



Background of The Morgan Library & Museum's Literary and Historical Manuscripts Collection

The Morgan Library & Museum's collection of literary and historical manuscripts includes complete manuscripts and working drafts of poetry and prose as well as correspondence, journals, and other documents of important British, European, and American authors, artists, scientists, and historical and political figures from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries. The handwritten documents in the collection preserve a process of human activity—from mind to hand to pen to paper—with an immediacy and power indiscernible in texts produced electronically.

The general pattern of the collection was established by Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), who began to acquire literary and historical manuscripts on a large scale during the 1890s. He sought not to achieve comprehensiveness in any particular field but rather to assemble important documents related to events of historical significance, lives of notable individuals, and the creation of great literary works. By the time of his death, he had gathered a number of exceptional documents handwritten or signed by influential figures in Western culture, including Elizabeth I, Marie Antoinette, Napoléon, Sir Isaac Newton, and Voltaire. Morgan had a great interest in major British writers; a centerpiece of his collection was—and still is—the sole surviving manuscript of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, transcribed and corrected under the direction of the blind poet. Other collection highlights are Charles Dickens's manuscript of *A Christmas Carol*, Henry David Thoreau's journals, Thomas Jefferson's letters to his daughter Martha, and manuscripts and letters of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, and John Steinbeck.

The Morgan's collection of literary and historical manuscripts has been enriched by many gifts and acquisitions, and twentieth-century holdings have increased significantly. The collection, particularly strong in artists' letters, was greatly enhanced by the Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, the gift of the Pierre Matisse Foundation in 1997. These archives include more than fifteen hundred letters as well as records of the gallery installations of Balthus, Marc Chagall, Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Giacometti, Joan Miró, and other twentieth-century artists. The Carter Burden Collection of American Literature

includes important manuscripts and correspondence of John Cheever, Ezra Pound, and Tennessee Williams. The 1999 acquisition of *The Paris Review Archives* brings to the Morgan's collection the correspondence, typescripts, and galley proofs of several hundred post-World War II writers, including Donald Hall, Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, Norman Mailer, Toni Morrison, George Plimpton, Philip Roth, and Anne Sexton.