

# REALISM

1865-1915



# EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION

1865 Pop: 35 Million

1915 Pop: 100 Million



# EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION

- All the old issues remain, but America has passed its greatest test and emerges with newfound confidence
- Westward Expansion
  - Homestead Act
  - Transcontinental Railroad
  - The “Cowboy”
- Urban Industrialization
  - Steam Power
  - Factory Model
  - Electricity
- The “American Way”
  - Rugged, Hardheaded, Individualism



# EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION

**West: Wild and Unsettled**

**East: Urban and Dense**



# POLITICAL SCENE

- After Lincoln, two decades of corruption and mediocrity
- Cleveland presidency (1885-89; 1893-97) creates reform
- Teddy Roosevelt (1901-1909): The Ironic President
  - Conservative who reforms big business (anti-trust laws)
  - Hunter who becomes the first conservationist (national parks)
  - War hawk who wins the Nobel Peace Prize (Russia-Japan)
- Wilson elected in 1913 and WWI breaks out in 1914



# **SOCIAL SCENE: THE “GILDED AGE”**

- Pulitzer and Hearst Newspaper Empire
- Cornelius Vanderbilt Railroad Empire
- John D. Rockefeller Oil Empire
- Andrew Carnegie Steel Empire
- J.P. Morgan Banking Empire



# **SOCIAL SCENE: THE NOT-SO-GILDED**

- **No social programs**
  - **Medicaid, Minimum Wage, Social Security**
- **No government regulatory agencies**
  - **FDA, FDIC, EPA, OSHA**
- **New class of citizen: The Working Poor**
  - **Strikes, riots, and a market collapse**
  - **Powerful labor and farm organizations emerge**



# LITERARY SCENE

- Realism (the way things are) emerges as a reaction against Romanticism (the way things ought to be)
- The role of the author becomes one of documentarian, doing their best to mirror the social fabric of everyday America and the experience of the ordinary rather than the extraordinary





# REALISM

## Common Features

1. Direct Impression of Life
2. Present and Common Experience
3. Moral and Social Themes
4. Causality and Character



# “AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE” (1890)

- AMBROSE BIERCE



- Civil War veteran and journalist
  - His **cynicism** helped make him a relentless journalist and uncompromising writer
- Disappeared in 1913, near the Mexican border, during a tour of former Civil War battlefields



# “AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE” (1890)

- AMBROSE BIERCE



- Is this a direct impression of life?
- Is Peyton Farquar's experience one of the common man?
- Is there a fundamental question of morality at its heart?
- Do Farquar's choices have consequences?



# THE GREAT UMBRELLA

## Realism

Naturalism

Local  
Color

Social Protest

Feminism

Civil  
Rights

Labor



# NATURALISM

- Naturalists go even further, suggesting a deterministic universe in which people have only limited control over their destiny
- They place greater emphasis on heredity, environment, economic circumstance, and other things often beyond our control
- They examine people and society objectively, like scientists



# “THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT” (1869) - BRET HARTE



- Is this a direct impression of life?
  - **Dialect**
- Do the cast of characters represent average folks?
- Is there a fundamental question of morality at its heart?
- Is there a conflict between individual choice and circumstances beyond their control?



# “THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT”

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the twenty-third of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause was another question. "I reckon they're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been wiping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture....

Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept Fate. With him life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognized the usual percentage in favor of the dealer.



# LOCAL COLOR

- Embodies elements peculiar to a particular region
  - Dialect, folklore, customs, landscape
- Setting is crucial
  - Almost a character
- Narrator is typically an outsider
  - “Educated observer”
- Plot and themes often revolve around “community”
  - Celebration of community
  - Conflict between urban and rural
  - Resistance to change
    - Nostalgic view of the past

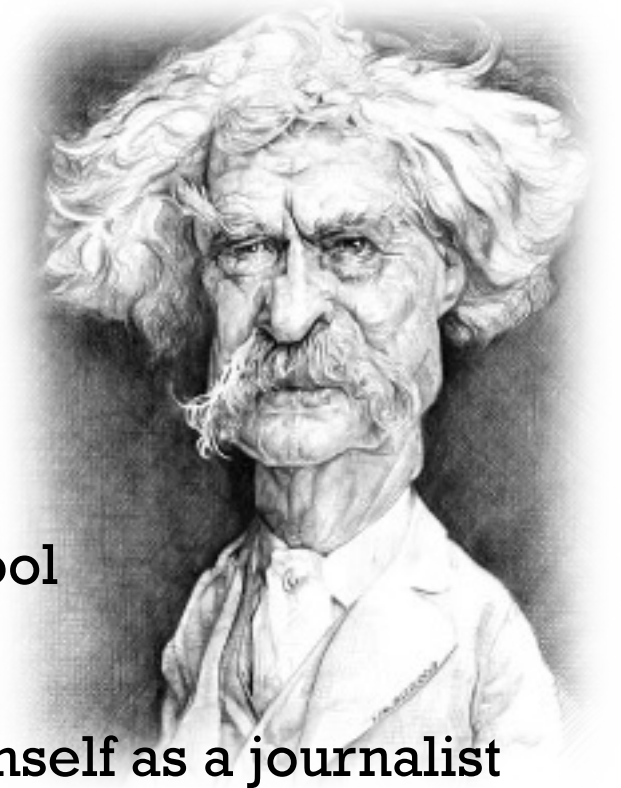




# MARK TWAIN

1835-1910

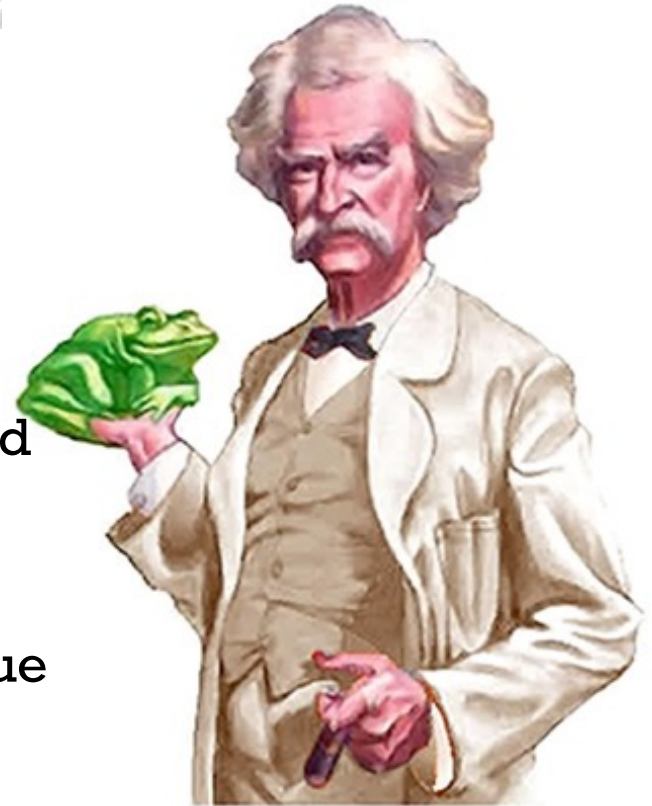
- Born Samuel Langhorne Clemens
- Born in Hannibal, Missouri
- At 11, father dies and Twain leaves school
- At 21, pursues career as riverboat pilot
- When war closes the river, supports himself as a journalist
- Perhaps America's greatest and most popular cynic
  - Linguist's ear for dialect
  - Storyteller's gift for spinning yarns
  - Journalist's impulse for exposing social problems





# “THE NOTORIOUS JUMPING FROG OF CALAVERAS COUNTY” (1865)

- **Tall Tale**
  - A story with unbelievable elements, related as though true and factual
- **Satire**
  - The use of wit, sarcasm, and ridicule to attack the vices and follies of humankind
- **Framed Story**
  - A story “framed” by a smaller story that serves as a sort of prologue and epilogue
- What makes this a local color story?



# ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

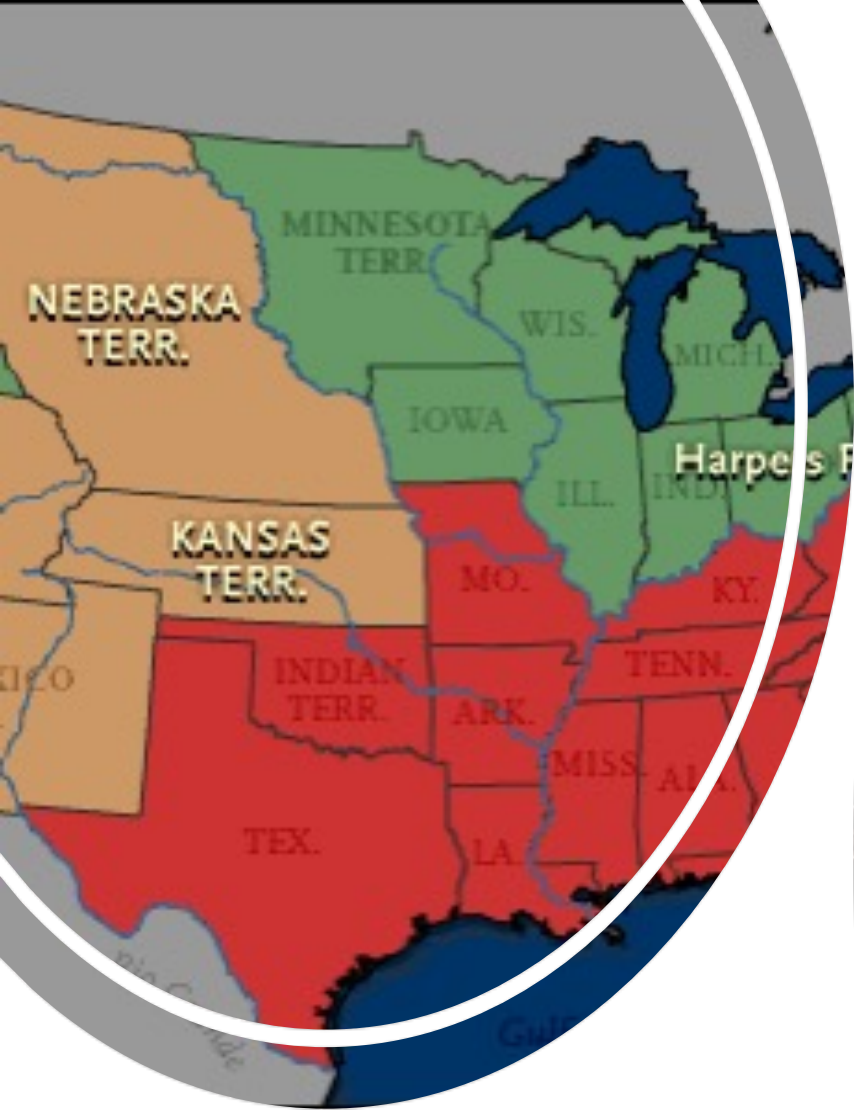
- Published in 1885, almost a decade after *Tom Sawyer*
- A hard look at pre-Civil War social attitudes and cultural norms—especially racism and particularly in the South
- Criticized upon release because of its coarse language, and became even more controversial in the 20th century because of its perceived use of racial stereotypes and slurs
- One of the—if not the—most banned books in American history
- The drifting journey of Huck and his friend Jim, a runaway slave, down the Mississippi River on their raft may be one of the most enduring images of escape and freedom in all of American literature



# PLOT

- The novel is narrated by Huck Finn and sees him faking his own death to get away from his hapless and drunken father. Together with Jim, a runaway slave, Huck makes his way down the Mississippi on a raft. Along their journey, Huck and Jim become involved with a series of peculiar and suspicious characters, such as the feuding Grangerford and Shepherdson families and later the shady 'Duke' and 'Dauphin' who sell Jim back into slavery.
- Like Tom Sawyer, its predecessor, Huck Finn is a picaresque novel (i.e., a travel adventure), but together its separate elements form a complex commentary on the "American experience" as seen through the eyes of an innocent boy.
- It is essentially a "rite of passage" . . . with a problem.





# STYLE

- Twain was attempting to move away from pure “literary” writing, and was experimenting with dialect
- Perhaps the first entirely vernacular novel
- Revisions of the first line demonstrates his intentions
  - You will not know about me.
  - You do not know about me.
  - You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer'; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly.



# CHARGES OF RACISM

- The moral climax of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* comes after the duke and dauphin have betrayed Jim and sold him to the Phelps for “forty dirty dollars”
- Huck goes back to the raft to figure out what to do next, and there he gets to thinking about the lessons he learned in Sunday school about what happens to people like him who assist runaway slaves
- Huck feels genuine conviction regarding his sin and, fearful of his certain fate in hell unless he changes course, he decides to write a letter to Jim’s owner, Miss Watson, to tell her where Jim can be found:



# CHARGES OF RACISM

So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn't know what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I'll go and write the letter- and then see if I can pray. Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather, right straight off, and my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil, all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:

Miss Watson your runaway n----r Jim is down here two mile below Pikesville and Mr. Phelps has got him and he will give him up for the reward if you send. HUCK FINN

I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking- thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell.





# CHARGES OF RACISM

And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me, all the time; in the day, and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking, and singing, and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him agin in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had smallpox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the only one he's got now; and then I happened to look around, and see that paper.



# CHARGES OF RACISM

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right, then, I'll go to hell"- and tore it up.

It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head; and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.



# CHARGES OF RACISM

- It is a moment of true moral courage, as Huck, despite ingrained cultural assumptions and a very real belief that he will burn in an “everlasting fire,” chooses to sacrifice himself for another human being
- How many of us would make a similar choice, given such a belief in its eternal outcome?



# FEMINISM



- Just as laborers are unionizing and a new generation of African Americans are carving out a place for themselves in a post-slavery nation, so too are women trying to redefine their role in a society dominated by white males
- Often their critique is direct
  - Suffrage movement
- In fiction, it is more subversive
  - Women break of the romantic molds that had come to define their gender in popular fiction
  - Deeply personal and regional stories where a single protagonist might symbolize the struggle of all women for equality and independence



# CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

## 1860-1935

- Born into one of the great families of the 19th century
  - Abolitionists, suffragists, academics
- Ironically, “family” is her problem
  - Father abandons family
  - Mother is cold
  - Marries a bohemian artist who nevertheless holds “traditional” views on gender
  - Gives birth to her only child in 1885
- Visits S. Wier Mitchell—a famous specialist in “hysteria”



DEA# GB000000

Lic. # ME 000000

DR. S. WIER MITCHELL

24 IMPERIAL DRIVE  
SELDEN, NY 11784  
TEL: (631) 696-4900 FAX: (631) 696-4901

NAME Charlotte Perkins Gilman AGE \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**R**

REST CURE

- ✓ Remain in bed for 6 weeks to 2 months
- ✓ No sitting up for the first 4-5 weeks
- ✓ No sewing, writing, reading, or the use of one's hands other than to clean the teeth
- ✓ Bowels may be passed while lying down
- ✓ Patient may be lifted onto a lounge for an hour in the morning and again at bedtime and then lifted back into the newly made bed

\_\_\_\_\_  
(SIGNATURE)

LABEL  
REFILL 0 1 2 3 4 5 PRN

DRS -NAT PRESC T  
1-866-696-0800





The  
Yellow  
Wallpaper



# **“THE YELLOW WALL-PAPER”**

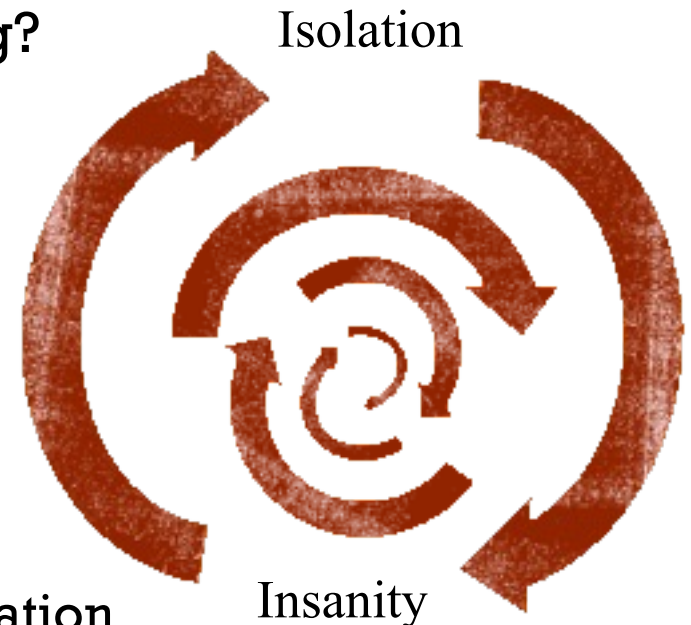
- Written in 1890, but not published until 1892
- Psychologically suspenseful tale of isolation and insanity based largely on Gilman’s own experience with the “rest cure”
- Told from the point of view of a nameless female protagonist who undergoes the rest cure, in an ancestral home, while on vacation with her husband, who also happens to be a doctor





# DESCENT INTO MADNESS OR ... ESCAPE INTO FREEDOM?

- From what is the narrator suffering?
- Why, how, and to whom is she writing?
- What is the wallpaper?
  - What does it look like?
  - How does the narrator perceive it?
  - How does it behave?
- With whom is she in conflict?
- What is the plot?
  - Fascination>Identification>Transformation



# TRIUMPH OF IMAGINATION OR ... TRAGEDY OF SOCIETY?

- Irony
  - The room
- Symbolism
  - Wallpaper? Window? Names?
- Motif
  - Style? Phrases? Descriptions?
- Style
  - Sentences? Voice? Plot?
- Irony of the ending
  - Is she freed by her imagination or trapped inside it?
  - Has she locked others out or locked herself in?



# SOCIAL PROTEST

- Perhaps the most controversial post-Civil War issue of the time was the public discussion regarding the rights of a newly created population—*free* African Americans
- How will freedom be defined for this population?
- Two writers, more than anyone else, come to embody the divided mindset of the African-American population
  - Booker T. Washington
  - W.E.B. Du Bois



# TWO DIFFERENT MEN ON TWO DIFFERENT PATHS

## **Booker T. Washington**

**(1836-1915)**

- Born into slavery
- Southerner
- Salt-packer and Coalminer
- Hampton Institute graduate and later president of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute
- Up from Slavery (1901)
- Advocated Industrial Arts



## **W.E.B. Du Bois**

**(1868-1963)**

- Born post-Civil War
- Northerner
- Part of a small, free, land-owning black population in a largely white community
- Harvard graduate
- The Souls of Black Folk (1903)
- Advocated Liberal Arts



# CIVIL RIGHTS

- 1865 End of War creates millions of newly free Americans
  - Jobs? Homes? Ownership? Vote?
- 1868 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment grants citizenship to former slaves
  - "Black Codes" in southern states essentially exclude
- 1870 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment grants voting rights
  - Local election officials create "laws" to prevent actual voting
- 1896 Plessey v. Ferguson legalizes racial segregation
  - Jim Crow laws effectively marginalize: schools, hospitals, businesses, parks, busses, trains, theaters, and bathrooms
- 1900 Only 2,000 African Americans—in history—have earned a college degree
  - Only 34 colleges and universities even admit African Americans



# CIVIL RIGHTS

- It will be another 50+ years before
  - AMA accepts membership of black doctors
  - Brown v. Board desegregates public schools
  - Federal government sends in troops to University of Alabama



# LABOR

- By the turn of the century, the gap between the wealthy and the rest of the country became a flashpoint
  - 10% controlled 90% of wealth
- The shift from rural to urban areas and from farming to manufacturing only highlighted the need for greater protection of laborers
  - No minimum wage
  - No social security
  - No workplace safety
- Immigrants particularly exploited



# *THE JUNGLE* (1906) - UPTON SINCLAIR



- Writer, Muckraker, Political Activist
- **Muckrakers:** Reform-minded journalists, writers, and photographers during the Progressive Era (1890s-1920s)
- Muckrakers worked to document and expose corruption, crime, and unethical behavior within established American institutions
  - Poverty, Prostitution, Child Labor, etc.





# ***THE JUNGLE* (1906)**

## **- UPTON SINCLAIR**



- Though a work of fiction, it is based on Sinclair's 7-week undercover investigation of the meatpacking industry in Chicago's stockyards
- His intention was to expose the dangerous and deadly conditions for workers
- The public's focus on the unsanitary treatment of their food was ultimately what made it a bestseller



# ***THE JUNGLE*** (1906) - **UPTON SINCLAIR**



- His account of workers falling into rendering tanks and being ground along with animal parts into "Durham's Pure Leaf Lard" gripped the public
- Led to the creation of several government regulatory bodies
  - Meat Inspection Act
  - Pure Food and Drug act (FDA)
  - OSHA
- Jack London called it the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" of wage slavery



# THE CALL OF THE WILD

- First published in 1903, *The Call of the Wild* is based on London's experiences as a gold prospector in the Canadian wilderness and his ideas about nature and the struggle for existence
- The plot concerns Buck, a big suburban St. Bernard, who is dog-napped by men procuring dogs to be used as sled transportation during the Yukon Gold Rush of Alaska. From pampered city-dog to mistreated domestic-going-feral mixed breed to well-treated frontier dog, Buck learns survival, adaptation, and much about humanity's range of character and behavioral traits.
- Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tidewater dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego.

