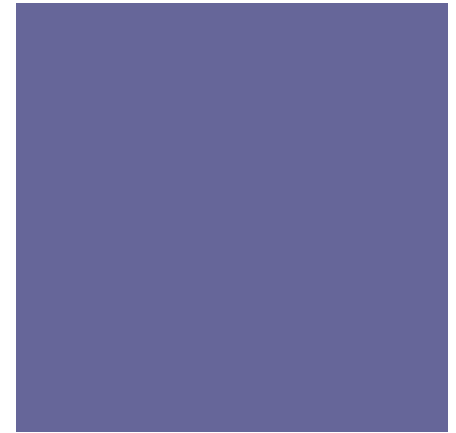




Adapted from:
Campbell, Donna M. "Regionalism and Local Color Fiction, 1865-1895."
Literary Movements. Dept. of English, Washington State University.
21 Jul. 2013. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.



Realism

Regionalism & Local Color

1865-1920

+ WHAT IS REALISM?



- Broadly defined, a literary technique devoted to **"the faithful representation of reality"**
- A reaction against Romanticism
- Sparked by an interest in the scientific method, the systematizing of the study of documentary history, and the influence of rational philosophy



REALIST WRITERS



- Endeavored to accurately represent contemporary culture and people from all walks of life
- Addressed themes of socioeconomic conflict by contrasting the living conditions of the poor with those of the upper classes in urban as well as rural societies
- Sought to narrate their novels from an objective, unbiased perspective that simply and clearly represented the factual elements of the story
- Became masters at psychological characterization, detailed descriptions of everyday life in realistic settings, and dialogue that captures the idioms of natural human speech

+ SOME KEY INFLUENCES

- Rapid growth after the Civil War
- Increasing rates of democracy and literacy
- Rapid growth in industrialism and urbanization
- An expanding population base due to immigration
- A relative rise in middle-class affluence
- Interest in understanding these rapid shifts in culture
- Concern about loss of personal identity

+ LOCAL COLOR/REGIONAL LITERATURE

- *Local color* or *regional* literature focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region.
- Between the Civil War and the end of the nineteenth century, this mode of writing became dominant in American literature.

+ LOCAL COLOR

- According to the *Oxford Companion to American Literature*, "In local-color literature, one finds the dual influence of Romanticism and Realism, since the author frequently looks away from ordinary life to distant lands, strange customs, or exotic scenes, but retains through minute detail a sense of fidelity and accuracy of description" (439).

+ REGIONAL LITERATURE



- Regional literature incorporates the broader concept of sectional differences within a locale.
- For example, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain makes use of seven distinct dialects to represent the differences of various groups living in the region.
- For example, in *O Pioneers!*, Willa Cather focuses on the differences between the Swedes, Bohemians, and French within the Nebraskan community.

+ IMPACTS

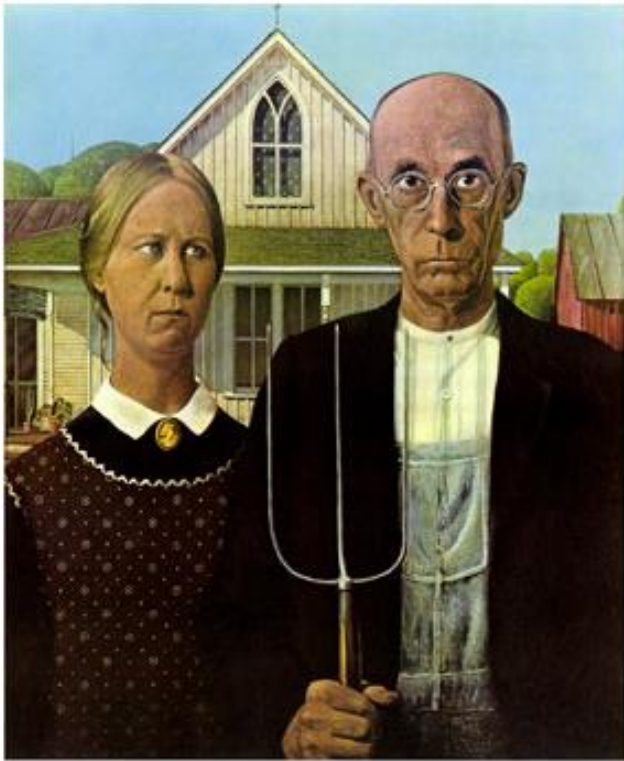
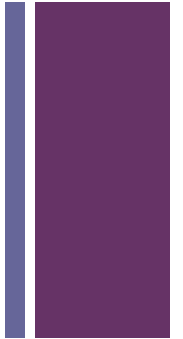


- Contributed to the reunification of the country after the Civil War

- Helped build a national identity



SHARED CHARACTERISTICS IN LOCAL COLOR & REGIONAL LITERATURE



AMERICAN GOITIC
J.M.W. TURNER
1840
OIL ON CANVAS
101.6 x 148.3 cm
© 2011 THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

- Setting
- Characters
- Narrator
- Plots
- Themes

+ SETTING



- The emphasis is frequently on nature and the limitations it imposes
- Settings are frequently remote and inaccessible.
- The setting is integral to the story and may sometimes become a character in itself. (Q Pioneers!)

+ CHARACTERS



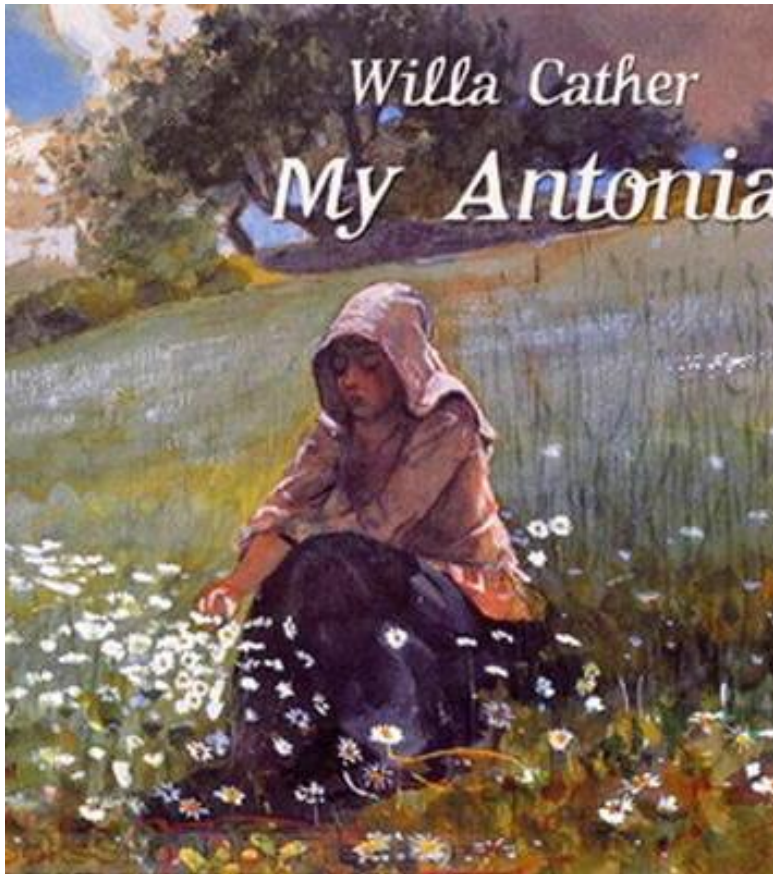
- Local color stories tend to be concerned with the character of the district or region rather than with the individual: characters may become character types, sometimes quaint or stereotypical.
- The characters are marked by their adherence to the old ways, by dialect, and by particular personality traits central to the region.

+ NARRATOR

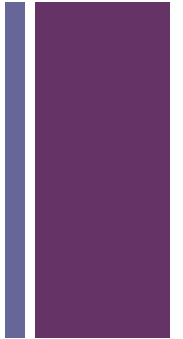


- The narrator is typically an educated observer from the world beyond who learns something from the characters while preserving a sometimes sympathetic, sometimes ironic distance from them.
- The narrator serves as mediator between the rural folk of the tale and the urban audience to whom the tale is directed.

+ PLOTS



- It has been said that "nothing happens" in local color stories by women authors, and often very little does happen.
- Stories may include lots of storytelling and revolve around the community and its rituals.



+ THEMES



- Many local color stories share an aversion to change and a nostalgia for an always-past golden age.
- Thematic tension or conflict between urban ways and old-fashioned rural values is often symbolized by the intrusion of an outsider or interloper who seeks something from the community.

+ SHARED TECHNIQUES



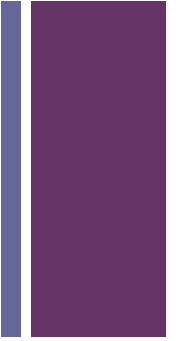
- Use of dialect to establish credibility and authenticity of regional characters.
- Use of detailed description, especially of small, seemingly insignificant details central to an understanding of the region.
- Frequent use of a frame story in which the narrator hears some tale of the region.



FAMOUS PRACTITIONERS

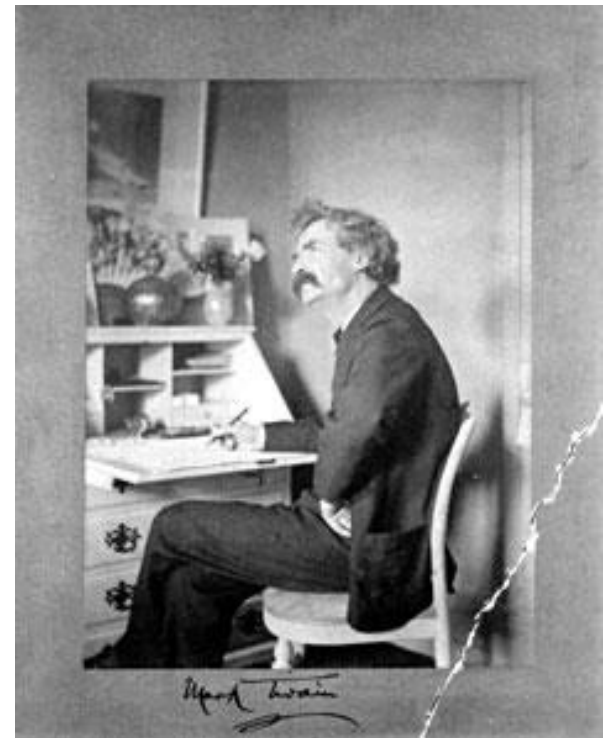


- Mark Twain
- Bret Harte
- Joel Chandler Harris
- William Faulkner
- Sinclair Lewis
- Henry James
- Kate Chopin
- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Eudora Welty
- Sarah Orne Jewett
- Willa Cather
- Marietta Holly



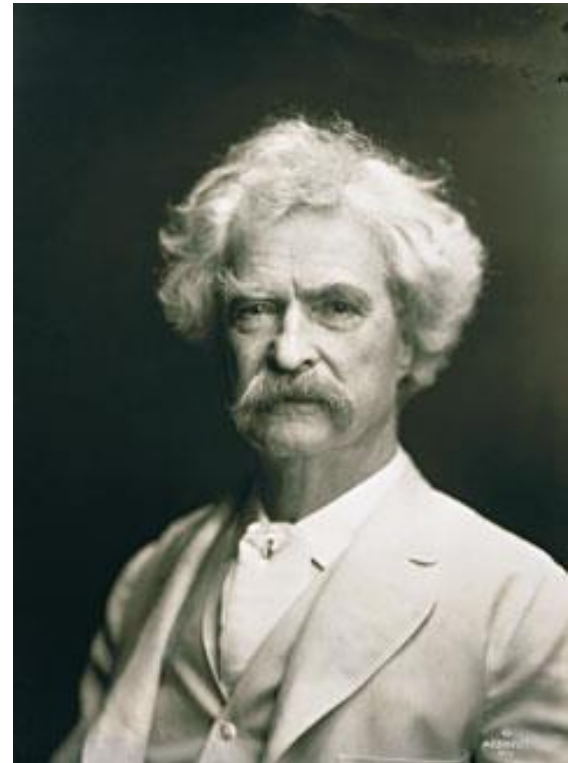
Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910)

- Samuel Langhorne Clemens, aka. Mark Twain, was a natural-born storyteller who was the first writer to recognize that art could be created out of the American language.
- Through his use of carefully chosen words and his sharply honed humor, he dealt head-on with controversial issues that others were afraid to confront.



Mark Twain's Writing Advice

- *“Whatever you have lived, you can write – & by hard work & a genuine apprenticeship, you can learn to write well; but what you have not lived you cannot write, you can only pretend to write it...”*



+ What is satire?

- A literary genre or form in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, and society itself, into improvement.
- Although satire is usually meant to be funny, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit as a weapon.
- A common feature of satire is strong irony or sarcasm; it also makes frequent use of parody, burlesque, analogy, exaggeration, juxtaposition, and double entendre.
- Modern Examples: *Animal Farm*; *Fahrenheit 451*; *Lord of the Flies*; *Saturday Night Live*, "Doonesbury," John Stewart; Stephen Colbert; *The Simpsons*; *South Park*