

Robinson crusoë' and 'pride and prejudice' by daniel defoe and jane austen explic...

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The novels Robinson Crusoe and Pride and Prejudice by Daniel Defoe and Jane Austen respectively, share a lot. Characterization and themes that the two novels portray are drawn from the medieval British society. This implies that the two novels use huge amounts of realism as a technical element that facilitates their themes.

At the one hand, it is recognizable in Defoe's novel that the use of real events to steer the plot has been immense. In the novel, Robinson Crusoe, Defoe describes it as a history of facts that seeks to portray the social institutions and structures of the medieval British society.

Indeed, he uses real experiences of the protagonist who had spent quite some time alone. Undoubtedly, this is a reflection of the real life of Alexander Selkirk in uninhabited island.

The author uses his skills to describe minute details in such an elaborate way that the reader cannot question the presence of reality in the novel (Black 129). For instance, he describes the minute details of Crusoe's activities like building the fence, harvesting his grains and digging the cave amongst many others.

Using circumstantial method, Defoe brings out the aspect of realism in the novel. According to Myers, he describes the success of the protagonist in growing crops that gives him a platform through which he brings on board the technical element of realism (176).

It is apparent that Defoe also introduces a wrecked ship in novel that facilitates the survival of Crusoe. Another technical skill that has typified

Defoe's use of realism is in the characterization. He portrays Friday's gratitude and behavior in a very natural way.

This is in consideration of the fact that Crusoe had saved his life from cannibals. It therefore becomes natural for him to show gratitude to the protagonist, which inspires the realism in the novel.

Finally, he narrates using precise dates that the protagonist stayed in uninhabited island after being swept ashore by unfavorable sailing conditions. In fact, these dates coincide with the real dates of the real character, Alexander Selkirk whose experiences have largely inspired the novel (Black 192).

On the other hand, Jane's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, depicts the reality of the society in the nineteenth century. Precisely, her depiction of events in the novel reflects the society of the time.

DeMaria says that it is clear that throughout the novel she uses such stylistic devices as irony and contrast to highlight the theme of social relationships in the society (591). Use of letters and other medieval means of communication throughout the novel are critical and realistic elements that portray the themes as being relevant to the medieval British society.

Like Defoe, Austen uses characterization to display the reality of social values and beliefs. The characters such as "Bennets" have used their subjective beliefs to choose the course of their lives. Apparently, society

shapes people's beliefs and values and imparts them on individuals during the process of socialization (Black 72).

Elizabeth (one of the Bennets) contrasts with Mr. Collins who believes that the social system's ideals dictated that women were supposed to submit to men. Besides, he believes that women should not acquire any property and act as custodians of men's wealth.

He asserts his arguments with confidence owing to the prevalent social values and norms (DeMaria 592). However, Austen introduces such characters as Elizabeth to appraise the discriminating social system that favored a patriarchy. The use of characters to depict reality of the society has as such, facilitated the novel to highlight major themes.

Further, realism is explicit in the novel when the author highlights the theme of marriage. In nineteenth century, women bore gender roles that openly discriminated them from decision-making processes of the society. Mr. Collins asserts this claim by believing that Elizabeth could not reject him after he makes a marriage proposal (Myers 87).

It becomes clear that he attributes his subsequent rejection to women's modesty of the time. This implies that it was very unusual during the nineteenth century for a woman to reject men advances. Indeed, society attributed rejection to pride borne by liberal women and young feminists (like Elizabeth).

It was therefore an exception rather than a norm. Austen compares with Defoe in depiction of dates that clearly depicts the periods that their novels portray. Austen shows the rise of gender equality and women empowerment that took shape in the century. She describes discriminative land ownership practices that had typified the era (Black 231).

Finally, the two novels contrast in their main themes. While Defoe chose to explore the rise of British imperialism, Austen tends to dwell on the pertinent issues that affected women and the marriage institution. The protagonists in the novels play different roles but present them in a very realistic way. Nonetheless, the depiction of reality in the two novels is overwhelming.

The novel has wide variety of themes that are apparent in the plot. Mary points this out at the onset of the novel where she claims that human beings are vulnerable to pride. Pride blurs the ability of some characters to see the truth. This makes them unable to attain happiness in their lives.

Particularly, Elizabeth's pride presents an impediment to her marriage with Darcy. Her vanity leads to impaired judgment of Darcy and Wickham in which she thinks well of the latter and perceives the former as evil. However, she comes to realize that her pride had led her to wrong inferences.

Further, Darcy is proud owing to his social status and disparages anyone who occupied lower social status. He also writes a letter to Elizabeth asking her to abandon vanity and begin to use reason (DeMaria 577). Austen also uses Prejudice as a major theme in the novel. It is important to point out that the prejudice is intricate to other themes.

Darcy uses social-economic prejudice to scorn other members of the society that occupy lower classes. Besides, Elizabeth's prejudicial and unfounded beliefs make her to believe that she could make impeccable judgments. She realizes in the end that she could not and that she had been wrong in a number of occurrences.

DeMaria points out that Austen explores family institution as a major theme that characterized the medieval society (579). The novel depicts the family institution as that which is endowed with the responsibility of inculcating morals and intellect to the children.

For instance, " Bennets" fail to educate their children leading to explicit naivety, promiscuity and shame exhibited by Lydia. Elizabeth's manages to get some positive virtues after she receives some informal education from the Gardiners. In fact, only the Gardiners are portrayed in the novel as a family that showed concern for the girls' welfare (Myers 42).

This theme is in tandem with the roles of women and the marriage. All the characters in the novel hold the concept of marriage with such intensity that they all long for marriage. Elizabeth eventually accepts to get married to Darcy despite her beliefs regarding marriages. The context of family and marriage provides a platform that Austen uses to explore the idea of gender disparities.

In the 19th century, women suffered from myriad of injustices among them being discrimination due to their gender. Although Austen attempts to depict

women as equal to men, it is apparent that the society had preservation for this perspective (Black 171).

It is a patriarchal society where women were supposed to be the obedient and submissive to their husbands. The society denied women the rights to own property as well as access to education and employment opportunities. Evidently, the " Bennets" fail to educate their five daughters and remain convinced that women had no rights to education.

Finally, class and social stratification has typified the entire novel. In particular, Darcy represents a major character that is full of pride and conscious of his social status. He perceives class as a phenomenon that is not only composed of wealth but also inclusive of other factors.

Gardiners are depicted as occupying lower economic classes but their intellect and virtue have leveled their class with other characters that are affluent. Other than class, Austen also highlights the theme of individual and society. The society takes precedence even in the private matters of its members.

Specifically, Lydia's elopement with Wickham is scandalous in the whole society and she becomes a disgrace to her family (Black 179). Besides, Darcy's failure to reveal the Wickham's true behavior is seen as a failure to honor social obligations and duties. Despite the society's involvement in individuals' private lives, Austen questions its capacity to make right inferences regarding different characters.

Realism emerged in the mid 19th century and reflected a shift from initial literary works that were typical of romantic idealism. It gives more attention to the subject matter and characters and depicts the true nature of the contexts. Although it coincided with the Victorianism, realism has the ability to remove subjectivity in the novels.

It employs journalistic approaches of reporting 'as is' without imparting personal beliefs and values. Harrison asserts that much of the literature work that have realism as a core element stand out from the rest for their true portrayal of the events and characters as they happened in the real world.

Henry Fielding has often been referred as the pioneer of the style. In the novel, *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding uses a wide scope and keenly observes the requirements of realism. His perception of the medieval England portrays a true picture of England at the onset of Industrial revolution (Black 171).

The novel highlights characteristics of human nature through characterization. For instance, he portrays selfishness and meanness of humans after Joseph had been robbed and left for the dead. The only reason the community rescues him was the fear of being held accountable for his death.

This aspect of realism is also manifest in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* in which Austen portrays the society in a true way. The presence of class disparities is typical of the two novels making it possible to portray realism (Myers 73). Although Daniel Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe* was published earlier, he is not short of realism.

He depicts the British society during the exploration of the world by giving the real occurrences in the life of Alexander Selkirk. It is in such novels whose use of realism was able to appraise social system and structures.

Realism has been used in different novels to give shape to themes. In *Pride and Prejudice*, it is apparent that Austen describes the characters of the novel with emphasis of minute details. Through realism, she is able to address social issues that affect specific social groups.

As such, realism gave writers platform where they could appraise prevalent social system. Similarly, Virginia Woolf in the novel *To the Lighthouse* uses realism to highlight the need for equality within the society. Henry Fielding also used realism to appraise particular aspects of the society.

In sum, Defoe and Austen bear similarities in the manner that they explore their themes. Although they differ in their central themes, the use of realism is evident throughout their novels. Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice* uses characters and real events of the 19th century to highlight the themes of pride, prejudice, social class, gender inequalities and marriage.

Realism has been typical of many novels since the 18th and 19th centuries. At the very minimum, it helps novels to meet the demands of reality with objectivity and giving details to characters, events and objectivity.

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