

Characteristics of Naturalism

Naturalism is a new and harsher of realism, The term naturalism itself came from *Emile Zola*. It is believed that he sought a new idea to convince the reading public of something new and more modern in his fiction. He argued that his innovation in fiction-writing was the creation of characters and plots based on the scientific method. Skinnerian principles of learning through conditioning and the Darwinian hierarchy of the survival of the fittest are the underlying themes involved in shaping the human character. There are many defining characteristics of literary naturalism.

1. One of these of naturalism is **determinism**. **Determinism** is basically the opposite of the notion of free will. For determinism, the idea that individual characters have a direct influence on the course of their lives is supplanted by a focus on nature or fate. Human beings are living in a natural environment like animals. They can react toward the exterior and interior forces but they are helpless before these forces. Often, a naturalist author will lead the reader to believe that a character's fate has been pre-determined. The universe is indifferent to human awe or suffering. Fate is determined by reality of the way things are: usually by heredity and environmental factors.

2. Another characteristic of literary naturalism is **objectivism**. The author often tries to maintain a tone that will be experienced as 'objective.' The author presents himself or herself as an objective observer, similar to a scientist taking note of what he or she sees. Of course, no human being can ever be truly objective, but by detaching the narrator from the story he or she tells, an author can achieve objectivity. Also, an author will sometimes achieve detachment by creating nameless characters (strictly speaking, this is more common among modernists such as Ernest Hemingway). This puts the focus more on the plot and what happens to the character, rather than the characters themselves.

3. Another characteristic is **pessimism**. Very often, one or more characters will continue to repeat one line or phrase that tends to have a pessimistic connotation, sometimes emphasizing the inevitability of death. Naturalistic works often include uncouth language and sordid subject matter. For example, Emile Zola's works had a frankness about sexuality along with a pervasive pessimism. Naturalistic works exposed the real harshness of life, including poverty, racism, sex, prejudice, disease, prostitution, and filth.

4. Another common characteristic is a surprising twist at the end of the story. Equally, there tends to be in naturalist novels and stories a strong sense that nature is indifferent to human struggle.