

Realism was based upon three propositions: that life, social life as lived in the world was valuable, and was permeated with morality; that its continued health depended upon the use of human reason to overcome the anarchic selfishness of human passions; that an objective portrayal of human life by art will illustrate the superior value of social, civilized man, or human reason over animal passion and primitive ignorance (Everett Carter, *Howells and the Age of Realism*, 1954).

Realism set itself at work to consider characters and events which are apparently the most ordinary and uninteresting, in order to extract from these their full value and true meaning. It would apprehend in all particulars the connection between the familiar and the extraordinary, and the seen and unseen of human nature. (George Parsons Lathrop, "The Novel and its Future," *Atlantic Monthly* 34 (September 1874): 313-24.

Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material. William Dean Howells, "Editor's Study," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (November 1889), 966.

Realism, n. The art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads. The charm suffusing a landscape painted by a mole, or a story written by a measuring worm." (Ambrose Bierce *The Devil's Dictionary*, 1911).

Where Romanticists transcend the immediate to find the ideal, and Naturalists plumb the actual or superficial to find the scientific laws that control its action, Realists center their attention to a remarkable degree on the immediate the here and now, the specific action, and the verifiable consequence” (William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* 428).

The basic axiom of the realistic view of morality was that there could be no moralizing novel. The morality of the Realists, then, was built upon what appears a paradox—morality with an abhorrence of moralizing. Their ethical beliefs called, first of all, for a rejection of scheme of moral behavior imposed, from without, upon the characters of fiction and their actions. Yet, Howells always claimed for his works a deep moral purpose. (Everett Carter, *Howells and the Age of Realism*, 1954).