

## **Comparing American and English Realism: Similarities and Differences in Literature**

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**Abstract:** This article compares and contrasts American and English realism, two literary movements that emerged in the 19th century. Both movements share a commitment to portraying life and society realistically and addressing social issues. However, they differ in their geographical settings, cultural contexts, authors and works, and specific themes and styles. American realism focuses on the United States and often explores individualism and the American Dream, while English realism is centered in England and may delve into themes like social class, morality, and the impact of industrialization. The article highlights the similarities and differences between these two literary movements in terms of setting, cultural context, authors and works, and style and themes.

**Keywords:** American realism, English realism, literary movements, commitment, portraying life, society realistically, social issues, individualism.

As English literature and American literature plays an important role where the term literature is concerned, identifying the difference between English literature and American literature is essential for literature students. As you may already know, literature encompasses a wide variety of written works, especially those with eternal artistic value and it is not confined to a particular geographical area, yet it is rather spread in almost every country. For example, published literary works in France is termed French literature while published literary works in India is called Indian literature. Hence, literature is rather a scattered discipline in every nook and corner of the world.

English literature refers to the collection of written literary work in the Great Britain and its colonies since the 7th century to the present day. As may be apparent, it has a great and much-loved history where it is chronologically categorized into several eras: Old English literature (c.658-1100), Middle English literature (1100–1500), English Renaissance (1500–1660), Neo-Classical Period (1660–1798), 19th-century literature, English literature since 1901 which includes modern, post-modern, and 20th century literature. Among the many writers from different parts of the English speaking world, those who have immensely contributed to the development of English literature are, William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Virginia Woolf, William Wordsworth, W.B. Keats, Robert Frost. As literature is the presentation of writers' expressions towards life in their socio-economic background, any type of literature depicts a certain culture. English literature, by its all forms, genres, and stylistics, reflects the culture of the British. The most known features of English literature include its wit, depiction of manners, disparity between classes, themes being stressed on plots and characterization.

## Difference Between English Literature and American Literature

Comparatively, American literature is a notion that emerged in the recent past. It is the production of literary work written in the context of America portraying American culture and themes. America, originally being a British colony, was part of English literature until the country won independence and every aspect of the country: economy, education, literature, arts, culture, and social aspects changed and new brands brooded. The origin of the American literature dates back to the early 17th century. American literature was largely shaped by the history of the country and revolutionary ideas emerged during civil and revolutionary wars.

### American Literature

What is the difference between English Literature and American Literature?

- Literary works written and published in Great Britain and British colonies are referred by the term English literature while American literature refers to literary works written and published in America.
- English literature is written in British English while American literature is written in American English.
- English literature mainly reflects the English culture, English mannerisms while American literature mirrors American culture, its history, and revolutionary concepts such as relationships with the church, the state, supernatural elements that emerged in the country. E.g. Massachusetts battle.
- English literature is older than the American English.
- American literature is often known as a much more realistic in portraying characters while English literature is known for its wit and portrayal of theme in plots and characterization.

Judging by the above distinct and subtle differences, it is comprehensible that English literature and American literature are two different notions although American literature was once part of the English literature.

American and English realism are both literary movements that emerged in the 19th century, but they exhibit some similarities and differences in their works:

#### Similarities:

1. **Realism:** Both American and English realism share a commitment to portraying life and society realistically. They aim to depict the everyday lives and struggles of ordinary people in a detailed and accurate manner.
2. **Focus on Social Issues:** Both movements address social issues and inequalities of their respective societies. They often critique the class system, industrialization, and urbanization, shedding light on the harsh realities faced by the working class.
3. **Psychological Realism:** Both American and English realist writers delve into the inner thoughts and emotions of their characters. They explore the psychological aspects of their characters' lives, providing a nuanced understanding of human behavior.

#### Differences:

1. **Setting:** One key difference is the geographical setting. American realism primarily focuses on the United States, reflecting the unique American experience, while English realism, as the name suggests, is centered in England and often explores British society and culture.
2. **Cultural and Historical Context:** American realism emerged in the mid to late 19th century, coinciding with the aftermath of the Civil War and westward expansion. English realism, on the other hand, developed in the context of Victorian England, with its own set of societal norms and issues.

3. Authors and Works: American realist authors include Mark Twain, Henry James, and Stephen Crane, known for works like «The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,» «The Portrait of a Lady,» and «The Red Badge of Courage.» English realist writers encompass Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, famous for novels like «Great Expectations,» «Middlemarch,» and «Tess of the d'Urbervilles.»
4. Style and Themes: While both movements focus on realism, American realist works often have a more colloquial and straightforward style. They frequently explore the idea of individualism and the American Dream. English realist literature can be more ornate and may delve into themes like social class, morality, and the impact of industrialization.

In summary, American and English realism share a commitment to depicting real-life experiences and societal issues, but they differ in their geographical settings, cultural contexts, and the specific themes and styles they employ in their works.

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