

Spring Final Essay Study Guide

Romanticism

Characteristics:

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- The natural world = source of beauty and truth
 - Artists sought to capture the drama of natural forms - whether serene and peaceful or twisted and grotesque
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- An individual human is an entire universe
 - The idea that art should be a form of self-expression first took shape in this era.
 - The way to find universal truths is to express what is within, rather than conform to the outside world of society (Romantic heroes!)
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- Rather than using knowledge, facts, and reason like the Rationalists, Romantics thought emotions, intuition, and imagination were the keys to a deeper understanding of the world.
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- Romantics loved to hear about faraway lands and times, the supernatural, the mysterious.
 - This could take the form of frontier adventure tales (cowboys and explorers!), or could be creepy horror stories.
 - Whether heroic or horrifying, Romantics thought fantastic tales suggested universal truths about the human heart.
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- Romantics also showed a new interest in the common people, rural life, and children.
 - The genuine voice of ordinary people was held to be more authentic than the sophisticated tone of writing and art from the Age of Enlightenment.
 - Children were prized for their innocence and their freedom from the corrupting influence of society.
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- Romantics' goal was to question society!
 - Writers and artists sought to influence the issues of slavery, women's rights, and labor.
 - Romantics were also reformers in their art, seeking new forms of poetry and storytelling, and rejecting the need to follow the examples of earlier masters.

Gothic Romanticism

Common Gothic Elements

- _____: Gothic Romantics were some of the first authors to incorporate mystery into their works. Gothic stories always keep the readers on their toes by building suspense through mystery. Readers at the time were horrified and enthralled--they wanted to know what exactly was behind that shimmering veil, who put out the candles, where exactly that wailing was coming from, and if the house really was "haunted" (hint: it almost always was).
- _____: Creepy forests, rotting houses, underground passageways, castles at the top of a hill - just your friendly Gothic neighborhood! And often, the setting in Gothic stories play a large part in the plot. Sometimes, the setting seems to be alive in how it can affect the characters emotionally, mentally, and sometimes physically.
- _____: Melodrama plays took off in the 18th century and gave us a whole boatload of shared cultural images: that hand fluttering to the heart when shocked; the exaggerated lip-bite when confused; the wringing of the hands when worried. It's all melodrama. This type of over-the-top emotional gesturing was a trend people actually paid to go see live.
- Part of the addictive allure of Gothic novels is their ability to meld two distinct stylistic elements: melodrama from theater and sensationalism (the use of exciting or _____ stories to provoke _____) from contemporary novels.
- Both elements were harshly ridiculed by critics at the time who considered Gothic novels in general to be _____, but Gothic novels that offered you excessive emotion (melodrama) and made your heart pound (sensationalism) sold like crazy.
- _____: Vampires, ghosts, demons, and other monsters got their big break in Gothic novels...and the world never looked back. In fact, absolutely no true Gothic tale would be complete without the supernatural.
- Some authors wrote about _____ monsters (Dracula, Frankenstein, Mr. Hyde), while others wrote about psychological terrors that suggested otherworldly threats (people going insane is a common one). Other authors blended the two and wrote stories that could equally be interpreted as supernatural interference or the narrator going "crazy".

- Beyond the fun of playing with the supernatural, Gothic authors wanted to reach an emotional state they called the _____ - an indescribable feeling of terror or joy.
- _____: Gothic authors were the first to introduce the concept of the _____ - an imperfect, sometimes morally questionable character who acts as the “hero” or main character, the reader is meant to root for.
- The gothic hero was similar to the typical Romantic hero in that he follows his instincts and his own moral code. Unlike the Romantic hero, however, the Gothic hero is not always innocent or pure - sometimes, the Gothic hero is hiding a _____ of his own...
- _____: Gothic literature also focuses on the individual. Unlike the Transcendentalists, however, who focus on the connection between individuals (individuals = part of the greater whole), Gothics focus on the isolation of the individual.
- Typically, the hero is separated from society _____, (either kidnapped, lost, or trapped in a spooky place) as well as _____ or _____ in some way.
- Because of this, there is typically a mental as well as physical danger found in Gothic stories.
- _____: This is the idea that our fate is _____ and humans have no control over their own destinies, and it is a common element of gothic literature. Often characters are doomed to their fate, no matter what actions they might take to prevent it.

Realism

Characteristics of Realism

- _____: 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 every day events.
- _____: 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.

- _____: 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.
- “_____” : Realists acknowledged that no one is perfect. Characters in Realist fiction will always make mistakes or be flawed in some way, but oftentimes are depicted in a positive light despite their flaws.
- _____: In an effort to realistically portray life, Realists 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 characters spoke.
- _____: 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.)

Naturalism

Realism vs Naturalism

Similarities:

- Focus on _____ - in both Naturalism and Realism, there are no supernatural elements, no exaggerated characters, no forces of good or evil. There are only every day characters with realistic problems,
- Focus on _____ voices - Both Naturalism and Realism focuses on the lower and middle classes, as well as characters who weren't previously focused on in literature (immigrants, escaped/freed former slaves, prostitutes, criminals, suffragettes, homeless people, etc. Basically, everyone besides wealthy white men).

Differences:

- Beauty in the _____ - While Realism has a more positive outlook on its characters (they're usually good people, despite their flaws), Naturalism takes a more _____ approach. Naturalist literature often looks at its characters in a detached, almost scientific way. They believe that all human behavior is guided by instinct and biology - there is no “good” or “bad.” We are only animals trying to survive.

- Aim for Social Change - Realists often showed the _____ in their literature because they wanted to change how society _____ them - they might show the good in an escaped slave to get across an abolitionist agenda, or they might show the struggles of a lower-class housewife to show the reader that society should treat women as equals, etc. Naturalists, on the other hand, did not aim for social change because they did not think society was _____ of changing. They believed society is a reflection of nature, and survival of the fittest is the natural law - something that no one can change. Instead, they focused on the "unfit", those unheard voices, as a way of honoring them (while also accepting that there is no changing their fate).
- Fate - In Realist pieces, the characters are able to control their destinies. It is their good and bad qualities that allow them to _____ their lives and those around them. In Naturalism, however, the characters are _____ against the controlling forces in their lives. Again, in Naturalist fiction, those forces include Nature, Biology/Hereditry, and Social Class. In other words, while both Realism and Naturalism believe they are portraying "_____" as honestly as possible. Realists believed that humans are in control of their destinies, and Naturalists believed our gates are controlled by outside (non-supernatural) forces.