Realism, Regionalism, and Naturalism in American Literature

WebQuest Description: This webquest provides an overview of American realism, regionalism, and naturalism in literature, as well as the historical background of the time.

Grade Level: 9-12
Curriculum: English / Language Arts
Keywords: American Realism in Literature
Published On: 2013-01-14 07:04:04
Last Modified: 2013-01-14 09:01:08
WebQuest URL: http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=179459

Introduction

Prior to the Civil War, the most prominent style of fiction prose was known as the romantic novel. These novels, such as the writing of James Fenimore Cooper, involved idealistic characters who lived entertaining lives filled with courageous acts, daring chases, and exciting escapes. But, after the Civil War, writing style changed to simple realism. Authors like Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, began to write about more common, everyday events. They used ordinary characters taken from normal, realistic settings, like factory workers, politicians, and even prostitutes. The most significant form of realism in America was called regionalism.&nbs

Regionalism emphasized the speech and manners of people from a particular area for effect in fiction. Some early regionalists are Sarah Orne Jewett, Kate Chopin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Bret Harte, The most famous regional writer, however, is Mark Twain, who wrote Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Naturalism was another form of realism. One example of a naturalist is Frank Norris, the author of The Octopus. Naturalists relied on the scientific disciplines of psychology and sociology and attempted to dissect human nature objectively. Although Stephen Crane is sometimes considered a naturalist, he is really more of an ironist because of his skillful depiction of the sharp contrast between human affectations with the coldness of the universe. One final branch of American Realism was the psychological novel. This was expressed in Henry James' Daisy Miller and The Portrait of a Lady. James's novels take place in Europe, because he thought European society to be more sinister than American society.

Tasks

Your assignment is to use the suggested websites and Powerpoint (found under Resources) to answer 15 multiple-choice questions and to complete the questions on the Evaluation tab. When you finish these questions, you will fully understand American Realist literature. Each of these questions contains a very difficult choice. One answer is very close to the correct one. The other is obviously wrong, as it is absolutely and totally incorrect.

Process

Resources: 1. Realism, Regionalism, and Naturalism. Notes: http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CEMQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.huffenglish.com%2Fpowerpoints%2FAmerica%252520Regionalism%252520Realism%252520and%252520Naturalism.ppt&ei=YlwUIIDyBYiw8ASx64CQCQ&usg=AFQjCNHiQWgTsrTFaDzI2cKQwIrOmrp0A21. Late Nineteenth Century: American Realism- A Brief Introduction: http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap5/5intro.html2. American Realism: A Webiology and E-Anthology: http://www.longwood.edu/staff/lynchrl/English%20203/american_realism.htm Use the above resources and others you might find to answer the following questions:

1. What spurred Realism into the mainstream?
   A. The Civil War
   B. The Transcendentalist movement
   C. People no longer liked hearing stories about whimsical woodland creatures
   2. What did realism concentrate on mostly?
   A. Plot
   B. Self-determination
   C. Happy endings
   3. Style of writing is characterized by:
   A. Lack of symbolism
   B. Use of vernacular
   C. Objectivity
   D. Lack of poeticalness
   4. Was realism transcendental or non-transcendental?
   A. Non-transcendental
   B. Transcendental
   5. "Character is superior to ---"
   A. Creativity
   B. Post-modern mechanical elements
   C. Circumstance
   6. Realist writers for the most part portrayed ---
   A. Class life
   B. Poor and Middle Class
   C. Weathy
   7. "...is the philosophical belief that events are shaped by forces beyond the control of human beings.
   A. Despotism
   B. Determinism
   C. Pre-destinationism
the art of depicting nature as it is seen by ---

A. Toads
B. Children
C. Ministers
D. Ordinary People

9. “In American literature, the term "realism" encompasses the period of time from the Civil War to the ---”
A. Turn of the century
B. End of the Civil War
C. Yesterday

10. The philosophy of Realism is that _____________ control the destiny of an individual.
A. God
B. Humans
C. Outside forces

11-15. Name 5 Specific realist writers:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

1. Write a paragraph explaining why Realism developed as a style of writing.
2. List 10 common themes or elements found in this genre:

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Total Score

Conclusion

Teacher Page

Standards

Credits

Other