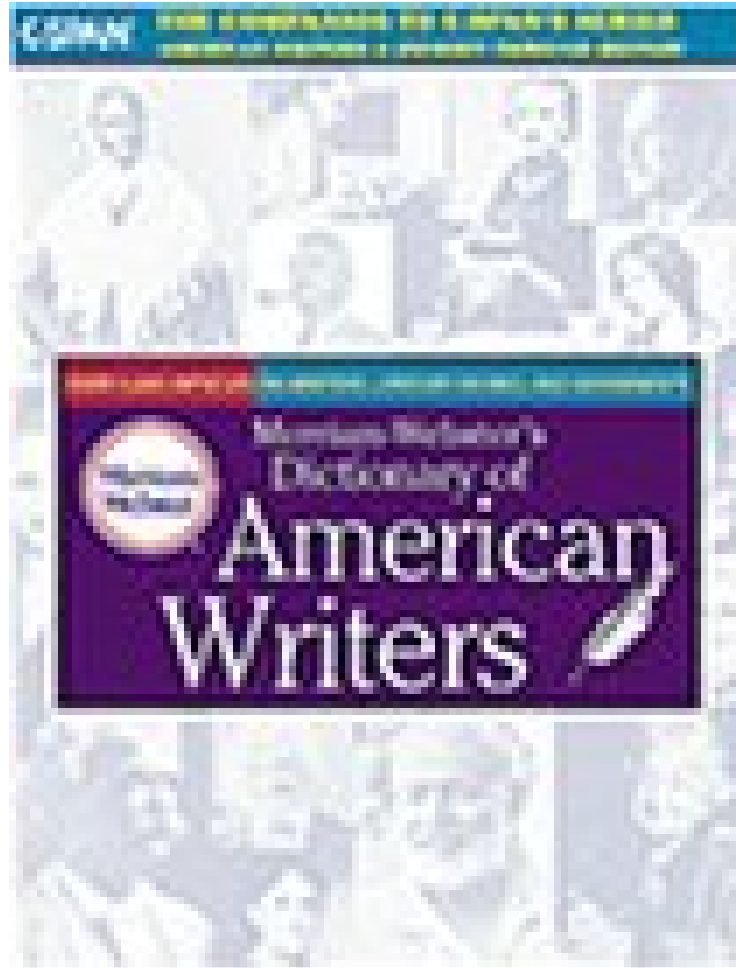


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Merriam Webster's Dictionary of American Writers

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Merriam-Webster : Merriam Webster's Dictionary of American Writers before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Merriam Webster's Dictionary of American Writers:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Good only for a cursory look at American writers By Debbie Lee Wesselmann This catalogue of American writers was published as a companion to C-SPAN's "American Writers: A Journey Through History" and unfortunately ends up feeling like something more suited to television than a reference book. Entries are brief and succinct, and are no more informative than a curriculum vitae. However, I was pleased to see some obscure writers listed, especially minorities, along with other, better known names. The editors have marked the entries for writers featured on the series with a line-drawing of a quill, a helpful touch for readers familiar with the show. The short section at the end on "Groups, Movements, and Periodicals" is perhaps the best part of this book, as it offers quick access to the historical aspects of American literature. If you want a good research source of American literature, you'd be better off buying Benet's Readers Encyclopedia of American Literature or Merriam-Webster's

Encyclopedia of Literature. But, if you enjoyed the C-SPAN series and want a book that complements it, you'll probably appreciate it for what it is. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A superbly presented guide to a rich literary tradition. By Midwest Book Review. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary Of American Writers is a very highly recommended addition to any personal or academic literary studies reference collection. The more than 1600 entries are illustrated with more than 150 photographs and arranged in three principle sections: Biographies of over 1100 of America's greatest novelists, poets, playwrights, and historians; Synopses of more than 500 important literary works; and entries for 75 of the most important literary groups, movements, and influential periodicals. A superbly presented guide to a rich literary tradition, Merriam-Webster's Dictionary Of American Writers was created in cooperation with the Encyclopedia Britannica.

New! A guide to America's literary tradition. Over 1,600 articles on writer's literary works, movements, and influential periodicals. More than 170 black-and-white photographs. The companion volume to C-SPAN's series American Writer: A Journey Through History. Binding: jacketed hardcover. Pages: 560.

.com Published in conjunction with C-SPAN's American Writers series, this Dictionary of American Writers features capsule biographies of more than 1,100 American writers. Among them are "numerous American Indians, former slaves, and immigrants from every corner of the earth." There are writers of fiction, poetry, drama, history, essays, diaries, philosophy, and even screenplays. While some of these write-ups (on Emily Dickinson, Benjamin Franklin, and William Dean Howells, for example) are longer, most are around 150 words (and adapted from Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature). You can't say a lot in 150 words. There are dates and places to fit in, as well as titles of major works, and, in some cases, pronunciations (though why there are five listed for John Brougham's surname eludes us). The biographical sketches are, in other words, sketchy. Still, the book starts in with Edward Abbey and doggedly charts a path all the way to Louis Zukofsky. If you're looking for a little information about an awful lot of American writers, this will suit your needs just fine. And there are interesting tidbits throughout: lawyer Louis Auchincloss, we learn, managed to pen 50 books in part because he would take a writing notebook to court; Frances Hodgson Burnett paid for writing paper by "gathering and selling wild grapes"; and Mary Higgins Clark worked as a flight attendant. Also included are more than 500 entries on literary works, and over 75 on groups, movements, and periodicals that have helped shape "the character of American literature." --Jane Steinberg
From Library Journal
the series' web site (www.americanwriters.org). The bulk of the work consists of 1000 biographical articles on influential American authors. Following is a section of briefer descriptive entries on over 500 literary works, including important novels, poems, plays, essays, and histories. The dictionary ends with a section that lists and describes 75 of the groups, movements, and periodicals that have shaped American literature. Each biographical entry includes full name, pronunciation (if necessary), birth and death dates and places, and a one-line precis of the importance of the subject, in addition to the brief biographical article. Black-and-white thumbnail photos of the authors appear on alternating pages. As an accompaniment to the television series, this is a wonderful book, to be used for reference and read for enrichment. But as a comprehensive biographical dictionary for a library reference collection, it doesn't quite fit the bill. In size, shape, and format, it is like the line of dependable biographical, geographical, and other dictionaries produced by Merriam-Webster, but unlike those works, it is too selective. Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature (LJ 1/92) is still a better choice at the reference desk. Nevertheless, this book will be handy for the millions of library patrons who will be watching C-SPAN's year-long series. APaul D'Alessandro, Portland P.L., ME Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Booklist
Designed for the average reader as a companion volume to C-SPAN's 38-part series American Writers: A Journey through History, this alphabetically arranged dictionary treats the 400-year literary history of the U.S., from the time of the earliest European colonists to the eve of the twenty-first century. Entries are arranged into three sections: "Authors," "Literary Works," and "Groups, Movements, and Periodicals." The first section, by far the largest, with more than 1,000 entries, covers a wide range of authors, including novelists, poets, dramatists, historians, diarists, essayists, journalists, philosophers, and even screenwriters. Entries, generally a paragraph or two in length, contain biographical information and a listing of important works, some cross-referenced to entries in the "Literary Works" section. Twentieth-century authors predominate, but writers from other time periods are well represented. America's pluralism is reflected, although several omissions were noted, among them Denise Chavez, Michael Dorris, and David Henry Hwang. Although fewer in number, the 500 entries of the "Literary Works" section are no less significant. They provide a brief publishing history, summary, and discussion of important poems, plays, novels, essays, autobiographies, short stories, and historical works. Coverage is thorough, except for the last category, which could have been enriched by the inclusion of the Declaration of Independence and Gettysburg Address. Excluded presumably because they are not considered literary works per se, their absence is surprising considering their routine appearance in many literary anthologies. In "Groups, Movements, and Periodicals," readers can explore the evolving nature of the American tradition in 75 entries as varied as the Hartford wits, Kenyon, and Transcendentalism. Overall, this resource has much to recommend it--clarity, ease of use, fine organization, and sound information, not to mention 150 black-and-white

photographs. There are numerous other reference books covering the same topics, but generally in one alphabetical sequence; this volume's three-part arrangement offers a different approach. Although neither exhaustive nor definitive, it would make a nice addition to high-school, public, and academic libraries needing an affordable, accessible one-volume guide. RBB Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved