

Realism Era - NOTES 1865-1915

Realism – The era in literature following the Romantic Era and the Civil War in which there was a concern with faithfully depicting subject matter or representing real life accurately in literature. This represented a shift away from the idealism of Romanticism. There was a sense of disillusionment and common subjects included the slums of rapidly growing cities, factories replacing farmlands, poor factory workers, and corrupt politicians and businessmen.

Literary Elements

Dialogue – 1. The words a character in a story speaks; 2. A fancy word for “discussion.”

Dialect – A particular way of speaking that is unique to a social class or region.

Diction – 1. The words a writer chooses; 2. Enunciation of words.

Satire – A work that ridicules the shortcomings of specific people or institutions as an attempt to bring about change.

Parody – A work that makes fun of another work by imitating some aspect of the original piece’s style.

Oxymoron – A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction. (examples: good grief, restless sleep)

Onomatopoeia – A word that mimics the sound it represents. (examples: buzz, swish, hiss)

Features of Realism

Regionalism – Writing which depicts a particular geographical area. It attempts to accurately capture the details of life in certain parts of the country, such as: speech, manners, beliefs, and everyday life. It became a common element of literature in the Realism Era.

Naturalism – Writing which reflects Darwin’s influence on society and culture. It portrays life pessimistically because of the belief that man has no control over his fate and that there is no God. Therefore, life is viewed as meaningless, and man is not responsible for his behavior. His behavior is determined by his environment and his circumstances, which are beyond his control.

Genres

Short Stories

Novels

Poetry

Authors to Know

Fredrick Douglass (Civil War Era) – *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*

Harriet Beecher Stowe (Civil War Era) – *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Mark Twain – *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, "The Celebrated (Notorious) Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"

Jack London – *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, "That Spot"

Stephen Crane – *The Red Badge of Courage*

O. Henry – "The Ransom of Red Chief," "The Gift of the Magi"

Sidney Lanier – "Song of the Chattahoochee"

James Whitcomb Riley – "The Man in the Moon," "Little Orphant Annie"

Richard Hovey – "The Sea Gypsy"

Influential Historical Events

Abolition

Civil War (1861-1865)

Rise of industry – Industrial Revolution

Growth of cities

Railroad expansion

Invention of the telegraph

Gold rushes – westward expansion continues

Darwinism