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Sommario/riassunto	This book examines fiction and nonfiction texts from the period 1830 to 1860 to demonstrate how major and minor American writers constructed their country's identity by contrasting their own characteristics with those of innumerable immigrants. Confronted with

newcomers whose cultural and social background made them appear more alien than their predecessors, American writers reconsidered their nation's democracy and republicanism, together with its cultural and ethnic heritage, in a context of heated scientific and popular debates about race.
