NAVIGATING NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVELS: LINKING HISTORICAL AND LITERARY PERSPECTIVES TO EXPLORE THE INFLUENCE OF DIME NOVELS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA.

by

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IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

NAVIGATING NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVELS: LINKING HISTORICAL AND LITERARY PERSPECTIVES TO EXPLORE THE INFLUENCE OF DIME NOVELS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA.

To set the context, this study will compare what has been written about three layers of literary output in nineteenth century America, and examine what can be learned about the class, race, gender, and culture of the intended readers. The three layers are identified by David Reynolds in *Beneath the American Renaissance.* Firstly, there was "classic" literature of the American Renaissance writers, secondly, a "genteel sentimental-domestic genre," and thirdly, the "sensational literature" that grew with the rise of the penny press.

In order to set the scene, this study examines briefly the rise of the American novel, looks at some contemporary reviews, and as Cathy Davidson suggests in *Revolution and the Word* does a "careful appraisal of those moments in which literature is written." It also examines the different sectors of society at the time - the interpretive communities, in other words, the reading audience. At the same time, the study will link the arenas of cultural historian and literary critic, by examining what can be learned from a more in depth look at sensational literature, more specifically the dime novel genre.

Research into these three areas of literature reveals that much has been written about the "classic" and the "sentimental" genres, but the 'sensational" literature has been less well documented. In fact, as Shelley Streeby writes in *American Sensations,* "Although important work on sensational popular cultures has been published in the last two decades, the relative critical neglect of sensational literature...has contributed to an amnesia about the connections among working-class culture, popular culture, and

imperialism in nineteenth-century U.S. history." This seems surprising, as it is interesting to note that by 1849, Edward Zane Carroll Judson, a.k.a. Ned Buntline, who first introduced us to the adventures of Buffalo Bill Cody, had become America's highest paid writer.

This relative neglect and amnesia about sensational literature begs further exploration. Therefore the purpose of this study is to show that by examining, as Streeby defines it, the "low culture, comprising story-paper fiction and dime novels," a more complete understanding of the class, race, gender, and culture of the intended readers in nineteenth century America should be rendered. White working class members, certain immigrants, soldiers, women, and children were some of the dime novel's biggest customers. Why? Was it pure escapism or something more? What was considered good reading, and by whom? Ultimately, it should be possible to interpret this literature to discover what can be learned about history, and the culture and psyche of nineteenth century America.

The dime novel has much adolescent appeal, and historical characters, such as Jesse James, Wild Bill Hickok, and Calamity Jane, for example, will bring colorful highlights to the lesson plan. Firstly, a study of dime novel covers, posters, and photos of the authors will provide a visual research experience, which will be followed by a comparison of excerpted works from the three literary layers. A writing activity based on *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in the Wild West From 1840-1900* by Candy Moulton, will provide the students with a hands-on feel for the time period. Participation in a role-playing game will wrap up the unit, as students identify with the different audiences, publishers, authors, and characters.

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> "First and foremost, the dime novel was big business. Never before or since has book publishing held a larger share of the gross national product. [It was] the first mass-produced entertainment industry of importance."[1]
>
> E.F. Bleiler

By 1850, a range of terms had been established to describe and evaluate novels. For the purposes of this study, the novel is described as an extended fictitious prose narrative. The Chambers dictionary describes it as a tale presenting a picture of real life, especially of the emotional crises of the men and women portrayed. The Longman dictionary says the novelist's purpose is often to convey a particular idea or message about a culture or society.

The dime novel was the direct ancestor of today's popular genre paperbacks - the mystery, suspense, horror, science fiction, fantasy, romance and the Western.[2] According to historian, Michael Denning, dime novels were the American equivalent of the French 'feuilleton' or the British 'penny dreadful'[3]. He describes three main formats for popular fictional narratives between 1840 and 1890: the story paper, the pamphlet novel, and the cheap library, all of which he says are justified in being placed under the umbrella term, "dime novels".

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[1] E.F. Bleiler, *Eight Dime Novels* (New York: Dover Publications Inc. 1974) vii.
[2] Christine Jeffords, *Dime Novels: The Popular Paperback of the Nineteenth Century* <http://freepages.genealogv.rootsweb.com/~poindexterfamily/ChristinesPages/Dimers.html> (Accessed 05-06-05).
[3] Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* **(New York:** Verso, 1987)2.

The story paper originated after the establishment of the penny press in the 1830's out of the newspaper revolution.[4] They were five-cent eight-page weekly newspapers that contained serialized stories in with the news, "as well as correspondence, brief sermons, humor, fashion advice, and bits of arcane knowledge."[5] The pamphlet novel was introduced in 1842 as a newspaper "extra". It was a fifty-page, five by eight-and-a-half inch pamphlet costing 12-1/2 cents known as a "shilling novelette". Although increased postal rates put many pamphlets out of business, the "practice had been established well enough for a small New York publisher of ten-cent song and etiquette books to issue a weekly series of pamphlet novels in 1860 under the title 'Beadle's Dime Novels'."[6] These dime novels were four by six inches, a hundred page long pamphlets also known as "yellow-backs". By 1865, Beadle & Adams had published four million such dime novels, and a large part of that audience was soldiers in the Civil War. Other publishers, such as Sinclair Tousey, George Munro, and Robert DeWitt soon produced competing lines of dime novels. The cheap library was a series of nickel and dime pamphlets, eight by eleven inches, sixteen or thirty-two pages in length, introduced in 1875. By 1877 there were fourteen such libraries, for example, Beadle & Adam's *Fireside Library*, George Munro's *Seaside Library,* and Norman Munro's *Riverside Library*. Denning concludes that despite the changing formats, "the continuities of readership, publishers, and the fiction itself...justify the use of 'dime

[4] According to Denning, "the conditions for the success of the penny press also contributed to the beginning of the story papers: technological developments in production and distribution with the emergence of the steam-driven cylinder press and an extensive rail and canal network, and social changes in the emergence of a new reading public, the artisans and mechanics of the eastern cities." Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 10.
[5] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 10.
[6] Ibid., 11.

novels' to describe this body of narratives, a body quite separate from the genteel fiction of the Victorian middle classes."[7]

Denning suggests two ways to approach the dime novel: "we might loosely define these … as a concern for 'literature *in* society', seeing literature as a form of production, and a view of 'literature *and* society', seeing literature as embodying social consciousness."[8] Thus, dime novels can be viewed either from an economic standpoint as we explore what is to be learned *about* them, or dime novels can be viewed from a "poetics" standpoint as we explore what can be *learned from* them as "symbolic actions".[9] The two perspectives naturally weave together to tell the history of the dime novel - both its own history and its place in cultural history. As Denning sees it, "A history of dime novels is not simply a history of a culture industry; it also encompasses a history of their place in working class culture, and of their role in the struggles to reform that culture."[10] This dual view of dime novels gives the historian direction and insight about how to proceed. It becomes apparent that to understand the place of the dime novel in America's cultural history, it is not only important to consider their production and historical development but also their place in society and how they were interpreted. Indeed, Denning adds that since,

> the dime novel was one of the major choices nineteenth-century American culture offered working people, a history of this culture industry cannot limit itself simply to an account of the mass production and distribution of the commodities; it must consider the nature of the stories narrated and the ways they were interpreted.[11]

Yet the ways in which dime novels have been interpreted to this day have been affected more by collector's tastes than by historical analysis. In fact, as Denning posits,

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[7] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*,12.
[8] Ibid., 2.
[9] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 3.
[10] Ibid., 26.

"throughout the standard works, these narratives are repeatedly defined as subliterary - as daydreams, wish fulfillments, narcotics - with no further end than as a brief distraction from a life of work."[12] The place of dime novels in society can hardly be examined if this "escapism" theory is allowed to cloud the water, argues Denning. Warren Susman adds to the discussion by saying that, "Escapism may indeed be an issue but why and how people choose to escape in the particular ways they do - the choices a culture provides -is a much more important question."[13] In 1926, Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci posed some interesting and pertinent questions: "Why are these books always the most read and the most frequently published? What needs do they satisfy and what aspirations do they fulfill? What emotions and attitudes emerge in this squalid literature, to have such wide appeal?"[14] These stories were not merely escapism, he notes, because that theory could be applied to all forms of literature. Rather, he argued that the "success of a work of commercial literature indicates the 'philosophy of the age', that is, the mass of feelings and conceptions of the world predominant among the 'silent' majority."[15] Indeed, "one must analyze the particular illusion that the serial novel provides the people with and how this illusion changes through historical-political periods."[16] Denning concludes that if one thinks of dime novels as a mere form of escapism, one is forgetting that these stories have unconscious, even logical meaningful activities. He would agree with Merle Curti, that "The dime novel is the nearest thing we

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[11] Ibid., 66.
[12] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 65.
[13] Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 108.
[14] Antonio Gramsci, *Letters From Prison* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 80, 145.
[15] Gramsci, *Letters From Prison*, 349.
[16] Ibid., 375-376.

have had in this country to what is now so much discussed, a true 'proletarian' literature, that is, a literature written for the great masses of people and actually read by them."[17]

Mary Noel reiterates this idea of the dime novel being used as a key to understanding the feelings of the masses:

> Popular literature reflects the fleeting notions, the less enduring ideals, the physical settings, the mannerisms of the time that passes. Because popular literature is a deliberate and successful effort to please the people, it is perhaps as good an index to that elusive subject of popular opinion, tastes, and impressions as the historian can find. The very artificiality of its aims and methods makes it objective.[18]

E.F. Bleiler also notes the historical and cultural significance of the dime novel:

> During the years of its heyday...the dime novel permeated young America, molding folkways in the same manner that television does today... The dime novels also reflected and served to reinforce the cultural 'myths' of the period: admiration for the violent egotist; worship of physical strength; the Puritan ethic about wealth; the upward dynamism of progress; the righteousness of expansion; and a simplistic morality.[19]

The historian then, is encouraged to look beyond the dime novel as providing a purely escapist function. However, W.H. Bishop offered a cautionary note in 1879: "Though written almost exclusively for the use of the lower classes of society, the story papers are not accurate pictures of their life. They are not a mass of evidence from which, though rude, a valuable insight into their thoughts, feelings, and doings can be obtained by others who do not know them."[20] What then, must a historian do? How must the historian look at the dime novel literature?

Denning offers a solution. He proposes not looking so much for "accurate pictures" as for "the accents in which the stories are told, the disguises they use, and the

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[17] Merle Curti, "Dime Novels and the American Tradition." *Yale Review* 26 (Summer 1937) 761-778.
[18] Mary Noel, *Villians Galore: The Heyday of the Popular Story Weekly* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954) 1-2.
[19] Bleiler, *Eight Dime Novels*, ix.
[20] W.H. Bishop, "Story-Paper Literature." *Atlantic Monthly* 44 (September 1879) 383-393, 389.

figures that condense and displace workers' 'thoughts, feelings and doings.'"[21] He argues that "since workers made up the bulk of the dime novel public, their concerns and accents are inscribed in the cheap stories."[22] He suggests exploring the ways in which the novels were read, the intended audiences and the actual readers hoping to "uncover their disguises and hear their mechanic accents."[23]

Initially, this study will follow the suggested dual approach: setting the context, by examining the "classic," "sentimental," and "sensational," layers of literary output within the broader literary arena of nineteenth century America; and then exploring the intentions and interpretations of the readers, writers, and reviewers of the dime novel. Simultaneously, the study will navigate a course through the different worlds of the cultural historian and the literary critic, by examining what they can learn from the dime novel. Ultimately, the dime novel will emerge as a potentially rich and historically stimulating resource on the culture and psyche of America in the nineteenth century – a resource from which the historian might reap information about race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, national origin, empire, political persuasions, and morality.

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[21] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 3.
[22] Ibid., 4.
[23] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 5.

The Layers of Literary Output in Nineteenth Century America: "Classic", "Sentimental", and "Sensational" Literature.

> "The struggle now being waged in the professoriate over which writers deserve canonical status is not just a struggle over the relative merits of literary geniuses; it is a struggle among contending factions for the right to be represented in the picture America draws of itself."[24]
>
> Jane Tompkins

In the field of literary criticism, the central issues surrounding nineteenth century literature focus on comparing the value of novels that were seared into the national consciousness - the classics - with those that were largely overshadowed by these canonized texts. David Reynolds in Beneath the American Renaissance, identifies three layers of literary output in nineteenth century America: the classic literature; a "genteel sentimental-domestic genre"; and the "sensational literature" that grew with the rise of the penny press.[25]

In a study of mid-nineteenth century American literature, the lens tends to focus on the classic authors of the "American Renaissance" period in the pre-Civil War decade.[26] During this period, American writers borrowed from the Elizabethans, particularly Shakespeare.[27] Lawrence Levine supports this perception by claiming that "Shakespeare was popular entertainment in nineteenth-century America."[28] According to David Reynolds, the major authors that took part in this literary blossoming include

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[24] Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 201.
[25] David S. Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988) 171.
[26] F.O. Matthiessen coined the term in the title of his book, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941).
[27] Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance, 5.
[28] Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988)4.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and Nathaniel Hawthorne.[29]

Over the last twenty years, however, scholars including Reynolds have noted that the classic literature of the nineteenth century long commanded center stage to the point that other works were eclipsed, if not lost. Jane Tompkins notes that "American literature gives the people a conception of themselves and of their people."[30] Thus, if only certain works are represented in the various anthologies of great literature then there is a tendency for only these works to be discussed at length. Indeed, when selecting works he considered "classic", F.O. Matthiessen chose works that he needed to believe represented "all the people", as well as having "enduring requirements for great art."[31] In so doing, he actually had a great influence on the books that students and critics would read and write about for decades to come.

Yet Matthiessen's selections, in Tompkins' mind, do not fully represent the literary purposes and intentions of nineteenth century America. She subsequently raises the question of whether the classic canonized texts are a sufficient basis on which the American people should build their conceptions or whether a more accurate view exists. To support her cautionary idea about placing too much reliance upon the representative nature of the classics, Tompkins points out that even what enters the anthologies is a varying, unstable entity, and what is considered great literature is an ever-changing selection affected by the changing currents of social and political life. During both the 1930s and 1960s, for example, there were marked shifts in anthologists' aims as literary critics. To the historian, these shifts can be seen as "a response to the conservative

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[29] Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance,* 3.
[30] Tompkins, *Sensational Designs,* 199.
[31] Matthiessen, *American Renaissance,* xi.

temper of the post-war years, just as the collections of the thirties are to the Depression."[32]

Of further interest to the historian is a coupling of this question raised by Tompkins with Reynolds's claim that the major authors, "fully assimilated their popular culture... In particular, their deep engagement with the popular subversive themes and idioms supplied them with literary material."[33] He adds that, "they victoriously created literary works in which the monster of popular culture suddenly took on human aspect and lasting appeal."[34] Reynolds thus makes a case for acknowledging that the major writers were influenced by their contemporary cultural backgrounds, and that they themselves expressed their debt to lesser writers of the period. He says of Emerson that the "relationship [he] perceived between popular and elite culture was hardly one of hostility or antithesis: rather it was one of reciprocity and cross-fertilization."[35] Of Whitman, Reynolds says, "Far from being a lonely rebel against his culture, he was a broad-ranging observer who made every effort to assimilate his culture's sensational themes and images and to reproduce them deliberately in sanitizing, transfiguring poetry."[36]

However, even though Reynolds makes a partial case for the representative nature of the classic literature, the very acknowledgment of embracing sensational themes makes the historian and literary critic alike want to know more about those subversive cultural influences. One such influence was the "sentimental" genre. Shirley Samuels assures us that more than a mere influence, "Sentimentality is literally at the heart of

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[32] Tompkins, *Sensational Designs,* 192.
[33] Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* ,567.
[34] Ibid., 567.
[35] Ibid., 4.
[36] Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance,* 4.

nineteenth-century American culture."[37] She describes sentimental fiction as "a set of cultural practices designed to evoke a certain form of emotional response, usually empathy, in the reader or viewer," producing "spectacles that cross race, class, and gender boundaries."[38] She explains that the discomfort of sentimentality comes from being forced to feel - "a response that raises questions about the moral or political status of the works."[39]

Tompkins argues for serious consideration in the literary world of this domestic, or "sentimental" fiction. Her motivation stems from her desire to understand why these novels were so popular among their initial readers. Interestingly, she points out that in the time frame Matthiessen delineated, common readers were "engrossed" in the works of Susan Warner, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Fanny Fern, Grace Greenwood, Caroline Lee Hentz, Mary Jane Holmes, Augusta Jane Evans, and others. "With the exception of Emerson, none of the authors Matthiessen names was read by the common reader, nor did the common readers have a hand in assuring their survival."[40] Plainly, Tompkins is interested in bringing to light the more frequently read female authors, their original intentions, and their effect on the initial readers of sentimental fiction.

For the most part, recent scholars who critique literature and examine literature from a historical perspective, focus their interest in the "forgotten" works. Such an approach, however, is not without criticism. Jonathan Yardley of the Washington Post observed:

> With the good subjects for study already taken, they [professors of literature] have done the perfectly sensible thing and invented new subjects around which to construct their careers. This means that they must invest those subjects with

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[37] Shirley Samuels, "Introduction," *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 3-8, 4.
[38] Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*, 4-5.
[39] Samuels, The Culture of Sentiment, 5.
[40] Thompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 227.

> academic legitimacy: Hence the rush to cover with glory writers and books that previously had been properly regarded as of minor scholarly interest.[41]

Indeed, the literature professors must "stop tampering with the canon."[42]

But this view does not seem to have deterred those seeking to invest academic legitimacy. In fact, Tompkins makes it clear that it is, "morally and politically objectionable, and intellectually obtuse, to have contempt for literary works that appeal to millions of people simply *because* they are popular."[43]

Debate continues even within the sentimental fiction camp. Laura Wexler observes the differing views of Ann Douglas and Jane Tompkins regarding women writers in the Victorian between 1820 and 1870.[44] She explains that Douglas sees the women writers as undermining the tough-minded, Calvinist theological tradition. Tompkins, on the other hand, sees sentimental literature as a political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory that both codifies and attempts to mold the values of its time. They both agree, however, on two aspects of sentimental fiction: it is "a 'power' and a 'political force' too considerable to be neglected," and it requires a reexamination so that we might readjust our notions of cultural history.[45]

Michael Denning and Shelley Streeby reiterate this need for readjustment by urging us to acknowledge the mass publishing market - the sensational literature beginning in the mid-1800s. According to Streeby, "the relative critical neglect of sensational literature, along with the isolation of sensational urban genres from imperial

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[41] Jonathan Yardley, "Paradise Tossed: The Fall of Literary Standards," *Washington Post* (January 11, 1988).
[42] Levine, Highbrow / Lowbrow, 253.
[43] Tompkins, *Sensational Literature*, xiv.
[44] Laura Wexler, "Tender Violence: Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform," *The Culture of Sentiment* Samuels, 9-38, 10.
[45] Wexler, "Tender Violence," *The Culture of Sentiment,* 12.

genres, has contributed to an amnesia about the connections among working-class culture, popular culture, and imperialism in nineteenth-century U.S. history."[46]

In distinguishing between sensationalism and sentimentalism Streeby observes that, "sentimentalism generally emphasizes refinement and transcendence, whereas sensationalism emphasizes materiality and corporeality, even or especially to the point of thrilling and horrifying readers."[47] She further explains the culture of sensation in the specifically literary sphere as a separate identity that was "roughly classified as a "low" kind of literature in relation to a more middlebrow popular sentimentalism as well as to the largely nonpopular writing that would subsequently be enshrined as the classic literature of the American Renaissance."[48] However, Ronald Zboray reminds us that at the time these "three tiers" were not entirely separate worlds. Indeed, particularly in the 1840s and 1850s writers and audiences overlapped. Yet, "still, within emerging literary hierarchies these types of literature occupied different positions, even though the differences were not absolute and even though such distinctions were still in the process of being elaborated and institutionalized."[49]

Overall, the scholars have revealed that overemphasis of the "classics" has created an imbalance. The classic literature cannot be held as solely representational of the time period. A consideration of the bigger picture of nineteenth century literary output will be truer to the factions struggling to be in the picture America conceives of itself. Further, Reynolds illustrates the influence of lesser known writers on the classic authors, specifically their use of subversive and sensational themes. These influences beg further exploration and they exist most accessibly in the "low culture", the dime novels

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[46] Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* University of California Press (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 37.
[47] Streeby, *American Sensations,* 31.
[48] Ibid., 27.

and story papers of the nineteenth century. Tompkins further points the direction for the historian by identifying a continuum:

> the more directly [the novel] engages purely local and temporal concerns, the less literary it will be, not only because it is captive to the fluctuations of history, but also because in its attempt to mold public opinion it is closer to propaganda than to art, and hence furnishes material for the historian rather than the literary critic.[50]

So the path for the historian is plotted. The door to the subversive world has been flung wide open and the literary critic has waved the historian through. The historian is to navigate around literary criticism and the judgment of a work as good or bad. As Cathy Davidson says, "Criticism has already rendered its crucial verdicts and its remaining business is mostly to buttress further its case. Criticism thus becomes a kind of house committee on un-American fictional activities."[51] However, it is also wise to avoid trying to reduce literary works to "simply history". After all, as Dominick La Capra warns: "Literature becomes redundant when it tells us what can be gleaned from other documentary sources."[52] Ultimately, a cross-disciplinary approach is suggested, one in which literary critics and historians work side-by-side to unveil the true picture of nineteenth century literature and its audience. To focus on the kinds of responses novels received, and to consider how persuasive their messages might have been to the readers is the next direction indicated to the historian.

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[49] Streeby, *American Sensations,* 29.
[50] Tompkins, *Sensational Designs,* 186.
[51] Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)255.
[52] Dominick La Capra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 126.

Intentions and Interpretations: the Readers, Writers, and Reviewers of Dime Novel Fiction in Nineteenth Century America

> "The early American novel happened at those places in its society where issues were unresolved, at the interstices between public rhetoric and private expression."[53]
>
> Cathy Davidson

By 1850, the novel in America had, at last, "entered the world of intellectual discourse."[54] Davidson not only describes the novel as a "new" form of literature, but claims it encouraged more participation on the part of the reader. This contrasts with the "classical rhetorical tradition" where readers were generally required to be more passive and subservient.[55] With the novel, however, the reader could explore possibilities of meaning and be taken subversively to where they "might not willingly be taken on their own."[56] This idea helps the historian realize the potential of the novel to be used for political gain or societal commentary.

It must be remembered, however, that a novel is not a mirror of reality. As Davidson says, "It is its own artificially framed world, an organized structure with its own rules and interpretations. At the same time, it is part of a larger structure and is determined by... economic, institutional, and ideological forces."[57] The historian must not fall into the trap of merely trying to reduce the content and analyze the meaning of the novel. To do this is to miss the point of the power of the novel to interact with its readers. Indeed, "The novel is its reading and its readers."[58]

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[53] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 260.
[54] Nina Baym, Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) 14.
[55] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 260.
[56] Ibid,260.
[57] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word* 260.
[58] Ibid., 262.

Stanley Fish referred to these readers as "interpretive communities".[59] In order to understand the interpretive community of a certain type of literature, it would be ideal to interview readers. For example, in conducting such interviews in the early 1980s, Janice A. Radway, found that the romance novel served a variety of different purposes in the lives of its readers, more than the simply escapist purpose.[60] Through letters and diary entries, and even in the fiction itself, it is possible to learn how the novels were read. In a recent article examining various letters and personal papers from nineteenth-century Boston, Ronald and Mary Zboray suggest that "the discourse of response itself comprises a text to be analyzed as primary evidence of reading in history."[61] In addition, actual copies of surviving novels contain wear and tear, repairs, writing in the margins, and inscriptions - all of which reveal something to reveal about the readers.

While understanding the contemporary nineteenth century reader is key to the historian, it is not a task that has been at the center of discussion. In the literary world, the focus has centered more on the comparative value of various works and which of these deserve canonical status. Recent scholarship has questioned whether or not the classics should be allowed to overshadow to such an extent that the American consciousness is misinformed and then develops an unrealistic perception of itself. Zboray suggests "A historicist approach that combines disciplines," and that "can unify text and context, the literary and the historical."[62] This would most effectively reconstruct the responses of

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[59] Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," *New Literary History, 2* (Autumn 1970), 123-62.
[60] Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).
[61] Ronald J. Zboray, and Mary Saracino, "Have You Read...? Real Readers and Their Responses in Antebellum Boston and Its Region," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 52 (September 1997) 139-170, 169.
[62] Zboray, "Have You Read...?" 170.

nineteenth century readers, and "remains the most promising avenue" for further exploration.[63]

The question of who read dime novels, and what was thought about them remains difficult and elusive. Even if one can determine who the readers were, discovering how they interpreted their reading can be difficult. Denning says that cultural historians of America have been reluctant to use class categories to describe and analyze the reading public. As a result, they often end up with "a simple dichotomy between the few and the many, the discriminating and the mass, the elite and the popular."[64] For example, Nina Baym identified two such groups, as she says, "Ultimately, in novel criticism, the audience seems divided into two groups, correlated loosely with presumed class membership."[65] Denning, however, points out that Baym misses the third group occasionally mentioned in the reviews she uses: the readers of cheap literature.

Here we return to an earlier discussion, the concept of three, not two, literary layers. Denning attributes the three-tiered understanding of antebellum readers to George Woodberry, and the twentieth century concept of three "brows" to Henry Nash Smith -"lowbrow", "middlebrow", and "highbrow". Woodberry used the term "Unknown Public" for the "lowbrow" audience. In addition, several terms seem to have been used for this group of readers including the "great people", the "million", and the "submerged tenth".

Having first acknowledged this "lowbrow" group, Denning then attempts to characterize the readers of dime novels by explaining the relationship between two questions: Who were the audiences of the dime novels, story papers, and cheap libraries?

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[63] Ibid.,170.
[64] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 27.

What did working class people read in the nineteenth century? Denning argues that these two questions converge and that "the bulk of the audience of dime novels were workers -craft workers, factory operatives, domestic servants and domestic workers - and that the bulk of workers' reading was sensational fiction."[66] W. H.Bishop, in 1879, concurred when he wrote that the story papers and cheap fiction were "written almost exclusively for the use of the lower classes of society."[67] Frederick Whittaker, writing in 1884, echoed this belief when he wrote that "the readers of the dimes are farmers, mechanics, workwomen, drummers, boys in shops and factories."[68]

Further probing leads us to ask just which sectors of the "lower class society" delineated the dime novel audience. The publication of the *Ten Cent Irish Novels,* and George Munro's *Die Deutsche Library* led Denning to "assume that some part of the audience was made up of immigrants and ethnics, particularly Irish and Germans ... there were, however, no dime novels aimed at Blacks."[69] There seems to have been no doubt that the audience was predominantly young and white. Bishop described the people who bought dime novels on publication days:

> A middle-aged woman with a shawl over her head and a half peck of potatoes in a basket, stops in for one; a shop-girl on her way home from work; a servant from one of the good houses in the side streets...But with them, before them, and after them come boys...the most ardent class of patron are boys.[70]

Denning adds, however, that the dime novel should not be deemed children's literature.

To further identify the dime novel audience, it will help to consider where dime novels were read, and under what circumstances. It could "give the critic and historian

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[65] Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers,* 47.
[66] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 27.
[67] W.H. Bishop, "Story-Paper Literature." *Atlantic Monthly,* 389.
[68] Frederick Whittaker,. "Reply," *New York Tribune* (16 March 1884) 8.
[69] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 30.
[70] W.H. Bishop, "Story-Paper Literature," *Atlantic Monthly,* 384.

some idea of how they ought to be read and interpreted now."[71] For example, increased railroad and streetcar travel for commuting created a new venue for "light entertaining reading." Indeed, "The culture of the railroad is deeply inscribed in the dime novel, whether as a technical force that makes mass distribution possible, as the mode of transportation that encourages reading, or as the subject of innumerable novels themselves."[72] It seems the three main venues for dime novel reading were traveling, at home, or at work. More telling though is the fact that dime novels were not welcome at "school, religious institutions, saloons, and other cultural and leisure sites."[73]

Little research has been conducted about the writers of the dime novel. Collectors have spent a great deal of time sorting through the pseudonyms, and the names under which writers published, but for the most part as Denning says, "even rudimentary study has not been done."[74] The available research is limited to "some autobiographical accounts, a few interviews, a handful of biographies, and Albert Johannsen's biographical dictionary of the Beadle authors."[75] In general, Denning recommends that we consider dime novels as a branch of journalism. Indeed, "if the production of dime novels is considered as a branch of journalism, the repeated formulas, the quantity and rapidity of the writing, the lack of a clear 'author', the appearance of current events in the stories, and the industrial conditions of dime novel writing become more comprehensible."[76]

The dime novel, then, must be recognized as a commercial product of a growing industry. The publishers had strict requirements, and it can be concluded that much dime

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[71] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 38.
[72] lbid.,40.
[73] Ibid.,38.
[74] Ibid., 20.
[75] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 20.
[76] Ibid., 24.

novel production was "merely writing for money."[77] It is interesting to note, however, that even though some writers discounted their work in this way, they "all defend the morality and usefulness of dime novels."[78] For example, Eugene Sawyer's interview statement of 1902 says that, "Though my work was all trashy, it never pandered to any depraved tastes. For a dime novel you require only three things - a riotous imagination, a dramatic instinct, and a right hand that never tires."[79]

Some authors became well known, and "by force of personality became stars in this industry - Lippard, Buntline, Southworth, and Libbey," but these were the exception rather than the rule.[80] It would be safer to conclude that "the trend was toward industrial production based on division of labor and corporate trademarks,"[81] and that the dime novel was "a commercial product of a burgeoning industry employing relatively educated professionals - writers who also worked as journalist, teachers, or clerks."[82]

Tompkins casts further light on the writing style of dime novel authors by urging us to value the familiar and typical elements: the stereotypical characters and the formulaic plots. This leads her to view the nineteenth century texts as "conceived agents of cultural formation rather than objects of interpretation and appraisal."[83] Tompkins' aim is to highlight the common characteristics rather than the differences in the texts, as is the normal approach in literary criticism. "For a novel's impact on the culture at large, depends not on its escape from the formulaic and derivative, but on its tapping into a storehouse of commonly held assumptions, reproducing what is already there in a typical

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[77] Albert Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams and its Dime and Nickel Novels: The Story of a Vanished Literature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950) 4.
[78] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 22.
[79] Gelett Burgess, "The Confessions of a Dime-Novelist," *The Bookman* 15 (August 1902): 533.
[80] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 23.
[81] Ibid., 23.
[82] Ibid., 23 and 45.
[83] Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, xvii.

and familiar form."[84] In other words, the novels written at that time met the needs of the reading audience of the time, and should not necessarily be subjected to modern critical requirements. Indeed, "the problems these plots delineate - problems concerning the relations among people of different sexes, races, social classes, ethnic groups, economic levels - require a narrative structure different from the plots of modern psychological novels."[85] These novels were not written to be extensively analyzed in the centuries to come; they were written for the contemporary public and they offered solutions to possible social and political situations. Thus, the scholars suggest novels not only were written in a way that encouraged contemporary audiences to respond, but they also were designed in a way that shaped culture and society.

Patrick Brantlinger notes the extreme responses of the contemporary audiences and reviewers of sensational literature and the controversy surrounding dime novels and their readers:

> Fiction, no matter how realistic, always implies the inadequacy of the reality that it supplements and often explicitly critiques. The more specific history of reaction to novels and novel-reading can be understood as a diffuse moral panic extending over two centuries. But the general anxiety is punctuated by the controversies aroused by specific kinds of fiction - Gothic romances, Newgate novels, penny dreadfuls - none exceeding in intensity the uproar over sensational novels.[86]

The controversy was known as the "fiction question": "the debates, moral panics, and attempts to regulate cultural production that marked the nineteenth-century reaction to the flood of cheap stories and the marked increase in working-class reading."[87] For example, the Ladies Repository stated in 1845 that the object of popular fiction was "the murder of time, the dissipation of the intellectual energies, and the corruption of the

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[84] Ibid., xvi.
[85] Ibid., xvi.
[86] Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) 142.
[87] Denning, Mechanic Accents, 47.

heart; whose tendency is to habituate the mind to a morbid excitement which totally unfits it for healthy and rational action."[88] Contributors to the *Atlantic Monthly,* a central periodical of the genteel culture, similarly debated the effects of the dime novel, "wondering whether dime novel reading was better than no reading at all."[89] These debates surrounding the publication of the cheap, popular literature, were fueled in part by Anthony Comstock, founder of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, "a quasi-legal organization to campaign against immoral and obscene books and materials."[90] Part of Comstock's campaign was directed against dime novels and story papers, and he even had the editor of the *Fireside Companion* arrested in 1872 for publishing obscene matter. Denning asks whether Comstock's vice crusade was "an important and symptomatic cultural struggle, or merely a colorful but idiosyncratic incident?"[91] He cautions that while Comstock's views were not fully representative of American culture, "members and supporters of vice societies were bastions of patrician and bourgeois culture... and part of the larger philanthropic activities of genteel reformers."[92] These philanthropic reform activities extended into the debates among librarians who hoped to deter their readers from sensational fiction toward genteel middlebrow popular reading, thus recognizing that the dime novels competed for the loyalties of the workers.[93] All in all, the ideological debates about dime novels and working class reading were largely moralistic in nature and influenced the stances taken by the contemporary reviewers of the popular literature.

Ultimately, Denning says the debates were,

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[88] Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers,* 59-60.
[89] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 52.
[90] Ibid., 50.
[91] Ibid., 51.
[92] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 51.
[93] Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920* (New York: The Free Press, 1979) 71.

> an exercise of cultural power, drawing and policing (literally, in the case of Comstock) a boundary between the *genteel* and the *sensational* This boundary was a moral as well as aesthetic one, dividing the culture of the 'middle class' from the ways of the 'lower classes', and giving very different inflections to apparently similar stories.[94]

The maintenance of the perceived boundary between the "genteel" and the "sensational" in the nineteenth century, meant that dime novels were routinely excluded from "middle class" culture. The exclusion marks the attempts by the dominant culture to police and reform the culture of the "lower classes". In the twentieth century the boundary lines were drawn up differently. According to Denning, "In its twentieth-century afterlife the dime novel ascends the cultural escalator, becoming a sign of American middle-class boyhood and used to draw a boundary excluding the cultures of Black migrants and the 'new' immigrants."[95]

The view that dime novels were representative of American middle-class boyhood, is one that has persisted until relatively recently. For example, E.F. Bleiler writing in 1973 claimed that "the history of the dime novel, on the whole, is one of devolution. What began as a marketing venture for adult books ended as an almost entirely juvenile form...Today the dime novel is a matter of nostalgia and sociology of literature."[96] Denning would refute such a view, insisting that to view these books "through the culture of craft workers, factory operatives, and laborers rescues them from a kind of patronizing and patriotic nostalgia, and situates them not in a pastoral golden age but in the class conflicts of the gilded age."[97]

In general, what scholars have unearthed so far is a clearer understanding of the role of the nineteenth century novel. By drawing our gaze away from the "classic"

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[94] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 59.
[95] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 59.
[96] Bleiler, *Eight Dime Novels,* ix.
[97] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 16.

literature and to a more balanced position, we find that the "forgotten works" from the "sentimental" and "sensational" genres are credited as being both instigators and the results of social change. Davidson remarks on the ways in which American authors used the novel as a "political and cultural forum" and a place for authors to "express their visions."[98] This sentiment is echoed particularly in the work of Tompkins, Denning, and Streeby, who urge us to look more carefully at the popular sentimental and sensational works. They suggest that by putting the dime novel in historical context and revealing the complex environment in which it was written, we will recognize the significant role the dime novel played in nineteenth century culture. What remains is an exploration of the content of the dime novel, and the specific places where "disguises" may be uncovered.

[98] Davidson, Revolution and the Word, 11.

What Does the Dime Novel Tell the Historian about Nineteenth Century America?

> "Literature and popular culture comprise arenas of class conflict within which the roles of class actors are not adumbrated, but tried out and realized."[99]
>
> Alexander Saxton

The body of sensational literature that includes story papers, pamphlet novels, and cheap libraries has been placed under the umbrella term "dime novels". This particular body of fiction is vast and open to a variety of classification schemes, making it impossible to be conclusive, and hazardous to form broad generalizations. However, amid this "unmanageable mass" of nineteenth century literature, lie some interpretative opportunities.[100] A few scholars, such as Michael Denning, Alexander Saxton, and Shelley Streeby, have made inroads and claimed some discernible common themes. In particular, Saxton and Streeby build on the work of Denning and specifically highlight the connections between white egalitarianism, nativism, and imperialism; the creation of the American hero; the political and moral persuasions of the authors; and in effect, the ideologies of the American Republic.

In order to comprehend fully the impact of the dime novel on nineteenth century culture, one must first understand the "construction of heroes" at the heart of American ideology.[101] For example, Streeby illustrates that "in the 1840s, the 'volunteer' - the virtuous citizen-soldier who defended the nation out of a love for his native land - was often championed as a manly ideal and as a symbol of the United States in the popular press."[102] Saxton suggests that it was the Free Soil hero who became the "chief

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[99] Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990) 321.
[100] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 206.
[101] Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*, 321.
[102] Streeby, *American Sensations*, 82.

commodity" of the dime novel industry.[103] He supports this claim by quantifying the output of the serials and dime novels of the Beadle and Adams publishing company. Using novel titles and descriptions from Albert Johannsen's comprehensive volumes, *The House of Beadle and Adams and its Dime and Nickel Novels, Volume* /, Saxton tabulates the dime novel themes by half decade from 1860-1900. He classifies these novels into several broad categories: Colonial pre-1775, Revolution 1775-1790, Frontier and Western Post-1790, Mexican War, Civil War and Slavery, Sea, Domestic and Melodrama, and Detective.[104] In addition, he sub-categorizes the 'Revolution' and 'Frontier and Western' categories into 'Indian-Related' and 'Other'. His findings indicate that all works dealing directly with Indian conflict and egalitarianism make up 52 percent and outweigh all other themes. Saxton claims that "if the Free Soil hero became the chief commodity of the story paper-dime novel industry, it would follow that egalitarian discourse and Indian killing would furnish central themes for that literature."[105]

The "Free Soil" idea was presented in 1848 as a solution to prevent any extensions of slavery in the territories after the end of the Mexican War. Advocates of the Free Soil movement were typically white, Anglo, Protestants, with yeoman or artisan backgrounds from the lower to middle classes; in other words, working Americans, with "self-made man" idealism. Saxton observes that fictional heroes act out or realize class relationships, and the Free Soil heroes of the dime novels were no exception. However, he adds that these particular dime novel heroes were able to "transcend the mere acting out of class situations" and could be used as powerful advocates for certain values.[106]

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[103] Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic,* 328.
[104] Ibid., 329.
[105] Saxton, The Rise and Fall of the White Republic, 321.
[106] Ibid., 321.

They showed heroic traits such as courage and grace that were "to some extent exportable across class lines."[107]

How did the Free Soil heroes attain such heights in the dime novel literature? The Beadle and Adams collections provide some statistical evidence. According to Saxton's calculations, the writers employed full time in the dime novel industry resided north of the Mason-Dixon line with a heavy concentration in New England, upper New York state, and the old Northwest. In addition, for 30 percent of the "regular" contributors, the dime novel profession "provided a route from farmer-artisan backgrounds into the professional middle class...whose egalitarian rhetoric directly expressed their own class antagonisms and aspirations."[108] Thus, Saxton draws attention to the popularity of the white egalitarian rhetoric in the bulk of dime novel literature that indeed, reflects author belief and experience.

It must be remembered, however, that in a society where conflicting views exist, "one person's hero... is likely to be another's villain."[109] The Free Soil advocates had mixed motives. As Gary B. Nash explains; "For some, slavery was an evil to be destroyed. But for many northern white farmers looking westward, the threat of economic competition with an expanding system of large-scale slave labor was even more serious. Nor did they wish to compete with free blacks."[110] The Free-Soilers' advocacy of the prevention of slavery extension only went so far. Saxton explains the complexity of viewpoints:

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[107] Ibid., 321.
[108] Ibid., 328.

[109] Ibid., 321.

[110]Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society* (New York: Longman, 2003) 408.

> While from the viewpoint of rebelling against a politics of deference, or that of overthrowing the Slave Power, [the Free Soil heroes] appear as liberators, their role with respect to Indians (and those empathetic to Indians) will be exactly opposite. Members of the newly forming industrial labor force, on the other hand, many of whom doubtless concurred in massacres of Indians, would increasingly perceive Free Soil heroes (the Indian killers John Chivington and John Evans, for example) as betrayers in the sense of defending class exploitation and special privilege.[111]

This existence of conflicting views in society is another key to understanding the impact of the dime novel, and the scholars agree when they refer to the dime novel as the place where conflicting political or moral views were tried and tested. For example, Streeby notes the connections between sensational literature "and the wider arenas of political life and social movements, especially the labor, abolitionist, nativist, and land reform movements of the era."[112] Saxton observes that "literature and popular culture comprise arenas of class conflict."[113] Finally, Denning urges us to understand the dime novels as,

> neither forms of deception, manipulation, and social control nor as expressions of a genuine people's culture, opposing and resisting the dominant culture. Rather they are best seen as a contested terrain, a field of cultural conflict where signs with wide appeal and resonance take on contradictory disguises and are spoken in contrary accents.[114]

To exemplify this "contested terrain", Streeby draws our attention to some specific dime novel authors, their political and moral views, and how these views appear in their works. In particular, she suggests "how intimately questions of land, labor, and nativism in Northeastern cities were connected to issues of empire."[115] For example, of the mysteries-of-the-city and Western frontier novels by Ned Buntline, whose literary

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[111] Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic,* 321.
[112] Streeby, American Sensations, 27.
[113] Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic,* 321.
[114] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 3.
[115] Streeby, *American Sensations,* 22.

career spanned from the 1840s until his death in 1886, Streeby says the "conjunction of class, nativism, white manhood, and imperialism is especially significant."[116] She adds,

> Although Buntline supported the U.S. troops and glorified U.S. military leaders, his proslavery, nativist, and white egalitarian beliefs made him wary of unequivocally_endorsing a policy of U.S. empire-building in Mexico, and those same beliefs would play a significant role in the working-class nativism that he later promoted in his newspapers, in his novels, and on the streets of New York City.[117]

Streeby notes that George Lippard's "sensational literature and advocacy of the working class also revolved around this double axis of city and empire."[118] Lippard was influenced by his Protestant, German immigrant background, and "his engagement with the fiercely divided artisan republican labor culture of Philadelphia."[119] A.J.H. Duganne, who wrote poetry championing the laborer's rights to the soil, was another author whose nativist and white egalitarian beliefs characterized his work. According to Streeby, "his anti-imperialism derived from nativist beliefs about the importance of keeping foreigners and Catholics out of the republic, as well as from pacifist, radical republican, and anti-slavery convictions."[120] It is worth noting that Duganne was elected to one term as representative of the nativist Know-Nothing Party and that it was the Know-Nothings who first brought anti-Catholicism to national focus in America in the 1850s.

Streeby further notes that female dime novel authors, such as Ann Stephens, Metta Victor, and Mary Denison played a role in forming cultural ideals about empire and U.S. expansion. She observes that, in general, the Northern white women authors "did not entirely support the leveling of class distinctions among whites."[121] Rather, they

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[116] Ibid., 138.
[117] Ibid., 21.
[118] Ibid., 23.
[119] Ibid., 23.
[120] Streeby, *American Sensations,* 22.
[121] Ibid., 26.

upheld a more "middling version of white egalitarianism...that was opposed to the perceived excesses of both the lower and upper classes."[122]

Streeby's aim is to help us reconsider the place of imperialism in the "centrality of entanglements" of class, race, gender, and sexuality to be found in the dime novel literature.[123] She compares the story paper novels about the U.S. Mexican War with congressional debates about annexation:

> Although these novelettes stake out different positions on the war and annexation, they all register questions that were being raised in Congress, in the newspapers, and in popular culture more generally, about the boundaries of whiteness and about the incorporation of nonwhites and Catholics into the republic. ...Which foreign elements might safely be absorbed by Anglo-Saxon America and which would fatally modify it?[124]

In the "international romance — a subgenre of imperial adventure fiction" women were used as symbols of the Mexican nation.[125] These romances used the marriage contract as the model for the relationship between Mexico and the United States. Native-born American white men formed "cross-class coalitions" with the Mexican women "at the expense of immigrants and nonwhites."[126] Ultimately, Streeby's overall picture of relations with Mexico links white egalitarian ideology with ideas about imperialism:

> In the 1840s an emerging cross-class coalition among artisans, yeomanry, and an important sector of the merchant elite was built on the foundation of nativism as well as the subordination of nonwhites. Such a white egalitarian position which emphasizes equal opportunity and class mobility for non-elite men, is grounded in the ideal of white 'native' military manliness tested and displayed through violent encounters with foreigners and nonwhites. This is true of all the story paper novels that obscure or negate the hero's class origins in favor of an overarching model of imperial manhood and international romance.[127]

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[122] Ibid., 26.
[123] Ibid., 37.
[124] Ibid., 112-113.
[125] Ibid., 25.
[126] Ibid., 25.

It becomes apparent, as Denning says, that "the dime novel remains firmly within the racist parameters of the nineteenth century producer culture," and that "if the dime novel's accents are those of the mechanic, its color is white."[128] Dana Nelson further clarifies "race" saying, "while 'race' as a concretized idea was not fully realized until the late nineteenth to early twentieth century...what we now categorize as 'race' [is] the arbitrary enforcement and institutionalization of Anglo superiority in United States history."[129]

The purpose of this study has been to identify and understand the ways that scholars value the dime novel body of fiction within the broader output of nineteenth century American literature. The review of scholarly interest in the dime novel demonstrates that dime novels can indeed reveal valuable insights into American culture and psyche. In particular, the contemporary controversy surrounding the existence of dime novel literature suggests the contested relationship boundaries between different class sectors of society. The actual content of the dime novel literature reveals what we would today call "racist" white egalitarian ideals, and the ideologies of the working, "producing" classes. Attitude towards imperialism, territorial expansion, and consequent treatment of Indians is also highly visible, as is the confined role of women in society.

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[127] Streeby, American Sensations, 129.
[128] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 211.
[129] Dana D. Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race " in American Literature, 1638-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 21.

Conclusion

As Davidson illustrates, the novelist "chooses to write fiction precisely for what the form allows and for what it disallows."[130] In its early days during eighteenth century America, the "formlessness" of the novel "made it resistant to univocal readings," and allowed "tentative trials, and forays into alternative possibilities of meaning where readers might not willingly venture on their own."[131] Indeed, the new "novel" form encouraged unprecedented interaction with its reader. The reading of a novel was a more personal experience, and the opportunity this allowed the author to subversively shape the reader's thinking, however consciously, became a reality. Of particular interest to the historian, Davidson reminds us, is that this reality might lead us to conceive novels "as agents and products of social change."[132] On the other hand, she also provides a cautionary note: what we must not do, is "subject novels to a reductive content analysis in order to extract their historical 'meaning'," because to do this "misses the meaning of the genre."[133] Thus a fine line has been drawn between over-analysis, reduction or reading too much into the novels on the one hand, and seeing them as nothing more than escapism on the other. Throughout the course of this study, conscious awareness of this line has led to careful navigation between the literary and historical spheres.

The lens has focused on the novel's value to the historian. If, as Davidson reminds us, novels are not history, should historians be using them to learn about the past? Do novels have anything to tell us about the history of a particular time period? The answer from the scholars is a resounding "yes", *if they* are not taken too literally. Denning suggests the best approach is to train our ears to hear the accents in which the

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[130] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word,* 262.
[131] Ibid., 260.
[132] Ibid., 13.

stories were written - not only the accents of different ethnic representations, but the different accents of the socioeconomic classes. He and others suggest the dime novel should be seen as an area of contested terrain, a place where different political and moral views were put on trial.

For the historian determining the usefulness of the novel, and more specifically in this study, the usefulness of the dime novel body of fiction, a dual approach is suggested: examination of dime novels for their own sake, by analyzing their own history and development against the larger backdrop of nineteenth century literature; and examination of dime novels in terms of what inherent themes and ideologies might tell us about the society and culture in which they were written. Examination of the larger context revealed that dime novels belonged in the lowbrow "sensational" culture that made up one of three layers of literary output — the others being the highbrow "classic" genre, and the middlebrow "sentimental" genre. According to recent literary scholars, the over-emphasis on the "classic" genre has led to an unbalanced view of nineteenth century literature. To readjust our notions, there has been a recent push towards acknowledging lesser-known works and authors of the "sentimental" genre, and even more recently, towards recognizing the role played by "sensational" works in nineteenth century society. Of importance to the cultural historian is the desire to understand the mindset of the readers, writers, and contemporary reviewers, and to determine what message, if any, the writer wanted to convey, and what reactions and interpretations were received. The "uproar over sensational novels" certainly leads us to the conclusion that dime novels were controversial, and indeed a contested terrain.[134] Thus, a closer look at the actual content, more than just a cataloguing of themes, has recently been undertaken. Those

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[133] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word,* 260.
[134] Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson,* 142.

few scholars concur on the presence of some key elements in the dime novel literature: the concept of the self-made man; white egalitarian ideals; the harsh treatment of Indians; differing views on imperialism; and the subordinate role of women. The accents to be heard are those of the "working-class" sector of society, the white craft workers, artisans and farmers of nineteenth century America.

Opportunities abound however, for further exploration into this vast body of literature. True, the dime novels were subject to "sensational, formulaic plots," a "cheap, crude format," and seen as "economic commodities rather than intellectual or aesthetic artifacts," but they are proving to be an interesting resource on the culture and psyche of nineteenth century America.[135]

[135] Cynthia Allen, *The Life of the Dime Novel or Why Popular Reading Was Not Popular*, 2003 <http://courses.unt.edu/efiga/HistoryAndEthnography/callenresearch.doc > (Accessed 05-07-05).

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson plan is to help students understand the role of the dime novel in American society and to value the use of this body of fiction as a historical resource. The dime novel literature is seen as both an instigator and a result of social change. By studying this "low culture, comprising story-paper fiction and dime novels" it is hoped that a more complete understanding of class, race, and gender issues in nineteenth century American culture will be rendered.[136] Ultimately, the students will be able to navigate their way through the literary field and to understand the advantages and disadvantages of fictional primary documents and how to interpret them.

The overarching theme of the lesson plan is that fiction can teach us much about history. Thus, students will discover that the dime novel reveals the thoughts, feelings, and actions of working Americans; the racial, class, and gender parameters of nineteenth century American culture; and the embodiment of American ideology - the self-made man. The themes center on what can be learned from the dime novel literature about American society - the relationship boundaries between the different class sectors, the "racist" white egalitarian ideals of the working-classes, and the confining role of women. Consequently, the students may understand how "new cultural movements at different social levels affected American life."[137]

This lesson plan series is intended for use in 5 ,6 ,7 , and 8th grade classrooms. Most activities are somewhat open-ended and the lessons could quite readily be adapted

[136] Streeby, *American Sensations*, 28.

up or down accordingly. The lessons will take place over a two-week period and will be divided into three broad areas: an exploration of the history of the dime novel, an examination of the writing style of dime novel authors, and an analysis of what might be learned about American society using the content of the dime novels. On days one through four, the students will study dime novel covers through a picture analysis activity in which they will note their first impressions, and predict likely dime novel themes and content. They will graphically organize the literary output of nineteenth century literature into three tiers, identify authors, and compare excerpts of works from those tiers. In addition, the students will examine the relationship between dime novels and the rapid railroad expansion of the mid-nineteenth century, and identify the dime novel audience. These activities should serve to classify the dime novel body of fiction as an identifiable historical resource, with its own interesting history of development.

On days five through seven, the students will delve into the world of dime novel authors and try their hand at writing in that style. Initially, they will examine a stringent set of publisher's rules for would-be dime novel authors and then study the writing devices and techniques used in a typical dime novel to create a fast-moving plot requiring larger-than-life characters. The students will then be required to complete a writing assignment using a character illustrated on a dime novel cover. This assignment is intended to be part of a cross-disciplinary approach bridging language arts and social studies.

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[137] United States History Standards for Grades 5-12 Era 6.

The final area of study will take place on days eight through ten when the question of what can be learned from the actual content of dime novels will be explored. Through a role-playing activity, the students will come to understand some political and cultural ideals of the authors and their intended audiences. The students will examine the characters and the heroes of dime novel fiction, and decide what role they fulfilled for society at large. In so doing, they will ponder three questions: Do they agree with the scholars that dime novels really served more than an escapist function? Do they hear the "accents" of the working classes? Did their own characters have any underlying accents, beliefs, or prejudices that were reflected in their writing? Then using a literary pyramid, students will explore Denning's suggestion about reading dime novels allegorically, analyze Saxton's table of dime novel content, discuss the free-soil heroes, the ideals of white egalitarianism, and the concept of the "self-made man". Students will study "how Americans, animated by land hunger, the ideology of 'Manifest Destiny', and the optimism that anything was possible with imagination, hard work, and the maximum freedom of the individual, flocked to the western frontier."[138]

The concluding activities will involve a self-evaluation of their writing experience and a formal evaluation with short answer, multiple choice, and open-ended essay questions. The evaluations will cause the students to think critically about the novels and the practice of using fiction to flesh out today's social studies lessons. What are the advantages? What are the pitfalls? They will also ponder the writing for money versus

[138] From the overview to the United States History Standards for Grades 5-12 Era 4. <http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/era4-5-12.html> (Accessed 05-07-05).

pride argument, and ultimately consider the usefulness of literature in furthering our understanding of history.

Prior Content Knowledge and Skills

There are two areas of study after which an examination of dime novel literature would fit aptly into the grades 5-8 California history curriculum. One is the study of policies towards American Indians, particularly during the territorial expansion and reform period in the pre-Civil War era. The other is after the Civil War and Reconstruction period, while studying the development of industrial corporations from 1870-1900. Prior knowledge of the treatment of American Indians, the impact of Indian removal and resettlement, and the concept of "Manifest Destiny" would help students better understand the frontier and western expansion themes in the dime novels. An understanding of the rise of industrial corporations, mechanized farming, and technological innovations that took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century would set the stage for understanding the dime novel culture, and its working-class connections. (See Appendix A for an exact listing on a grade-by-grade basis of the applicable California standards.)

In addition to prior content knowledge, there are a number of prerequisite work skills that the students will need before embarking on this study. For example: a fifth grade or above reading level and writing ability, and a familiarity with graphically organized material and data tables; an understanding of narrative fictional elements - setting, character, plot problem and resolution; and experience in map-reading, particularly maps showing gradual territorial expansion.

It is hoped that the students will expand upon their powers of analysis and observation, their reading and creative writing skills, and their critical evaluation and discussion abilities during the course of this study. More importantly, the students should gain a deeper understanding of the seeds of opportunities and difficulties present in the nineteenth century that face our society today.

Content Hook

In order to set the stage and to maximize student interest, a visual matching game will be the basis for the content hook. This activity, shown in Appendix B1, involves matching dime novel cover illustrations with the titles. Once that is complete, the students can then attempt to match the titles and illustrations to the dime novel series or library. The illustrations were designed to hook the readers, so it seems natural that it should be the starting place for this study. As "it was the job of the artist to convey the suspense and drama of these stories in visual form," the illustrations are meant to grab attention and express the "spirit and essence of each story."[139]

Before presenting the material to the students, a disclaimer is advised. It should be stated that the images used in the following lesson plans are not endorsing the opinions or ideals of today, but should be seen in historical context. It should also be noted that not all dime novel material is suitable for children, so selections must be made according to level of maturity.

At the start of this pre-lesson activity, announce that the students will play a matching game and that they should anticipate some ambiguity. Matching by process of elimination may be necessary. The reason for the possible ambiguity is the interesting procedural changes that took place as the dime novel industry grew:

> In the early days of the dime novel, publishers would hire artists to produce original illustrations for each story. As time went on, however, publishers began to recycle illustrations, taking images from one story and using them to illustrate

[139] *Guided Tour on Print Processes: The Artist* Stanford Universities Academic Text Service <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/ppintro.httnl> (Accessed 05-07-05).

> completely different stories in an effort to keep cost down. This meant that authors were often presented with an illustration and told to write a story around a pre-existing image.[140]

When presenting the material, the pictures could be enlarged and placed on an overhead and discussed and matched as a whole class, or the students could use the format in the appendix and work in pairs. Once the students have spent approximately ten minutes matching the titles and illustrations, some pairs might like to try and match them to the dime novel series titles. The particular dime novel covers used are provided in their complete format on a separate answer sheet.[141] Once the illustrations and titles have been successfully matched, ask the students to predict and list the themes suggested by the titles. Some possible answers might be, "westerns", "adventures", "Indian stories", "mysteries", "city stories", "sea stories", and "invention stories". Some students might notice similarities with today's comic and magazine story themes. Discuss the students' first impressions with this material. Does it appear these stories are exciting and designed to capture interest?[142]

Once the content hook game, listing, and discussion activities are complete, the students should be ready to transition into a more in-depth analysis of a dime novel illustration and continue day 1 of the lesson plan.

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[140] *Guided Tour on Print Processes: The Artist* Stanford Universities Academic Text Service <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/ppintro.html> (Accessed 05-07-05).

[141] The dime novels published by Street and Smith, *Ted Strong's Vigilantes, Down the River,* and *Frank Merriwell's Fortune* can be found online at <libwww.syr.edu/digital/guides/s/StreetAndSmith/> in their original color versions. (Accessed 05-07-05).

[142] A further hook activity would be to compare the fictional and non-fictional versions of the books put out by the Rosen Publishing Group about Jesse James and Bill Hickok. The books are designed to show students the value of primary documents in fleshing out our understanding of history.

Lesson Content

The goals of the first four days in this lesson series are to familiarize the students with the body of material that is termed "dime novel" and to help them understand how such fiction might help them better understand U.S. history. The aim is for students to recognize the dime novel as a separate body of literature from the classic and sentimental genres, and to understand the type of audience to which it appealed. Starting with a visual aspect - a picture analysis procedure - will serve to motivate and interest the students.

The U.S. National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) offers a series of analysis worksheets in their digital classroom.[143] A combination of the Photo and of the Cartoon Analysis Worksheets would work well for an analysis for the dime novel cover illustrations as shown in Appendix B2. The analysis involves a close examination of the illustration for two minutes followed by a division of the picture into quadrants for further observation. The students are then asked to list people, objects and activities in the picture, and to make inferences based on their observations. In addition, the students are asked to think about the actions and possible emotions portrayed and what messages or symbolism these might hold. Allow about twenty minutes for this absorbing activity which is ideally done with a partner. Upon completion, encourage the students to keep an open mind, and be aware of the possibility that there is more to the dime novel than meets the eye. When planning these activities, allow 45-60 minutes for the content hook and the day 1 activities together.

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[143] <http://archives.gov/digital_classroom> Click on "document analysis worksheets" link. (Accessed 05-07-

The object of day 2 is to set the dime novel body of literature in context, and to view the broader picture of literary output in the nineteenth century. The students will come to identify the dime novels as affordable literature aimed at working-class Americans. First, divide up the background information as shown in Appendix B3, into the short sections indicated and give a section to each group of students. They are to read and share their information in turn with the rest of the class. The information reveals the history of the dime novel itself, its various formats, and its publication history. Then to introduce the idea that there were other layers of literary output in the nineteenth century, read Cynthia Allen's section on "Dime Novel Criticism," found in Appendix B4 and discover contemporary objections to the dime novel genre.[144] The objections were raised by certain sectors of society attempting to police the boundary between the "genteel" culture, and the "sensational" culture of the dime novel. According to Denning, "This boundary was a moral as well as aesthetic one, dividing the culture of the 'middle class' from the ways of the 'lower classes'."[145] These two activities should fit a 45 -60 minute time period.

On day 3, introduce the terms "middle", and "lower" class, and explain to the students that similar terms have been used to describe the literary output of the nineteenth century - "highbrow", "middlebrow", and "lowbrow". Fill out an overhead with definitions elicited from the students as they try and define these terms. Then hand out the three tier graphic organizer in Appendix B5 and guide students through to

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[144] "Cynthia Allen, <http://courses.unt.edu/efiga/HistoryAndEthnography/websites.htm> scroll down to 'The Life of the Dime Novel or Why Popular Reading Was Not Popular." (Accessed 05-07-05).

completion, showing the three literary spheres. Once the spheres have been identified and discussed, read aloud the various excerpts also in Appendix B5 citing author names, and titles of works. After reading each excerpt, ask the students to try and place the title in the appropriate sphere on the graphic organizer. What clues are present in the writing? The overhead, graphic organizer and read aloud discussion should take 45-60 minutes.

Discussion will include the suggestions of scholars that there were three main venues for dime novel consumption: at home, at work, and while traveling. They were certainly not read at school or church, nor, interestingly, at saloons or sporting events, or at other leisure activities. The number one venue was in the home, as some titles of story papers would suggest: *Family Story Paper,* and *Fireside Companion.* In addition, Denning claims that "fiction reading was also part of the culture of the workplace."[146] Reading was a part of the factory lunch break and slack periods. In 1838, James Alexander addressed the "American mechanic", saying,

> Reading aloud, besides being a useful accomplishment, is highly advantageous to the health, and is recommended by the best physicians, as a preservative of the lungs. All this may be gained without any self-denial, by the custom of reading the papers, or other entertaining publications, during the intervals of labor.[147]

As well as at home and at work, the dime novel was read while traveling, and it is this third category that forms the basis for the next lesson. The fourth day's activities link the rise of the dime novel with the rise of the railroad system in America. According to

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[145] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 59.
[146] Ibid., 40.
[147] James W. Alexander, [Charles Qill, pseudo.] *The American Mechanic* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1838)225-226.

Denning,

> The rise of railroad and streetcar travel both for commuting to work and for leisure gave a new place and opportunity for light, entertaining reading. As the distance between residential neighborhoods and factory districts grew in the late nineteenth century ... more time was spent commuting, and cheap reading matter accompanied the journey.[148]

Day 4 requires approximately 45 minutes and access to a computer lab or power point presentation for a web search activity. An exploration of *Railroad Maps 1828-1900* reveals that "the railroad maps represent an important historical record, illustrating the growth of travel and settlement as well as the development of industry and agriculture in the United States."[149] Browsing the collection of maps in the "transport and communication" link at this site will provide students with powerful visuals of the growth of the railroad system in the United States. For example, map *65,* Disturnells's new map of the United States and Canada shows all the canals, railroads, telegraph lines, and principal state routes in 1850.[150] It is possible to zoom in at various locations on this map. For example, ask the students to see if they can find out the date of this map. Post this key question for the students on the board: Who had access to the dime novel genre once the railroads expanded? In addition, the following links, "learning page," "history," then "postal services," will lead students to answer another key question to be posted on the board: How would the dime novel business benefit from faster postal service? Overall, the lesson should build an understanding of the rapid growth of the dime novel

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[148] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 39.
[149] <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/rrhtml/rrhome.html>. (Accessed 05-07-05).
[150] <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/mapitem.pl?data=/home/www/data/gmd/gmd370/g3700/g3700/ct000759.sid>. (Accessed 05-07-05).

industry, and its direct relationship to the expansion of the railroad system and the new venue it provided for dime novel consumption.

Once students are familiar with dime novels as an identifiable body of fiction within nineteenth century literature, and have an understanding of their history and intended audience, it will be interesting to challenge them to write in the style of dime novel authors. This activity will be introduced on day 5, and then worked on through days 6 and 7. To prepare them initially, give students the handout in Appendix B6, showing Beadle's Instructions to prospective authors.[151] Students might be amused by the strict regulations but point out some advice that seems to have stood the test of time. For example, Beadle states, "Authors must be familiar with characters and places which they introduce and not attempt to write in fields of which they have no intimate knowledge."[152] On the whole, however, Johannsen doubts that these rules for writing could have been strictly observed, considering the volume and "many simultaneous publications of the firm, it is no wonder that one lone editor could not always see that these rules were observed."[153]

What, then, might a truer picture of the dime novel writing style look like? Streeby suggests that certain features and devices are typical of the dime novel;

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[151] <http://www.niulib.niu.edu/badndp/bibindex.html> Click on "Contents" link. Click on "Part I: Introduction" and scroll down to "Go to Chapter 1." Scroll down the page to "Beadle's Instructions to Prospective Authors." (Accessed 05-07-05).
[152] <http://www.niulib.niu.edu/badndp/bibindex.html>
[153] <http://www.niulib.niu.edu/badndp/bibindex.html>

"disguise, the exposure of secret identities, violence, cliffhanging chapter endings, beautiful endangered virgins ... and patriotism."[154] Bleiler suggests that "language peculiar to dime novels" was "the omnipresent declarative sentence, the bald statement of results rather than description of processes, and the capsulation of adventure in briefest form."[155] To offer students further ideas about the dime novel style of writing, explain the following information from Denning:

> Dime novels were also clearly connected to popular melodramas ... Reversing a common process, they are not dramatized for the stage, but narrativized for the story paper ... This crossing between dime novels and melodrama may indicate a common audience as well as a common body of stories ... the narrativization of stage productions indicates a new mode or character in the reading of dime novels and story papers; reading became a way of preserving and recapturing a public moment or a favorite performance. Like the scripts of the melodramas themselves, the thinness of dime novels, the absence of detailed description, may reveal the memory of the nineteenth century theatrical spectacles with their elaborate special effects and mechanisms- trains, fires, and live animals on stage -while prefiguring the close relation between popular fiction and the modern cinema.[156]

Ask the students to read an excerpt from the dime novel, *Frank James on the Trail* published in 1882 and found in Appendix B7. Guide the students to observe such dime novel devices as suggested by Streeby, Bleiler, and Denning. For example, dialogue is a device that can facilitate a fast-moving plot. As Dory Lynch states:

> In a story dialogue accomplishes two main tasks. It helps build characters and advances the plot. It makes the action seem more timely because dialogue is usually presented in the present tense, whereas the rest of the story is most often recorded in the past tense. It also makes the action seem more natural as it combines with conversation as really happens in daily life.[157]

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[154] Streeby, *American Sensations,* 197.
[155] Bleiler *Eight Dime Novels,* ix.
[156] Denning, *Mechanic Accents,* 24-25.
[157] Dory Lynch, 2003: <http://www.bloomington.in.us/~dory/creative/class9.html>- (Accessed 05-07-05). Lynch's website offers useful advice for would-be writers, though not intended for dime novels, of

The Frank James excerpt certainly provides a large dose of dialogue, but other typical dime novel attributes such as violence, patriotism and the absence of detailed description should be noticeable to the students. Reading Beadle's rules, discussing the writing devices, and reading the Frank James excerpt should take approximately 45-60 minutes.

On day 6, reintroduce the students to the characters on the front of the dime novel covers, as presented on day 1 in Appendix Bl. With a partner, ask them to select a character and to build around that character an imaginary dime-novel style story. Point out that contrary to the usual advice, they are not going to spend a great deal of time developing that character, rather they are going to throw them into an adventure. The plot must be eventful and dramatic and there is to be a minimum amount of description. In other words, they must try to incorporate the devices and writing techniques explored on day 5.[158] This writing activity, which acts as a bridge between social studies and language arts, can last through to the end of day 7 and then continue for homework, if necessary.

The purpose of the final three days of the lesson plan is for students to think critically and come to an understanding about what might be learned from the dime novel body of fiction. Appendix B8 contains brief paragraphs from the rest of *Frank James on the Trail,* and they can be divided up among groups of two or three students. The students must identify the political, cultural, or historical aspect of the paragraph, and then build a short skit around it. After viewing the skit, the other students can then try to

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course, she explains the elements of stories, such as action, plot, dialogue, transitions, and story structure.

[158] Candy Moulton's *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in the Wild West From 1840-1900* (Cincinnati:Writer's Digest Books, 1999) is an excellent resource for students, providing dates, facts,

guess the significance of the paragraph, and discuss its place in the larger context nineteenth century America. For example, in the following paragraph, reference is made to the encouragement of settling in the south. Notice how it is embedded in the Frank James story, rather as an aside:

> We have left Tom Moore out in the cold - no, we beg pardon it's never cold in Texas - that is if we believe the glowing statements made by authority of the state legislature when inviting settlers to purchase land in the southern Paradise. Tom Moore had gotten off his horse and was anxiously waiting for his friend to open the door.[159]

When the skits have been completed, spend the remaining minutes of day 8 asking the students to consider how the dime novel might be useful to the historian. Balance this by asking them to consider how a consideration of dime novel content might be misleading to the historian. Is there a middle ground? Explain to the students Denning's idea of training our ears to hear the "accents" in which the stories were written: the accents of different ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, and genders, and the ideals, prejudices, moralities, and political views that they reveal. Do the students agree with the scholars that dime novels served more than an escapist function? Did their own characters in either their writing or their skit have underlying "accents", beliefs or prejudices?

On day 9, more complex issues surrounding the dime novel body of fiction are introduced, and consequently, the material may better suit students in at least grades 7

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timelines, and examples of the people and places of the "Wild West."
[159] John W. Morrison, "Frank James on the Trail," *Morrison's Sensational Series* Vol.1 No.46 (1882).

and 8. Using an overhead of the literary pyramid in Appendix B9, discuss once more the three literary levels of output in nineteenth century America. Relate the levels to the pyramid and notice that the classics are at the top of the pyramid, and that allegory is on the third tier. Notice too, that the western, mystery, adventure, and romance are on the seventh tier, and that melodrama is even lower, on the eighth. The pyramid is arranged for the reader in general order of difficulty, the more difficult literature being nearer the top. Post a definition of "allegory" on the board, and discuss its meaning with the students. It is interesting to note that Denning suggests using a more complex allegorical approach from the third tier to the reading of dime novels which would be positioned somewhere around the seventh and eighth tiers:

> Allegory is usually taken as a literary genre, an identifiable form of writing, usually deprecated in romantic and modernist criticism... What I want to suggest is that allegory is a mode of reading as well, that one may read works that do not appear to be allegorical in an allegorical fashion and come up with a kind of reading at odds with what might be expected....To read novelistically, one understands characters neither as existing people nor as metaphorical types: one takes them as 'typical' individuals with thoughts, psyches, and motives acting in an everyday world. To read allegorically or typo logic ally, I suggest, the fictional world is less a representation of the real world than a microcosm. Thus the households and families in dime novels that would be interpreted as typical households if read novelistically are interpreted as microcosms of the social world when read allegorically; individual characters are less individuals than figures for social groups. For an allegorical mode of reading to shape a system of reading, there is usually a master plot, or body of narratives, that are shared by a culture... such a single tale, a master plot, existed in the nineteenth-century working-class culture and...it shaped allegorical readings of dime novels. This plot was made up of nationalist, class-inflected stories of the American Republic, inter-related, if sometimes contradictory tales of its origins and the threats to it....Moreover, allegory is a mode characteristic of subordinate groups...a sign of the powerlessness of the working-class reader. The dime novels that elicit allegorical readings in order to make sense of them are novels of disguise: the stories of tramps who are discovered to be heirs, and of working girls who

> become ladies. All depend on magical transformations to compensate the impossibility of imagining 'realistic' actions by powerful agents.[160]

Denning suggests then, that if read allegorically, the master plot of nineteenth century dime novels consisted of "nationalist, class-inflected stories of the American Republic," and was representative of the working-class culture. It is the accents of the working-classes that Denning particularly wants us to hear, especially the craft workers and artisans in the north-eastern cities. Saxton extends this discussion by including the accents of the Free Soil heroes of the dime novels, those with white egalitarian ideals. Appendix B10 shows Saxton's table of Beadle and Adams books and serials. First post some key concepts on the board and ask the students to look up the definitions: egalitarianism, Free Soil, and self-made man. On an overhead or handout of the table, show how Saxton has arranged the dime novels by theme and half decades. Make sure the students understand the theme headings and then ask them to examine the quantity of output under each theme. Check for understanding as to why Saxton concludes that more than half of the works deal directly with Indian conflict and egalitarianism, and why he further concludes that the Free Soil hero was therefore the "chief commodity" of the dime novel (see page 26 in the historiography).

End the lesson with a discussion about heroes. What kind of hero was the American ideal in the nineteenth century? How is that different or similar today? The students should come away with a deeper understanding of the contested terrain of nineteenth century socioeconomic class, and ethnic conflict. They should also realize that actual data from a categorization of dime novel themes can be used to hypothesize about

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[160] Denning, *Mechanic Accents, 12-14.*

the values, views, beliefs, and psyche of nineteenth century American culture. In other words, they will be able to defend the lesson theme that fiction can teach us a great deal about our history.

Evaluation

On day 10, the students will participate in some evaluation activities. The first activity will be to share their dime novel style writing, either with the teacher or they could volunteer to share with the rest of the class. If the students understood the assignment correctly, then there should be a wealth of action in the stories and little else in terms of character development or description. Ask the students to identify the strategy they used to create a fast-moving plot. This evaluation is designed to be more informal and values risks and experimentation by the student, therefore only positive feedback is encouraged.

A more formal evaluation can be found in Appendix B11. This starts out with multiple choice questions pertaining to explicit information covered over the course of the two weeks. For example, the students are asked to recognize the terms "highbrow", "middlebrow", and "lowbrow", from other lists of possibilities. Then there is a short answer section with a mixture of explicit and inferential comprehension questions. For example, the students are asked to identify the purpose of the dime novel cover illustrations.

Appendix B12 shows a section containing a choice of open-ended essay questions, and the students can focus on two. The questions are designed to ask the students to think critically and share their thoughts about the materials presented. For example, Cathy Davidson reminds us that "novels are not history," even ones that reside

in the genre of historical fiction, and she goes on to add that a novelist "chooses to write fiction precisely for what the form allows and for what it disallows."[161] If by this we understand that novels in general are not to be trusted as historically accurate documents, what then, are their uses to the historian? What can novels tell us about the history of a particular time period? How should historians view the sensational literary output of the nineteenth century, for example?

Question two asks students to compare the act of writing for money versus writing for pride. In answering the question the students might explore how the sensational genre of the dime novel has been dismissed by literary critics as unworthy of consideration. Or they might consider how the motivation to write is strengthened or weakened, or how once a successful formula is discovered it is churned out relentlessly.

The third question focuses on the use of literature to further our understanding of history. It is common practice for teachers to read aloud a children's historical fiction novel as background to a particular subject being taught in a social studies lesson. The students are asked to consider the effectiveness of this strategy. Does it help set the context, the backdrop to the stage? Does it provide more in depth understanding or does it confuse by mixing fiction and truth?

Question four asks the students to consider the term "hero". The ideal of the American hero was explored in the dime novel genre. What were the main characteristics of that hero, and have they altered in today's society? Who are today's heroes?

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[161] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 260-262.

The last question asks the students to consider approaches to writing, in particular modern day historical fiction. Throughout the lesson plan the theme has centered on the question of how to navigate between the worlds of literature and history. This question of how to balance history and fiction came up in a discussion with Charles Frazier in *Novel History,* a collection of essays on the subject of writing historical fiction.[162] Frazier, when writing *Cold Mountain,* consciously chose to take a handful of historical facts and use them as the basis for a narrative, consequently letting "the fiction drive and the history ride."[163] The students are asked to consider whether historical fiction should be limited to a re-telling of actual events, or whether authors are free to let historical figures have conversations and act in ways that cannot be verified. Indeed, are authors, "free to lash them with emotions they never actually felt?"[164]

These open-ended questions bring to light some of the issues that have been raised throughout the course of this study. It is hoped that the students will now be able to look objectively at fiction and understand its possibilities to share something of the time period in which it was written. Of course, fiction by its very definition is make-believe and imaginary, but it can still reveal a historically interesting vision of the culture and psyche of a time in history.

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[162] Charles Frazier, "Some Remarks on History and Fiction," *Novel History: Historians and Novelists Confront America's Past,* ed. Mark C. Carries (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).
[163] Charles Frazier, "Some Remarks on History and Fiction," *Novel History,* 313.
[164] Ibid., 312.

APPENDIX A

Content Standards

California History-Social Science Content Standards

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills: Grades K-5

3 Students distinguish fact from fiction by comparing documentary sources on historical figures and events with fictionalized characters and events.

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills: Grades 6-8

Research, Evidence, and Point of View:

2. Students distinguish fact from opinion in historical narratives and stories.

3. Students distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, essential from incidental information, and verifiable from unverifiable information in historical narratives and stories.

4. Students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.

Historical Interpretation:

1 Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.

United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation: Grade 5

5.8. Students trace the colonization, immigration, and settlement patterns of the American people from 1789 to the mid-1800s, with emphasis on the role of economic incentives, effects of the physical and political geography, and transportation systems.

United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict: Grade 8

8.6. Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced, with emphasis on the Northeast

California English-language Arts Content Standards:

Grade 5:

Reading Comprehension:

2.4: Draw inferences, conclusions, or generalizations about text and support them with textual evidence and prior knowledge.

Expository Critique:

2.5: Distinguish facts, supported inferences, and opinions in text.

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:

3.4: Understand that theme refers to the meaning or moral of a selection and recognize themes (whether implied or stated directly) in sample works.

Literary Criticism:

3.6: Evaluate the meaning of archetypal patterns and symbols that are found in myth and tradition by using literature from different eras and cultures.

3.7: Evaluate the author's use of various techniques to influence readers' perspectives.

Grade 6:

Writing Applications:

2.1a: Establish and develop a plot and setting and present a point of view that is appropriate to the stories.

2.1c: Use a range of narrative devices (e.g., dialogue, suspense).

Grade 8:

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:

3.6: Identify significant literary devices (e.g., metaphor, symbolism, dialect, irony) that define a writer's style and use those elements to interpret the work

National History Standards: United States History Standards: Grades 5-12

Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

1C: 5-12: Explain the economic, political, racial, and religious roots of Manifest Destiny and analyze how the concept influenced the westward expansion of the nation.

2A: 5-12: Explain how the major technological developments that revolutionized land and water transportation arose and analyze how they transformed the economy, created international markets, and affected the environment.

2B: 7-12: Analyze how rapid urbanization, immigration, and industrialization affected the social fabric of early nineteenth century cities.

2B: 5-12: Compare popular and high culture in the growing cities.

2E: 5-12: Explore the lure of the West and the reality of life on the frontier.

3A: 7-12: Relate the increasing popular participation in state and national politics to the evolving democratic ideal that adult white males were entitled to political participation.

4B: 5-12: Examine how literary and artistic movements fostered a distinct American identity among different groups and in different regions.

Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900).

2C: 7-12: Describe how regional artists and writers portrayed American life in this period.

2C: 5-12: Investigate new forms of popular culture and leisure activities at different levels of American society.

APPENDIX B

Lesson Plan Handouts and Materials

APPENDIX Bl

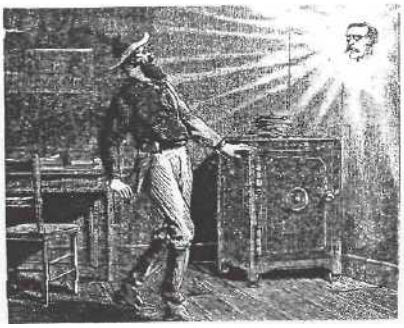
Dime Novel Covers Matching Game

Match the dime novel cover illustration with its title:

A

B

C



D

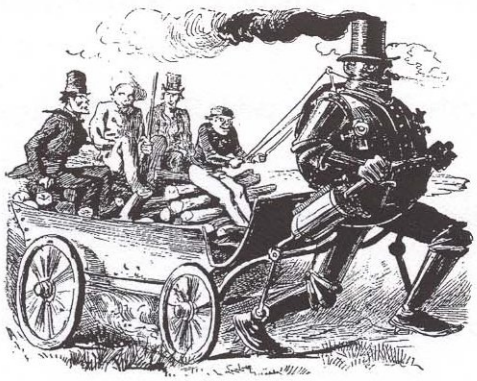
E

F

G

H

I



J

K

L

M

N

1. Frank Merriwell's Nobility or the Tragedy of the Ocean Tramp _____

2. Scylla, the Sea Robber or Nick Carter and the Queen of Sirens _____

3. The Kidnapper; or the Great Shanghai of the Northwest _____

4. The Huge Hunter, or the Steam Man of the Prairies _____

5. Old Grizzly Adams, the Bear Tamer or the Monarch of the Mountains _____

6. The Prairie Pilot; or the Phantom Spy _____

7. Cowboy Chris in Cinnabar _____

8. The Maiden Martyr _____

9. The Bradys and the Girl Smuggler _____

10. Silver Sam of Deadwood _____

11. Frank James on the Trail _____

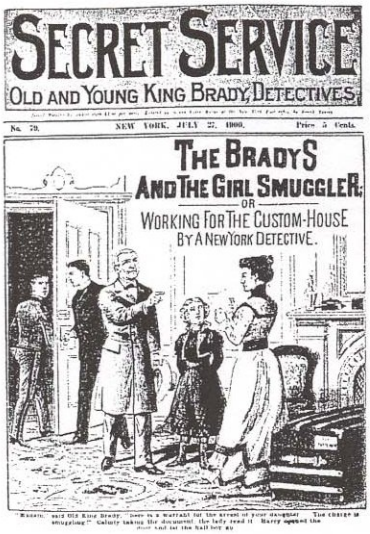
12. The Deer-Hunters _____

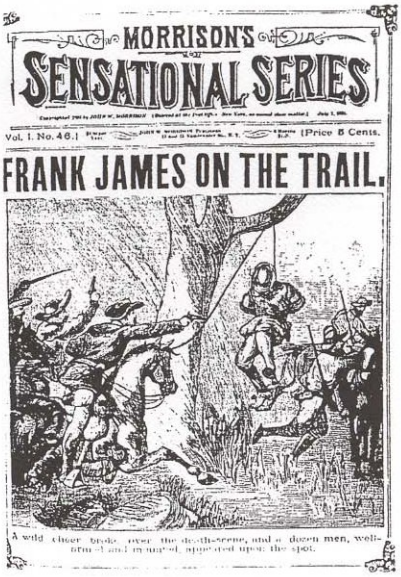
13. The Patriot Highwayman _____

14. The Fighting Trapper, or Kit Carson to the Rescue _____

Answers (Use these full cover illustrations again on Day 6)

Answers continued:





APPENDIX B2

Picture Analysis Worksheet and Activity

Picture Analysis Worksheet (<http://archives.gov/digital classroom>)
Step l. Observation
A.
Study the picture for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the picture and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

_____

_____

B.
Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities or action in the picture.
People _____ Objects _____ Activities

Step *2.* Inference
A.
Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this picture.

_____

_____

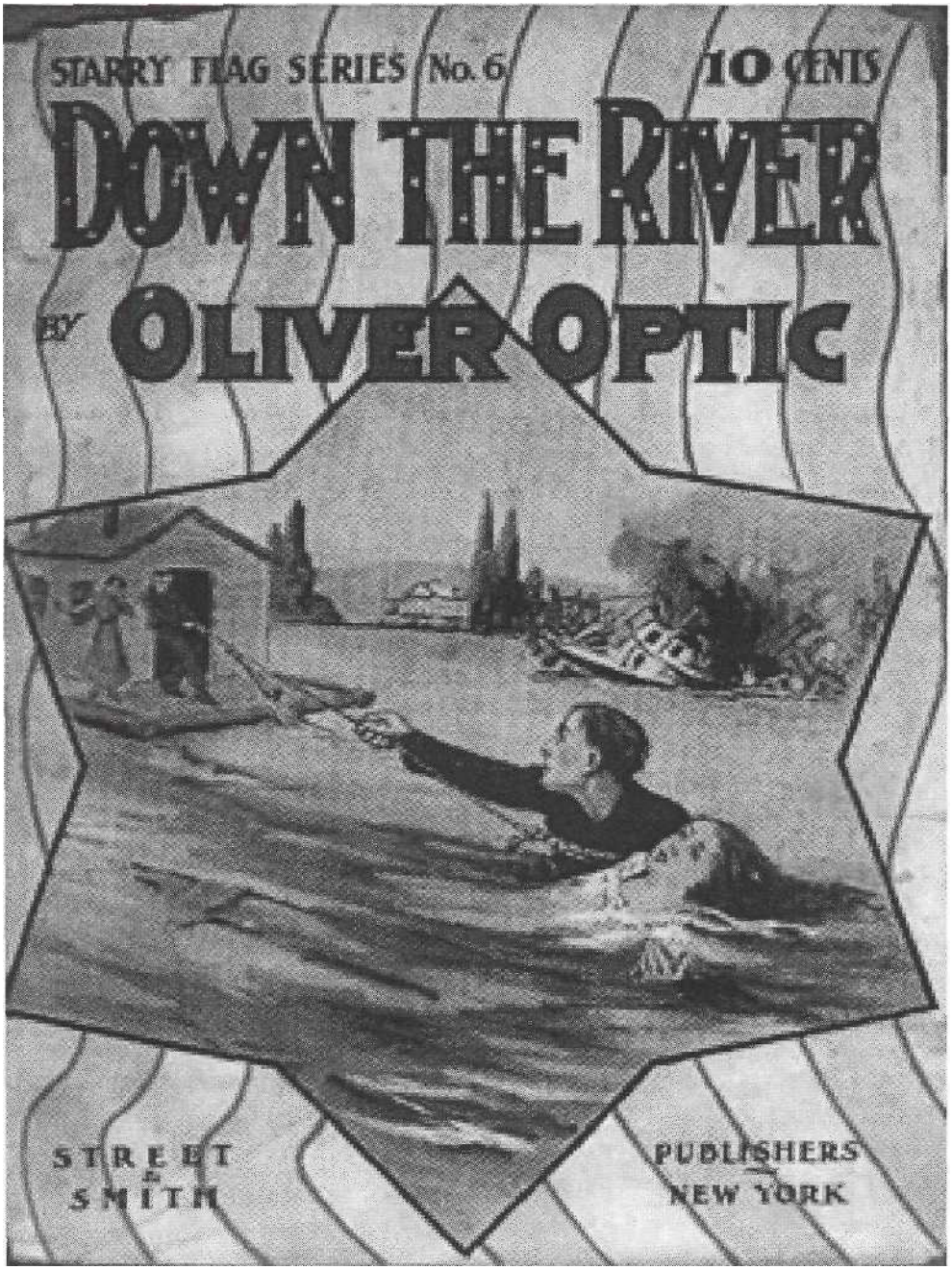
B.
List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the picture.

_____

Step 3.
A.
What questions does this picture raise in your mind?

_____

Sample dime novel cover for picture analysis: A variety of other covers may be found at <http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/guides/s/StreetAndSmith/> or <http://www.niulib.niu.edu/badndp/bibindex.html>



APPENDIX B3

Dime Novel History / Background

Cynthia Allen's Dime Novel History
(<http://courses.unt.edu/efiga/HistoryAndEthnographv/websites.htm>)
Background information:

Dime novels were cheap, paperback books that featured sensationalized, melodramatic plots. They were written in several installments and included chapters with cliffhanger endings. Dime novels were written about every topic imaginable with the first samplings including stories of early American frontier and the west. As popularity grew and more dime novels were being written a wide range of topics were incorporated including: circus, railroading, science fiction and fantasy, fire fighting, sports, adventures in far away places, westerns, sea stories (polar exploration being a favorite), and gold mining. Often current issues and popular people of the day were reflected in the plots as well. Also, in the late 1800s detective characters became very popular.

The first dime novel to be published was written by Mrs. Ann Stephens, *Malaeska, the Indian Wife of the White Hunter.* It had previously been published in the *Ladies Companion* in 1839 and was published by Beadle and Adams as the first *Beadle Dime Novel in 1860.* From 1860-1874 Beadle and Adams published a new *Beadle Dime Novel* every two weeks, for a total of 321 novels published by this publishing company alone in a fourteen-year period. The *Beadle Dime Novels* were 4 X 6 inches in size and had about 100 pages. Each one cost ten cents.

In the 1830s, there had had been an attempt to publish paper-covered novels for the general public. They were slightly larger than dime novels, but the price of twenty-five cents a copy made them too expensive for most people. Dime novels came along at just the right time to take advantage of advances in education, technology, and transportation. Compulsory education laws passed in the 1870s raised the literacy rate and created a young generation of readers with little available reading material. Technological advances, such as the rotary press and stereotyped plates made mass production of the dime novels inexpensive. Also, the growth of the railroad helped to tie the different regions of the country together and made freight prices more affordable. The publishers and readers of dime novels reaped the benefits of each of these advances.

In the early days of dime novels, Beadle and Adam's toughest competition came from George Munro, who had at one time worked at Beadle House. However, several other publishers joined the dime novel industry as larger and larger profits were being made. During this time the term dime novel became generic and not just associated with Beadle and Adams. Dime novel came to mean any paper-covered fiction, regardless of the price. Most of the early dime novels cost between five and twenty-five cents and were aimed at adult audiences. Many of the topics dealt with purely American subjects such as historical fiction, biographies, the west, and wars that the United States had been involved in.

The cover illustration was used to lure the reader in and entice him to buy the book. Black and white illustrations decorated the covers and depicted the feats of heroism, adventure, and excitement captured in the words of the book. In the late 1890s one publishing company had artist draw the covers first and then the story was written to match it. This same company published novels for a few months with no title on the front but covered the entire cover with a picture. Another ploy to sell more dime novels

was adding the term new. In 1874, Beadle and Adams's series changed to *Beadle's New Dime Novels*, From 1874-1885, 309 issues were published, however they were all reprints of earlier stories issued with new numbers and hand stenciled cover illustrations.

In 1877, Beadle House brought about several changes in the dime novel industry. First, the format of the dime novel changed. The new books were created by folding paper in half to create a 16-page format, 8 ½ X 12 ½ inches. This was referred to as quarto size and was used for libraries. Libraries were a collection of series books. Each issue contained one story written in double or triple column form. About 450 different library series were published from 1877 until the dime novel demise in the second decade of the 1900s. Another change Beadle and Adams introduced in 1877 was the idea of the recurring hero. These characters appeared at more or less regular intervals within a series. Even though these characters appeared over and over, there was generally little character growth or development that took place. In the late 1870s, Beadle and Adams and other publishers began to release dime novels aimed at a younger readership. *Beadle's Half-Dime Library* (published 1877-1905) was targeted at boys from ages 8 to 16. Some dime novels were written specifically for girls but they were never very successful. One could usually tell the target audience by the price of the book: five cents for teenagers and ten cents for adults.

One reason for the change in the format of dime novels was to keep postal rates down. Postal laws tried to make access to "information deemed essential to the functions of a democracy" affordable to all Americans. Newspapers fit into this type of information source. Thus if dime novels looked like newspapers, subscribers paid newspaper prices, which were considerably cheaper than book prices. Books were seen as merchandise and had to be mailed at a higher price. Also, the numbering and issuing of series helped the dime novels fall under the auspices of a periodical, therefore keeping the price down.

After reaching their peak sales in the last half of the 19th century, dime novel sales began to decline in the early 1900s. The last original dime novel was published in 1915; however, reprints were sold until 1933. One of the biggest reasons for the decline of the dime novel was the advent of motion pictures. For the same amount of money, five or ten cents, a person could see live action as opposed to just reading about it. Also, adults were being drawn to the new pulp fiction magazines, which were a direct offspring of the dime novels. Series books were beginning to be published for children and these drew readers away from the dime novels. Radio also played a part in the dime novel's decline.

The first publisher of the dime novels, or yellow-backs as they were called early on because of the color of the cover (which Erastus Beadle vowed was actually a salmon color), was the publishing house of Beadle and Adams. This company was originally owned by Erastus Beadle, his brother, Irwin, and Robert Adams. They had published several items before the advent of the dime novel, but it was by far their most successful venture.

In an 1884 interview with a reporter for the *Boston Evening Transcript,* Erastus Beadle explained how the concept for the dime novel came about.

> Every one was publishing books with thick paper and wide margins-trying to see how little they could give their readers for a dollar or a

> dollar and a half... Well, I took the other tack, and thought I would see how much I could give for ten cents; cash sales, no credit. Every one said the project would fail, but it didn't. (Pearson, 98)

In 1864, the *North American Review* stated that over five million Beadle and Adams dime novels were in circulation. The company was successful until the late 1890s.

Another one of the five major dime novel publishers was Street and Smith. The company, founded by Francis Scott Street and Francis Shubael Smith, began operation in 1855 and published its first dime novel in 1889. Street and Smith were able to survive the death of the dime novel industry and continue to be successful publishers because of the diversification of their work. They eventually purchased many of the other publishers' reprint rights and went on to publish the same type material in pulp magazines and other formats that followed after the dime novel. One format they published was "thick books". These were dime novel paperbacks that used some of the same stories that were in the original dime novel form. Through this format some of the stories were still in publication until the 1930s.

George P. Munro had worked for Beadle and Adams but left in 1863 to form a partnership with Irvin Beadle. This partnership gave Beadle and Adams some tough competition in the early years of publishing dime novels. Their first dime novel appeared in 1863. Munro published one of the first dime novel detective stories and the first dime novel detective series with a recurring hero. Norman L. Munro was George Munro's brother and worked with his company until the early 1870s. Munro often took the other major publishers to court, especially his brother, over proprietary rights. He was the first to dedicate a periodical to detective fiction, *Old Cap. Collier Library.*

Frank Tousey is the final of the big five dime novel publishers. Tousey published dramatic, sensationalized fiction, much of it targeted at young readers. He began his career as a partner of Norman Munro, but after three years formed his own company. Tousey often had current events incorporated into his stories. There is no way to determine how many publishers of dime novels there actually were. These five were the most successful and survived the longest in the business. Some of the goings on behind the scenes in the publishing houses were as dramatic and sensational as the dime novels themselves.

The heroes of dime novels came from many walks of life. Some were ordinary people who took on extraordinary qualities and endeavors. Others were larger than life heroes who made it their job to right wrongs, save damsels, solve mysteries, and undertake a myriad of other tasks. Some of the main characters returned story after story while others only appeared once or twice and then faded into the history of dime novels. Publishers would sometimes use famous people and characters and mingle fact and fiction into the plot. Often names of characters were not famous people but were closely tied to famous people so a connection would be made.

The history of the dime novel has interesting twists and turns just like the stories contained in the novels. Although they were probably not the best literary offerings of the times, dime novels filled a void in American literature in the late 1800s. The working class and young people needed books they could afford and books that were interesting to them. The cries made by the critics seem somewhat sensationalized just

like the dime novels they were so vehemently opposed to. Jt seems that dime novels were an easy scapegoat for the evils of the day. Whether they were enjoyable or "evil" an entire generation of boys group up reading them, devouring them, exchanging them, and running to get the next one. Until recent years dime novels have been overlooked for their literary contributions. Even if you do not agree with the content you have to agree that they can no longer be ignored. Dime novels are a part of our literary history, and though they are not the most high quality offerings they did earn the right to be represented in that history.

APPENDIX B4

Dime Novel Criticism

Cynthia Allen's Dime Novel Criticism
(<http://courses.unt.edu/efiga/HistorvAndEthnography/websites.htrn>')

There were several reasons critics found for disliking the dime novels; sensational, formulaic plots; cheap, crude format; and the concept of commodification, "seeing books as economic commodities rather than intellectual or aesthetic artifacts". The enormous amount of dime novels that were produced and consumed by the public led to intense investigation into this medium.

The rapidness with which stories were produced led to several points of criticism. Many of the stories contained grammar mistakes, narrative flaws, and underdeveloped characters. Also, the plots often followed the same pattern or formula because a new story had to be written every week, month... This intense time line of production tended to emphasize quantity over quality. This led critics to state that reading the dime novels took little effort or thought and therefore the reader was not bettering himself by reading it. In an 1878 article, "What Our Boys Are Reading", William Graham Sumner wrote, "the literary material is either intensely stupid or spiced to the highest degree with sensation."

During the 1870s, dime novels began to be seen as immoral and dangerous to the minds of readers. During this time, as competition grew, the story lines were being written more quickly and becoming more sensationalized.

Erastus Beadle always claimed that his dime novels were good and the authors were well written. He claimed the competition cheapened the quality of the stories. Beadle and Adams did profess to having to "kill a few more Indians" as time went on to keep up with the competition, but their stories were still good, according to them.

The 1870s brought about changes that made the dime novels fall under more criticism. First the size was changed to make the dime novels smaller, 16 pages- 8 ½ X 12 ½ inches- folded in half. The change in format seemed to cheapen the image of the reading material in critic's eyes. This happened despite the fact that many of the stories published after 1874 are exact reprints of earlier stories. One point many critics brought out was that the smaller size made the dime novels easier to conceal. Youngsters could easily put the pamphlet inside another book to hide it from teachers, parents, or other adults. Also, changes in postal rates made it more advantageous for publishers to sell the dime novels at newsstands or shops rather than through home delivery making them more accessible to younger readers and lower income readers. Many young readers found it easier to conceal their reading material from their parents when it was purchased at the newsstand verses receiving it through the mail.

Also, there was the issue of the types of business that sold dime novels. Many of them were places that sold tobacco and critics pointed out how inviting that might seem to young people. Also, many of these type stores had "backrooms" where shady characters seemed to congregate, often playing pool and drinking. These were certainly not the types of place the young people of America needed to be going.

Many critics believed the dime novels were immoral because they painted a picture of criminals as heroes. Some felt the youth would begin to act out in real life what was portrayed in the dime novels. Thus reading this type of material would lead to a life of crime.

One of the most outspoken critics of dime novels was Anthony Comstock (1844-1915). Comstock was very zealous in combating what he considered to be vices of the day; among these were dime novels. He was a member of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, one of the most ardent critics of dime novels. They believed the stories presented criminal life as fun, glorified the criminals, and instructed youth in criminal activity. In several annual reports as secretary of the Society, Comstock commented that he had interviewed young delinquents who said dime novels had let them astray. In 1880, the Society released this statement concerning mass produced literature, "The fearful increase of youthful criminals in our cities in recent years should be traced very largely to this source."

In 1883, Comstock wrote a book, Traps for the Young. In it he presented his case against dime novels to the public. The purpose was to "expose the minds of parents teachers, guardians, and pastors to some of the mighty forces for evil that are today exerting a controlling influence over the young." In the book he presented case after case of young people who were "ruined" by reading mass-produced literature. He espoused the idea that the work ethic was being undermined in youth who read dime novels because the criminal life was glorified with the criminals often coming up the winner.

Comstock believed the greatest challenge facing adults was to guard the innocence of children who were not strong enough to detect the ploys of the devil. His idea was that youth reading these stories would more easily succumb to other vices and traps laid by the devil.

In June 1884, the New York State legislature outlawed the sale of story paper, which contained dime novel stories, and other publications that contained crime stories to minors. This law was passed after much work by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. In the years that followed several other states passed the same type laws.

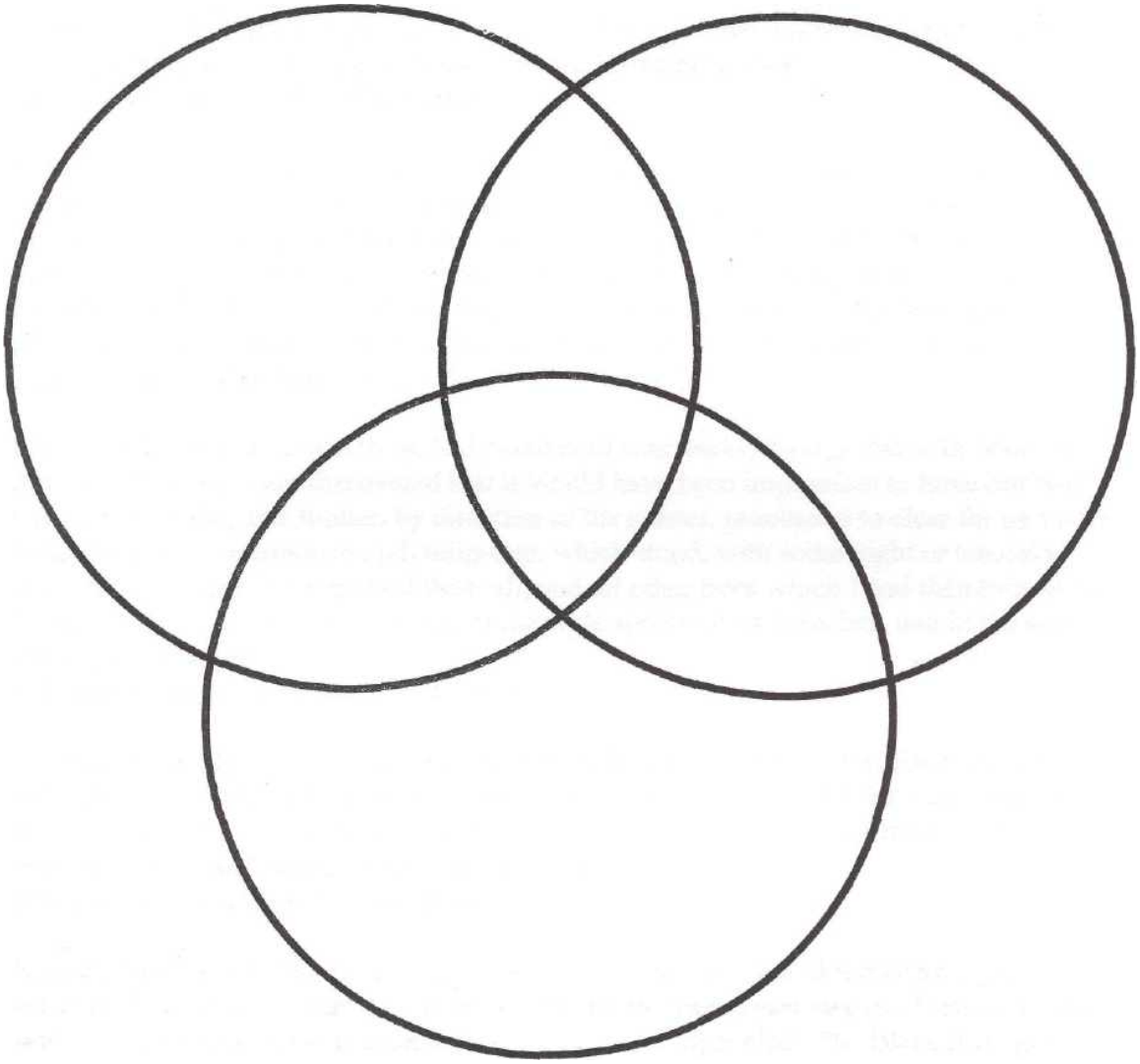
Children's librarians were also opposed to children reading dime novels. They held beliefs similar to Comstock concerning what they viewed as immorality in dime novels. Many children's librarians published articles in the late 1800s stating that their job was to guide the children to read respected forms of literature. They felt the children could be enticed into reading material similar to the dime novels but less violent and vulgar. Several librarians wrote articles stating that if children were given true stories of adventure and heroism to read they would turn from the dime novels.

Minerva L. Saunders, director of the Pawtucket Rhode Island Public Library, reported that young people would come to the library and hide the small dime novels in the pages of a "respectable" work so to go unmolested in their reading. She was reported to lecture the children on the "dangers of reading the stuff; however, this seemed to have little effect. She even collected newspaper clippings of youth who had been negatively influence by reading dime novels and made the children she caught reading them read a scrape book containing the clippings.

APPENDIX B5

Graphic Organizer and Excerpts of Three Layers

Graphic organizer for three layers of literary output in nineteenth century America



Excerpts for the Three Layers of Literary Output in the Nineteenth Century:

Read in random order and have students guess to which literary sphere or spheres they belong.

i) Classic: (Note the longer sentence structure and rich vocabulary.)
At the time I now write of, Father Mapple was in the hardy winter of a healthy old age; that sort of old age which seems merging into a second flowering youth, for among all the fissures of his wrinkles, there shone certain mild gleams of a newly developing bloom - the spring verdure peeping forth even before February's snow.
(*Moby Dick,* Herman Melville, Classic.)
Scarcely had I dropped my head back into its original position, when there flashed upon my mind what I cannot better describe than as the unformed half of that idea of deliverance to which I have previously alluded, and of which a moiety only floated indeterminately through my brain when I raised food to my burning lips. The whole thought was now present — feeble, scarcely sane, scarcely definite — but still entire. I proceeded at once, with the nervous energy of despair, to attempt its execution.
(*The Pit and the Pendulum,* Edgar Allan Poe, Classic.)
The natural platform to which we had clambered was thickly overgrown with brambles, through which we soon discovered that it would have been impossible to force our way but for the scythe; and Jupiter, by direction of his master, proceeded to clear for us a path to the foot of an enormously, tall tulip-tree, which stood, with some eight or ten oaks, upon the level, and far surpassed them all, and all other trees which I had then ever seen, in the beauty of its foliage and form, in the wide spread of its branches, and in the general majesty of its appearance.
(*The Gold-Bug,* Edgar Allan Poe, Classic)
The boys talked little, and only under their breath, for the time and the place and the pervading solemnity and silence oppressed their spirits. They found the sharp new heap they were seeking, and ensconced themselves within the protection of three great elms that grew in a bunch within a few feet of the grave.
(*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* Mark Twain, Classic.)

Now the raft was passing before the distant town. Two or three glimmering lights showed where it lay, peacefully sleeping, beyond the vague vast sweep of star-gemmed water, unconscious of the tremendous event that was happening. The Black Avenger stood, still with arms folded, "looking his last" upon the scene of his former joys and his later sufferings...
(*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* Mark Twain, Classic with Sensational overtones)

ii) Sentimental; (Note the domestic subject matter and setting.)
As Meg went rustling after, with her long skirts trailing, her earrings tinkling, her curls waving, and her heart beating, she felt as if her "fun" had really begun at last, for the mirror had plainly told her that she *was* "a little beauty." Her friends repeated the phrase enthusiastically; and, for several minutes she stood, like the jackdaw in the fable, enjoying her borrowed plumes, while the rest chattered like a party of magpies.

(*Little Women:* Louisa M. Alcott, Sentimental)
Next day, having seen both the old and young gentleman out of the house, Beth, after two or three retreats, fairly got in at the side door, and made her way as noiselessly as any mouse to the drawing-room, where her idol stood. Quite by accident, of course, some pretty, easy music lay on the piano: and with trembling fingers, and frequent stops to listen and look about, Beth at last touched the great instrument, and straightway forgot her fear, herself, and everything else but the unspeakable delight which the music gave her, for it was like the voice of a beloved friend.
(*Little Women,* Louisa M. Alcott, Sentimental.)

It was Sunday evening, and Eva's Bible lay open on her knee. She read, - "And I saw a sea of glass mingled with fire."

"Tom," said Eva, suddenly stopping, and pointing to the lake, "there 't is."

"What Miss Eva?"

"Don't you see, - there?" said the child, pointing to the glassy water, which, as it rose and fell, reflected the golden glow of the sky.

"There's the 'sea of glass, mingled with fire.'"

(Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sentimental.)
"You see," she continued, in a faint and lady-like voice, like the last dying breath of an Arabian jessamine or something equally ethereal, "you see, Cousin Ophelia, I don't often speak of myself. It isn't my *habit,* it isn't agreeable to me. In fact, I haven't strength to do it. But there are points where St.Clare and I differ. St. Clare never understood me, never appreciated me. I think it lies at the root of all my ill health. St. Clare means well, I am bound to believe; but men are constitutionally selfish and inconsiderate to woman. That, at least, is my impression."
(*Uncle Tom's Cabin,* Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sentimental.)

iii) Sensational: (Note elements of disguise, rapid action, damsels in distress, and use of dialogue.)

The instant his own name was uttered, Nick Carter realized that he had gotten himself into a fix from which it would be no easy matter to escape.
But he did not permit a muscle of his face to depict the surprise he felt.
Instead he stopped still in the middle of the room, and returning the bow, said in his own natural tones:
"Madam, permit me to compliment you upon your cleverness."
There was a general laugh around the room in response to this: and then Scylla said:
"You must have taken infinite pains in the manufacture of that disguise you are wearing, Mr. Carter. It is almost perfect."
(*Scylla, the Sea Robber or Nick Carter and the Queen of Sirens,* Street and Smith, Sensational)

"Fear not, miss;" and the youth gently supported her to a sitting posture. "I am a friend and your cruel captors have vamosed. Lucky I came along just as I did, or it's likely they'd have killed you."

"Oh, sir, how can I ever thank you for rescuing me from those merciless fiends!" and the
maiden gave him a grateful glance. "They whipped me terribly!"
"I know, lady - all because you defended yourself in Red Canyon."
"I suppose so: but how did you find out so much, and also effect my release from the savages?"
Fearless Frank leaned up against the tree which had been used as the torture-stake, and related what is already known to the reader.
(Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road; or The Black Rider of the Black Hills, Edward L. Wheeler, Beadle's Half Dime Library, Sensational.)

She sat in terror, with her face buried in her hands, and when she saw them rush in with drawn pistols, she shrieked:
"Oh, don't kill me! Don't kill me!"
"Where did that Savoy girl and the four men go?" sternly asked Old King Brady, glancing around the room.
"Out the Back door."
"Into the yard?"
"Yes, Sir."
The police began pounding on the front doors just as the Bradys rushed out into the rear yard.
Just as they emerged, Harry saw the figure of Jean disappearing over the back fence and pointing at it, he cried excitedly:
"There they go!"
"After them!" roared Old King Brady.
They rushed across the yard.
Over the fence they climbed like a couple of cats, and leaping into the yard of an adjoining tenement, they ran for the hall."
Blood spots on the flags left a plain trail.
(The Bradys and the Girl Smuggler; or Working for the Custom-House By a New York Detective, Frank Tousey, Sensational.)

Fully ten minutes were passed in this manner, when steam was entirely shut off, whereupon the giant came to such a sudden halt that both were thrown violently forward and bruised somewhat.

"Skulp me! But don't stop quite so sudden like," said the hunter. "It's a little onhandy fur me to hold up so quick!"

"I'll soon learn to manage it," replied Johnny. "I'll see it won't do to shut off all at once."

Descending from his perch, he examined every portion of the engine. Several parts were found heated, and the fuel was getting low. The water in the boiler, however was just right, the engineer having been able to control that from his seat in the wagon.

(The Huge Hunter, or the Steam Man of the Prairies, Edward S. Ellis, Beadle's Half Dime Library, Sensational.)

APPENDIX B6:

Beadle's Instructions to Prospective Authors

Beadle's instructions to prospective authors;
(<http://www.niulib.niu.edu/badndp/bibindex.html>)

So much is said, and justly, against a considerable number of papers and libraries now on the market, that we beg leave to repeat the following announcement and long standing instructions to all contributors:

Authors who write for our consideration will bear in mind that

We prohibit all things offensive to good taste in expression and incident—

We prohibit subjects of characters that carry an immoral taint—

We prohibit the repetition of any occurrence which, though true, is yet better untold—

We prohibit what cannot be read with satisfaction by every right-minded person—old and young alike—

We require your best work—

We require unquestioned originality—

We require pronounced strength of plot and high dramatic interest of story—

We require grace and precision of narrative, and correctness in composition.

Authors must be familiar with characters and places which they introduce and not attempt to write in fields of which they have no intimate knowledge.

Those who fail to reach the standard here indicated cannot write acceptably for our several Libraries, or for any of our publications.

APPENDIX B7

Excerpt from *Frank James on the Trail.*

Excerpt from *Frank James on the Trail*

"Jack, would you like to share twenty thousand dollars with me?" asked Tom Moore, breaking the five minute silence abruptly.

Jack turned round in his chair and faced his visitor, anxiously wondering whether he was entertaining a madman in his house.

After satisfying himself that Moore was perfectly cool, he exclaimed:

"What?"

"My dear boy," calmly replied Moore, "don't get excited, but if I can tell you where you can get twenty thousand dollars, which I could have all to myself, will you give me half?"

"Of course I will!" said the astonished Maguire mentally hoping that Mrs. Maguire was dressing and about to come down so that she might be a witness if Moore assaulted his host.

"You agree to give me half?"

"You bet I will."

"Well, then, to come to business. Frank James and two of his masked band are within five miles of us,"

"By jiminy, where?"

"You know where Will Brannigan lives? Well Frank is at his house."

"By thunder, you don't say so."

"Yes, I do."

"Will Brannigan would never harbor Frank James," said Jack Maguire.

"Not if he knew who he was."

"How did you find out about Frank?"

"I had to call on Will, and I heard two men talking ------ "

"And you listened?"

"Yes."

"Well, go on. Man alive, I'm all on fire to know what you heard."

It was evident that Jack Maguire, sheriff and captain of the Emergency Committee of Vigilantes, was getting excited.

"Don't flurry yourself," coolly remarked Moore, "and I'll tell you all I heard."

Tom then repeated the conversation to which he been an unknown listener, and Jack became convinced that one of the men was the veritable outlaw.

"The other man was Will Brannigan?"

"No , you fool. Brannigan was a-bed, the other was Bill Polk, who is Frank James' right hand man."

"Do you think I should call out the vigilantes?"

"Yes."

"Are the masked outlaws well-armed and equipped?"

"I reckon so."

""To-morrow I'll get together a dozen men and go over to Brannigan's, and it may be a fortune to us." "Yes," said the calculating Tom Moore. "The rewards sum up pretty big, don't they?"

"Rather," said Sheriff Maguire, looking at a small memorandum book. "Texas offers twenty thousand, Missouri, ten thousand, Minnesota, five thousand, and Kansas, five thousand."

"Or a grand total of?" asked Moore.

"Forty thousand dollars," replied Jack, "and the best of it is that it will all be paid on satisfactory proof that Frank James is dead or in jail."

"Bravo, Jack! Give each of your vigilants a cool thousand, and we should have twenty thousand a piece."

"Yes, but we had better not build too much on capturing Frank. He is cunning as a serpent, and as slippery as an eel."

"Well, I'll guess I'll go now," said Tom.

"No, I hear Mrs. Maguire coming down stairs, and I know she has got a bed ready for you, so hitch up your horse in the stable, and make a night of it here," said hospital Maguire.

The worthies spent a jolly time, and built many a *chateau d"Espagne* before they retired to bed to catch a few hours repose."

CHAPTER II.

Will Brannigan was a broad-shouldered, tall, sturdy Irishman.

He had left his native land because he had joined the Fenian movement, and was "wanted" by the police.

He believed in dear, old Ireland, and was one of those men of whom the peasantry are constantly singing as being:

"Dear Ireland's strength,
Her truest strength is still
The rough and ready, roving boys,
Like Rory of the Hill."

Will Brannigan had met Frank James and his brother Jesse soon after he had arrived from the old world. Will had a kindly liking for the outlaw brothers, and often helped them out of their difficulties, but would never join their band or share their plunder.

"No, Frank, Brannigan would say, "no Brannigan was ever 'wanted' for anything bu political offences, and I'm not going to join you."

"Well, Will," answered Frank, "you're a good fellow, and I will never ask you again to unite your fortunes with ours."

"Remember, Frank, where I live, and if I can ever help you or your brother, rely on me," answered the warm-hearted Celt.

It was in this man's house that Tom Moore had fancied he had discovered the outlaw Nemesis.

"Who was that fellow who was over here yesterday?" asked Frank.

"An old pal called Tom Moore," was Brannigan's answer.

"Is he safe?"

"No, not if he recognized you."

"Well, I guess he did," answered Frank.

"I feel sure of it," remarked Bill Polk.

"Then you will have to get ready for attack, for Moore would sell his God if he could," solemnly assured Brannigan.

Bill Polk had been injured in the shoulder a few days previously, and he hoped he was going to have a few days' rest.

"We got to move," said Frank.

"Yes, I', ready," was Polk's reply.

"Do you feel strong enough?"

"Don't worry about me," said Polk.

The horses were brought out and saddled. Polk was helped to mount.

"Good-bye Brannigan," called out Frank, as he commenced on his journey.

"Halt!" came a voice in the rear.

Frank James did not heed it.

"Halt!"

"Ride on Polk, and I will cover your retreat," said generous-hearted Frank James.

"Not if I know it," was the reply.

"Crack!"

"Bang!"

"Crack"

A volley of pistol and rifle shots whistled above their heads.

Frank slackened his speed for a moment.

Then drew his surest revolver and examined it.

"Crack!"

The report rang out almost as loud as a rifle shot.

The smoke gradually rose and lifted the veil from their eyes and a riderless horse was seen.

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"By God, I'm hit!" said Frank.

"For mercy's sake where?" asked Polk.

"One of my spurs taken off, I guess," and Frank laughed heartily to think it was no worse.

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

The bullets whizzed and rattled, the reports clanged and clacked, and as Frank jestingly said, seemed to play a death waltz.

"Men" cried Jack Maguire, "I'll give two thousand to the man who can kill that villain, Frank James."

"Come on" retorted Frank, "I'll give a leaden tonic to the one who comes first."

"Crack!"

Bill Polk had fired but not at the vigilantes.

"What did you fire that way for?" hurriedly asked Frank.

"Because the scoundrel informer Tom Moore was sneaking there."

'Crack!"

Another one of Captain Maguire's Emergency Committee of Vigilantes had bitten the dust. On the pursuers came. Frank shouted back to them:

"Not a man of you will live if you continue this pursuit."

Frank halted, and then, with the speed of lightening, fired six shots at the enemy. Two more of the vigilants were rendered powerless.

"Crack!"

"Whiz-z!"

"Bang! Crack!"

A perfect storm of bullets seemed to be falling.

Frank James had often declared he bore a charmed life and it seemed so. Not a shot but was aimed at him, and yet he was unharmed. The vigilants screamed and yelled and roared. One by one they fell, wounded, many never to rise again from their grassy bed.

Frank and Bill rode on, their horses showing no sign of fatigue. The bullets whistled over their heads. Frank James returned them with interest, and he, with his companion, rode on, gradually gaining the advantage. They came to a narrow pass. At the far end they saw a man, evidently waiting for them. As they neared him, he called out:

"Halt! Who are you?"

"I am Frank James."

The man had raised his revolver and took aim.

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

It was duel. The man had fired. So had Frank James. Frank and his pal rode on, there was no one to stop them. For, in the duel Frank's shot had taken effect, whilst his would-be captor had shot wide of the mark.

For hours the pursuit was continued, but at last rest was at hand. They had ridden over a hundred miles without rest, and they needed it badly.

No pursuers were to be seen, and Frank James determined to rest for a few hours - days if need be.

Tom Morris's [Moore's] dead body was found in the wood.

He had died, a victim to his greed and love of money.

Captain Jack Maguire had lost seven of his men and he was shot in the wrist, temporarily disabling his left hand.

"Curse the fellow," he muttered, as he rode back home, "the devil does take good care of his own."

APPENDIX B8

Skit Excerpts from *Frank James on the Trail*

Skit excerpts from *Frank James on the Trail* showing political, cultural, and historical aspects of interest:

a) Jack was a farmer.

He was also a sheriff and still further was a most important man. To be chairman of the Republican County Committee, was something to be proud of; to be elected sheriff without opposition placed another feather in the cap of honest Jack, but the position he valued most and thought the best was that of captain of the "Emergency Committee of Vigilants."

What a name!

What objects that committee had!

b) We have left Tom Moore out in the cold - no, we beg pardon it's never cold in Texas - that is if we believe the glowing statements made by authority of the state legislature when inviting settlers to purchase land in the southern Paradise. Tom Moore had gotten off his horse and was anxiously waiting for his friend to open the door.

c) Will Brannigan was a broad-shouldered, tall, sturdy Irishman. He had left his native land because he had joined the Fenian movement, and was "wanted" by the police.

d) Was there in the whole of the United States a woman so devoted, so loving and so courageous, that she would offer her life in place of a man for whose body so large a reward was offered?

Yes! There was one!

And that one, whose love was so matchless was —

Annie Ralston James.

The wife of the outlaw. The sharer of his troubles, the partner of his joys.

e) When will governments learn that two crimes will never make justice?

Blood money!

Aye, what crimes have been committed, what desolation caused by the offer of rewards for the apprehension of criminals.

Blood money!

Aye, for the desire to obtain it innocent men have been imprisoned, and many ascended the gallows steps, their loves and liberties being sworn away by the perjurers' love of gold.

Innocent women have been left husbandless, their homes destroyed, their children made outcasts.

Girls have been force into lives of shame and ignominy, and murder itself committed in the craving to obtain blood money.

Governments offering such large rewards put temptation in the way of thousands of weak and criminal men.

It was so in the case of the James boys.

Hundreds of men left their business, in city and country, and gave themselves up to hunting the outlaws.

f) On a lounge in the little front room the hunter placed his burden, then he ordered Pompey, who had followed him, to bring water.

The negro complied and Brannigan proceeded to wash the blood from the lacerated back of the dead woman.

After this was done, he threw a light shawl over the silent form and then turned to Pompey.

"You will remain here and watch until I return."

"Golly, massa, I darsent. I -them murderin' raskils may come back—"
"No danger of that, blackskin," returned Brannigan.

g) "Frank, my boy," said Brannigan, " I am outlawed as well as you, for I have sworn to help exterminate men who murder innocent women."

h) The stage coach left Toxarkana well loaded with passengers. All kinds and conditions of men were there. Yankees from New England, greasers from Mexico, and even miners from Arizona. Never before had the coach taken such a valuable load.

i) The Scotchman [McVittie] was a hardshell Baptist, but he swore like a trooper and cursed like a Colorado miner.

j) The bank was a quiet, private-looking house, and with the exception of the word "bank" might have been taken for the village doctor's residence.

APPENDIX B9

The Literary Pyramid.

The Literary Pyamid

CLASSICS
LITERATRY CRITICISM
NOVEL ALLEGORY SATIRE
EPIC POETRY POETIC DRAMA
ODE SONNET ELEGY EASY LYRIC POETRY
NOVELLETTE AUTOBIOGRAPHY BIOGRAPHY ESSAY
SHORT STORY WESTERN MYSTERY ADVENTURE ROMANCE
MELODRAMA POP MAGAZINE LETTER DIARY JOURNAL FARCE
FABLE COMICS COMIC-FORMAT BOOK LIMERICK SONG OR BALLARD

Readers should move upward on the literary pyramid.
In general, the more difficult literature will be nearer the top.

APPENDIX B10

Saxton's Table of Beadle and Adams Books and Serials

Saxton's Table of Beadle and Adams Books and Serial

(Reproduced with permission by Verso.)

BEADLE AND ADAMS BOOKS AND SERIALS: THEMES BY HALF-DECADES, 1859-1900

Half-Decades Ending		*Colonial pre-1775* 1	*Revolution 1775-1790* 2 (*Indian-Related*)	3 (*Other*)	*Frontier & Western Post-1790* 4 (*Indian-Related*)	5 (*Other*)	*Mexican War* 6	*Civil War & Slavery* 7	*Sea* 8	*Domestic & Melodrama* 9	*Detective* 10	*Totals*
I	1860	2	1	3	1	3	3	0	0	11	0	24
II	1865	18	2	16	32	14	4	20	7	13	0	126
III	1870	38	11	25	119	32	4	2	27	45	0	303
IV	1875	29	12	19	227	59	11	1	29	97	5	489
V	1880	25	10	25	226	175	11	23	69	310	22	896
VI	1885	39	10	30	312	390	15	2	140	499	116	1553
VII	1890	13	3	19	209	385	7	2	107	132	271	1148
VIII	1895	4	1	3	91	298	2	3	44	75	316	837
IX	1900	0	0	1	22	116	1	2	26	21	78	267
Totals		168	50	141	1239	1472	58	55	449	1203	808	5643
Percent		3	1	2	22	26	1	1	8	21	14	100

SOURCE: Compiled from Albert Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams and Its Dime and Nickle Novels: The Story of a Vanishing Literature*, Norman, Okla. 1950-62, vol. 1.

APPENDIX B11

Multiple Choice and Short Answer Quiz.

Multiple Choice / Short Answer Quiz
Name: _____

1. Which three terms have been used to describe the three layers of literary output in the nineteenth century?
O a) foreground; middle ground; background.
O b) high ground; middle ground; low ground.
O c) high brow; middle brow; low brow;
O d) upper brow, middle brow; lower brow.

2. Into what three categories have scholars divided the literary output of the nineteenth century?
O a) dime novels; poetry; allegorical.
O b) classic; sentimental; sensational.
O c) sentimental; classical, musical.
O d) classic; sentimental; paper backs.

3. Which set of broad-ranging topics were included in the dime novels?
O a) westerns; science fiction, poetry.
O b) sea stories; railroading; westerns.
O c) circus; myths; ballads.
O d) science fiction; mystery; comedy.

4. What was the first dime novel to be published?
O a) *Silver Sam of Deadwood.*
O b) *The Huge Hunter or the Steam Man of the Prairies.*
O c) *Down the River.*
O d) *Malaeska, the Indian Wife of the White Hunter.*

5. Which quote is sensational in style?
O a) ... that idea of deliverance to which I have previously alluded, and of which a moiety only floated indeterminately through my brain ...
O b) ... Her friends repeated the phrase enthusiastically; and for several minutes she stood, like the jackdaw in the fable, enjoying her borrowed plumes ...
O c) .. ."You see," she continued, in a faint and lady-like voice, like the last dying breath of an Arabian jessamine or something equally ethereal ...
O d) ... Over the fence they climbed like a couple of cats, and leaping into the yard of an adjoining tenement, they ran for the hall. Blood spots on the flags left a plain trail ...

6. Dime novels came along at just the right time to take advantage of advances in …
O a) education; technology, and transportation.
O b) medicine; theology; and philosophy.
O c) technology; sociology; and "Manifest Destiny".
O d) Education; Theology; and Agriculture.

7. Which statement is true?
O a) Most of the early dime novels cost ten cents and were aimed at child audiences.
O b) Most of the early dime novels cost between five and twenty-five cents and were aimed at adult audiences.
O c) Most of the early dime novels cost between five and ten cents and were primarily westerns.
O d) Most of the early dime novels cost ten cents and were the precursors to the newspaper.

8. One of the most outspoken critics of dime novels was ...
O a) William Graham Sumner.
O b) Erastus Beadle.
O c) Anthony Comstock.
O d) Minerva L. Saunders.

9. One of the biggest reasons for the decline of the dime novel was the advent of…
O a) newspapers.
O b) classic novels.
O c) television.
O d) motion pictures.

10. Which of the following is a list of dime novel publishers?
O a) Beadle and Adams; Street and Smith; Frank Tousey.
O b) George P. Munro; Anthony Comstock; Mark Twain.
O c) Francis Scott Street; Norman Munro; Smith and Steer.
O d) Herman Melville; Barnes and Noble; Frank Tousey.

11. Name five wide-ranging topics incorporated into dime novels:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

12. What connection exists between the compulsory education laws passed 1870s and the publication of dime novels?

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Describe a typical dime novel hero:

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Describe the purpose of the dime novel cover.

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What be the best way to explain the use of the dime novel to the historian?

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Answer Key: l.c.2.b.3.b.4.d.5.d.6.a.7.b.8.c.9.d.l0.a.)

APPENDIX B12

Essay Questions

Essay Questions:
Answer two questions:

1. Cathy Davidson, author of *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, reminds us that "novels are not history," even historical fiction novels. Should historians trust novels as historically accurate documents? Are novels of any use to the historian? What can novels tell us about the history of a particular time period? How should historians view the sensational literary output of the nineteenth century, for example?

2. Write a compare and contrast essay on the act of writing for money versus pride.

3. It is common practice for teachers, particularly in the upper elementary grades, to read aloud from children's historical fiction novels as background to a particular subject being taught in a social studies lesson. Discuss the effectiveness of this strategy.

4. The ideal of the American hero was explored in the dime novel genre. What were the main characteristics of that hero, and have they changed much today?

5. Charles Frazier, when writing *Cold Mountain*, consciously chose to take a handful of historical facts and use them as the basis for a narrative, consequently letting "the fiction drive and the history ride." Should historical fiction be limited to a re-telling of actual events, or should authors be free to let historical figures have conversations and act in ways that cannot be verified?

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