

The background features a stylized, muted-toned illustration of a mountain range with a prominent peak on the right. In the foreground on the right side, there are several thin, dark branches of a willow tree, each bearing a cluster of small, dark, round buds or berries. The overall aesthetic is soft and naturalistic, with a textured, paper-like background.

Naturalism

1870's to mid-1900

How is Naturalism different from Realism?

- ❖ **Realism emphasizes the depiction of life as it is lived.**

Versus

- ❖ **Naturalism emphasizes the more brutal aspects of existence.**

What exactly is Naturalism?

- ❖ **Naturalism is a type of literature that attempts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings.**
- ❖ **Naturalism is an extension and refinement of Realism, based on the theories of the French novelist, Emile Zola (1840 – 1902) .**
- ❖ **Influenced by the scientific discoveries of the time. Naturalist saw humans as one of the pack...not individuals. Emile Zola coined the term “human beasts” to demonstrate this.**
- ❖ **Inspired by Charles Darwin & Thomas Huxley, Zola believed people’s actions and beliefs resulted not from freewill but from arbitrary, outside forces of heredity and environment.**
- ❖ **Often depicts man in conflict with nature, society, or himself.**

How Culture Influenced Literature and Led to Naturalism

- ❖ Darwin says it's natural selection, not a divine blueprint of some sort, that determines which organisms live and die in the world -- it's mere "survival of the fittest."
- ❖ Marx says the masses are at the mercy of a capitalist economy, which more often than not brutally exploits them.
- ❖ Freud says we're all at the mercy of dark internal drives and desires we can scarcely hope to control.
- ❖ U.S. population grew at a staggering rate. Millions of people are settling into densely crowded urban areas where they seem to be living and working more and more like insects, basically--there's not a whole lot of difference between humans, who we like to think are individualistic and have free will, and animals, who of course live in flocks, herds, and schools and have to run on instinct.

Why did Naturalism develop?

- ❖ **The swell of immigrants in the latter half of the 19th century, which led to a larger lower class and increased poverty in the cities**
- ❖ **Gold Rushes/Industrialism**
- ❖ **The prominence of psychology and the theories of Sigmund Freud**
- ❖ **Pessimism in the wake of the Civil War and Reconstruction**
- ❖ **Publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species**

What are the characteristics of Naturalism?

- ❖ **Characters- ill-educated or lower-class governed by forces of heredity, instinct, and passion.**
- ❖ **Exercise free will.**
- ❖ **Social Darwinism helped determine their fates**
- ❖ **Urban Setting**
- ❖ **Techniques/plots-panoramic drama of degeneration**

Major Principles of Naturalism

- ❖ **Writer must examine people and society objectively and, like a scientist, draw conclusions from what is observed.**
- ❖ **Reality: the inescapable working out of natural forces**
- ❖ **Destiny is decided by heredity and environment, physical drives, and economic circumstances.**
- ❖ **Tended to be pessimistic.**
- ❖ **Direct opposite of Romanticism and Transcendentalism, which saw nature as holy or mystical**
- ❖ **Despite their underlying powerlessness, characters generally conduct themselves with strength and dignity in the face of adversity, thereby affirming the significance of their existence.**

Expanding ideas of Naturalism

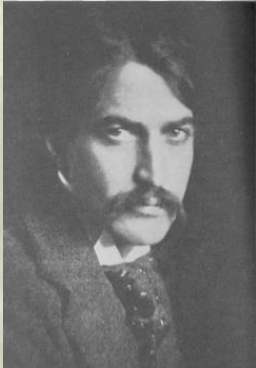
- ❖ Another side to nature controlling our destiny, is the nature *inside* of us such as the need for food, shelter, social dominance, etc.
- ❖ Naturalism doesn't just focus on nature's influence. It encompasses many environments, the man-made environment, or finance, industry, and the economy. Something is always beating down and controlling the lives of lowly individual humans.
- ❖ Naturalist works are more likely to be *political* than traditional realist works. A great many naturalists (like Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle*, which is about the plight of the working poor in Chicago's meat-packing industry) want to expose the cruelty of certain "larger forces," more often than not America's voracious capitalist economy.

What are the major themes of Naturalism??

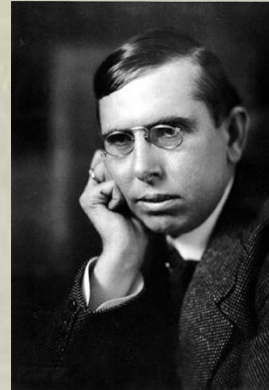
- ❖ **Survival**
- ❖ **Determination**
- ❖ **Nature as an indifferent force acting in human lives**
- ❖ **The “brute within”- strong emotions-- conflict-- man vs. nature or man vs. himself**
- ❖ **Violence**
- ❖ **Taboo**
- ❖ **Difference, deterministic universe**
- ❖ **Determinism—inability to express free will**
- ❖ **Forces of heredity and environment as they affect the individual**

Most Popular American Naturalist Writers:

❖ **Stephen Crane**



❖ **Theodore Dreiser**



❖ **Jack London**



❖ **Frank Norris**

