

Evolution of american literature analysis



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As American Literature progresses, numerous changes took place in response to the similarly progressing and ever-changing American society. Each American literary piece is a representation of an author's reaction to a particular time in history; therefore, the changes are either towards a particular school of thought or movement. The progression of American Literature roots its way back to the effects of Puritanism to the evolution of Realism. Nonetheless, the effects of these changes on the American people are somewhat prolific in terms of widening the horizons and subjects of the arts.

Changes in American Literature Puritanism can be considered to be one of the earliest themes of American writing. Writers such as William Bradford and Cotton Mather are two of the most renowned religious authors who discussed the Puritan beliefs in their writings. Clearly, religion played a major role in the development of American Literature. The functions of Puritan writers revolved around the transformation of " a mysterious God", relevance of God to the universe and glorification of God (Reuben n. p.).

With the rise of Puritan beliefs, it was inevitable for a human being to voice out his/her response to the shortcomings of a particular movement.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, the author of *The Scarlet Letter*, made use of his writing skills to manifest his political and spiritual ideas against the strict codes of Puritanism. Apparently, by writing *The Scarlet Letter*, he was able to convey a response which showed the negativity of some of the Puritan beliefs and the nature of guilt and sin; thus, the emergence of Romanticism.

“ The Scarlet Letter, ‘ Young Goodman Brown’, ‘ The Minister’s Black Veil’ . . .

Hawthorne’s studies of evil often coincide with his studies of religion, particularly Puritanism, which his ancestors in Salem practiced in the 17th century. ” Transcendentalists, on the other hand, emerged in the early 1800s as social reformists who wished to go beyond the normal arrangement of society. One of the most renowned transcendentalists was the writer, Henry David Thoreau, who went as far as isolating himself from civilization to experience a simple life in the woods.

His most famous non-fiction book, *Walden*, reflected this simple living whereas he acknowledged the beauty of “ civil disobedience”. Moreover in the late 19th century, realist writers such as Mark Twain delved into writing adventure stories such as “ *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer*” and “ *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” as his own personal way of declaring his detestation against racism and civilized society. He made use of a narrative which actually reflected a normal person’s language and views.

“ Persons attempting to find motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot” (Twain 2). The book’s introductory note shows the author’s transparent humor and sense of spontaneity as a writer.

Apparently, the evolution of American Literature has a tremendous effect to the American people. Every historical movement shows a change in beliefs and response or attack to the previous movement. This is the case of Realism and Romanticism.

Realism intends to counter the style of Romanticism as it ventures on realistic writing rather than psychology or occults. Nevertheless, because of these literary works, the world of art has broadened and at the same time united itself with other forms of arts. Literature has mixed with visual arts such as paintings and films. America has clearly evolved as a country filled with artistic people who are capable to develop different forms of artistry in one literary piece. Many American classic literatures have been adapted to the screens today such as *The Crucible* which was originally written as a play.

This kind of gesture shows the ability of the American people to preserve its artistic history and to proclaim its appreciation towards its past writers.

Conclusion The changes in the style of writing of American Literature are evident with regard to the school of thought of every writer who wished to respond to his/her present environment and time. However, the changes from Puritanism to Modern Literature have one thing in common: they were all constructed as a way to reflect a certain time in history where writers struggled to have their voices heard.