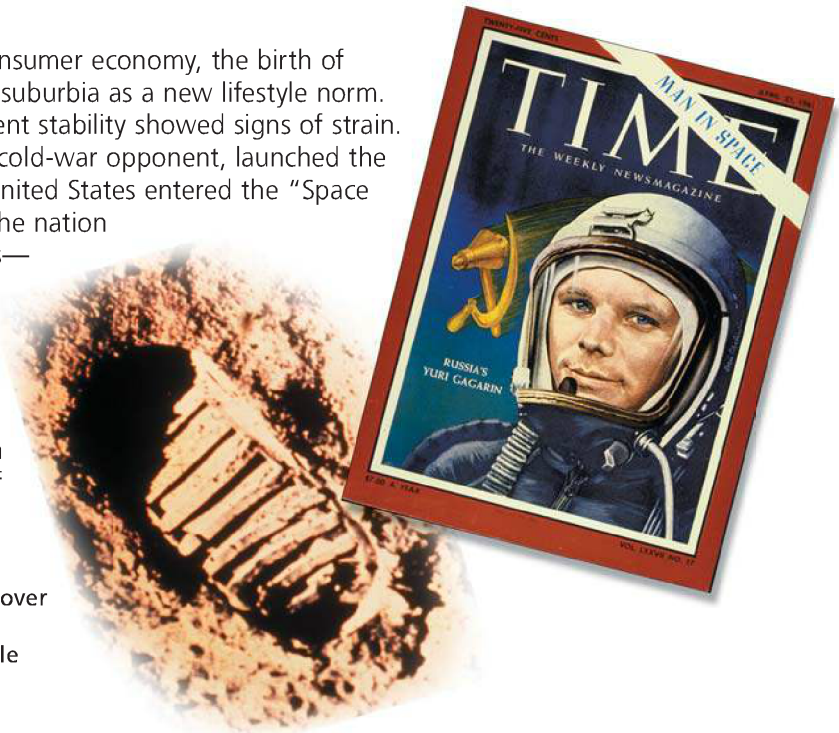


Snapshot of the Period

The 1950s began with a booming consumer economy, the birth of American car culture, and the rise of suburbia as a new lifestyle norm. By the end of the decade, this apparent stability showed signs of strain. In 1957, the Soviet Union, America's cold-war opponent, launched the first earth-orbiting satellite and the United States entered the "Space Race" in dire earnestness. Unrest in the nation over Civil Rights issues led to protests—some organized and peaceful, some violent. The war in Vietnam, begun in 1954, did not end until 1975. It became a focal point of political and generational conflict. A period that began with complacency, ended with a spirit of revolution and the sense of a new age dawning.

A human footprint on the moon and TIME magazine's cover featuring Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin are two indelible images of the space race. ►



O'Connor



Plath



Baldwin



Bishop



King



Miller



As you read the selections in this unit, you will be asked to think about them in view of three key questions:

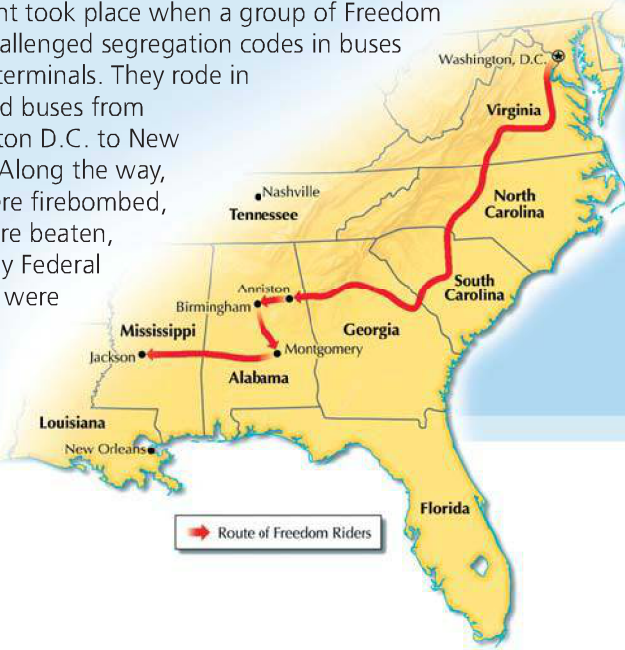
How does literature
shape or reflect *society*?

What makes American
literature *American*?

What is the relationship
between place and *literature*?

RIDING FOR FREEDOM

In 1961, a historic moment in the Civil Rights movement took place when a group of Freedom Riders challenged segregation codes in buses and bus terminals. They rode in integrated buses from Washington D.C. to New Orleans. Along the way, buses were firebombed, riders were beaten, and finally Federal Marshals were called in.



Buttons of the Era



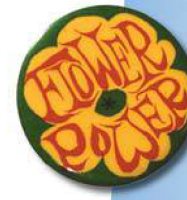
A dove held by white and black hands symbolized racial harmony and world peace.



A march that took place in Jackson, Mississippi, was named for Civil Rights figure James Meredith.



President Kennedy dreamed of an international army of peace workers. This dream led to the creation of the Peace Corps.



The peace movement, lead by Hippies, used flowers as symbols for an alternative to war.



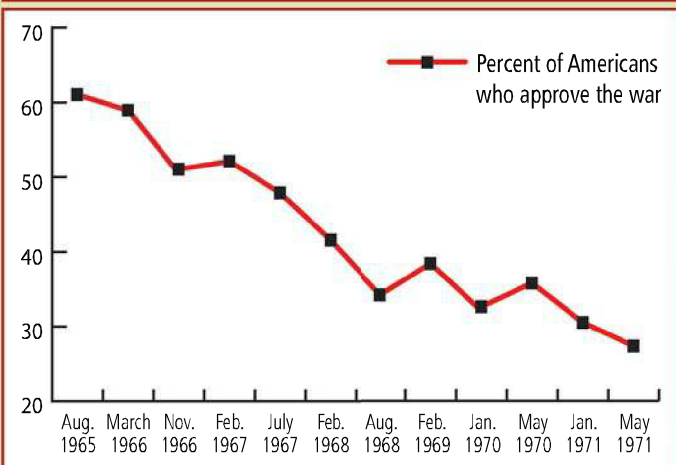
Many Americans believed in the Vietnam War and sought to support the troops overseas.



As the Vietnam War dragged on and more Americans died, support waned.

Connect to the Period What does the information contained in the map and graph, and expressed in the images on this page, suggest about political and social unrest during the mid-twentieth century? **[Synthesize]**

Vietnam War Approval Rates (1965–1971)



Source: The Gallup Poll