

The background of americas realism english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Anton TrottMrs. AdrasEnglish 327 February 2013America's RealismAmerican realism was an early 20th century idea in literature that exposed reflections of the time period and social interactions. Realism is defined as a manner of treating subject matter that presents a careful description of everyday life, usually of the lower and middle classes. Whether it was in the new culture of the country, or an in depth look into the industrial cities, these works of new writings, represented a modern outlook of the things that were changing in the world, it was an attempt at defining what was real. In America at the beginning of the 20th century, a new generation of writers and journalists were coming of age. At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States went through many changes, economically, social, and culturally. As European immigration was on the rise, much more trade had opened up beyond the Americas. Local color is defined as the customs, manner of speech, dress, or other typical features of a place or period that contribute to its particular character (dictionary. com). Vernacular is described as the language or dialect that is spoken in a specific region or place (dictionary. com). A few important writers to this era of writing include Mark Twain, William Dean Howells and Horatio Alger Jr. All of the writers use similar vernacular, local color, and themes in their writing. Common themes of realism include attempts to represent real life, ordinary people like people in the middle class, use of vernacular, and the specific way of life in the ordinary American house. The three authors mentioned above were shaped and inspired to create their writings through their surroundings and the way people spoke at the time. Mark Twain is mostly known for his controversial books; Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Twain's style is

built on spirited, realistic, everyday American speech, giving American writers a different appreciation of the freedom and nationalism given to the country. Twain was the first major author to come from the central of the country, and he captured its distinctive, humorous slang and iconoclasm. Alger's main productions were adolescent stories that observed the explorations of young children who worked their way up to the middle class. All three authors use similar and distinctive vernacular and dialect in their stories that were inspired by the time and surroundings of the authors. Although not every story contains the specific vernacular used by major authors, in the time of American Realism vernacular shaped and described the style of writing that was present, the vernacular in the short stories changed and inspired American writing. Mark Twain, known for his controversial books, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*, was one of the most influential writers of his time. Twain's style used realistic and natural speech in America; giving American authors an inspiration for the writings. Twain also wrote many short stories that contained the same style of writing and speech. In *John Chinaman In New York*, by Mark Twain, the language used is distinctive and creates its own tone and feel to it. For example, Twain starts the paragraph with, "Is it not a shame that we, who prate so much about civilization and humanity, are content to degrade a fellow-being to such an office as this" (Twain). Starting the paragraph gives the story a sense of doubt and makes the reader curious as to what has happened and what will happen. In addition, the dialect and choice of words in the short story makes it unique and separate from what writers wrote before him. In particular, "Here was a poor creature whom hard fortune had

exiled from his natural home" (Twain). Twain compares the china man to a creature and not simply as a man. The metaphor shows that Asian migrants were looked at differently and the word choice defines the realism era. Mark Twain was one of the most influential realistic writers and his choice of words and structure of his words defined him as a writer and the peak of American realism. In the story *An Experience*, by William Dean Howell, the word choice, and style of words used are idiosyncratic. The theme of the story is about a poor man living a normal life trying to get by. Howell, many times, uses rarely used verbs to make his writing more interesting to read and interpret. For example, " Then by the mental zigzagging which all thinking is..." (Howell). Howell uses zigzagging to describe how the narrator thinks and how his mind works. Instead of using common verbs, Howell moves out of the comfort zone of usual writing to create a feeling appropriate to the American realism period. In addition, Howell uses the words " hither" and " thither" (Howell) a few times in his short story. The reader can interpret the story without these additions, but Howell subconsciously used these words to fit with the vernacular present at the time and the style realist wrote in America at the time. Word choice or diction is incorporated in vernacular and Howell does a good job to display this. The short story, *The Lottery Ticket* by Horatio Alger, is a hybrid of Howell's style of writing and Twain's style. The story follows two financially struggling young men as they fall into the trap of the lottery. Alger's word choice is more common than Howell's, but still contains a feel of his own originality to the American realism movement. Alger uses more usual words than others use in the era, but is still able to give the feeling of what time his stories were written in. Alger is not a well-

known name in the writing of American realism, but he supplied the same vernacular significance as the renowned Mark Twain and other successful writers of the time. He proved that the realism movement was alive and Americans were being inspired across the nation; having the same ideas and influences as one another. The Realistic Movement in America created a new style of writing to the country that the country could call its own. Realistic writers were inspired by historical events in the country including the Civil War. They wrote about what was happening in the world, the average person living a typical life and how these people spoke. The three writers mentioned above wrote their works with a similar style of word choice and dialect. Their vernacular was much inspired by early America and the environment they lived in. Certain words chosen and used give their stories a feeling of commonness, which was a great part of the realistic movement. The works above reflect from the movement through their vernacular and the dialect of the time. The short stories show that during the time most writers had the same style and thoughts of how to write through the inspiration.