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Chapter 1 : Seminar in 19th Century American Literature: Realism and Naturalism | English

Introduction. Various defined as distinct philosophical approaches, complementary aesthetic strategies, or broad literary movements, realism and naturalism emerged as the dominant categories applied to American fiction of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Local color or regional literature is fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region. Influenced by Southwestern and Down East humor, between the Civil War and the end of the nineteenth century this mode of writing became dominant in American literature. Its weaknesses may include nostalgia or sentimentality. Its customary form is the sketch or short story, although Hamlin Garland argued for the novel of local color. The emphasis is frequently on nature and the limitations it imposes; settings are frequently remote and inaccessible. The setting is integral to the story and may sometimes become a character in itself. Local color stories tend to be concerned with the character of the district or region rather than with the individual: The characters are marked by their adherence to the old ways, by dialect, and by particular personality traits central to the region. The narrator is typically an educated observer from the world beyond who learns something from the characters while preserving a sometimes sympathetic, sometimes ironic distance from them. The narrator serves as mediator between the rural folk of the tale and the urban audience to whom the tale is directed. Stories may include lots of storytelling and revolve around the community and its rituals. Many local color stories share an antipathy to change and a certain degree of nostalgia for an always-past golden age. Thematic tension or conflict between urban ways and old-fashioned rural values is often symbolized by the intrusion of an outsider or interloper who seeks something from the community. Although strictly speaking, realism is a technique, it also denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life. A reaction against romanticism, an interest in scientific method, the systematizing of the study of documentary history, and the influence of rational philosophy all affected the rise of realism. Selective presentation of reality with an emphasis on verisimilitude, even at the expense of a well-made plot. Character is more important than action and plot; complex ethical choices are often the subject. Characters appear in their real complexity of temperament and motive; they are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past. Events will usually be plausible. Realistic novels avoid the sensational, dramatic elements of naturalistic novels and romances. Objectivity in presentation becomes increasingly important: Interior or psychological realism a variant form. Naturalism The term naturalism describes a type of literature that attempts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. Unlike realism, which focuses on literary technique, naturalism implies a philosophical position: Through this objective study of human beings, naturalistic writers believed that the laws behind the forces that govern human lives might be studied and understood. Although they used the techniques of accumulating detail pioneered by the realists, the naturalists thus had a specific object in mind when they chose the segment of reality that they wished to convey. Frequently but not invariably ill-educated or lower-class characters whose lives are governed by the forces of heredity, instinct, and passion. Their attempts at exercising free will or choice are hamstrung by forces beyond their control; social Darwinism and other theories help to explain their fates to the reader. Doubtless the main difference between the novel realism and the romance is in the way in which they view reality. The novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. It takes a group of people and set them going about the business of life. We come to see these people in their real complexity of temperament and motive. They are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past. Character is more important than action and plot, and probably the tragic or comic actions of the narrative will have the primary purpose of enhancing our knowledge of and feeling for an important character, a group of characters, or a way of life. By contrast the romance, following distantly the medieval example, feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character, and action will be

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freer in a romance than in a novel, encountering, as it were, less resistance from reality. This is not always true, as we see in what might be called the static romances of Hawthorne, in which the author uses the allegorical and moral, rather than the dramatic, possibilities of the form. The romance can flourish without providing much intricacy of relation. The characters, probably rather two-dimensional types, will not be complexly related to each other or to society or to the past. Human beings will on the whole be shown in an ideal relation—that is, they will share emotions only after these have become abstract or symbolic. To be sure, characters may become profoundly involved in some way, as in Hawthorne or Melville, but it will be a deep and narrow, an obsessive, involvement. In American romances it will not matter much what class people come from, and where the novelist would arouse our interest in a character by exploring his origin, the romancer will probably do so by enveloping it in mystery. Character itself becomes, then, somewhat abstract and ideal, so much so in some romances that it seems to be merely a function of plot. The plot we may expect to be highly colored. Astonishing events may occur, and these are likely to have a symbolic or ideological, rather than a realistic, plausibility. Being less committed to the immediate rendition of reality than the novel, the romance will more freely veer toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms.

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Chapter 2 : Literary realism - Wikipedia

Realism and Representation Essays on the Problem of Realism in Relation to Science, Literature, and Culture. George Lewis Levine - *Beyond Naturalism a New Realism in American Theatre.*

Naturalism Definition of Naturalism Naturalism is a literary genre that started as a movement in late nineteenth century in literature, film, theater, and art. It is a type of extreme realism. This movement suggested the roles of family, social conditions, and environment in shaping human character. Thus, naturalistic writers write stories based on the idea that environment determines and governs human character. We also see use of some of the scientific principles in naturalistic works, and humans struggling for survival in hostile and alien society. **Realism** Both naturalism and realism are literary genres and interlinked. However, there are some differences between them: Naturalism suggests a philosophical pessimism in which writers use scientific techniques to depict human beings as objective and impartial characters; whereas realism focuses on literary technique. Realism poses that a decision of a character comes from his response to a certain situation. **Examples of Naturalism in Literature** Example 1: Steinbeck, in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, portrays the Joad family and its changing environment from the naturalistic point of view, during the t Great Depression in the United States. He depicts the Joad family as insignificant, instinct-bound, and small creatures bound to seek a paradise they might never find. Initially, when the Joads leave home, they are very simple and animal-like people, who could barely understand their plight. They face constant opposition from two powerful predators – society and nature. However, as the narrative progresses, they begin to adapt to new circumstances. **The Open Boat** By Stephen Crane Stephen Crane, in his short story *The Open Boat*, portrays men on a boat, representing human endurance against indifferent nature, where they feel themselves helpless. Thus, it contains a theme of naturalism. Besides, *The Open Boat* symbolically represents human place in the huge universe where man struggles against nature. Then we see a definite determination, as men cannot play any part in their outcome, which results in unexpected death of Oiler, despite being an expert sailor. Neither does she fit in the Creole society. Consequently, Edna becomes a victim of her sociological pressures. Naturalism in this novel shows how human beings need to be careful at every corner, as death could reach them anywhere, waiting for them to commit a mistake and take their lives. We see the story is about a man with his dog trying to survive harsh, cold weather by building a fire. **Function of Naturalism** The impact that naturalism has left on literary writers is colossal, leading to the evolution of the modern movement. Generally, naturalistic works expose dark sides of life such as prejudice, racism, poverty, prostitution, filth, and disease. Since these works are often pessimistic and blunt, they receive heavy criticism. Despite the echoing pessimism in this literary output, naturalists are generally concerned with improving the human condition around the world.

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Chapter 3 : Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature, Revised Edition by Donald

This book attempts to answer two major questions: how can one best describe realism and naturalism in nineteenth-century American fiction, and what is the relationship between the literary criticism of the age and the emergence and nature of realism and naturalism?

Included under the broad umbrella of realism are a diverse set of authors, including Henry James, W. Often categorized as regionalists or local colorists, many of these writers produced work that emphasized geographically distinct dialects and customs. Others offered satirical fiction or novels of manners that exposed the excesses, hypocrisies, or shortcomings of a culture undergoing radical social change. A subsequent generation of writers, including Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Edith Wharton, and Jack London, are most often cited as the American inheritors of the naturalist approach practiced by Emile Zola, whose treatise *Le Roman Experimental* applied the experimental methods of medical science to the construction of the novel. Governed by a combination of heredity, environment, and chance, the typical characters of naturalist fiction find themselves constrained from achieving the transcendent goals suggested by a false ideology of romantic individualism. Over the past century, critics and literary historians have alternately viewed realist and naturalist texts as explicit condemnations of the economic, cultural, or ethical deficiencies of the industrialized age or as representations of the very ideological forces they purport to critique. More recently, the emergence of deconstructive, Marxist, and new historicist criticism in the s afforded a revised, and often skeptical, reevaluation of realism and naturalism as more conflicted forms, itself defined or constructed by hegemonic forces and offering insight into late- and early-20th-century ideologies of class, race, and gender. In particular, efforts to provide large-scale summaries reflect the attention to social problems in s, and the influence of post-structuralism and cultural criticism in the s. In all cases, however, comprehensive hypotheses about the nature of realism and naturalism remain grounded, to a large extent, in the political, economic, and cultural history of the late 19th century. Kaplan , Borus , and Bell each make valuable contributions to the new historicist reexamination of naturalism. Murphy offers one of the few comprehensive accounts of realism within dramatic literature. *The Problem of American Realism: Studies in the Cultural History of a Literary Idea*. University of Chicago Press, *The Ferment of Realism: In this light, establishes forceful reading of realist novels as varied statements of outrage and opposition to the increasing materialism, disorder, and perceived moral decay in the years leading up to World War I. Howells, James, and Norris in the Mass Market*. University of North Carolina Press, *Explores Howells, James, and Norris in detail, with some attention to other writers, including compelling discussions of the publishing industry, literary celebrity, and rise of the political novel. The Social Construction of American Realism*. Among the more influential new historicist interventions. *The Novel in an Age of Transition*. University of Wisconsin Press, *Describes the philosophical and cultural assumptions that helped shape these movements and traces their development throughout the 20th century. At times polemical in its dismissal of post-structuralist or materialist rereadings see, for example, Kaplan ; Howard or Michaels , both cited under Philosophy, History, and Form , nonetheless immensely useful and readable synthesis of key ideas. American Realism and American Drama*, Cambridge University Press, *Addresses the scant attention paid to the theater in the scholarship on realism. The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America*, Southern Illinois University Press, *Collects a variety of essays that construct a coherent portrait of the movements and their defining tensions.*

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Chapter 4 : Compare and Contrast: The Similarities and Differences Between Realism and Naturalism | Ov

Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Crosscurrents Modern Critiques) Hardcover - September 1, by Professor Donald Pizer PhD (Author).

Regionalism and Realism in 19th Century American Literature In century America the Civil War and westward expansion created numerous changes in society and politics. American artists turned to realism and regionalism to comment on the new concerns of the time period such as the ongoing struggle of the working class as well as the societal elevation of the middle class. Artists documented these national transformations by creating removed, impartial depictions of everyday life. In order to bring their characters and setting to life to allow their readers to become fully engulfed in their stories, Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Kate Chopin in *The Awakening* employed regionalism while Henry James depicted real life in real time using realism in his story *Daisy Miller*: Mark Twain and Kate Chopin were experts at creating regionalist works. Regionalism refers to texts that concentrate heavily on specific, unique features of a certain region including dialect, customs, tradition, topography, history, and characters. It focuses on the formal and the informal, analyzing the attitudes characters have towards one another and their community as a whole. The narrator is particularly important in regionalist fiction for he or she serves as a translator, making the region understandable for the reader. Twain brings to the local to life. From the very beginning of the novel Twain tells his reader, "In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: Twain guides his reader, using the vernacular, directly into the scene so you feel as if you are right next to Huck Finn, floating down the Mississippi River, as he dictates the story to you. The local color stories he describes throughout the novel give the reader a representation of the region in which he dwells and travels. The Mississippi River plays a huge part in the story. It does not just function as the natural landscape and setting for this region. The river also points to other aspects of regionalism. Regionalist works tend to be more focused on the actual region than painstakingly tending to the systematic development of the plot. The moon was so bright I could a counted the drift logs that went a slipping along, black and still, hundreds of yards out from shore" Twain, pg. These descriptions have absolutely nothing to do with the plot. Instead they are a digression from it. Digression from the plot is a regionalist technique of better representing the culture. Although it plays a role in the story, it is not necessarily the most important part of the plot. Narrator translation is another key characteristic of regionalism. Huck takes his experiences and articulates them so the reader can understand where he is and what it is like there. Along with depicting the river, Huck works as a translator when he explains the widow and her actions. He tells the reader, "The widow cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she never meant no harm by it" Twain, pg. Regionalist works also call for the sympathy for the local and what is lost when it is incorporated into the national. In doing so she is viewed as an enemy because she is attempting to erase the local and uniqueness of the region that Huck embodies. Kate Chopin also employs regionalism in her work *The Awakening*. While Twain looks to glorify the region he writes about, Chopin uses her novel to criticize the region in which her story takes place. She still fully presents the reader with an understanding of the region by adhering to the same set of regionalist characteristics and guidelines used by Twain but she showcases her region in a dimmer light. *The Awakening* takes place in the Creole society and culture of Louisiana. She brings her reader, unlike Twain, into a world of high class. In both places, Creole society is expressed. Like Twain, Chopin uses the vernacular. Certain French phrases such as "quadroon" are common to the Southern region and are employed by Chopin throughout her novel as a means of bringing her reader into the region. Pontellier most forcibly was their entire absence of prudery. Their freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible to her, though she had no difficulty in reconciling it with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable" Chopin, pg. The most significant is the assumed and structured role of the mother-woman. She is everything Edna is not. She not only worships her husband and children and perfectly executes her domestic

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duties, but she is also free in her expression and discourse. All of these are characteristics of the ideal Creole woman. Chopin used numerous characters, their dialect and interaction with each other and community to compose her regionalist work and bring the specific region in which *The Awakening* is set to life. In his most famous novella, *Daisy Miller: A Study*, Henry James employs realism. Realism overlaps regionalism in many ways. It is the literary depiction of life how it is lived. Realist works digress from the plot by indulging into the depths of its characters in order to capture the essence of real life in real time. Realist writers attack social mores and traditions. Rejecting romanticism, realist writers do not wish to hide the unpleasant. Instead, they revel and flourish in what is real; proudly including all that is ugly, crude and perhaps socially unacceptable. True to the realistic technique, Henry James has a strong emphasis on the development of believable characters in *Daisy Miller*: Daisy is so real to readers because she is so flawed. Even though her actions may be radical for the times, they are true to her own specific character and way of being. When Winterbourne first meets her in Switzerland she is "chatty," "audacious" and "a flirt" James, pg. Daisy never loses these characteristics or betrays who she truly is. By doing this, James makes her real to the reader. However, in being real, Daisy is not accepted by society. This is the beauty of realism. She is described by Winterbourne and his aunt as "crude," "dreadful," "ignorant" and "vulgar" James, pg. Although her actions, such as walking with two men in public, are deemed scandalous by society, they are true to her flirtatious nature. If James had made Daisy abandon her unique demeanor in favor of the societal norm, she would no longer be real. Instead, James adheres to realism from beginning to end. Instead, in having his heroic main character die, James makes his work that much more realistic. In response to social and political changes in America and in direct opposition to romanticism, a style that had dominated literature for many years, 19th century American writers employed regionalism and realism.

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Chapter 5 : W. W. Norton & Company | The Norton Anthology of Western Literature

Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature Donald Pizer Snippet view - Realism and naturalism in nineteenth-century American literature.

Definitions Broadly defined as "the faithful representation of reality" or "verisimilitude," realism is a literary technique practiced by many schools of writing. Although strictly speaking, realism is a technique, it also denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life. A reaction against romanticism, an interest in scientific method, the systematizing of the study of documentary history, and the influence of rational philosophy all affected the rise of realism. According to William Harmon and Hugh Holman, "Where romanticists transcend the immediate to find the ideal, and naturalists plumb the actual or superficial to find the scientific laws that control its actions, realists center their attention to a remarkable degree on the immediate, the here and now, the specific action, and the verifiable consequence" *A Handbook to Literature* Many critics have suggested that there is no clear distinction between realism and its related late nineteenth-century movement, naturalism. Howells to London, the term "realism" is difficult to define, in part because it is used differently in European contexts than in American literature. Pizer suggests that "whatever was being produced in fiction during the s and s that was new, interesting, and roughly similar in a number of ways can be designated as realism, and that an equally new, interesting, and roughly similar body of writing produced at the turn of the century can be designated as naturalism" 5. Put rather too simplistically, one rough distinction made by critics is that realism espousing a deterministic philosophy and focusing on the lower classes is considered naturalism. In American literature, the term "realism" encompasses the period of time from the Civil War to the turn of the century during which William Dean Howells, Rebecca Harding Davis, Henry James, Mark Twain, and others wrote fiction devoted to accurate representation and an exploration of American lives in various contexts. As the United States grew rapidly after the Civil War, the increasing rates of democracy and literacy, the rapid growth in industrialism and urbanization, an expanding population base due to immigration, and a relative rise in middle-class affluence provided a fertile literary environment for readers interested in understanding these rapid shifts in culture. In drawing attention to this connection, Amy Kaplan has called realism a "strategy for imagining and managing the threats of social change" *Social Construction of American Realism* ix. Realism was a movement that encompassed the entire country, or at least the Midwest and South, although many of the writers and critics associated with realism notably W. Howells were based in New England. Among the Midwestern writers considered realists would be Joseph Kirkland, E. Selective presentation of reality with an emphasis on verisimilitude, even at the expense of a well-made plot Character is more important than action and plot; complex ethical choices are often the subject. Characters appear in their real complexity of temperament and motive; they are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past. Class is important; the novel has traditionally served the interests and aspirations of an insurgent middle class. Realistic novels avoid the sensational, dramatic elements of naturalistic novels and romances. Diction is natural vernacular, not heightened or poetic; tone may be comic, satiric, or matter-of-fact. Objectivity in presentation becomes increasingly important: Interior or psychological realism a variant form. In *Black and White Strangers*, Kenneth Warren suggests that a basic difference between realism and sentimentalism is that in realism, "the redemption of the individual lay within the social world," but in sentimental fiction, "the redemption of the social world lay with the individual" The realism of James and Twain was critically acclaimed in twentieth century; Howellsian realism fell into disfavor as part of early twentieth century rebellion against the "genteel tradition.

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Chapter 6 : Donald Pizer, Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature - PhilPapers

Naturalism in American Literature. For a much more extensive description than appears on this brief page, see the works listed in the naturalism bibliography and the bibliographies on Frank Norris and Stephen Crane.

This is because both movements portray life as it is. These movements depicted believable, natural or real everyday activities and experiences. However, there exists a significant difference between realism and naturalism. Realism sought to represent real life whereas naturalism sought to represent life in a more scientific, almost clinical manner than realism. This is the main difference between realism and naturalism. What is Realism Realism is a literary movement that began in the middle of the nineteenth century in France and spread across Europe. This movement can be defined as a reaction against Romanticism. They depicted events that could happen to anyone in real life. Realism portrays life as it is, without idealizing, flattering or romanticizing. Before Realism, the literature tended to focus on nobles, royals, and divinity which were of little relevance to the middle classes. But Realism movement broke this convention by portraying characters that belong to working classes. There were no great heroes; the protagonists were ordinary characters with whom the audience can identify with. Realistic literature also paid great attention to detail; this was necessary to create a realistic feel and effect. The language used in literature during this period was also ordinary, unlike in Romantic period. Common vernacular and dialects were used to render the texts more believable and realistic. Henrik Ibsen What is Naturalism Naturalism proceeded from realism is often referred to as a logical outgrowth of literary Realism. It can be considered as an exaggerated form of realism since it used detailed realism to propose that social conditions, heredity, and environment were the three main forces in shaping human character. Naturalism was heavily influenced by theories of Charles Darwin and naturalistic authors attempted to apply scientific theories to literature. Therefore, they often took a detached and clinical tone. Naturalism often portrayed lower-class characters and themes involving violence and taboo activities. Naturalistic novels are typically pessimistic in nature. The work of the French novelist Emile Zola is often considered to be the origins of the Naturalistic movement. His *Les Rougon-Macquart* is considered to be one of the finest works in Naturalistic movement. Naturalism is an outgrowth of literary realism, influenced by scientific theories. Portrayal of People Realism portrayed the everyday life of ordinary people. Naturalism portrayed how environment, heredity, and social conditions control the human being. Characters Naturalism depicted lower class characters. Themes Realistic novels used themes like society, social class, mobility, etc. Naturalistic novels were written on themes of violence, poverty, corruption, prostitution, etc.

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Chapter 7 : Naturalism - Literature Periods & Movements

Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature by Donald Pizer (review) Earl N. Harbert *Studies in American Fiction*, Volume 13, Number 1, Spring , pp.

This literary movement, like its predecessor, found expression almost exclusively within the novel. Naturalism also found its greatest number of practitioners in America shortly before and after the turn of the twentieth century. A poor immigrant could not escape their life of poverty because their preconditions were the only formative aspects in his or her existence that mattered. The theories of Charles Darwin are often identified as playing a role in the development of literary Naturalism; however, such a relationship does not stand up to investigative rigor. Darwin never applied his theories to human social behavior, and in doing so many authors seriously abused the actual science. There was in the late nineteenth century a fashion in sociology to apply evolutionary theory to human social woes. This line of thinking came to be known as Social Darwinism, and today is recognized as the systematized, scientific racism that it is. More than a few atrocities in world history were perpetrated by those who misguidedly applied Darwinism to the social realm. Naturalism, for better or worse, is in some respects a form of Social Darwinism played out in fiction. One could make the case that Naturalism merely a specialized variety of Realism. In fact, many authors of the period are identified as both Naturalist and Realist. Edith Wharton for one is frequently identified as perfectly representative of both aesthetic frameworks. However, Naturalism displayed some very specific characteristics that delimit it from the contemporary literature that was merely realistic. The environment, especially the social environment, played a large part in how the narrative developed. The locale essentially becomes its own character, guiding the human characters in ways they do not fully realize. Plot structure as such was secondary to the inner workings of character, which superficially resembles how the Realists approached characterization. The work of Emile Zola provided inspiration for many of the Naturalist authors, as well as the work of many Russian novelists. It would be fairer to assert that all Naturalist fiction is Realist, but not all Realist fiction is Naturalist. The dominant theme of Naturalist literature is that persons are fated to whatever station in life their heredity, environment, and social conditions prepare them for. The power of primitive emotions to negate human reason was also a recurring element. Writers like Zola and Frank Norris conceived of their work as experiments in which characters were subjected to various stimuli in order to gauge reactions. Adverse social conditions are taken as a matter of fact. The documentary style of narrative makes no comment on the situation, and there is no sense of advocating for change. The Naturalist simply takes the world as it is, for good or ill. The Naturalist novel is then a sort of laboratory of fiction, with studies underway that ethically could not be performed in the real world. The work of French novelist and playwright Emile Zola is often pinpointed as the genesis of the Naturalist movement proper. His most famous contribution to Naturalism was *Les Rougon-Macquart*, a sweeping collection of 20 novels that follow two families over the course of five generations. One of the families is privileged, the other impoverished, but they each stumble into decay and failure. The action takes place during the rule of Napoleon III, a time of great uncertainty for the French people. The atmosphere in Paris, as well as in the novels, was one of dread and uncertainty. Zola crafts over characters for his epic, yet on the whole they are rather thinly drawn. His concern is not with character as such, but how characters react to circumstances. Often, an inanimate object or place is given as much potency as a human character. There is a clinical aspect to his craft that is echoed in his descriptions of novel-writing as a form of science. Later writers would concur, citing Zola as their major inspiration in pursuing the Naturalist aesthetic in literature. *A Girl of the Streets*. Crane spent a great deal of time in the Bowery of lower Manhattan gathering material for his first novel. Like a research scientist accumulating data, Crane wanted to learn as much as he could about life for the impoverished, mostly immigrant residents. Maggie was unusual for the time in that it perfectly reproduced the ostensibly vulgar dialect of the persons portrayed. An earlier novel treating the same subject may have romanticized the immigrant life, but Crane portrayed abject poverty exactly as it was. The book was not a

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great seller, and he lost a hefty sum of money on the venture, but those who did read it saw the promise of a new talent in American literature. Like many of his fellow American novelists, Crane began his career as a journalist, and he continued to travel and report on international stories for the remainder of his career. His total contributions to the body of literature were relatively small, as he died before his thirtieth birthday. This was not fully realized until many years after his death. Modernists like Ernest Hemingway worked hard to rehabilitate the critical reputation of Crane, and today that reputation is resoundingly positive. His descriptions and scenery were inspired by war and history magazines, which he found dry and too matter-of-fact. He saw an opportunity to craft the first novel that explored warfare from the point of view of the psyche. Characters speak in realistic dialects. The story is not rooted in a specific locale. The soldiers cannot see the big picture of the war, and neither can the reader. The glory of warfare is replaced by ignorance, pain, and fear. Crane offers no sentimentality or mythology. He reports the events in fine detail, but makes no authorial commentary. The *Red Badge of Courage* is frequently required reading for high school English classes, yet the irony of the text is often lost. Crane abhorred the mythmaking that surrounded armed combat, and his greatest novel is an attempt to show that humans were not designed to commit such atrocities on each other. Though she is frequently lumped together with the Realists, Edith Wharton often produced novels that just as rightly belong in the category of Naturalism. Though she herself descended from enormous wealth, Wharton was able to step outside her own experience and take an objective view of privilege and class. Her agenda was to show the unforgiving nature of life at the top of the class structure. Her characters often fall from grace through their own mistakes, miscalculation, and sometimes for no apparent reason at all. Interestingly, Wharton also had a successful career as a designer of homes and landscapes. This attention to environmental details certainly found expression with her literary productions. More so than most Naturalist writers, Wharton displayed a real sympathy for her characters. In that sense, her particular brand of Naturalism was less cold and clinical than many of her contemporaries. Still, one cannot escape the sense that Wharton subscribed to the notion of determinism – a world devoid of free will. In *Ethan Frome*, Wharton departs from her typical subject matter and attempts a thoroughly provincial narrative. The setting is rural Massachusetts, and the characters are poverty-stricken and hopeless. There is the faintest hint of romance, but all hopes of a happy resolution are dashed, quite literally. The poverty of the characters is presented as a roadblock to even the slimmest chance of fulfillment. The lead characters are not even permitted to end their suffering through suicide – their fateful sledding accident only adding to the tragedy of their existence. There is no epic sweep to the tragedy either. The sense of irrevocable fate is overpowering, as is the unforgiving, elemental nature of the harsh Massachusetts winter. In Frank Norris, American literature found its most potent expression of Naturalism. His novels are Darwinian struggles played out in fiction, and he was sometimes criticized for making literature that was too scientific and lacking in sympathy. Like many Naturalists, Norris was interested in the trials of life of the poor and destitute. In *McTeague*, his most famous novel, he studies how ambition and greed derail the life of a moderately successful dentist. Characters are frequently referred to in animalistic terms, and there is an undercurrent of unhealthy sexuality that permeates the first sections of the novel. The title character is small-minded, almost childlike in his view of the world. Because of this, his well-meaning efforts to improve his economic situation go hopeless awry. In the final scene, one gets the impression that the protagonist, if one can call him that, could not have ended up anywhere else. Despite the resounding pessimism of their literary output, the Naturalists for the most part were genuinely concerned with improving the situation of the poor in America and the world. There would seem to be a disconnect between the opinions of the authors and the statements made in the contexts of their novels. However, closer study reveals this not to be the case. Norris intended his novels to be warnings about the capacity for mankind to sink to its lowest common denominator. Critics, both contemporary and modern, sometimes accuse the Naturalists of ethnocentricity. True, the images presented of immigrant and ethnic groups are unflattering. However, given their backgrounds in journalism, the Naturalist writers would probably argue that they simply presented life as it appeared. If the life they saw was ugly or depraved, they were not to be held responsible. Naturalism was a relatively short-lived

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philosophical approach to crafting novels. Few writers of the period experienced real success in the style, but those that did became titans of the art form. One wonders at the profound literature that might have been produced had Stephen Crane not died before his thirtieth birthday. Frank Norris likewise died before his time, an irony that should not escape modern readers. It is difficult to gauge the total effects of Naturalism on the path of American literature. The fact that Social Darwinism eventually came to be seen for the disguised racism that it is probably marred the reputation of Naturalist writing. However, the sheer art and craft of the literature that the greatest novelists of the period generated overcomes such handicaps. This article is copyrighted by Jalic Inc. Do not reprint it without permission. Written by Josh Rahn.

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Chapter 8 : Naturalism in American Literature

In American literature, the term "realism" encompasses the period of time from the Civil War to the turn of the century during which William Dean Howells, Rebecca Harding Davis, Henry James, Mark Twain, and others wrote fiction devoted to accurate representation and an exploration of American lives in various contexts.

Background[edit] Broadly defined as "the representation of reality", [2] realism in the arts is the attempt to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions, as well as implausible, exotic and supernatural elements. Realism has been prevalent in the arts at many periods, and is in large part a matter of technique and training, and the avoidance of stylization. In the visual arts, illusionistic realism is the accurate depiction of lifeforms, perspective, and the details of light and colour. Realist works of art may emphasize the ugly or sordid, such as works of social realism , regionalism , or Kitchen sink realism. There have been various realism movements in the arts, such as the opera style of verismo , literary realism, theatrical realism and Italian neorealist cinema. The realism art movement in painting began in France in the s, after the Revolution. It aims to reproduce " objective reality ", and focused on showing everyday, quotidian activities and life, primarily among the middle or lower class society, without romantic idealization or dramatization. As literary critic Ian Watt states in *The Rise of the Novel*, modern realism "begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through the senses" and as such "it has its origins in Descartes and Locke , and received its first full formulation by Thomas Reid in the middle of the eighteenth century. Starting around , the driving motive of modernist literature was the criticism of the 19th-century bourgeois social order and world view, which was countered with an antirationalist, antirealist and antibourgeois program. Social novel Social Realism is an international art movement that includes the work of painters, printmakers, photographers and filmmakers who draw attention to the everyday conditions of the working classes and the poor, and who are critical of the social structures that maintain these conditions. Its protagonists usually could be described as angry young men, and it often depicted the domestic situations of working-class Britons living in cramped rented accommodation and spending their off-hours drinking in grimy pubs , to explore social issues and political controversies. The films, plays and novels employing this style are set frequently in poorer industrial areas in the North of England , and use the rough-hewn speaking accents and slang heard in those regions. The gritty love-triangle of *Look Back in Anger*, for example, takes place in a cramped, one-room flat in the English Midlands. The conventions of the genre have continued into the s, finding expression in such television shows as *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders*. Proletarian literature Socialist realism is the official Soviet art form that was institutionalized by Joseph Stalin in and was later adopted by allied Communist parties worldwide. The Statute of the Union of Soviet Writers in stated that socialist realism is the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism. However, the changes were gradual since the social realism tradition was so ingrained into the psyche of the Soviet literati that even dissidents followed the habits of this type of composition, rarely straying from its formal and ideological mold. This movement has been existing for at least fifteen years and was first seen during the Bolshevik Revolution. The official definition of social realism has been criticized for its conflicting framework. While the concept itself is simple, discerning scholars struggle in reconciling its elements. According to Peter Kenez, "it was impossible to reconcile the teleological requirement with realistic presentation," further stressing that "the world could either be depicted as it was or as it should be according to theory, but the two are obviously not the same. Naturalism in 19th-century French literature Naturalism was a literary movement or tendency from the s to s that used detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity , and environment had inescapable force in shaping human character. It was a mainly unorganized literary movement that sought to

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depict believable everyday reality, as opposed to such movements as Romanticism or Surrealism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic or even supernatural treatment. Naturalism was an outgrowth of literary realism, a prominent literary movement in mid-century France and elsewhere. Naturalistic works tend to focus on the darker aspects of life, including poverty, racism, violence, prejudice, disease, corruption, prostitution, and filth. As a result, naturalistic writers were frequently criticized for focusing too much on human vice and misery. This argument is based on the idea that we do not often get what is real correctly. To present reality, we draw on what is "real" according to how we remember it as well as how we experience it. However, remembered or experienced reality does not always correspond to what the truth is. Instead, we often obtain a distorted version of it that is only related to what is out there or how things really are. Realism is criticized for its supposed inability to address this challenge and such failure is seen as tantamount to a complicity in a creating a process wherein "the artefactual nature of reality is overlooked or even concealed. The burgeoning literary concept that Australia was an extension of another, more distant country, was beginning to infiltrate into writing: Henry Handel Richardson, author of post-Federation novels such as *Maurice Guest* and *The Getting of Wisdom*, was said to have been heavily influenced by French and Scandinavian realism. In the twentieth century, as the working-class community of Sydney proliferated, the focus was shifted from the bush archetype to a more urban, inner-city setting: *Monkey Grip* concerns itself with a single-mother living in a succession of Melbourne share-houses, as she navigates her increasingly obsessive relationship with a drug addict who drifts in and out of her life. He also claims that the form addressed the interests and capacities of the new middle-class reading public and the new book trade evolving in response to them. *A Study of Provincial Life* (1972), described by novelists Martin Amis and Julian Barnes as the greatest novel in the English language, is a work of realism. *Middlemarch* also shows the deeply reactionary mindset within a settled community facing the prospect of what to many is unwelcome social, political and technological change. These books draw on his experience of life in the Staffordshire Potteries, an industrial area encompassing the six towns that now make up Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire, England. George Moore, whose most famous work is *Esther Waters*, was also influenced by the naturalism of Zola. Twain was the first major author to come from the interior of the country, and he captured its distinctive, humorous slang and iconoclasm. For Twain and other American writers of the late 19th century, realism was not merely a literary technique: It was a way of speaking truth and exploding worn-out conventions. Crane was primarily a journalist who also wrote fiction, essays, poetry, and plays. Crane saw life at its rawest, in slums and on battlefields. His haunting Civil War novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, was published to great acclaim in 1895, but he barely had time to bask in the attention before he died, at 28, having neglected his health. He has enjoyed continued success ever since as a champion of the common man, a realist, and a symbolist. *A Girl of the Streets*, is one of the best, if not the earliest, naturalistic American novel. It is the harrowing story of a poor, sensitive young girl whose uneducated, alcoholic parents utterly fail her. In love, and eager to escape her violent home life, she allows herself to be seduced into living with a young man, who soon deserts her. When her self-righteous mother rejects her, Maggie becomes a prostitute to survive, but soon commits suicide out of despair. His novels, of which *Ragged Dick* is a typical example, were hugely popular in their day.

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3) *While in realism, faithful representation of reality including the details of nature is important, in Naturalism, nature itself is a force, generally a powerful, indifferent mechanism. Realism in American Literature.*