

Free nature and the human experience in stephen cranes the open boat and jack lit...

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The entirety of human experience is, for proponents and advocates of the literary movement of naturalism, a result not of the individual's choice, but of the natural circumstances of his social and biological environment.

Whereas the realists advocate for the individual as the center of the conflict within the page, the naturalists construe literary conflict as emerging between man and nature. Two works that are often considered characteristic of this movement are Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat", and Jack London's "The Law of Life". In both works, the protagonists are pitted against their natural environments, and the heart of their narratives may be found in man's isolation from his fellow human beings.

In Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat", the protagonist is stranded in a dinghy off the Florida coast. The protagonist is stuck with three other men, in the aftermath of their ship's sinking, and in the midst of rough seas. They continually bicker and hope that they will be rescued. Eventually, however, they decide that all is lost and nature is indifferent to their fate. They swim to shore, risking their lives with the hopes of being saved. Aside from the four principal characters, the violence and power of Mother Nature may also be seen at the forefront of the story. Throughout Crane's prose, the dilemma of survival is always brought into question, and the likelihood of their being saved continually decreases with each passing day. Likewise, in Jack London's "The Law of Life", Koskoosh is also held at the mercy of nature, albeit London also considers the social environment wherein he moves about. Left to fend for himself by his own tribe, he contemplates how nature always stands supreme over the individual.