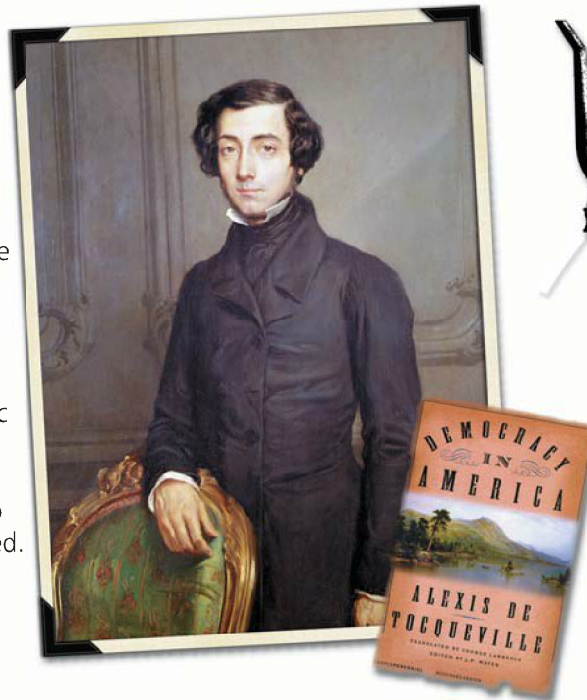


Snapshot of the Period

In 1831, the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville (shown at right) traveled to America to write about its prisons. He was so enchanted by the bustling spirit of the young nation that he chose to write instead about American culture. While he celebrated the country's energy, Tocqueville also noted that America "has produced very few writers of distinction ... [The literature of England] still darts its rays into the forests of the New World." By 1870, industrialism, population growth, economic changes, and the Civil War had all aged the nation's spirit. Along with that maturity came a new generation of writers who were the equal of any Europe had produced. Irving, Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Dickinson, Whitman, and others shone their distinctly American light into and far beyond the "forests of the New World."



1804 Filter
Coffee Pot



Hawthorne



Whitman



Poe



Emerson



Dickinson



Thoreau



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

What is the relationship
between place and *literature*?

How does literature
shape or reflect *society*?

What makes American
literature *American*?



1807 Steamboat



1814
Iron-Tipped
Plow



1835 Sewing
Machine



1845 Porcelain
False Teeth

Connect to the Period Nineteenth-century America saw explosive growth in the areas of science and industry, leading to the inventions shown on this timeline as well as many others. What do the number and variety of inventions tell you about American attitudes toward progress and innovation? **[Interpret]**

1857
Passenger
Elevator



1863 Typewriter



1863
Roller Skates

