**NATURALISM**

* deals with those raw and unpleasant experiences which reduce characters to "degrading" behavior in their struggle to survive.
* characters mostly from lower middle or lower classes--they are poor, uneducated, and unsophisticated.
* environment or setting is the commonplace and the unheroic; life is usually the dull round of daily existence, though those qualities are in such characters usually associated with the heroic or adventurous--acts of violence and passion leading to desperate moments and violent death; suggestion is that life on its lowest levels is not so simple as it seems to be.
* setting is frequently urban
* discussion of fate; generally the controlling force is society and the surrounding environment.
* characters conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, chance, or instinct; but they have compensating humanistic values which affirm their individuality and life--their struggle for life becomes heroic and they maintain human dignity.
* character is fundamentally an animal, without free will; external and internal forces, environment, or heredity control their behavior (determinism).
* believe in the existence of the will, but the will is often enslaved on account of different reasons.
* introduced new topics and helped broaden the scope of American fiction--prostitution; exposure of social conditions and social evil
* common themes of survival, determinism, violence and taboo
* "brute within" each individual, comprised of strong and often warring emotions: passions, such as lust, greed, or the desire for dominance or pleasure; and the fight for survival in an amoral, indifferent universe. The conflict in naturalistic novels is often "man against nature" or "man against himself" as characters struggle to retain a "veneer of civilization" despite external pressures that threaten to release the "brute within."
* nature as an indifferent force acting on the lives of human beings.