

THE DEVELOPMENT OF REALISM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The American literature developed very rapidly. The first widely read American author was Benjamin Franklin. Basically, the development of American literature is a path from romanticism to realism. Washington Irving (*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*) was the first American to gain an international literary reputation. Mark Twain still captivates readers with his unique—and uniquely American—humor and insight. Realism is any effort to portray life as it truly is. Realism in literature was part of a wider movement in the arts to focus on ordinary people and events. In the spirit of general "realism," Realist authors opted for depictions of everyday and banal activities and experiences, instead of a romanticized or similarly stylized presentation. "Realism sets itself at work to consider characters and events which are apparently the most ordinary and uninteresting, in order to extract from these their full value and true meaning. In America realism was an early 20th century idea in art, music and literature that showed through these different types of work. Characteristic American novels of the period depict the damage of economic forces. Pulling away from fantasy and focusing on the now, American Realism presented a new gateway and a breakthrough — introducing modernism, and what it means to be in the present. For Berthoff, realism is committed to "capturing the special immediate air of American reality. For Benardete, realism is "the record of life, the real, the true". Donald Pizer (1984) has modified a commonly accepted definition of realism based on three criteria—verisimilitude, representativeness, and objectivity. Alfred Habegger (1982) has suggested that realism was more specifically opposed to women's fiction. Hamlin Garland was his counterpart in the countryside. His collections of stories published and known as prairie realism. Josephine Donovan (1983) has argued that women's local color literature can be firmly situated within the anti-romantic tradition of women's realism. Howells equated romanticism with the Old World aristocracy and therefore considered realism to be the appropriate aesthetic for the emerging institution of American literature.

Keywords: Romanticism, women's realism, criteria, verisimilitude, objectivity, representativeness, literature, realism, prairie realism, reality, development, author, reflection, movement, tradition, American.