

REALISM

Broadly defined as "the faithful representation of reality" or "verisimilitude," realism is a literary technique practiced by many schools of writing.

Although strictly speaking, realism is a technique, it also denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life.

REMEMBER THAT EVEN THOUGH THE

AUTHOR IS BEING "REALISTIC," HE IS USING

IT AS A **TECHNIQUE**: THERE IS A METHOD
TO HIS/HER MADNESS. AUTHORS DON'T
WRITE NOVELS/PLAYS/POEMS WITHOUT A
REASON, NO MATTER WHAT THEY PRINT AT
THE BEGINNING OF THEM.

Huck Finn: disclaimer?

A reaction against romanticism, an interest in
scientific method, the systematizing of the study of
documentary history, and the influence of rational

philosophy all affected the rise of realism.

According to William Harmon and Hugh Holman,

"Where romanticists transcend the immediate to find

the ideal, and naturalists plumb the actual or

superficial to find the scientific laws that control its

actions, realists center their attention to a remarkable

degree on the immediate, the here and now, the

specific action, and the verifiable consequence" (*A*

Handbook to Literature 428).

The Individual: Realism in novels usually utilizes the first person POV because it is the way we (real people) see the world. We get to see inside (the thoughts, feelings, motivations, reasoning) of one character, and only the actions and words of all the others. The events of the story and the actions of others are interpreted to us through the narrator.

Unlike romanticism, realistic literature does not

always give us the tale from the central character
(hero).

Huck Finn: Who is the Hero?

Realistic characters have a will of their own, to be
sure, but they are not always able to impose it on the
world. Other people, nature, society, and general
happenstance happens-- to these characters. Realistic

authors portray characters that send the message (To
quote a song),

**“You can’t always get what you want, but, if you
try real hard, you get what you need”** (*The Rolling
Stones: purveyors of a little wisdom and a lot of
fashion mistakes*).

**Huck Finn: Who gets what they want and how do
they get it?**

Nature: beautiful and frightening, friend and foe.

Realists paint nature as a thing to be revered and respected, and also a haven from the madness of men, but uninvolved in the affairs of particular men—neutral in the conflicts of the characters.

Huck Finn: The River and the weather?

True Love: Love is possible, but it is more likely that anyone who finds it is the victim of a lucky accident.

Most relationships are based on mutual need, the decisions and values of the characters and a lot of hard work. Characters must pursue and nurture relationships. Love and friendship can be lost or won for a variety of reasons, not all of them within the control of the characters (natural events, the actions of a third party or societal force).

Huck Finn: Where's the love? What is it like?

Language: diction of the day: Just like the character's

“real” counterparts would speak, and a narrator

without more knowledge than he should have—the

reader knows more than the character does—all

interpretation is left to the reader—no flowery

speeches on the “real meaning” of events.

Huck Finn: dialects? Symbols? Interpretation of

**character's actions: (Phelps family, Jim, Huck,
Grangerfords, etc.).**