

REALISM



Historical Context: the Fall of Romanticism

Harsh Realities (continued):

- Life was marked by low wages, dangerous working conditions, and unsanitary, overcrowded living quarters.
- These harsh realities tethered Romantic thinkers to their bodies (instead of their imagination) and the realities of life and death, as well as everyday struggles.



Characteristics of Realism

Focus on reality - Realist thinkers wanted to portray reality and everyday life as honestly as possible. They avoided supernatural and overly dramatic elements, instead preferring to focus on ordinary characters and everyday events.

Emphasis on Unheard Voices - Realists were fascinated by the previously unheard voices in America. While fiction had previously often focused on the wealthy or upper-middle class, Realists shined a light on the other voices of America, including the middle- and lower-class, freed slaves, immigrants, farmers, prostitutes, beggars, factory workers, etc.

Characteristics of Realism

Beauty in the Ordinary - Realists found something beautiful and admirable in the struggles and perseverance of those unheard voices. While they were careful not to idealize anyone, Realists celebrated the lower- and middle-classes - flaws and all.

“Smiling Realism” - Realists acknowledged that no one is perfect. Characters in Realist fictions will always make mistakes or be flawed in some way, but oftentimes are depicted in a positive light despite their flaws.

Characteristics of Realism

Local Color - In an effort to realistically portray life, Realist literature often attempted to capture the “feel” of the towns and cities it takes place in. They often did this by giving detailed descriptions of town life and including local accents when their character spoke.

Aim to Change a Specific Social Problem - Because Realists focused on the oppressed or overlooked, their stories often included a subtle plea for social change (end to racism, better working conditions, and end judging the lower-class, etc.)

EXIT TICKET

Look back at your notes from today (the ones we JUST finished) and create two quiz questions that could possibly be on a quiz over Realism. The two questions must be short answer.

Example: Which war was happening during the rise of Realism?

Answer: The American Civil War