

American Curmudgeons

In the nineteenth century, American writers began to distance themselves from the influence of England to create a truly American literary identity. One attempt was literary realism, a philosophy that tried to represent contemporary society as it truly was. In the journalistic sphere, this experiment grew largely through the efforts of newspapermen Ambrose Bierce and Mark Twain in the 1870s and 1880s. It reached full bloom under the cynical editorial reign of H. L. Mencken in the early 1900s. Undergirding the writings of these three men was a fervent desire to puncture the myth of culture and to expose stupidity, vanity, and corruption through scorn and ridicule. All three, in their way, belonged to what one critic has termed “the cantankerous school” of American writing, an institution that offers master classes in sardonic satire, acidic invective, and merciless truth.

The exhibit was curated by Morgan Swan and was on display in the Class of 1965 Galleries from January 7 to February 28, 2013.

Materials Included in the Exhibition

Case Title	Materials included
<p>Case 1. Ambrose Bierce</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ambrose Bierce. <i>The Fiend's Delight</i>. London: John Camden Hotten, 1872. Bierce 16 2. Ambrose Bierce. <i>Nuggets and Dust Panned Out in California</i>. London: Chatto and Windus, 1872. Bierce 32. Also available online via Hathi Trust. 3. Ambrose Bierce. <i>Cobwebs from an Empty Skull</i>. London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1874. Bierce 7 4. Ambrose Bierce. <i>An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge and Other Stories</i>. Little blue book, no. 1054. Girard, Kan.: Haldeman-Julius, 1909. Bierce PS1097 .O357 5. Ambrose Bierce. <i>Tales of Soldiers and Civilians</i>. San Francisco: E.L.G. Steele, 1891. Bierce 39 6. Ambrose Bierce and Carroll D. Hall. <i>Selections from Prattle</i>. The California literary pamphlets: no. 3. San Francisco: The Book club of California, 1936. Bierce 34. 7. George Sterling. <i>To Ambrose Bierce</i>. New York: Neale, 1910.

	<p>Bierce 61</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Ambrose Bierce and Samuel Loveman. <i>Twenty-One Letters of Ambrose Bierce</i>. Cleveland: G.Kirk, 1922. Bierce 41. Also available online via Hathi Trust. 9. Ambrose Bierce. "Wit and Humor." <i>The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce</i>. New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1911. Volume 10. Baker Berry 816 B474 I v.10 10. Ambrose Bierce. <i>The Cynic's Word Book</i>. London: A. F. Bird, 1906. Bierce 10.
<p>Case 2. Samuel Langhorne Clemens</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mark Twain. <i>What is Man?</i> New York: De Vinne Press, 1906. Val 816 C59 Y611. Also available online via Hathi Trust. 2. Mark Twain. <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i>. New York: C.L. Webster & Co., 1889. Val 816C59 P31 or Rare Book PZ3.C59 Co 3. Mark Twain. <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade)</i>. London: Chatto & Windus, 1884. Rare Book PS1305 .A1 1884 4. Mark Twain. <i>The Innocents Abroad, or the New Pilgrim's Progress</i>. Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1869. Rare Book PS1312 .A1 1869 or Val 816C59 R81 or 1926 Coll C5925j 5. Mark Twain. <i>The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches</i>. New York: C. H. Webb, 1867. Rare Book PS1322 .C4 1867 6. Mark Twain, Robert J. Burdette, William Dean Howells and E. W. Kemble. <i>Mark Twain's Library of Humor</i>. New York: C. L. Webster,

	1888. Rare Book PN6157 .T9 1888.
Case 3. H. L. Mencken	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The Little Review</i>. Chicago: Margaret C. Anderson, 1917-18. Rare Book AP2 .L647 v.4, no.1-12 1917-1918 2. H. L. Mencken. Letter from H. L. Mencken to Ezra Pound, 08/28/17. Papers, 1909-1956. MS-693, Box 1. 3. H. L. Mencken. <i>The American Language; a Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States</i>. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1919. Mencken 65. Also available online via Hathi Trust. 4. H. L. Mencken. <i>Happy Days, 1880-1892</i>. 1st ed. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1940. Mencken 88 5. H. L. Mencken. <i>A New Dictionary of Quotations on Historical Principles from Ancient and Modern Sources</i>. 1 ed. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1940. Mencken PN6081 .M49 c.2 6. H. L. Mencken. Quotation cards. Papers, 1909-1956. MS-693, Boxes 4-9. 7. H. L. Mencken. "Heil Roosevelt!" Typescript. Papers, 1909-1956. MS-693, Box 3, Folder 13. 8. H. L. Mencken. "Heil Roosevelt!" <i>Baltimore Sun</i>, September 22, 1940.