H.L. Mencken, journalist and satirist, was born into a German-American family in Baltimore, Maryland. His father, a tailor, owned a successful tailoring business, and his mother was a woman of independent spirit. Mencken attended Baltimore Polytechnic Institute in 1896, where he became interested in literature and journalism. He worked in his family’s business before entering the field of journalism.

In 1899, Mencken began his career as a reporter and drama critic for the Baltimore Morning Herald. He later worked for various newspapers, including the Baltimore Sun, and eventually became a contributing editor for the New York Times. Mencken was known for his trenchant social observations and unbridled humor. He was also a prolific writer, publishing numerous works, including the landmark book "The American Language" in 1919.

Mencken was a controversial figure, known for his often provocative opinions on politics, religion, and social norms. He was a critic of democracy and a proponent of elitism. His views, while sometimes controversial, have had a lasting impact on American culture. Mencken passed away in 1956, but his influence continues to be felt through his writings and the enduring popularity of his ideas.