Tenets of the American Realism

1. Artists and writers present life with fidelity
2. Focus on the inner workings of the mind
3. Character is more important than plot
4. People are shaped by their environment
5. Realism is set in the present or recent past (no nostalgia)
6. Exposed political corruption, economic inequity, the exploitation of labor, and addressed women’s rights problems and racial inequality
7. Colloquial or vernacular speech
8. Introduced new kinds of characters: industrial workers and the rural poor

ambitious businessmen and vagrants

prostitutes

unheroic soldiers

1. Spurred by scientific and technological changes (the need for empirical evidence)
2. The camera captured reality with and unprecedented objectivity (i.e. Matthew Brady’s Civil War photographs)
3. American writers eventually felt the need to observe and describe their settings and characters with as much accuracy as possible
4. The intuitive (subjective) leap of the romantics was replaced by accurate depictions of setting, customs, manners and speech (objective)