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. Ha Jin's most recent novels are *The Crazy* (2002) and *War Trash* (2004).



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804–1864)

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, a descendant of Puritan immigrants. Educated at Bowdoin College, he was agonizingly slow in winning recognition for his work, and supported himself from time to time in government service—working in the customhouses of Boston and Salem and serving as the United States consul in Liverpool. His early collections of stories, *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) and *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), did not sell well, and it was not until the publication of his most famous novel, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), that his fame spread beyond a discerning few. His other novels include *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). Burdened by a deep sense of guilt for his family's role in the notorious Salem witchcraft trials over a century before he was born (one ancestor had been a judge), Hawthorne used fiction as a means of explor-



ing the moral dimensions of sin and the human soul.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

(1899–1961)

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, Ernest Hemingway became a reporter after graduating from high school. During World War I, he served as an ambulance-service volunteer in France and an infantryman in Italy, where he was wounded and decorated for valor. After the war, he lived for a time in Paris, part of the “Lost Generation” of American expatriates such as Gertrude Stein and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Two volumes of stories, *In Our Time* (1925) and *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), and two major novels, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), established his international reputation. Hemingway supported the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War—the subject of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940)—served as a war correspondent during World War II, and from 1950 until his death lived in Cuba. His novel *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) won a Pulitzer Prize, and Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.



JAMES JOYCE

(1882–1941)

In 1902, after graduating from University College, Dublin, James Joyce left Ireland for Paris, returning a year later to teach school. In October 1904, he eloped with Nora Barnacle and settled in Trieste, where he taught English for the Berlitz school. Though he lived as an expatriate for the rest of his life, all of his fiction is set in his native Dublin. Joyce had more than his share of difficulties with publication and censorship. His volume of short stories, *Dubliners*, completed in 1905, was not published until 1914. His novel *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, dated “Dublin 1904, Trieste 1914,” appeared first in America, in 1916. His great novel, *Ulysses* (1921), was banned for a dozen years in the United States and as long or longer elsewhere. In addition, Joyce published a play, *Exiles* (1918); two collections of poetry, *Chamber Music* (1907) and *Pomes Penyeach* (1927); and the monumental, experimental, and puzzling novel *Finnegans Wake* (1939).



FRANZ KAFKA

(1883–1924)

Born into a middle-class Jewish family in Prague, Franz Kafka earned a doctorate in law from the German University in that city and held an inconspicuous position in the civil service for many years. Emotionally and physically ill for the last seven or eight years of his short life, he died of tuberculosis in Vienna, never having married (though he was twice engaged to the same woman and lived with an actress in Berlin for some time before he died) and not having published his three major novels, *The Trial* (1925), *The Castle* (1926), and *Amerika* (1927). Indeed, he ordered his friend Max Brod to destroy them and other works he had left in manuscript. Fortunately, Brod did not; and not long after Kafka's death, his sometimes-dreamlike, sometimes-nightmarish work was known and admired all over the world. His stories in English translation are collected in *The Great Wall of China* (1933), *The Penal Colony* (1948), and *The Complete Stories* (1976).



YASUNARI KAWABATA

(1899–1972)

Born in Osaka, Japan, to a prosperous family, Yasunari Kawabata graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1924 and had his first literary success with the semiautobiographical novella *The Izu Dancer* (1926). He cofounded the journal *Contemporary Literature* in support of the Neosensualist movement, which had much in common with the European literary movements of Dadaism, Expressionism, and Cubism. His best-known works include *Snow Country* (1937), *Thousand Cranes* (1952), *The Sound of the Mountain* (1954), *The Lake* (1955), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1960), *The Old Capital* (1962), and the collection *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories* (translated in 1988). Kawabata was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968. After long suffering from poor health, he committed suicide in 1972.



JAMAICA KINCAID

(b. 1949)

Born in St. John's, Antigua, Elaine Potter Richardson left her native island and her family at seventeen. Changing her name to Jamaica Kincaid,



she worked in New York City as an au pair and a receptionist before studying photography at the New School for Social Research, then briefly continuing her studies at Franconia College in New Hampshire. After returning to New York, she became a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, for which she wrote from 1976 until 1995. Her publications include a collection of short stories, *At the Bottom of the River* (1983); a book-length essay about Antigua, *A Small Place* (1988); a book for children, *Annie, Gwen, Lilly, Pam, and Tulip* (1986); the novels *Annie John* (1985), *Lucy* (1990), and *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996); the memoir *My Brother* (1997); and a collection of her *New Yorker* pieces, *Talk Stories* (2001). Her most recent novel, *Mr. Potter* (2002), takes place on the island of Antigua.

JHUMPA LAHIRI

(b. 1967)

Born in London and raised in Rhode Island, Jhumpa Lahiri is the daughter of Bengali parents; much of her fiction addresses the difficulty of reconciling an Indian heritage with life in the United States. Lahiri earned a B.A. from Barnard College and several degrees from Boston University: an M.A. in English, an MFA in creative writing, an M.A. in comparative studies in literature and the arts, and a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies. She has published many stories in well-known periodicals such as *The New Yorker* and won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for her first collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), a best-seller that has been translated into 29 languages. *The Namesake*, her first novel, was published in 2003. Lahiri lives in New York City.



D. H. LAWRENCE

(1885–1930)

The son of a coal miner and a schoolteacher, David Herbert Lawrence was able to attend high school only briefly. He worked for a surgical-appliance manufacturer, attended Nottingham University College, and taught school in Croydon, near London. After publishing his first novel, *The White Peacock* (1911), he devoted his time exclusively to writing; *Sons and Lovers* (1913) established him as a major literary figure. In 1912, he eloped with Frieda von Richthofen, and in 1914, after her divorce, they were married. During World War I, both



his novels and his wife's German nationality gave him trouble: *The Rainbow* was published in September 1915 and suppressed in November. In 1919, the Lawrences left England and began years of wandering: first Italy, then Ceylon, Australia, Mexico, and New Mexico, then back to England and Italy. Lawrence published *Women in Love* in 1920 and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, his most sexually explicit novel, in 1928. Through it all he suffered from tuberculosis and eventually died from the disease.

URSULA K. LE GUIN

(b. 1929)

Born in Berkeley, California, to a writer/folklorist mother and an anthropologist father, Ursula Kroeber earned a B.A. from Radcliffe College and an M.A. from Columbia University. In 1952, she married the historian Charles Le Guin. Although she began publishing fiction in the early 1960s, Le Guin established her literary reputation with the philosophical fantasy *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), which formed a trilogy with *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971) and *The Farthest Shore* (1972). Read by both adolescents and adults, her work often depicts complex fictional societies with a folklorist's or anthropologist's eye for detail. Her novels include *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), *The Dispossessed* (1974), *Malafrena* (1979), *The Compass Rose* (1982), *The Telling* (2000), and *Gifts* (2004). Short story collections include *The Birthday of the World* (2002) and *Changing Planes* (2003). In addition, Le Guin has written essays, children's books, and poetry; she has collaborated on multimedia work and edited collections of science fiction.



DORIS LESSING (b. 1919)

Born in Persia (now Iran), to English parents, Doris Tayler lived for twenty-five years in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where she left school at fourteen to work as a nursemaid and secretary. After marriages to Frank Wisdom and Gottfried Lessing, she moved to England and soon published her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing* (1950). Some of her work is political, and much of it examines the inner lives of modern women. Her major works of fiction include the five Martha Quest novels, *Children of Violence* (1952–69); *The Golden Notebook* (1962); a five-volume science-fiction collection, *Canopus in Argos: Archives*



(1979–83); *The Good Terrorist* (1985); and *The Fifth Child* (1988). She has also published short fiction, plays, poetry, and two volumes of an autobiography. Her most recent works are *Ben, in the World: The Sequel to The Fifth Child* (2000), a novel; *The Grandmothers* (2003), a collection of four novellas; and *Time Bites* (2004), a selection of personal essays.

HERMAN MELVILLE

(1819–1891)

When his father died in debt, twelve-year-old Herman Melville's life of privilege became one of struggle. At eighteen, he left his native New York to teach in a backwoods Massachusetts school, then trained as a surveyor; finding no work, he became a sailor in 1839. After five years in the South Seas, he wrote *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847), sensationalized accounts of his voyages that were wildly popular. They proved the pinnacle of Melville's career in his lifetime, however; *Mardi* (1849) was judged too abstruse, the travel narratives *Redburn* (1849) and *White-Jacket* (1850), too listless. Melville's magnum opus, *Moby-Dick* (1851), was alternately shunned and condemned. His later novels—*Pierre* (1852), *Israel Potter* (1853), and *The Confidence-Man* (1856)—as well as his poetry collection *Battle-Pieces* (1866) were all but ignored. Melville's reputation as one of the giants of American literature was established only after his death; the novel *Billy Budd, Sailor* (not published until 1924), like *Moby-Dick*, was judged a masterpiece.



LORRIE MOORE

(b. 1957)

Marie Lorena Moore was born in Glens Falls, New York. At nineteen, while attending St. Lawrence University, she published her first story in *Seventeen* magazine; after graduating, she worked as a paralegal in New York City before earning her MFA in creative writing from Cornell. In 1989 her story "You're Ugly, Too" was published in the *New Yorker* and was included in *The Best American Short Stories*. Her first book, *Self-Help* (1985), a collection of short stories, was followed by the novels *Anagrams* (1986) and *Who Will Run the Frog Hospital?* (1994), and the short-story collections *Like Life* (1990) and *Birds of America* (1998). Since 1984, she has been a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.



BHARATI MUKHERJEE

(b. 1940)

Born to wealthy parents in Calcutta, Bharati Mukherjee attended private schools in India, London, and Switzerland before studying at the University of Iowa, where she earned both an MFA in creative writing and a Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature. At Iowa she met and married Canadian novelist Clark Blaise, with whom she has lived in Canada and the United States, and with whom she wrote *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977), an acclaimed account of their visit to her native India in 1972. In addition to her novels *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), and *The Tree Bride* (2004), Mukherjee has published the short-story collections *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman* (1988). She teaches at the University of California at Berkeley.



ALICE MUNRO

(b. 1931)

Widely considered Canada's best short-story writer, Alice Laidlaw was born on a farm in Wingham, Ontario, near Lake Huron. She began publishing stories while attending the University of Western Ontario. When her two-year scholarship ran out, she left the university, married James Munro, and moved to Vancouver. Her stories appeared sporadically during the 1950s, and she did not publish her first collection, the Governor General's Award-winning *Dance of the Happy Shades*, until 1968. Divorced and remarried, she returned to Ontario and went on to publish the novel *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) and the collections *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978, published in the US as *The Beggar Maid* in 1979), *The Moons of Jupiter* (1983), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Friend of My Youth* (1990), *Open Secrets* (1994), *Selected Stories* (1996), *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998), *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, and Marriage* (2001), and *Runaway* (2004).



FLANNERY O'CONNOR

(1925–1964)

Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia, studied at the Georgia State College for Women, and won a fellowship to the Writer's Work-



shop of the University of Iowa, from which she received her MFA. In 1950, she was first diagnosed with lupus, a painful autoimmune disorder that had killed her father and would trouble her for the rest of her brief life. Her first novel, *Wise Blood*, was published in 1952, and her first collection of stories, *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, in 1955. She was able to complete only one more novel, *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), and a second collection of stories, *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965), before dying of lupus, in Milledgeville, Georgia. Her posthumously published *Complete Stories* won the National Book Award in 1972. A collection of letters, edited by Sally Fitzgerald under the title *The Habit of Being*, appeared in 1979.

GRACE PALEY (b. 1922)

Born to Russian immigrants in the Bronx, New York, Grace Paley attended Hunter College and New York University but never finished college because she was too busy reading and writing poetry before she turned to fiction. Her short stories, first published in *The Little Disturbances of Man: Stories of Men and Women at Love* (1959), *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (1974), and *Later the Same Day* (1985), are assembled in *The Collected Stories* (1994); her poetry, in *Begin Again: Collected Poems* (2000); and her essays, reviews, and lectures, in *Just as I Thought* (1998). In 1987, she was awarded a Senior Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts, in recognition of her lifetime contribution to literature. In 1988, she was named the first New York State Author. Always politically engaged, she was an outspoken critic of the Vietnam War and has been a lifelong anti-nuclear activist and an outspoken feminist.



EDGAR ALLAN POE

(1809–1849)

Orphaned before he was three, Edgar Poe was adopted by John Allan, a wealthy Richmond businessman. Poe received his early schooling in Richmond and in England before a brief, unsuccessful stint at the University of Virginia. After serving for two years in the army, he was appointed to West Point in 1830 but was expelled within the year for cutting classes. Living in Baltimore with his grandmother, aunt, and cousin Virginia (whom he married in 1835, when she was thirteen), Poe eked out



a precarious living as an editor; his keen-edged reviews earned him numerous literary enemies. His two-volume *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* received little critical attention when published in 1839, but his poem "The Raven" (1845) made him a literary celebrity. After his wife's death of tuberculosis in 1847, Poe, already an alcoholic, became increasingly erratic and two years later he died mysteriously in Baltimore. His poems and stories have been collected in many editions.

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER (1890–1980)

A native of Indian Creek, Texas, and a descendant of Daniel Boone, Katherine Anne Porter was raised by her grandmother and educated in convent schools. Forced by tuberculosis to abandon an acting career, she worked as a journalist in Denver, Chicago, and Mexico. She published her first short story in 1922; her first collection *Flowering Judas* (1930), won critical acclaim. Porter's only full-length novel, *Ship of Fools* (1962), established her as a major American writer and made her rich. She won numerous awards for her work, including both a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for her *Collected Short Stories* (1965) and a Gold Medal from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Among her works are the story collections *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider* (1939) and *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* (1944); a volume of essays, *The Days Before* (1952); and an account of the controversial Sacco and Vanzetti murder trial, *The Never-Ending Wrong* (1977).



SALMAN RUSHDIE

(b. 1947)

Born in Bombay, India, Salman Rushdie was educated in England at Rugby School and Cambridge University. He published his first novel, *Grimus* (1975), while working as an advertising copywriter; his second novel, the Booker Prize-winning *Midnight's Children* (1981), established his literary reputation. Rushdie received international attention when Muslim clerics issued a *fatwa* (death sentence) against him following the publication of his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988), which allegedly blasphemes Islam. Obligated to go into hiding, Rushdie continued to write and to make unannounced public appearances. In 1998, the Iranian government revoked the *fatwa* and Rushdie ended his hiding. His works include the children's book



Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990); the novels *Shame* (1983), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), and *Fury* (2001); a collection of short stories, *East, West* (1994); and two volumes of essays: *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* (1991); and *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992–2002* (2002).

AMY TAN (b. 1952)

Amy Tan was born in Oakland, California, just two and a half years after her parents immigrated from China. She received her M.A. in linguistics from San Jose State University and has worked on programs for disabled children and as a freelance writer. In 1987, she visited China for the first time—"As soon as my feet touched China, I became Chinese"—and returned to write her first book, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989). Tan has since published three more novels—*The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2000)—and has co-authored two children's books. Her first book of nonfiction, *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003), explores lucky accidents, choice, and memory. Tan is also the lead singer for the Rock Bottom Remainers, a rock band made up of fellow writers, including Stephen King and Dave Barry; they make appearances at benefits that support literacy programs for children.



EUDORA WELTY

(1909–2001)

Known as the "First Lady of Southern Literature," Eudora Welty was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, attended Mississippi State College for Women, and earned a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin. Among the countless awards she received were two Guggenheim Fellowships, six O. Henry Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, the French Legion of Honor, the National Medal for Literature, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Although she wrote five novels, including *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942), *Ponder Heart* (1954), and *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972), she is best known for her short stories, many of which have been published in *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty* (1980). Among her nonfiction works are *One Writer's Beginnings* (1984), *A Writer's Eye: Collected Book Reviews* (1994), and five collections of her photographs, including *One Place, One Time* (1978) and *Photographs* (1989). In 1998 the Library of



America published a two-volume edition of her selected works, making her the first living author they had published.

EDITH WHARTON

(1862–1937)

Edith Jones was born into a distinguished New York family. Educated by private tutors and governesses, she published a book of her poems privately but did not begin to write for a public audience until after her marriage, to Edward Wharton, in 1885. The author of more than fifty volumes of poetry, essays, fiction, travelogues, and criticism, she was the first woman to receive an honorary doctorate from Yale University, in 1923. Although she emigrated to France in 1907 (and later was awarded the Legion of Honor for her philanthropic work during World War I), she continued to write about the New England of her youth in novels such as the popular *Ethan Frome* (1911). Among her many works are *The Valley of Decision* (1902), *The House of Mirth* (1905), *A Son at the Front* (1923), *Twilight Sleep* (1927), the autobiographical *A Backward Glance* (1934), and *The Buccaneers* (1938). She received a Pulitzer Prize for *The Age of Innocence* (1920).



WILLIAM CARLOS

WILLIAMS (1883–1963)

Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, William Carlos Williams attended school in Switzerland and New York and studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Leipzig in Germany. He spent most of his life in Rutherford, practicing medicine and gradually establishing himself as one of the great figures in American poetry. Early in his writing career he left the European-inspired Imagist movement in favor of a more uniquely American poetic style comprised of vital, local language and "no ideas but in things." His shorter poems have been published in numerous collected editions and other volumes, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Brueghel, and Other Poems* (1963); his five-volume philosophical poem, *Paterson*, was published in 1963. Among his other works are plays such as *A Dream of Love* (1948) and *Many Loves* (1950); a trilogy of novels: *White Mules* (1937), *In the Money* (1940), and *The Build-Up* (1952); his *Autobiography* (1951); his *Selected Essays* (1954); and his *Selected Letters* (1957).

