



REALISM AND NATURALISM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This article overview of the concepts of realism and naturalism in American literature and explores their significance and impact on the literary landscape. Realism and naturalism emerged as prominent literary movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reflecting the societal changes and intellectual currents of the time. This study aims to examine the key characteristics, similarities, and differences between realism and naturalism, and to analyze their representation in American literary works.

Keywords: significant, psychological, romanticize, exploration.

INTRODUCTION

Realism and naturalism are two significant literary movements that emerged in American literature during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They both sought to depict life and human experiences with a greater emphasis on truthfulness and accuracy, but they approached this objective in distinct ways.

American literature has been shaped by various literary movements throughout its rich history. Two prominent movements that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were realism and naturalism. These literary styles offered a sharp departure from romanticism and idealism, focusing instead on the gritty realities of everyday life. In this article, we will delve into the characteristics of realism and naturalism in American literature, highlighting key authors and their notable works.

Realism in American Literature:

Realism emerged as a literary response to the dramatic social and economic changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. Realist writers sought to depict life as it was and capture the complexities of ordinary people and their struggles. They aimed to provide an accurate portrayal of society, focusing on the middle and lower classes rather than the privileged elite.

Prominent Realist Authors and Their Works:



1. Mark Twain: Mark Twain, considered one of America's greatest literary figures, employed realism in his works to expose the flaws and contradictions of society. His masterpiece, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" (1884), explores the journey of a young boy and a runaway slave along the Mississippi River, addressing themes of racism, morality, and the quest for freedom.

2. Henry James: Known for his psychological realism, Henry James delved into the intricate workings of the human mind and social interactions. In his novel "The Portrait of a Lady" (1881), James examines the limitations faced by women in a male-dominated society and explores themes of independence, love, and self-discovery.

Naturalism in American Literature:

Building upon the foundations of realism, naturalism took a more deterministic approach, emphasizing the influence of external forces on human behavior. Naturalist writers believed that individuals were shaped by their environment, heredity, and social circumstances, often depicting characters trapped in dire situations and facing inevitable outcomes.

Prominent Naturalist Authors and Their Works:

1. Stephen Crane: Stephen Crane's novel "The Red Badge of Courage" (1895) is a prime example of naturalism in American literature. Set during the American Civil War, the story follows a young soldier's psychological and physical journey, exploring themes of fear, courage, and the harsh realities of war.

2. Theodore Dreiser: Dreiser's novel "Sister Carrie" (1900) is a powerful depiction of a young woman's struggle for success and happiness in an unforgiving urban society. The novel explores themes of ambition, materialism, and the consequences of personal choices.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

The impact of realism and naturalism on American literature was significant. Both movements challenged the prevailing literary conventions and sought to present a more accurate and unidealized depiction of society. Realism provided a platform for authors to explore the complexities of the human condition and critique social structures, while naturalism took this exploration further by emphasizing the deterministic influence of the environment. These movements paved the way for modern American literature by breaking away from romanticized and idealized portrayals of life. They influenced subsequent generations of writers and continue to shape literary trends today. The themes, techniques, and social critiques found in



realist and naturalist literature are still relevant and resonate with readers, offering insights into the human experience and the complexities of society.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, realism and naturalism in American literature were transformative movements that challenged traditional literary approaches. They provided a platform for authors to explore the realities of life, examine social issues, and present a more nuanced understanding of human nature. The impact of these movements continues to be felt in American literature and contributes to the rich tapestry of literary expression.

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