



People' s Democratic Republic of Algeria
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Realism 1850 - 1900

Literature / Second Year

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Realism 1850- 1900:

The development of realism:

Realism is an artistic movement that began in France, in the 1840s and spread to many parts of Europe and America. The emergence of realism coincided with remarkable developments such as the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859); the reign of Queen Victoria in 1837; the 1861–1865 American Civil War (the abolition of slavery); and imperialism.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founded in 1848 by a group of English painters, poets, and art critics, is also credited with the creation of realism. This group aimed to revive art qualities such as moral seriousness, directness, and minute representation of detail. For example, Gustave Courbet's painting "The Stone Breakers" ushered in the development of realism, which sought to represent reality and contemporary culture as accurately as possible. Among the pioneers of realism are Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Emile Zola in France, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in Russia, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Anthony Trollope, and Charles Dickens in England, and William Dean Howells and Henry James in America.

The realists endeavoured to apply a scientific approach to literature. They aimed for a "truthful, accurate, sincere, and objective representation of the real world, both the external world and the human self" (Habib 471). They rejected all the principles of Romanticism, including idealisation, escapism, nominalism, historical retrospection, imaginary worlds, subjectivity, the unusual, and the fantastic. Instead, it focused on the immediate, the here and now, everyday life, the common, middle-class society, social change, objectivity, experience, pragmatism, utilitarianism, mimesis, positivism, relativism, and epistemology.

1. **Positivism** is "the view that all valid knowledge must be based on the methods of empirical investigation and verifiability".

2. **Mimesis** is a Greek word for “imitation”. It was first used by Aristotle to describe how tragic plays where it referred to “the actors’ direct imitation of words and actions” (Morris, 5). Mimesis means the representation of external reality, which is related to verisimilitude. **Verisimilitude** means “the appearance of being true or real; likeness or resemblance to truth, reality or fact” (Morris, 5). Writers strive to present fiction as a mirror that reflects reality without distortion: reality as it is, not as it should be. In her novel, *Adam Bede*, George Eliot identifies one of the key objectives of realism as being "to give a faithful account of literary realism in nineteenth-century Britain of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" (Morris, 80).
3. **Epistemology** is the study of how human beings acquire knowledge, its nature and origin.
4. **Pragmatism** is an approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.
5. **Utilitarianism** is the belief that actions are correct if they are useful, benefit a majority, or maximize the happiness of the greatest number of people in society.
6. **Relativism** is the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

The objectives of realism;

To achieve this objective, realists used a number of strategies:

1. Descriptive and evocative details
2. Avoiding the fantastical, imaginary, and mythical
3. focusing on all probable events, and excusing the impossible and improbable ones.
4. The presentation of characters and incidents from all social classes, not only the nobility.
5. It emphasises the present or contemporary life rather than idealising the past.
6. It sees the individual as a social being.
7. The refrain from the use of elevated language, favouring colloquial idioms, everyday speech, directness and simplicity.

8. The possibility of total objectivity
9. On a moral basis, accept people in their current, imperfect, state.
10. in-depth psychological characterization (Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857))
11. Addressing themes of socioeconomic conflict (*Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens),
12. emphasis on direct experience and induction (truth through repeated experience).
13. In America, regionalism and local colour fiction
- 14- Causality (foreshadowing and facts)
15. Fixed identity
16. The omniscient narrator's fixed moral position
17. The importance of direct observation and facts, chronological plots, continuous narratives relayed by omniscient narrators, and 'closed endings'
18. The literary text expresses the author's psychology, biography, and age.
19. Beauty is perceived in "ordinary" things and events.
20. Realists "show" their readers rather than "tell" them.
21. Focusing on the "plausibility" of events.
22. Shifting from the use of Allegorical names to particular, fa

References:

Morris, Pam. *Realism*. Routledge, 2004.

Habib, M. A. R. *A History of Literary Criticism: from Plato to the Present*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.