PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

# 53

# The Novel, the Short Story and Poetry in the United States: H. Melville, E. A. Poe and W. Whitman

La novela, el cuento y la poesía en Estado Unidos: H. Melville, E.A. Poe y W. Whitman.

§

NOVIEMBRE DE 2026

Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

# Índice

1. INTRODUCTION

2. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

3. HERMAN MELVILLE AND THE NOVEL

- 3.1. Life and early career
- 3.2. Moby-Dick (1851)
- 3.3. Reception and the later fiction
- 3.4. Death and posthumous revival

4. EDGAR ALLAN POE: POET, CRITIC AND SHORT-STORY WRITER

- 4.1. Life
- 4.2. The short story
- 4.3. Poetry and critical theory
- 4.4. Reception

5. WALT WHITMAN AND AMERICAN POETRY

- 5.1. Life
- 5.2. Leaves of Grass
- 5.3. The Civil War and the last years

6. THE THREE WRITERS COMPARED: THEMES, FORMS AND INFLUENCE

7. PEDAGOGICAL AND DIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS

8. CONCLUSION

Fuentes

# 1. INTRODUCTION

"Call me Ishmael." Three words are enough to open one of the great American novels, and they also announce the central gesture of nineteenth-century American literature: a single voice, speaking in the first person, invites the reader to follow it into the unknown. Herman Melville opened the first chapter of Moby-Dick with that sentence in 1851; Edgar Allan Poe's narrators address us from the edge of madness; Walt Whitman opened Leaves of Grass with "I celebrate myself, and sing myself". Three writers, three genres and one shared ambition: to give the young United States a literature of its own.

This topic is built around those three figures, who were born within ten years of each other and who were largely misunderstood in their own lifetime. I will first outline the historical and literary background of the American nineteenth century. Secondly, I will examine Herman Melville and the novel, from his sea narratives to Moby-Dick and Billy Budd. Thirdly, I will study Edgar Allan Poe as poet, critic and master of the short story. Fourthly, I will turn to Walt Whitman and the poetry of Leaves of Grass. I will then compare the three writers and consider their reception and influence. Finally, I will consider the pedagogical and didactic implications of this content in the Secondary and Bachillerato classroom, before closing with a conclusion.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted for the preparation of this topic: Andrew Delbanco's Melville: His World and Work (Knopf, 2005), Kenneth Silverman's Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance (HarperCollins, 1991) and David S. Reynolds's Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography (Knopf, 1995), as well as F. O. Matthiessen's classic American Renaissance (Oxford University Press, 1941), together with the Academy of American Poets, the Walt Whitman Archive, the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, the Melville Society resources and Project Gutenberg for the exact wording of the quotations. As for the legal framework, I will refer to Ley Orgánica 3/2020, of 29 December (LOMLOE), which amends Ley Orgánica 2/2006 on Education; to Royal Decrees 217/2022 and 243/2022, which set the basic curriculum of Compulsory Secondary Education and of Bachillerato; and to Decrees 110/2022 and 109/2022, of 22 August, which develop them in Extremadura.