

ROMANTICISM VS. REALISM

(NOTE: The following does not specifically denote American literary trends but rather Romanticism & Realism on a broad scale. The goal is to impart a detailed working definition of these terms and their differences.)

Romanticism

- [1] Dominance of plot (characters serve plot & dramatic events)
- [2] Story is largely "told"
- [3] Metaphoric significance (e.g. triumph of good over evil)
- [4] Idealization
- [5] Hyperbole (exaggeration to depict ideal)
- [6] Story material from supernatural and/or phenomenal world
- [7] Events range from impossible to probable (mysterious causes to some events)
- [8] Disturbed chronology (events reordered to exploit suspense)
- [9] Limited disclosure (some information denied to readers)
- [10] Heterogeneous narration (multiple voices)
- [11] Intrusive author/narrator (addresses the reader directly, digresses, calls attention to himself as author)
- [12] Unusual characters (e.g. bandits, homicides, gypsies, avengers, devils)
- [13] Arbitrary and static characters (dominated by single passions; limited attitudes; unmotivated changes)
- [14] Psychic states revealed via tirades, confessions, harangues
- [15] Character names metaphoric (tag names indicate basic inner quality)
- [16] Characters possess special physical traits (e.g. unusually ugly or handsome; magnetic eyes; incredible strength)
- [17] Exotic settings (e.g. distant lands, Transylvania, fairy land, hell)
- [18] Description of the unusual for effect
- [19] No "inessential" details (all details serve storyline)
- [20] Temporal setting: past, present or future (but usually the past or future is used to enhance exoticism)
- [21] Setting serves plot (exotic people in exotic places do exotic things)

Realism

- [1] Dominance of character (plot serves character; events reveal character)
- [2] Story is largely "shown"
- [3] Pragmatic significance (e.g. good guys get ahead)
- [4] No idealization (life as it is)
- [5] Objectivity (shown it as it is)
- [6] Story material only from phenomenal world
- [7] Events range from possible to probable (all events "naturally" motivated)
- [8] Normal chronology (events presented in order of occurrence insofar as possible)
- [9] Full disclosure (all facts revealed to readers)
- [10] Homogenous narration (one voice with neutral exposition)
- [11] Absence of author as narrator (no author-reader play; author remains invisible to enhance illusion of reality)
- [12] Ordinary characters (ordinary people in mundane situations; daily routine)
- [13] Motivated and evolving characters (complex personalities; events change them; inconsistent behavior is motivated)
- [14] Psychic states revealed via dialogue, inner monologues, dreams
- [15] Character names motivated by "real" life customs
- [16] Characters are like everyone else (ordinary)
- [17] Settings prosaic (e.g. Chicago, an estate)
- [18] Description of the typical for verisimilitude
- [19] Peripheral, apparently inessential details (e.g. walk-on characters, landscapes, etc.) to give the impression of fullness and variety in life
- [20] Contemporary setting
- [21] Setting serves characterization (typical people in typical situations)

