

Roaring twenties

Regional realism

- Regional realism or local colourism
- Diversity of the country after the Civil War
- The population became conscious of their local colour and characteristics; growing national identity
- A tone of nostalgia
- Written as realistically as possible; were identified by its scrupulously factual, realistic technique

Francis Bret Harte (1836-1902)



- an American author and poet, best remembered for his accounts of pioneering life in California

Francis Bret Harte

- Parody to the European sentimentalism – the search of a new way to depict reality
- Bret Harte was making fun of the French sentimentalism – developed his gift for satire
- 1864 – Secretary of the California Mint
- 1868 – an editor of *The Overland Monthly*

Francis Bret Harte

- 1868 - *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, propelled Harte to nationwide fame
- unconventional way of depicting reality
- Bourgeois critics: the story was “indecent, irreligious, and improper”
- The first literary interpreter of life in the West with its striking contrasts of situations and characters

Francis Bret Harte

- 1870 - *Dickens in Camp* - considered as his masterpiece of verse, for its evident sincerity, the depth of feeling it displays, and the unusual quality of its poetic expression
- Typical character – an outsider thrown out of society but showing a true unselfish character

Francis Bret Harte

- Works are outwardly realistic, but presenting a bit romantic version of the gun-slinging West
- First to introduce low-life characters
- Readers were fascinated by melodramatic descriptions of the hard and violent life on the frontier.

Francis Bret Harte

- His realism was limited: he didn't try to solve social problems, he merely colorfully depicted what he saw.
- He didn't accept the bourgeois ideas of morals; shared humanitarian moral values
- Saw the tragedy both in the gold-fields life and in ridiculous violent conflicts over petty trifles

Local colorists

- Social protest, esp. towards the end of the century
- Racial injustice, inequality between sexes:
- **George Washington Cable** (1844-1925), *The Grandissimes* (1880)
- **Kate Chopin** (1851-1904), *The Awakening*
- **Charlotte Perkins Gilman** (1860-1935), *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Psychological Realism

- **Henry James** – American life in the Gilded Age was not worthy as a subject of literature
- Literary art “makes life, makes interest, makes importance”
- “international theme” – complex relations between naïve Americans and cosmopolitan Europeans
- the psychological problems of upper-class people in a realistic way

Henry James



- *Transatlantic Sketches* (1875)
- *The American* (1877)
- *Daisy Miller* (1879)
- *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) – the drama is not created by the heroine's actions, but by the thoughts in her mind

Henry James

- Second period – experimental; new ideas – feminism, social and political reform:
- The Princess Casamassima (1885)
- The Bostonians (1886)
- Third period – international subjects, but treated with increasing sophistication and psychological insight
- The Wings of the Dove(1902); The Ambassador (1903); The Golden Bowl (1904)

Henry James

- The Turn of the Screw – an enigmatic ghost story, intricate style and surgically precise analysis of character
- The story is fascinatingly ambiguous
- The ambiguity is created through the use of a limited point of view
- It's up to the reader to decide whether or not he may trust the main character's account of events

Edith Wharton

- Social transformation: the decline of the cultivated group of the society and the rise of boorish nouveau-riche business families
- Contrasts Americans and Europeans
- The core of her concern – the gulf separating social reality and the inner self
- A sensitive character feels trapped by unfeeling characters or social forces

Edith Wharton

- The House of Mirth (1905)
- The Custom of the Country (1913)
- Summer (1917)
- **The Age of Innocence** (1920)
- novella Ethan Frome (1911)

Naturalism and Muckraking

- Explicitly used realism to relate the individual to society
- Is essentially a literary expression of philosophical doctrine of determinism
- Denied religion as a motivating force in the world and perceived the universe as a blind, uncontrolled machine
- Naturalism opened up underside of society and the topics of divorce, adultery, poverty and crime

Literary Naturalism

- Naturalism was opposed to romanticism (symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment of subjects). Naturalistic works often include uncouth or sordid subject matter.
- Naturalistic works were often very pessimistic and frequently criticized for being too blunt.

American Naturalism

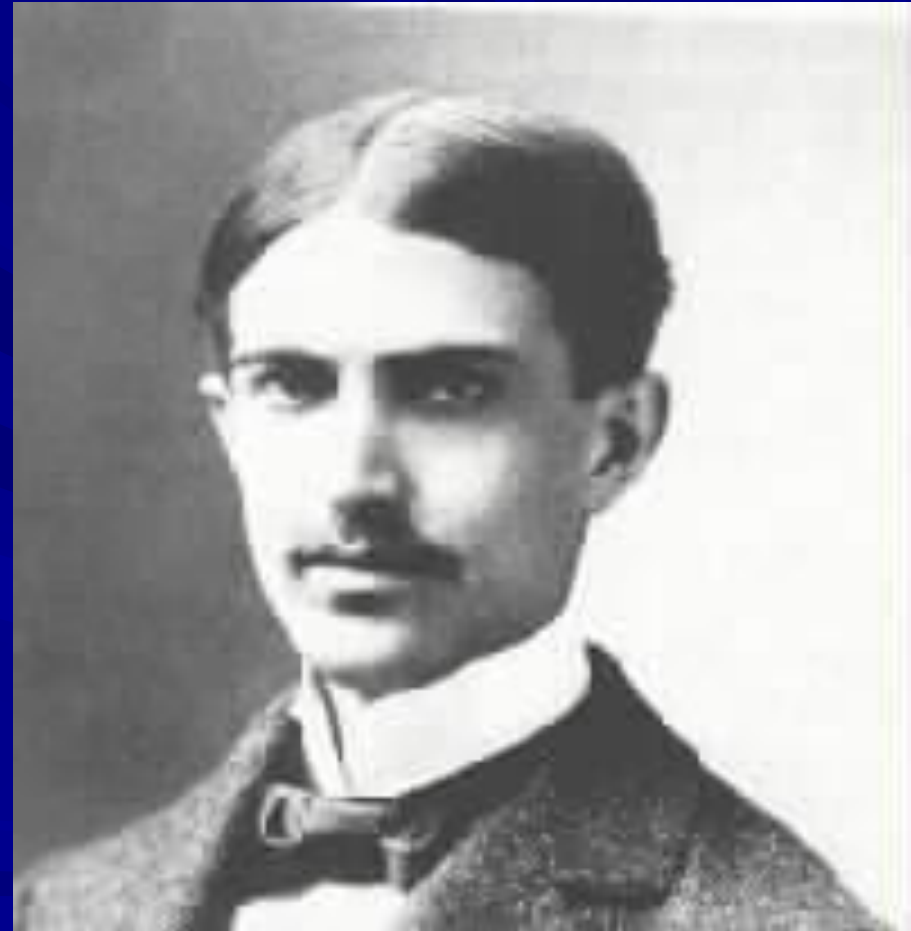
- American naturalists, especially Norris and London, were heavily influenced by Zola.
- Naturalists did not form a coherent literary movement, their occasional critical and theoretical reflections do not present a uniform philosophy.
- American naturalism - a reaction against the realist fiction of the 1870s and 1880s, whose scope was limited to middle-class or “local color” topics, with taboos on sexuality and violence

American Naturalism

- A disadvantage of naturalism: the writing is fragments of a picture with a great number of details. The naturalists gave only an impression, lacking analysis
- Russian realism (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov) with its humanism had a much greater influence of American writers

Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

- Writer and poet
- *Maggie: A Girl Of The Streets* (1893) - a milestone in the development of literary naturalism
- *The Red Badge Of Courage* (1895) - the first modern war novel



Maggie: A Girl Of The Streets

- One of the best and the earliest naturalistic American novels
- The harrowing story of a violent life of a poor, sensitive girl
- Earthy subject matter, objective, scientific style, devoid of moralizing

Stephen Crane

- *The Black Rider* (1895), a collection of poems, brought Crane better reporting assignments
- *The Open Boat*, is based on a true experience, when his ship sank on the journey to Cuba in 1896.

Frank Norris (1870-1902)

- an American novelist during the Progressive Era, the US first important naturalist writer



Frank Norris

- Notable works: **Mc Teague** (1899);
- **The Octopus: A California Story** (1901);
- **The Pit** (1903).
- Didn't support socialism as a political system, but a socialist mentality and influenced progressive writers such as Upton Sinclair.
- was influenced by Darwinism

Jack London (1876-1916)

- Socialist; described conditions under capitalism and wanted to change them
- London's socialism had very strong naturalist elements (surviving of the fittest and the ideal of a "superman")
- Primitive struggle of strong and weak individuals against the background of natural forces

Jack London

- The Son of the Wolf (1900)
- The Call of the Wild (1903)
- The Sea-Wolf (1904)
- Martin Eden (1909), an autobiographical novel – the inner stresses of the American dream experienced during the rise from the obscure poverty to wealth and fame
- Martin Eden – an unsuccessful story

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945)

- Explores the dangers of the American Dream (An American Tragedy)
- Clyde Griffiths – a boy of weak will and little self-awareness
- Precise details build up an overwhelming sense of tragic inevitability
- Failure of the American dream
- Stresses of urbanization, modernization and alienation

The Roaring Twenties

- The economy boomed
- A desire to be “emancipated”; Jazz
- Restricted emigration; prohibition
- Wall Street Crash 1929
- Literature – relentless criticism
- Intellectual immigration to Europe (small town provincialism)

The Roaring Twenties

- The First World War – sale of weapons to the Western Allies – prosperity
- October 1918 – 2 ml Americans were sent to the war
- After the war – policy of isolationism gave rise to a xenophobic feeling across the nation
- 1924 and 1929 – Immigration Quota Laws
- KKK gained widespread support and sought to persecute immigrants and minorities in the early 1920s

Prohibition



- US government outlawed the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages
- 18th Amendment to the Constitution and the Volstead Act

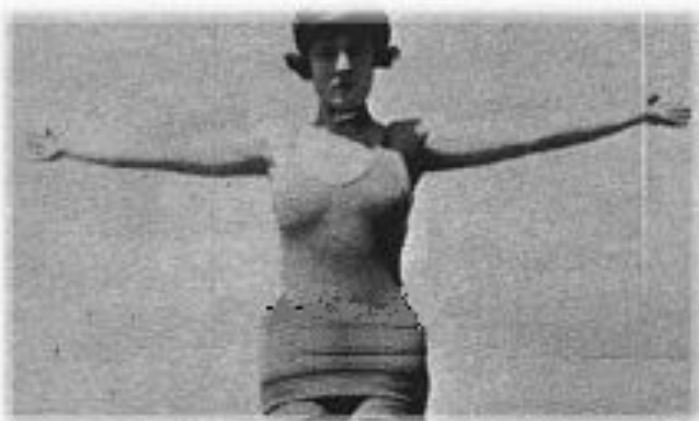
Prohibition

- A profitable, often violent, black market for alcohol flourished.
- Racketeering happened when powerful gangs corrupted law enforcement agencies.
- lack of tax revenues on alcohol (some \$500 million annually nationwide) affected government

Prohibition

- The KKK strongly supported Prohibition and its strict enforcement
- Joseph Kennedy, father of John F. Kennedy, smuggled alcohol from Canada to the U.S. and built a sizable fortune both during and after Prohibition.
- Crime and political corruption became much more common and accepted.
- Urban areas began to hold increasingly liberal views of sex, alcohol, drugs, homosexuality

Daring 20s



BOLD AND DARING FOR THE 20s



DANCING FLAPPER



FLAPPER



HAIR BOBBING



WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING



*There's no way
like the
American Way*



Small-town America

- Stupidity and prejudice was condemned
- 1915 – Edgar Lee Masters – *Spoon River Anthology*: people are damaged by the narrowness of a small-town life
- 1919 – Sherwood Anderson – *Winesburg, Ohio*, collection of short stories; simpler writing style, emphasis on form and a special use of time – a departure from the chronological structure

Sinclair Lewis