

## SPECIFIC FEATURES OF NATURALISM IN LITERATURE

*Oktyabrova Feruza Ulugbek kizi*

**Abstract:** This article is devoted to the specific aspects of the naturalistic literary movement that emerged at the end of the 19th century. Naturalistic works show how human behavior, life, and destiny are shaped by external factors — environment, heredity, and society. A person often seems helpless in front of forces beyond his control. The article analyzes important aspects of naturalistic literature with examples.

**Key words:** Naturalism, determinism, heredity, environment, objectivity, pessimism, lower class, darwinism, Émile Zola, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, animal instinct, social pressure, biological influence, realism, fate, human behavior

Naturalism is a literary movement that developed and expanded on realism in the late 19th century. While realism sought to portray life as it is, naturalism studied man on a scientific and deterministic basis, showing him as dependent on heredity, environment, and social circumstances. This movement was inspired by the ideas of Charles Darwin, Auguste Comte, and especially Emile Zola. Naturalist writers emphasized that human destiny is determined by external and internal factors, and that man cannot fully control his own life. This article will highlight the main features of naturalism - determinism, heredity, environmental influence, objectivity, pessimistic views, and reflection of the life of the lower classes.

One of the main aspects of naturalism is the concept of determinism. In naturalistic works, characters are often depicted as being subject to forces beyond their control. These forces may be biological instincts, societal pressures, economic circumstances, or environmental influences. In romantic or realist works, characters often act based on their own moral judgments and personal values, while in naturalistic literature, their lives are often determined by external circumstances. In naturalism, determinism is associated with scientific theories, particularly Darwin's ideas of evolution and "survival of the fittest." Human actions and decisions are not driven by free will, but by internal and external factors. For example, in Frank Norris's novel *McTeague*, the protagonist's crisis is the result of his animalistic nature and his inability to adapt to social life. His downfall is gradual and inevitable due to his inability to control himself. Thus, naturalist writers show that people are trapped in a chain of cause and effect and that they have very limited opportunities for spiritual or moral growth. In naturalistic literature, heredity, or inheritance, is shown as an important factor determining the fate of heroes. According to this theory, people inherit not only physical but also mental characteristics from their ancestors. These hereditary characteristics shape the behavior of heroes, their place in life, and their fate. In some cases, this heredity can be negative conditions such as mental illness, a tendency to violence, or drug addiction. The founder of naturalism, Emile Zola, pays great attention to the issue of heredity in his series "Rougon-Maccard". He shows the fate of different generations of one

family and describes how inherited characteristics affect their lives. Naturalist writers also argue that no matter how much effort or education a person has, they cannot completely escape their biological inheritance. In American literature, this idea is also expressed in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, where Carrie experiences the pursuit of wealth as a natural instinct, which leads her to make morally questionable decisions. Similarly, in Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, Buck the dog is shown reverting to his primitive nature. In this case, it is argued that the hereditary instincts for survival are stronger than growth. In naturalism, the role of the environment in shaping human life is important. Naturalist writers often depict harsh, indifferent, or oppressive conditions, showing how they shape the behavior and fate of their characters. This environment includes not only the physical setting, but also social systems, economic structures, and cultural norms. Depictions of urban conditions, especially poverty, crime, and social inequality, are common in naturalist literature. Writers often depict poor neighborhoods, factories, or working-class areas, showing how external factors cause people to suffer. The environment does not support people or provide justice; it acts only as an indifferent force that causes human suffering. Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* illustrates the influence of the environment well. Maggie is born in a poor neighborhood in New York City and cannot escape her environment. Although he strives to improve his life, his environment drags him down again, and his tragic end is due to his social circumstances. Naturalistic literature aims for an objective and analytical approach which is similar to that of a scientific experiment. Writers typically adopt a dispassionate narrative style, observing their characters without emotional involvement, sympathy, or judgment. This style is inspired by scientific methods, in which the observer must record events as they occur, without regard for moral implications. This objective approach allows writers to explore taboo subjects such as violence, sex, disease, and drug abuse without sentimentality. Naturalistic works are often seen as psychological experiments or case studies, where characters are tested by their own circumstances and internal motivations. The main goal is to understand how human behavior works, not to glorify or criticize the characters. This observational style is especially evident in the works of Émile Zola, who likened the writing process to that of a scientist conducting a scientific experiment. Emile Zola's idea was that by controlling the circumstances and observing the characters' reaction, literature could reveal universal truths about human nature. The works of Stephen Crane and Frank Norris, also took a similarly objective approach, with characters often described in animalistic or biological language, which reinforced the scientific approach. Naturalism is inherently pessimistic, portraying life as being governed by uncontrollable forces. Therefore, the fate of heroes in naturalistic literature is often tragic. They usually do not achieve salvation, happiness, or justice. Instead, they suffer, weaken, or die under the influence of their own weaknesses or circumstances. This tragic view represents life as being governed not by moral laws or divine justice, but by blind, indifferent forces. This pessimism is especially expressed in the stories of Jack London, in which nature is depicted as harsh and indifferent. In *To Build a Fire*, the protagonist overestimates his own power, misjudges nature, and loses his life in the icy wilderness. There is no moral lesson or consolation, only cold realism. Meanwhile, in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, the protagonist, Clyde Griffiths, is driven to despair by his own desires and the social pressures surrounding him. He tries to elevate his background, but makes poor decisions and falls victim to his own desires and the pressures of society. The novel ends with his death, which reinforces the despair that underlies the naturalistic philosophy. Naturalistic literature usually

focuses on the lowest classes of society—the working class, the poor, the marginalized, and the downtrodden. Such characters are chosen not to arouse sympathy, but to show how their lives are shaped by forces beyond their control. Naturalistic writers believe that it is the struggles of the lower classes that reveal the most stark and revealing truths about human life. Unlike Romantic or Victorian literature, which often portrays idealized heroes or middle-class problems, naturalistic writers portray the lives of people who are struggling, suffering from famine, crime, or drug addiction. Through such characters, they seek to portray the difficult, realistic, and painful aspects of life without idealism. This approach is particularly seen in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. It depicts the harsh and brutal working conditions of immigrants in the Chicago meatpacking industry. The protagonist, Jurgis Rudkus, is subjected to oppression, poverty, and tragedy. Sinclair intended to show how the capitalist system dehumanizes the working class.

In naturalist literature people are often compared to animals because of their basic instincts. Characters are frequently described in terms of their physical instincts, desires, or survival behaviors. This reflects the influence of Darwinian theory, which suggested that human beings are not separate from nature but part of a continuous evolutionary chain. In such works, people act more on instinct—for example, hunger, sexual desire, fear, or aggression. Animalistic feelings, rather than reason, influence their decisions. In *McTeague*, Norris repeatedly compares the protagonist to an animal, highlighting his brute strength and lack of self-awareness. This animalistic imagery emphasizes the raw, instinctive nature of human behavior in naturalist fiction.

Though naturalism is rooted in realism, it often uses symbolism and metaphor to deepen the meaning of the narrative. The natural environment, animals, objects, or even social systems can serve as symbols for the larger forces that control human life. These symbols are not used to romanticize the story but to illustrate the impersonal and often destructive power of fate, nature, or society. For example, in *The Octopus*, the railroad system is a symbol of industrial capitalism, which oppresses and prevents isolated farmers from resisting. In *The Pit*, the grain market is depicted as a symbol of economic chaos and forces beyond human control. Such images express the main ideas of naturalism more clearly and effectively. Naturalistic literature does not aim to teach a specific lesson or show good and bad people. The characters are presented as ordinary people - they have their flaws, mistakes, and conflicts. They do not always turn out to be good or bad. This means that people cannot be judged solely by moral rules, especially if they act under the influence of their environment. In such literature, writers raise difficult topics, but they do not judge on them. For example, if a character commits a crime, it is not because of evil, but because of life's difficulties or inner desires. This style makes naturalistic works close to life and deeply thought-provoking. The reader thinks about questions such as what justice is, whether a person can make free choices or not.

Naturalism in literature presents human life in a very open and sometimes sad way. It has important features: the predetermination of human fate (determinism), hereditary characteristics, environmental influences, impartial observation, despair, and writing about the lives of poor people. Through these things, naturalist writers show that people cannot change their destiny. They believe that people are governed not by their own decisions, but by their place of birth, environment, and biological characteristics. Therefore, human life in their works is not beautiful, but full of unpleasant truths. Naturalism encourages the reader to look at the difficult realities of life and understand that human will is not always strong.



**References:**

1. Pizer, Donald. (1995). *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: Howells to London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
2. Zola, Émile. (1880). *The Experimental Novel and Other Essays*. Translated by Belle M. Sherman. New York: Cassell.
3. Norris, Frank. (1899). *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*. New York: Doubleday & McClure Co.
4. Norris, Frank. (1901). *The Octopus: A Story of California*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company.
5. Crane, Stephen. (1893). *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. New York: D. Appleton and Company.
6. Zola, Émile. (1885). *Germinal*. Paris: Charpentier.