


NATURALISM

1890s – 1910s 

A. Social Context before:



Before Naturalism,
American society was...



1. Agricultural

"self-reliant" and independent

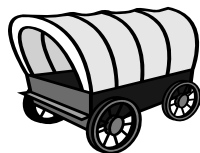
Lived mostly in small towns and villages



2. Optimistic

"Manifest destiny"

belief in progress



3. Governed by Absolutism:

The belief that some things in life will
never change

B. Reasons for change in society:



1. Industrialization and its problems
 - urbanization, immigration, dehumanization

2. The "Civil" War:

- massive death count; destruction; hostility; government bureaucracy

3. New Knowledge:

- inventions, discoveries, philosophies

C. So, America changed to...

1. Urban:

- crowding, crime, disease, etc.

2. Pessimistic:

- nihilism (Nietzsche)



3. Relativism:

- moral relativity; uncertainty

D. Four Main Influences

The Origin of the Species (1859)

1. Charles Darwin:

- evolution; survival of the fittest

Humans are products of

biological
(hereditary, genetic,
physical) forces outside of
their control

Consider: gender, race, ability...

2. Herbert Spencer:

- *Social Darwinism*: applied
evolutionary theory to human society

Humans are products of **social forces**
outside of their control

Consider: urban v. rural,
North v. South, racist v. egalitarian...

3. Sigmund Freud:

- subconscious mind; the id, the ego,
and the superego

Humans are products of **psychological**
forces outside of their control

Consider: the Freudian slip

The Communist Manifesto (1848)

4. Karl Marx:
economic class; bourgeois v. proletariat

Humans are products of **economic forces**
outside of their control

Consider: the haves v. the have nots,
rich v. poor...

E. Theory:

1. **Definition:** Humans are subject to
various deterministic forces *outside*
of their control; thus, man is a victim,
neither responsible for nor capable of
acts of free will

2. Technique:

- a. Realistic details
- b. Seek the representative, not the actual:
-the man; the youth, the woman,
the tall soldier, the loud soldier, etc.

3. Purpose:

Like fellow realists....

Social Criticism

4. Famous Authors

- a. Stephen Crane
- b. Kate Chopin*
- c. Jack London
- d. Theodore Dreiser
- e. Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- f. John Steinbeck