American Puritanism

1. Basic Puritan Beliefs (TULIP)
   a. Total Depravity: through Adam's fall, every human is born sinful—concept of Original Sin.
   b. Unconditional Election: God "saves" those he wishes—only a few are selected for salvation; concept of predestination.
   c. Limited Atonement: Jesus died for the chosen only, not for everyone.
   d. Irresistible Grace: God's grace is freely given; it cannot be earned or denied. Grace is defined as the saving and transfiguring power of God.
   e. Perseverance of the "saints": those elected by God have full power to interpret the will of God and to live uprightly. If anyone rejects grace after feeling its power in his life, he will be going against the will of God—something impossible in Puritanism.

2. The Function of Puritan Writers
   a. To transform a mysterious God—mysterious because he is separate from the world.
   b. To make him more relevant to the universe.
   c. To glorify God.

3. The Style of Puritan Writing
   a. Protestant—against ornateness; reverence for the Bible.
   b. Purposiveness—there was a purpose to Puritan writing - described in Part II above.
   c. Puritan writing reflected the character and scope of the reading public, which was literate and well-grounded in religion.

4. Common Themes in Early Puritan Writing
   a. Idealism—both religious and political.
   b. Pragmaticism—practicality and purposiveness.

5. Implications of Puritanism on American Literature
   a. Critics blame the Puritan heritage for much that seemed to limit American writing: it's heavily allegorizing disposition, its failure to open out to experience or the ambiguity of the symbol, its lack of inclusiveness, its dull response to the world of nature, its rigorous moralism and its Anglo-Saxonism.
   b. However, this heritage also opened up the doors of American literary discovery. The Puritans' cosmic, transcendental, and providential vision, their faith in an escape from a dead Old World to a redemptive New one, their "exceptionalist" belief in the powerful recovery of history, and the conviction that Americans had a special purpose and would speak it in a special voice lingers in American culture and literature.

6. Two Important New England Settlements
   a. The Plymouth Colony
      I. Flagship: Mayflower arrives 1620
      II. Leader: William Bradford
      III. Settlers known as Pilgrim Fathers
      IV. The Mayflower Compact provides for social, religious, and economic freedom, free of ties to Great Britain.
      V. The Separatists—Pilgrims
   b. The Massachusetts Bay Colony
      I. Flagship: Arbella arrives 1630
      II. Leader: John Winthrop
      III. Settlers are mostly Puritans
      IV. The Arbella Covenant clearly establishes a religious and theocratic settlement while still maintaining ties to Great Britain.
**Puritan Ideology:** Perry Miller says that Puritan govt. was a "dictatorship of the holy and regenerate." It was a "government established by God to save depraved men from their own depravity."

- Originally sought to purify the Church of England of ceremony and ritual which they believed to be unchristian and a corruption of acceptable forms of worship
- Attacked ritual and liturgy of C of E as Popish
- Eliz. I opposed Puritan attempts to change C of E, as she was more interested in ruling than religion
- Both separatists (Plymouth) and non-separatists
- Hierarchical in structure (God is head, then leaders (men), rich, poor, native people, etc)
- Church discipline (excommunication, punishment, death)
- Not religious freedom; one church and all should attend
- Puritan values (work ethic; individual struggle, literacy, writing, study)
- Typology-comparison with chosen of Israel
- Saw settlement in New England as promised land comparison—Godly mission to conquer and Christianize
- Bible is authoritative
- Worship used only Psalms or metrical versions of Psalms for singing (Bay Psalm Book); church building center of govt. too; pews assigned; later purchased
- Personal responsibility to "read" scripture, history, events, and nature
- Personal responsibility for "right thinking" and spiritual preparation

**Points to consider in literature:**

- Puritan attitude toward native peoples
- Central principles of Puritan thought
- New World Consciousness
- Resistance, undermining, questioning, or uncertainty in texts with ideals of Puritanism
- Literary Forms of Colonial Literature: history, journals/diaries; letters; poetry; captivity narrative; autobiographical elements; sermon
- Purposes of these literary forms (instruction; recording of history, personal examination)
- Concept of self and self-reliance
- Concept of affiliation, assimilation, oneness
- Examples of "divine retribution"
- Puritan values
• Narrative structure/voice
• Biblical references
• Figurative language—analogy, metaphor, etc.
• Persuasive elements
• Motifs (oppositions, contrasts, parallels)
• Issues of identity