

Critical Survey of American Literature

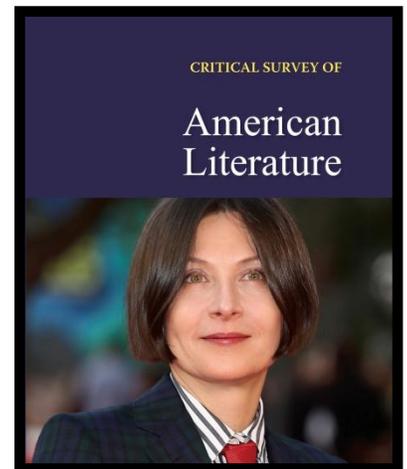
“This **six-volume survey of 412 significant American and Canadian writers** is arranged in alphabetical order, and offers a **brief but thorough essay** about each author covering a standard set of information points: most commonly used form of name, birth date, death date, and further biographical information; a general analysis of the author’s body of work and its context; a closer critical examination of a selection of the author’s most notable works; a summary discussing the author’s overall importance to the literary landscape; suggested discussion topics; and a bibliography of the author’s works as well as suggested analysis and criticism. **The selection of featured authors ranges from short story writers to poets to playwrights to novelists, from the very beginnings of American literary history to writers as recent as Ta-Nehisi Coates.**

The essays are cogent and accessibly written, varying in length from **6 to 13 pages**, and would serve as an **excellent starting point for any middle school, high school, or college student researching a particular author**. But there is also plenty of **useful content here for teachers preparing assignments, book clubs looking for contextual details and discussion prompts, and even general readers pursuing more information about authors that interest them.**

Further research tools include a glossary of literary terms, an index of all work titles referenced, and a categorization of authors by genre, ethnic descent, sexual orientation, and gender. The latter is a less common but important inclusion, and an appreciated step toward information literacy. For a work as definitive as this survey sets itself out to be, information about the demographics involved are crucial for context. (For instance, the category list provided allowed the reviewer to determine that about one third of the included authors are women, about 6% are LGBTQ, and about 22% are people of color.) It is of course impossible for any such survey of literature to escape its native framework of historical and cultural bias; rather, tools like this allow readers to acknowledge and further explore that framework.”

—ARBA

Full
Text
Reviews



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2 University Plaza, Suite 310, Hackensack, NJ 07601
(800) 221-1592 FAX (201) 968-0511
www.salempress.com csr@salempress.com