Puritan literature :

**Introduction:**

* We need to understand puritan thought to understand lot of American cultural traits. They have a huge impact on American culture even today.
* What is American literature? when did it begin?
* Early writings by sailors, military commanders, adventurers and explorers, they write in form of diaries and letters.

**Setting the Scene:**

* 1918 thirty years of religion wars in Europe
* 1620 Mayflower-Plymouth Establishment
* Slave trade reached its peak and reached the tobacco fields of north America.
* Old women and lonely young girls were accused of witchcraft and usually executed publically.

**Pre-Puritan**

* The early settlers wrote books about their journey to the new land. They were more as travel guides and propaganda for English people to visit and settle in the new found land. They mixed both reality and fantasy. They were also read for amusement and entertainment.
* John smith was the most known of them. He was an adventurer and a military man. He was among the founders of Jamestown (1906), the first English colony in North America. The Puritans, for instance, were influenced by his book *Description of New England,* and used it as a travel guide to the new world (1620). He is known most by his story of rescue by Pocahontas. Probably untrue, it is the oldest known tale in American culture.

**South Plantation**

* The south was different from the early settlements in the north. It was full of plantations and slave labor. The bourgeois liked British literature.

**Puritan Writings** Famous works: William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantations,* John Winthrop’s *the History of New England.*

**Puritan Themes, Style and Motifs:**

* The puritans in the north based their society on a strict Christian beliefs. This entails unity and purpose. So, the cultural production developed in the north e.g. Harvard university in Boston, and the first press.
* Two Christian themes were dominant in puritan literature: the promised land and the struggle between Satan
* and God.
* They were kinds of histories. Indians were pictured as villains. Lot of biblical references. Most authors (Winthrop for instance) were ministers themselves. Their writings are rather cold, free from shocking feelings and impressionism.
* The theocratic system (strong relation betwee, church and state laws) was depicted in their works (accusations of non-christains)
* Plain style and clear messages are derived from puritan thought, unlike the exaggerated and decorated style famous at the time in Europe (17th century)

**Less Religious Strictness:** Other authors (Roger Williams for instance), however, were against the strict puritan laws and wrote promoting less rigidness. Establishing his own colony, he promoted free religious belief.

**Puritan Advantages** In a way, puritan thought helped the growth of population based on farming in north America. Though religious freedom was slowly spreading in the north, but puritan control grew weaker and weaker.

* Puritans also admired natural sciences, believing that it’s God’s material creation.