

American Literature Realism and Naturalism (1850-1914)

Realism, n. The art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads. The charm suffusing a landscape painted by a mole, or a story written by a measuring-worm. --Ambrose Bierce *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911)

Realism

- literary movement that developed towards the end of the Civil War and stressed the actual (reality) as opposed to the imagined or fanciful

Literary Movements

- The writing of this period steered away from the Romantic, highly imaginative fiction from the early 1800's.
- The four main movements are known as:
 - Realism
 - Naturalism
 - “Literature of the Discontent”
 - Regionalism

Naturalism

- Naturalism is NOT “hippie-fiction.”
- It is more pessimistic than Realism, primarily.
- The Naturalist writers believed that larger forces were at work: Nature, Fate, and Heredity.
- Their writing was inspired by hardships, whether it was war, the frontier, or urbanization.

Naturalism

- literary movement that was an extension of Realism
- depicted real people in real situations like realism, but believed that forces larger than the individual – nature, fate, heredity – shaped individual destiny

Naturalism - Characteristics

- characters:
 - usually ill-educated or lower-class
 - lives governed by the forces of heredity, instinct, passion, or the environment
 - the criminal, the fallen, the down-and-out



Naturalism - Characteristics

- Themes
 - Survival (man against nature, man against himself)
 - Determinism (nature as an indifferent force on the lives of human beings)
 - Violence

“Literature of Discontent”

- Along the lines of Naturalism, the social problems of this period were seen as a force to deal with.
- Many groups, from women to freed slaves, started expressing their discontent with the way things were.
- They started addressing these issues in their writing.

Regionalism

- Regionalism is all about “local flavor” or “local color.”
- “Local Color” means a reliance on minor details and dialects.
- They usually wrote about the South or the West.
- More often than not, these stories were full of humor and small-town characters.

Realism - Characteristics

- objective writing about ordinary characters in ordinary situations; “real life”
- 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 reasonable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past.

Realism - Characteristics

- Class is important; the novel has traditionally served the interests and aspirations of an insurgent middle class.
- Diction is natural vernacular, not heightened or poetic; tone may be comic, satiric, or matter-of-fact.

Why did this literary movement come about?

- A reaction against Romanticism
 - rejected heroic, adventurous, or unfamiliar subjects
- The harsh reality of frontier life and the Civil War shattered the nation's idealism

Romance and Realism: Taste and Class

Romance

- Aspired to the ideal
- Thought to be more genteel since it did not show the vulgar details of life

Realism

- Thought to be more democratic
- Critics stressed the potential for vulgarity and its emphasis on the commonplace
- Potential “poison” for the pure of mind

How did this literary movement prevail?

- The Industrial Revolution
 - economic, social, and political changes that took place in post-war life allowed American Realism to succeed



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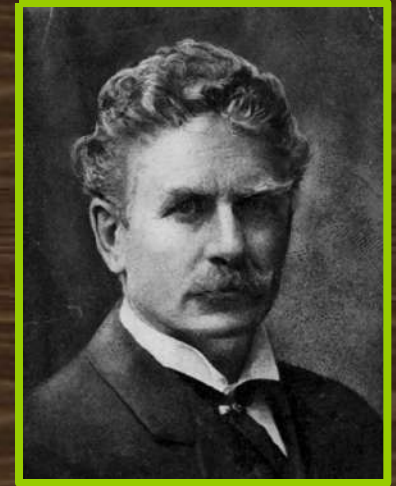




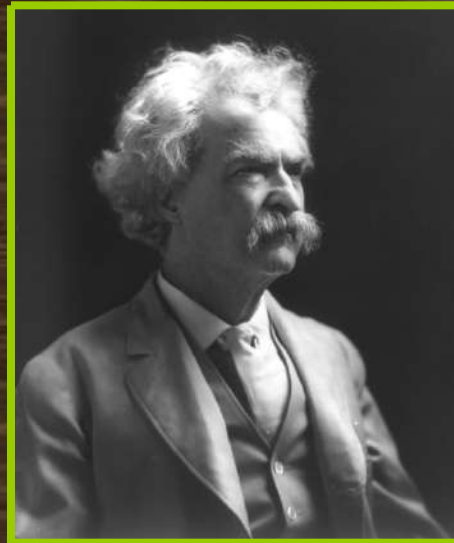
Author Bios



Stephen Crane



Ambrose Bierce



Mark Twain



Kate Chopin



Jack London

Bret Harte

The Culture of the Time:

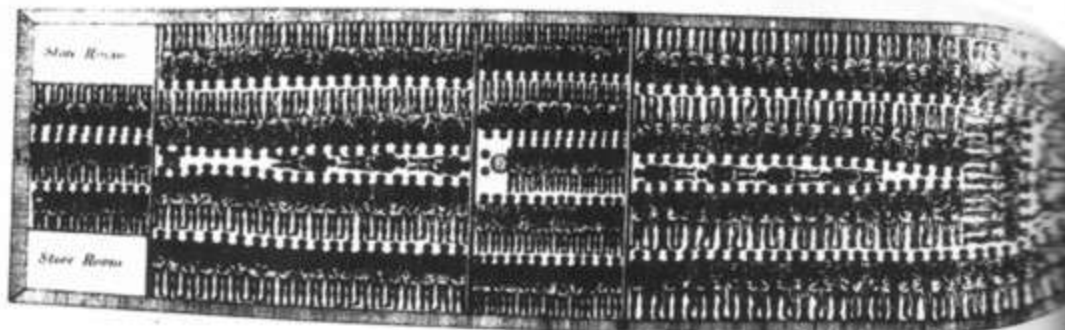
Slavery

- Slavery was a reality throughout America since it was founded, despite the hot debate as to whether or not we should have slaves.

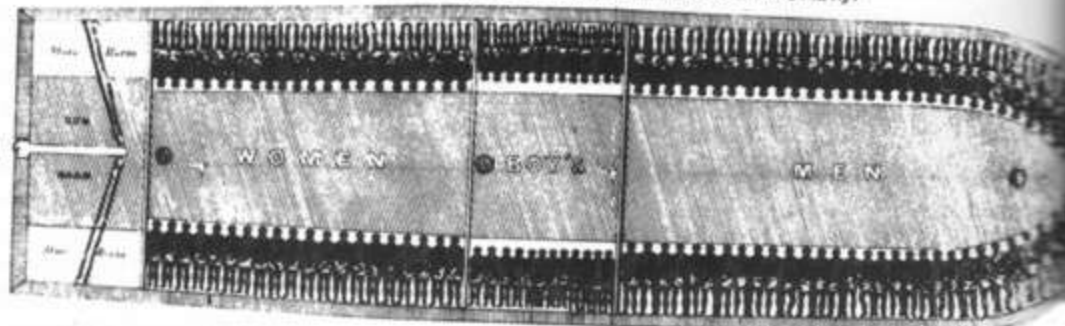


- The issue hinged on two different Americas: The Urban, Industrial North and the Agrarian South.

PLAN OF LOWER DECK WITH THE STOWAGE OF 292 SLAVES
 130 OF THESE BEING STOWED UNDER THE SHELVES AS SHEWN IN FIGURE 4 FIGURE 3.



PLAN SHEWING THE STOWAGE OF 130 ADDITIONAL SLAVES ROUND THE WINGS OR SIDES OF THE LOWER DECK BY MEANS OF PLATFORMS OR SHELVES
 (IN THE MANNER OF GALLERIES IN A CHURCH) THE SLAVES STOWED ON THE SHELVES AND BELOW THEM HAVE ONLY A HEIGHT OF 2 FEET 7 INCHES
 BETWEEN THE BEAMS AND FAR LESS UNDER THE BEAMS. - See Fig 1.



The American Civil War



Robert E. Lee



“The War Between the States”

“The Nefarious War of Northern Aggression”

“The Scuffle of Southern Secession”

