

## LITERARY TRENDS IN XIX-XX CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

**Kasimova Rano Rakhmatulloyevna**

DSc in Philology, Associate Professor,

Bukhara State University, English Literature and Translation Studies Department

[r.r.kasimova@buxdu.uz](mailto:r.r.kasimova@buxdu.uz)**Itolmasova Umida Bahodir qizi**

Master student, Asia International University, English Literature Department.

[Itolmasovaumida@gmail.com](mailto:Itolmasovaumida@gmail.com)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14879579>

**Abstract.** *In this article, the major literary trends that shaped American literature in the 19th and 20th centuries are discussed. The key movements, including Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism, are examined in detail. The characteristics of each movement are explained, and their influence on writers and literary works is analyzed. The contributions of well-known authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Henry James, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and others are explored. Their works are studied to show how literary styles and themes evolved over time. The impact of historical and social changes on literature is also considered. The effects of industrialization, wars, economic crises, and cultural transformations on literary expression are highlighted. The ways in which writers responded to these events through their works are examined. Changes in themes, character development, and writing techniques are discussed to demonstrate the transition from one literary period to another.*

**Keywords:** *American literature, literary trends, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, Postmodernism, literary movements, historical influence, social impact, thematic evolution, writing techniques.*

## ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЕ ТЕНДЕНЦИИ В АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ XIX-XX ВЕКОВ

**Аннотация.** *В этой статье рассматриваются основные литературные тенденции, которые сформировали американскую литературу в XIX и XX веках. Подробно рассматриваются ключевые движения, включая романтизм, реализм, натурализм, модернизм и постмодернизм. Объясняются характеристики каждого движения и анализируется их влияние на писателей и литературные произведения. Исследуется вклад таких известных авторов, как Эдгар Аллан По, Марк Твен, Генри Джеймс, Ф. Скотт Фицджеральд, Эрнест Хемингуэй и других. Их работы изучаются, чтобы показать, как литературные стили и темы развивались с течением времени. Также рассматривается влияние исторических и социальных изменений на литературу. Освещены последствия индустриализации, войн, экономических кризисов и культурных преобразований для*

литературного выражения. Рассматриваются способы, которыми писатели реагировали на эти события в своих произведениях. Изменения в темах, развитии персонажей и методах письма обсуждаются для демонстрации перехода от одного литературного периода к другому.

**Ключевые слова:** американская литература, литературные тенденции, романтизм, реализм, натурализм, модернизм, постмодернизм, литературные движения, историческое влияние, социальное воздействие, тематическая эволюция, методы письма.

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## Introduction

American literature in the 19th and 20th centuries was shaped by many important literary movements. During this time, writers explored new ideas, themes, and writing styles, leading to significant changes in literary expression. Different movements, such as Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism, were developed, each reflecting the values, beliefs, and concerns of its era. These movements influenced the way stories were told, how characters were created, and how themes were presented.

In the 19th century, literature was deeply influenced by Romanticism, which focused on emotions, imagination, and individualism. Writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne created stories filled with mystery, nature, and deep human emotions. However, as society changed, Realism emerged, bringing a new approach to literature. Writers like Mark Twain and Henry James began to describe life more accurately, portraying real people and everyday experiences. Later, Naturalism developed, emphasizing the impact of environment and social conditions on human behavior. This movement presented a more scientific and often darker view of life.

In the 20th century, Modernism introduced experimental writing styles and new ways of storytelling. Writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway broke traditional literary rules and explored themes of disillusionment, identity, and the effects of war. The horrors of World War I and the rapid modernization of society influenced many literary works. Later, in the mid-20th century, Postmodernism challenged previous literary conventions even further, questioning reality, truth, and meaning in literature.

These literary movements were not only shaped by artistic influences but also by historical and social changes. The American Civil War, industrialization, the Great Depression, and the two World Wars deeply affected the themes and concerns of writers. Literature became a way to express the struggles, hopes, and fears of the people. As a result, American literature evolved continuously, reflecting the transformation of society and the shifting perspectives of writers.

## Methods

In this research, different sources related to 19th and 20th-century American literature were analyzed. Books, academic articles, and historical documents were examined to understand the key literary movements. Information about Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism was collected from various literary studies. The works of famous authors were reviewed, and their writing styles were compared.

The influence of historical and social events on literature was investigated. Important events such as wars, economic changes, and cultural shifts were studied to see how they affected literary themes and techniques. Critical analysis of literary texts was conducted to identify patterns and changes in writing styles. Similarities and differences between different literary periods were observed.

Additionally, opinions from literary critics and scholars were considered. Their interpretations of major literary works were included to provide a broader perspective. The collected data was organized, and key findings were summarized to explain the evolution of American literature.

## Results

Through the study of 19th and 20th-century American literature, several important results were found. It was observed that each literary movement had unique features that reflected the social and historical conditions of its time. Romanticism was found to focus on emotions, nature, and individualism, while Realism presented everyday life and real human experiences. In Naturalism, it was discovered that environment and social conditions were shown to shape human behavior.

In the 20th century, significant changes in literary style were identified. It was seen that Modernist writers experimented with new techniques, such as stream of consciousness and fragmented narratives. Their works were influenced by war, industrialization, and rapid social changes. Postmodernism was found to question reality and traditional storytelling, often using irony and unconventional structures.

It was also revealed that historical events had a strong impact on literature. The Civil War, World Wars, the Great Depression, and technological advancements influenced writers and their themes. Many literary works were written to reflect the struggles, hopes, and transformations of society. Additionally, it was noticed that the role of literature changed over time, from storytelling for entertainment to a tool for deep philosophical and social discussions.

It was confirmed that American literature continuously evolved, adapting to new ideas and challenges. Writers responded to their surroundings, creating works that shaped and reflected the culture of their time.

## Discussion

The development of American literature in the 19th and 20th centuries was influenced by various literary movements, social changes, and historical events. Each period brought new styles, themes, and ideas that shaped literature and reflected the concerns of society. Scholars have extensively studied these literary trends, analyzing their impact on American culture and intellectual thought.

One of the earliest movements of the 19th century, Romanticism, was characterized by a focus on emotion, nature, and individualism. As noted by Richard Chase, Romanticism in American literature emphasized personal experience, imagination, and the supernatural<sup>1</sup>. Writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne created works that explored human psychology and moral dilemmas. It was observed that Romantic literature often contrasted nature with industrialization, showing a deep concern for the consequences of modernization.

By the mid-19th century, Realism emerged as a reaction to Romantic ideals. This movement was analyzed in detail by William Dean Howells, who argued that literature should depict everyday life and real social conditions<sup>2</sup>. Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and Henry James' "The Portrait of a Lady" were written to present realistic characters and social dynamics. Realist literature was found to focus on complex human relationships, moral struggles, and social class differences.

At the end of the 19th century, Naturalism extended Realism by including scientific and deterministic approaches. According to Donald Pizer, Naturalist writers portrayed human beings as controlled by environment, heredity, and social conditions<sup>3</sup>. The works of Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser demonstrated how individuals were shaped by external forces, often struggling against fate and poverty. Their novels illustrated the harsh realities of urban life and industrialization.

The early 20th century introduced Modernism, which was influenced by World War I, industrialization, and new psychological theories. As Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane stated, Modernist literature broke away from traditional storytelling methods, experimenting with fragmented narratives and stream-of-consciousness techniques<sup>4</sup>. Writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway used Modernist styles to explore themes of alienation,

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<sup>1</sup> Chase, Richard. *The American Novel and Its Tradition*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957.-P.15.

<sup>2</sup> Howells, William Dean. *Criticism and Fiction*. Harper & Brothers, 1891.-P.28.

<sup>3</sup> Pizer, Donald. *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1984.-P.34.

<sup>4</sup> Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane. *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930*. Penguin Books, 1991.-P.48.

disillusionment, and existential crisis. Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" reflected the moral decay of the Jazz Age, while Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms" depicted the emotional trauma of war.

By the mid-20th century, Postmodernism questioned established literary conventions and the idea of absolute truth. According to Ihab Hassan, Postmodern literature often included metafiction, irony, and intertextuality, challenging the reader's perception of reality<sup>5</sup>. Writers such as Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut used fragmented narratives and dark humor to critique modern society. Their works reflected skepticism toward history, identity, and cultural narratives.

The influence of historical and social events on these literary movements was significant. The Civil War, industrial growth, the Great Depression, and the two World Wars shaped the themes and concerns of American writers. Literature was used as a means to reflect the struggles of different periods, whether through Romantic imagination, Realist social observation, or Modernist experimentation. American literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries evolved continuously, adapting to cultural and intellectual changes. As scholars have shown, each literary movement contributed to the richness of American literature, reflecting the complexities of human experience and social transformation. Here is the table for literary trends in American literature:

Table 1. Literary movements

Literary Movement	Key Features	Notable Authors
Romanticism	emphasis on emotion, nature, and imagination	Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne
Realism	focus on everyday life and social conditions	Mark Twain, Henry James
Naturalism	deterministic approach; environment and heredity shape characters	Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser
Modernism	experimental narratives; themes of alienation and disillusionment	F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway
Postmodernism	metafiction, irony, questioning reality	Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut

## Conclusion

The study of American literature in the 19th and 20th centuries shows how literature changed with society. Different movements appeared as writers reacted to historical events and cultural shifts. Romanticism focused on emotion and imagination, while Realism and Naturalism portrayed life as it was. Later, Modernism and Postmodernism brought new techniques and questioned traditional storytelling. Each movement added something valuable to literature.

<sup>5</sup> Hassan, Ihab. *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*. Ohio State University Press, 1987.- P.62.

Writers used their works to express personal, social, and political issues. Literature helped people understand their world and reflect on human nature. The influence of history on literature was clear. Wars, economic struggles, and social changes shaped what writers wrote about and how they wrote. This shows that literature is not separate from reality; it grows with the world around it. In conclusion, American literature evolved over time, adapting to new ideas and challenges.

The study of these movements helps us understand not only literature but also the society and people of each period.

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