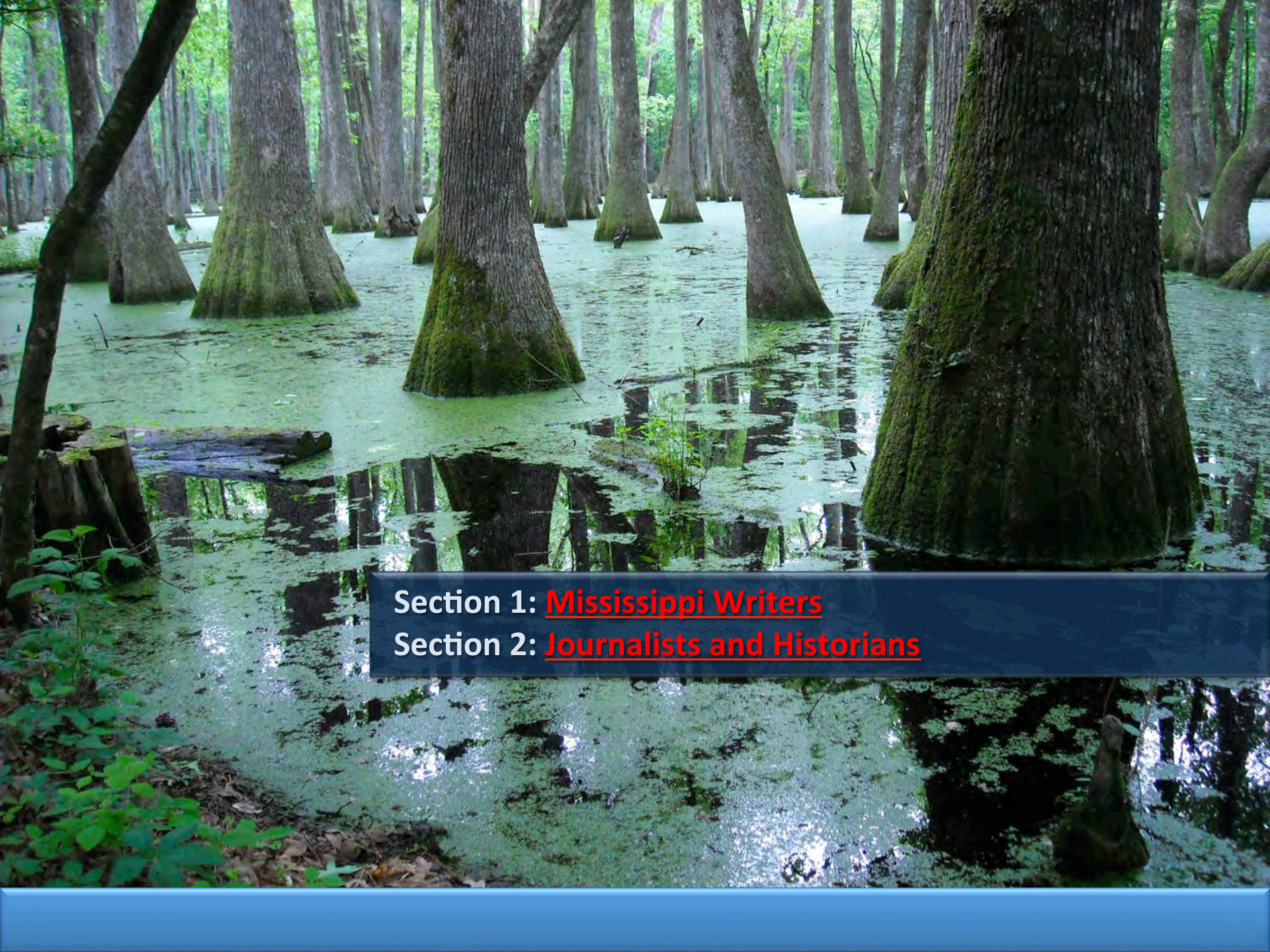


The image shows the Mississippi State Capitol building, a grand neoclassical structure with a prominent dome topped by a golden eagle. The building features a portico with tall columns and a pediment with a relief sculpture. The scene is set against a clear blue sky with some green foliage in the foreground.

A Place Called Mississippi

Chapter 15: Mississippi's Literary Tradition
STUDY PRESENTATION



Section 1: [Mississippi Writers](#)

Section 2: [Journalists and Historians](#)

Section 1: Mississippi Writers

- Essential Question: How has the culture of our state been shown by our writers?



Section 1: Mississippi Writers

➤ What terms do I need to know?

- Nobel Prize in Literature
- Pulitzer Prize
- Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center
- Harlem Renaissance
- autobiography
- writer-in-residence
- National Book Award
- Southern Renaissance



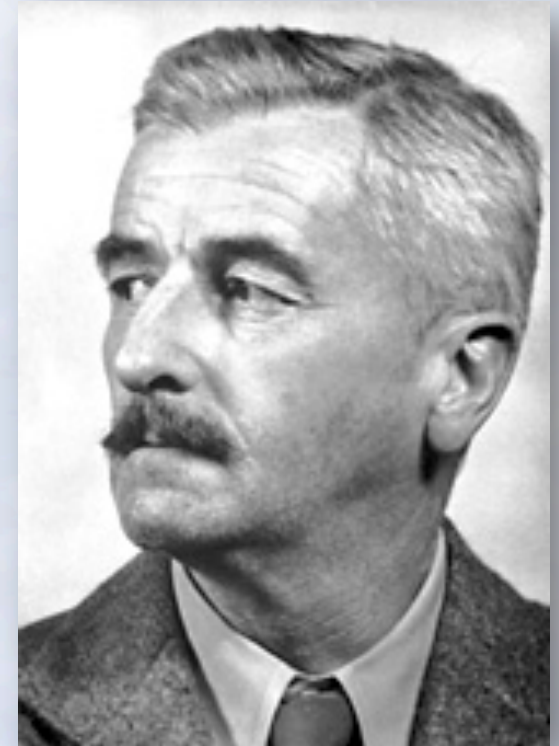
Introduction

- Mississippi's most famous writers include William Faulkner, Richard Wright, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams.
- Many more outstanding writers have come from Mississippi, and several have been inspired by more prominent names from the state.



William Faulkner (1897-1962)

- The fictional people and places that make up William Faulkner's stories resemble real people in real towns, both in Mississippi and around the world.
- The themes in Faulkner's novels included humor, greed, human dignity, human corruption, the dissolution of families, class distinction, racial prejudice, love, hate, jealousy, and violence.
- Faulkner once said that he wrote about the human heart in conflict with itself.
- William Faulkner won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954, and a Pulitzer Prize in fiction in 1955.
- Some of his famous works include *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *The Reivers*.



Richard Wright (1908-1960)

- Richard Wright, an African American writer, developed an intense interest in literature and read most of America's major authors.
- The basic theme in Wright's early novels is the black man's struggle to maintain dignity in a white man's world.
- Some literary critics have called Wright a bitter man because of the social and legal injustices blacks experienced in America.
- Some of his famous works include *Uncle Tom's Children*, *Native Son*, and *Black Boy*.



Eudora Welty (1909-2001)

- Eudora Welty, Mississippi's distinguished woman of letters, made the state the setting for most of her novels and short stories.
- Welty's Mississippi was a relatively tranquil, serene, and protected place, unlike Faulkner's view of the state.
- Her characters deal with conflict of the human heart in a more gentle and less desperate way.
- Welty places great emphasis upon place and family in her works.
- Eudora Welty was a popular lecturer, won numerous awards for her fiction, and received the Pulitzer Prize in 1973 for *The Optimist's Daughter*.



Tennessee Williams (1910-1983)

- Tennessee Williams is one of America's most successful playwrights.
- Many of Williams' plays have Mississippi or southern settings, and his characters speak and have manners similar to what he grew up around.
- The themes of deceit and greed of mankind, as well as the inevitable payback for those weaknesses, are common in his works.
- Williams won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.



Other Major Writers

- Since literature is a matter of taste and preference, determining which Mississippi authors should be included on a list of the state's major writers is difficult.
- The state of Mississippi has produced several successful writers.



Other Major Writers:

Margaret Walker Alexander (1915-1998)

- Margaret Walker Alexander received the Yale Younger Poets prize, a Ford Fellowship, and a Houghton Mifflin Fellowship.
- Some of her famous works include *For My People*, *Jubilee*, and *On Being Female, Black, and Free*.
- Alexander founded the Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People at Jackson State University; it was renamed the Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center.



Other Major Writers:

William Attaway (1911-1986)

- William Attaway was a major figure in the Harlem Renaissance in New York City.
- Some of his famous works include *Let Me Breathe Thunder*, and *Blood on the Forge*.
- Both focus on the tribulations of segregation and the movement of African Americans out of the South.



Other Major Writers: Larry Brown (1951-2004)

- Some of his famous works include *Dirty Work*, *Joe*, *Father and Son*, and *Faye*.
- He also wrote *On Fire*, and two short stories, *Facing the Music* and *Big Bad Love*.



Other Major Writers: David Cohn (1896-1960)

- Some themes of David Cohn's works include the influence of agriculture and technology on society.
- One of his famous works is *Where I Was Born and Raised*, and he wrote a still unpublished autobiography at the time of his death.



Other Major Writers: Ellen Douglas

- Ellen Douglas was a seventh-generation Mississippian, and she began writing poetry and sketching at a young age.
- Her novel, *A Family's Affairs*, won the Houghton Mifflin Award and was recognized by *The New York Times*.
- More of her works include *Black Cloud, White Cloud; Apostles of Light; The Rock Cried Out; A Long Night; Truth: Four Stories I Am Finally Old Enough to Tell; and Witnessing*.



Other Major Writers: Richard Ford

- Although he is a native of Jackson, Richard Ford claims that he is not a southern writer.
- Ford won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for *Independence Day*, a sequel to *The Sportswriter*.
- Some of his works include *Piece of My Heart*, *The Ultimate Good Luck*, *Rock Springs*, and *Wildlife*.



Other Major Writers:

Barry Hannah (1942-2010)

- Barry Hannah was one of Mississippi's most beloved writers, and he was a writer-in-residence at The University of Mississippi when he died.
- He won the William Faulkner Prize in 1972 for his first book, *Geronimo Rex*.
- More of his works include *Night-Watchmen*, *Ray*, *The Tennis Handsome*, *Hey Jack!*, *Boomerang*, *Never Die*, *Men Without Ties*, *High Lonesome*, *Yonder Stands Your Orphan*, *Captain Maximus*, and *Bats Out of Hell*.



Other Major Writers: Beth Henley

- Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart* was a remarkable success and won several awards, including the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize in 1981.
- More of her works include *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, *Impossible Marriage*, *Family Week*, and *Ridiculous Fraud*.



Other Major Writers: Greg Iles

- Greg Iles is best known for his thrillers, which have won rave reviews.
- His famous works include *Spandau Phoenix*, *Black Cross*, *24 Hours*, *The Footprints of God: A Novel*, *Turning Angel*, and *The Devil's Punchbowl*.



Other Major Writers: Anne Moody and Donna Tartt

- *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1968), an autobiography, brought Anne Moody fame and acclaim.
- *Coming of Age in Mississippi* won the Brotherhood Award, the Best Book of the Year Award, and the Faulkner Award.
- *The Secret History* (1992), brought Donna Tartt fame, and she also wrote *The Little Friend*.



Other Major Writers: Willie Morris (1934-1999)

- When Willie Morris graduated from high school in Mississippi, his father encouraged him to leave the state and broaden his horizons.
- He became the youngest editor of *Harper's*, a prestigious magazine, in New York City.
- Some of his works include *North Toward Home*, *Homecomings*, *Yazoo: Integration in a Deep-Southern Town*, *Faulkner's Mississippi*, *My Dog Skip*, and *The Ghosts of Medgar Evers*.



Other Major Writers: Walker Percy (1916-1990)

- Walker Percy was born in Alabama, but grew up with his cousin, William Alexander Percy, in Mississippi.
- Percy earned a medical degree, but his poor health prevented his practice of medicine, so he began to write instead.
- He received a National Book Award for his novel, *The Moviegoer*.
- Walker Percy also wrote *The Last Gentleman*, *Love in the Ruins*, *Message in the Bottle*, *Lancelot*, *The Second Coming*, and *The Thanatos Syndrome*.



Other Major Writers: William Alexander Percy (1885-1942)

- Alexander Percy is best known for his autobiography, *Lanterns on the Levee*.
- In the work, he recorded his life in the Mississippi Delta in the 1920s and wrote of his father's resistance to the Ku Klux Klan.
- Percy also published several volumes of poetry, including *Sappho in Levkas and Other Poems*, and *In April Once, and Other Poems*.



Other Major Writers: Sterling Plumpp

- Sterling Plumpp was valedictorian of his high school class in 1960, served in the United States Army, and graduated from Roosevelt University in 1968.
- Plumpp is best known as a poet, but he also wrote books, including *Portable Soul; Half Black, Half Blacker; Clinton; The Mojo Hands Call, I Must Go; Blues: The Story Always Untold; Harriet Tubman; Ornate With Smoke; and Paul Robeson.*



Other Major Writers: Elizabeth Spencer

- Elizabeth Spencer's first book, *Fire in the Morning*, was recognized by *The New York Times* as one of the best three novels of 1948.
- She also published *This Crooked Way* and *The Light in the Piazza*.
- Her novel, *The Voice at the Back Door*, won the Rosenthal Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1956.



Other Major Writers: Kathryn Stockett

- Kathryn Stockett's first novel *The Help*, published in 2009, was a tremendous success and sold 1.9 million copies.
- The setting is Jackson during the civil rights movement, and the major characters are two African American maids and a young white woman who recently graduated from Ole Miss.
- Steven Spielberg's Dream Works studio began making a film version of the book in 2010.



Other Major Writers: James Street (1903-1954)

- James Street wrote *Tap Roots*, which was made into a popular movie.
- He also wrote two religious novels, *The Gauntlet* and *The High Calling*.



Other Major Writers: Clifton Taulbert

- Clifton Taulbert was a successful author, lecturer, and entrepreneur during the early days of the civil rights movement.
- Taulbert wrote *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*, which focused on the bonds that held his family together, rather than the conflict between blacks and whites.
- Some of his other works include *The Last Train North*, *Eight Habits of the Heart: The Timeless Values That Build Strong Communities*, *The Journey Home: A Father's Gift to His Son*, and three children's books.



Other Major Writers: Mildred D. Taylor

- When Mildred Taylor visited Mississippi as a child, she heard stories about the dignity and survival of her people living in a hostile and segregated society.
- Most of Taylor's works are taken from her memory of those stories.
- Some of her works include *Song of the Trees*, and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.



Other Major Writers: Jesmyn Ward

- Jesmyn Ward began her teaching career at the University of New Orleans, and she and her family were devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.
- She published *Salvage the Bones* as a story of travail and survival in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and it won the 2011 National Book Award.
- Ward's first novel was *Where the Line Bleeds*.



Other Major Writers: Ida B. Wells (1862-1931)

- Ida B. Wells was a journalist, teacher, social activist, and a pioneer in the civil rights and women's suffrage movement.
- Wells was born into slavery in 1862, but devoted her life after emancipation to the elevation of blacks and women to full citizenship.
- The story of her life is told in *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*.



Other Major Writers:

Ben Ames Williams (1889-1953)

- Ben Ames Williams published his first novel in 1919, titled *All the Brothers Were Valiant*.
- He wrote several Civil War novels, including *House Divided*, which is comparable to *So Red the Rose* and *Gone With the Wind*.



Other Major Writers: Al Young

- Al Young's interest in language and music are evident in his writing, which includes fiction, poetry, and films.
- Some of his novels include *Who Is Angelina?*, *Sitting Pretty*, *Ask Me Now*, and *Seduction by Light*.
- Some of his poetry includes *Dancing*, *The Song Turning Back Into Itself*, *Geography of the Near Past*, *The Blues Don't Change*, and *Heaven*.



Other Major Writers: Stark Young (1881-1963)

- Stark Young is considered one of the most important writers of the Southern Renaissance, a period between the 1920s and 1930s during which there was a number of emerging writers in the South.
- Young was also a literary critic.
- Stark Young wrote *So Red the Rose*, and he wrote for *Theatre Arts Monthly*, *The New Republic*, and *The New York Times*.



More about Mississippi Writers

➤ To learn more about Mississippi's literary tradition, visit the following:

1. [Mississippi Writer's Page, The University of Mississippi](#)
2. [Mississippi Writers and Musicians Project, Starkville High School](#)



Section 2: Journalists and Historians

- Essential Question: How are the beliefs and ideals of Mississippi's people shown in its journalists and historians?



Section 2: Journalists and Historians

➤ What terms do I need to know?

- columnist
- press secretary
- Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics
- Silver M. Award



Introduction

- In addition to noteworthy writers, the state of Mississippi has produced many journalists and historians as well.



Journalists

- Andrew Marschalk brought the first printing press to Mississippi in 1789.
- Since that time, journalism has been a powerful influence in the state's society and politics.
- Until the 1920s, newspapers were the most prominent source of news and information available to people.



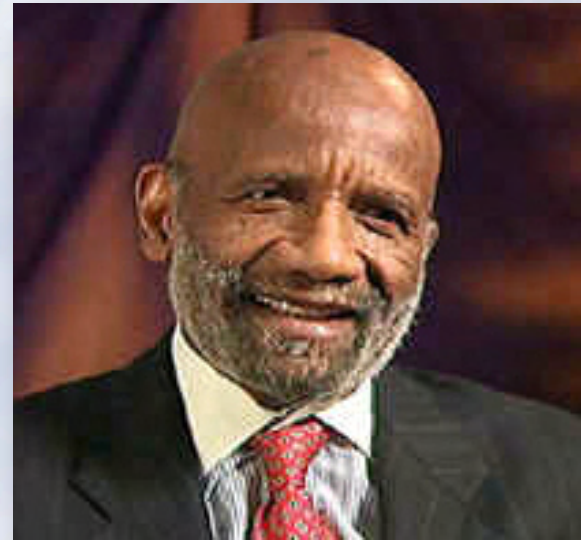
Journalists: Turner Catledge (1901-1983)

- Mississippi's most prestigious journalist was Turner Catledge, editor of *The New York Times*.
- Catledge began his career in journalism as a part-time printer for *Neshoba Democrat* in Philadelphia.
- He wrote several editorials for the *Tunica Times* condemning the Ku Klux Klan, and the Klan set fire to the newspaper's building.
- He published an autobiography in 1971, *My Life and The Times*.



Journalists: Lerone Bennett Jr.

- Lerone Bennett Jr., a journalist, historian, and essayist, is one of Mississippi's most prominent black writers.
- He is best known as editor of *Ebony* magazine, from 1958 to 1987.



Journalists: Hodding Carter II (1907-1972)

- Holding Carter II was not born in Mississippi, but he spent most of his adult life in the state.
- As a journalist, he frequently criticized the state's long tradition of racial discrimination.
- He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 1946, and was recognized for his other publications.



Journalists: William Raspberry

- William Raspberry is a distinguished African American journalist.
- He spent most of his career as a columnist with *The Washington Post*.
- Raspberry was awarded the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Commentary.
- William Raspberry was the Knight Professor of Journalism and Public Policy at Duke University until his retirement in 2008.



Journalists: Charles Overby

- Charles Overby's career as a journalist began at The University of Mississippi where he was an editor for the *Daily Mississippian*.
- Overby served briefly as press secretary for Senator John C. Stennis.
- He worked at several southern newspapers owned by the Gannett Company, including the state's largest newspaper *The Clarion-Ledger*.
- The Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics was established at the University of Mississippi in his honor.



Journalists: Craig Claiborne (1920-2000)

- Craig Claiborne was the food editor of *The New York Times* from 1975 to 1986.
- He was credited with introducing America to Asian and Latin cuisines.
- Claiborne published several cookbooks and wrote a syndicated column for newspapers throughout the country.



Journalists: Ira Harkey (1918-2006)

- Ira Harkey purchased the Pascagoula *Chronicle-Star* in 1948.
- Harkey, a young white editor, spoke out against Mississippi's white power structure.
- He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1963 for his brave editorials.
- Ira Harkey published a memoir titled *The Smell of Burning Crosses*.



Journalists: Hazel Brannon Smith (1914-1994)

- Hazel Brannon Smith, a young white editor, also supported the cause of racial and social justice.
- Smith was editor of the *Lexington Advertiser*, and she won a Pulitzer Prize in 1964.
- An advertising and subscription boycott forced her to file for bankruptcy.



Journalists: Percy Greene (1897-1977)

- Percy Greene founded the *Jackson Advocate*, the state's oldest African American newspaper, in 1938.
- He was editor of the newspaper from its founding until his death in 1977.
- Greene was a controversial figure, and some argued that he was too conservative and too friendly with the State Sovereignty Commission.



Journalists: Charles Tisdale (1926-2007)

- After Percy Greene's death, Charles Tisdale became owner and editor of the *Jackson Advocate*.
- He was an outspoken critic, in support of black rights, and against leaders who failed to meet his high standards.
- Greene often received threats.
- His wife, Alice, assumed the role of editor after his death.



Journalists: Ronnie Agnew

- Ronnie Agnew began his journalism career as a reporter for the *Greenwood Commonwealth*.
- He also wrote for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Hattiesburg American*, and *The Clarion Ledger*.
- He received the Silver M Award for distinguished journalism.



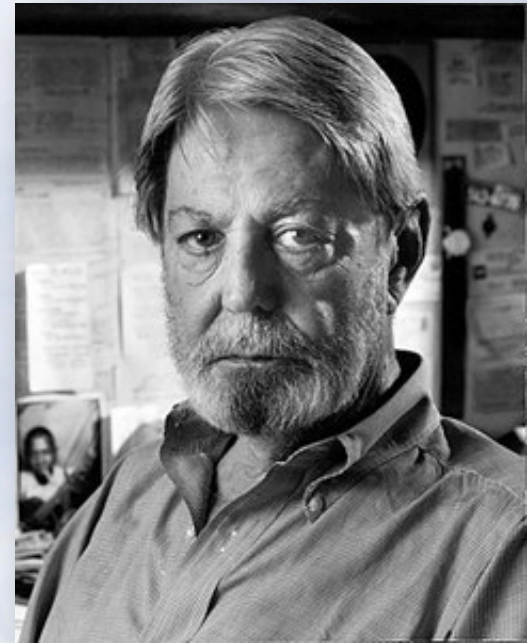
Historians

- Mississippi's preoccupation with the past produced many prominent historians from the state.
- Among these historians were John W. Monette and J. F. H. Claiborne.



Historians: Shelby Foote (1916-2005)

- After publishing several novels, Shelby Foote began work on a three-volume history of the Civil War.
- He spent twenty years writing *The Civil War: A Narrative*.
- Foote became popular as a consultant and commentator on a PBS series on the Civil War.



Historians: David Donald

- David Donald received a Pulitzer Prize in 1961 for his biography of abolitionist Charles Sumner.
- He won a second Pulitzer Prize for his biography of southern writer Thomas Wolfe.



Historians: Winthrop Jordan (1931-2007)

- Winthrop Jordan was author of *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro*, which was considered a seminal work, and it won several awards.
- Jordan also published *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry Into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy*.



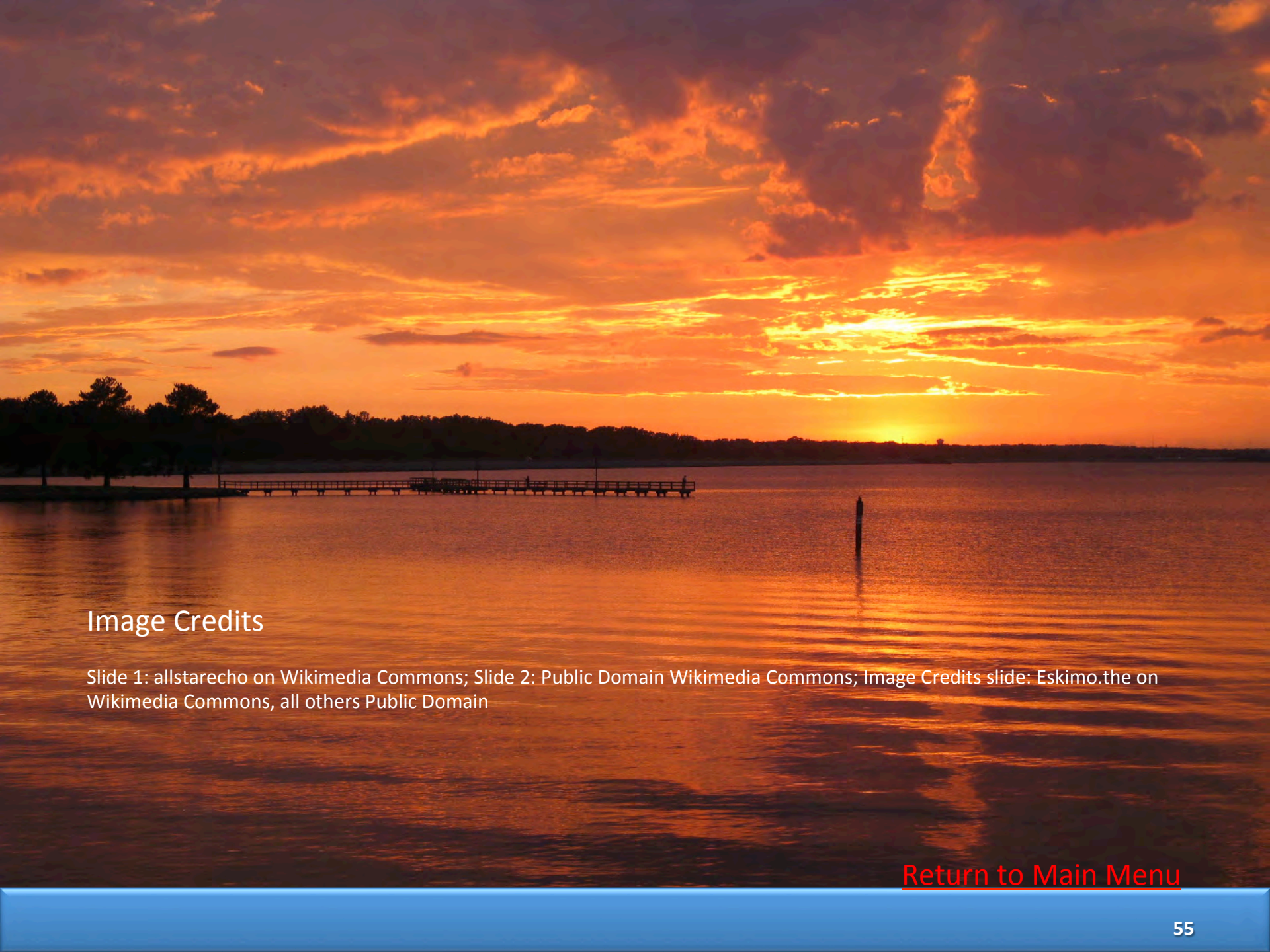


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