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During the pivotal period of America's international emergence, between the Civil War and WWI, the aligned literary movements of Realism and Naturalism not only shaped the national literature of the age, but also left an indelible and far-reaching influence on twentieth-century American and world literature. Seeking to strip narrative from pious sentimentalities, and, according to William Dean Howells, to "Apaint" life as it is, and human feelings in their true proportion and relation, Realism is best represented by this volume's masterly pieces by Twain, Henry James, Stephen Crane, Kate Chopin, and Willa Cather among others. The joining of Realist methods with the theories of Marx, Darwin, and Spencer to reveal the larger forces (biological, evolutionary, historical) which move humankind, are exemplified here in the fiction of such writers as Jack London, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser.

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