

# REALISM

KT Turner  
October 2018

Realism is recognized as the first modern art movement borne of the idea that everyday life was a suitable subject for art. Beginning in 19<sup>th</sup> Century France after the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, the traditional conventions of art and organization were rejected.

Realism is defined as “the movement or style of representing familiar things as they are.” Realism focuses on the natural structure of life and society. This genre does not shy away from showing the ugly, unpleasant side of life.

*Pictured: Le déjeuner sur l'herbe (Luncheon on the Grass) by Edouard Manet 1863 (painting, oil on canvas, Musee d'Orsay)*

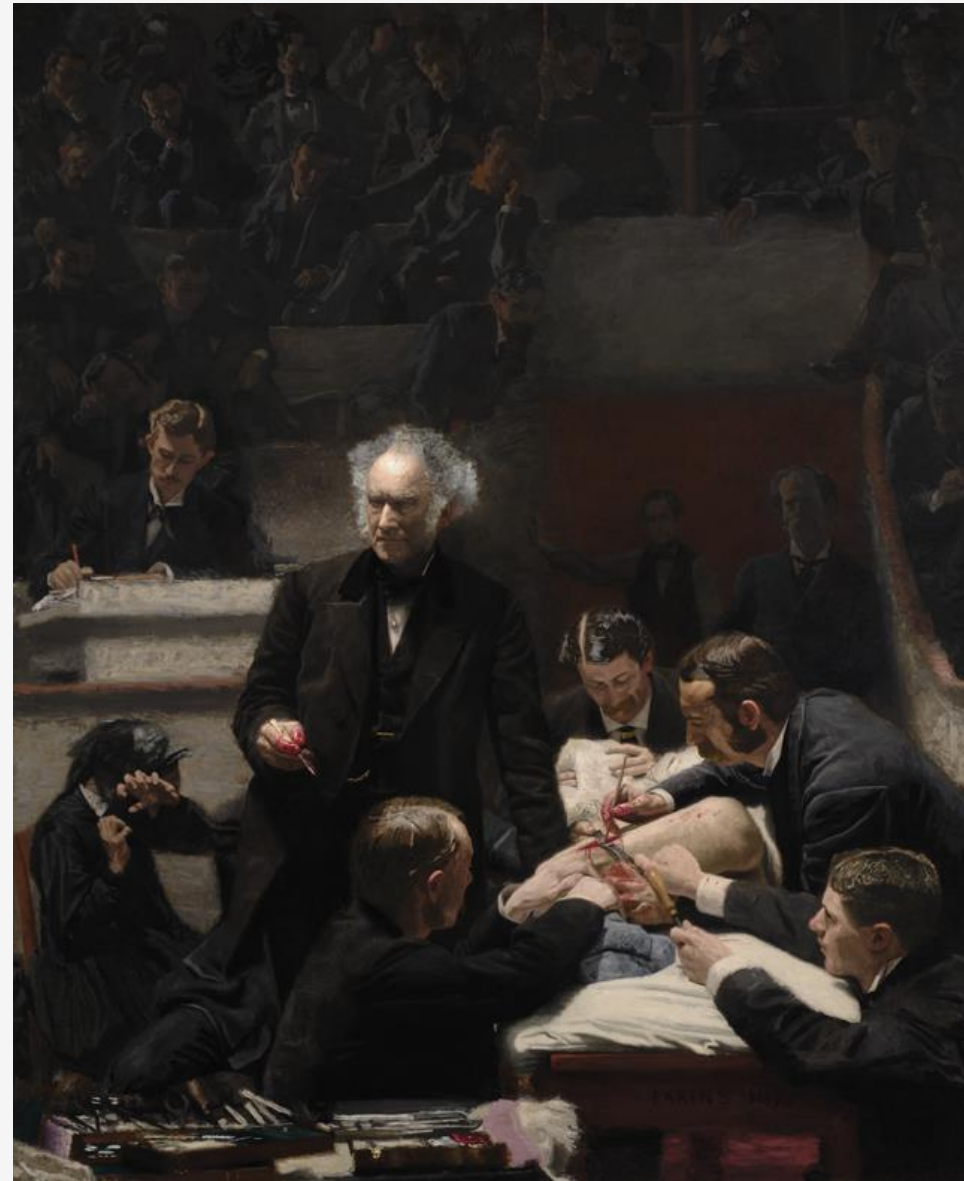


Realism replaced idealistic imagery and literary conceits of traditional art with real-life events.

"So, after the literary schools that wanted to give us a distorted, superhuman, poetic, touching, charming, or proud vision of life, the realist or naturalist school came, which sought to show us the truth, nothing but the truth and the whole truth."

- Guy de Maupassant

*Pictured: The Gross Clinic by Thomas Eakins, 1875 (painting, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art)*



“Realism aims at an exact, complete and honest reproduction of the social environment, of the age in which the author lives, because such studies are justified by reason, by the demands made by public interest and understanding, and because they are free from falsehood and deception. This reproduction should be as simple as possible so that all may understand it.”

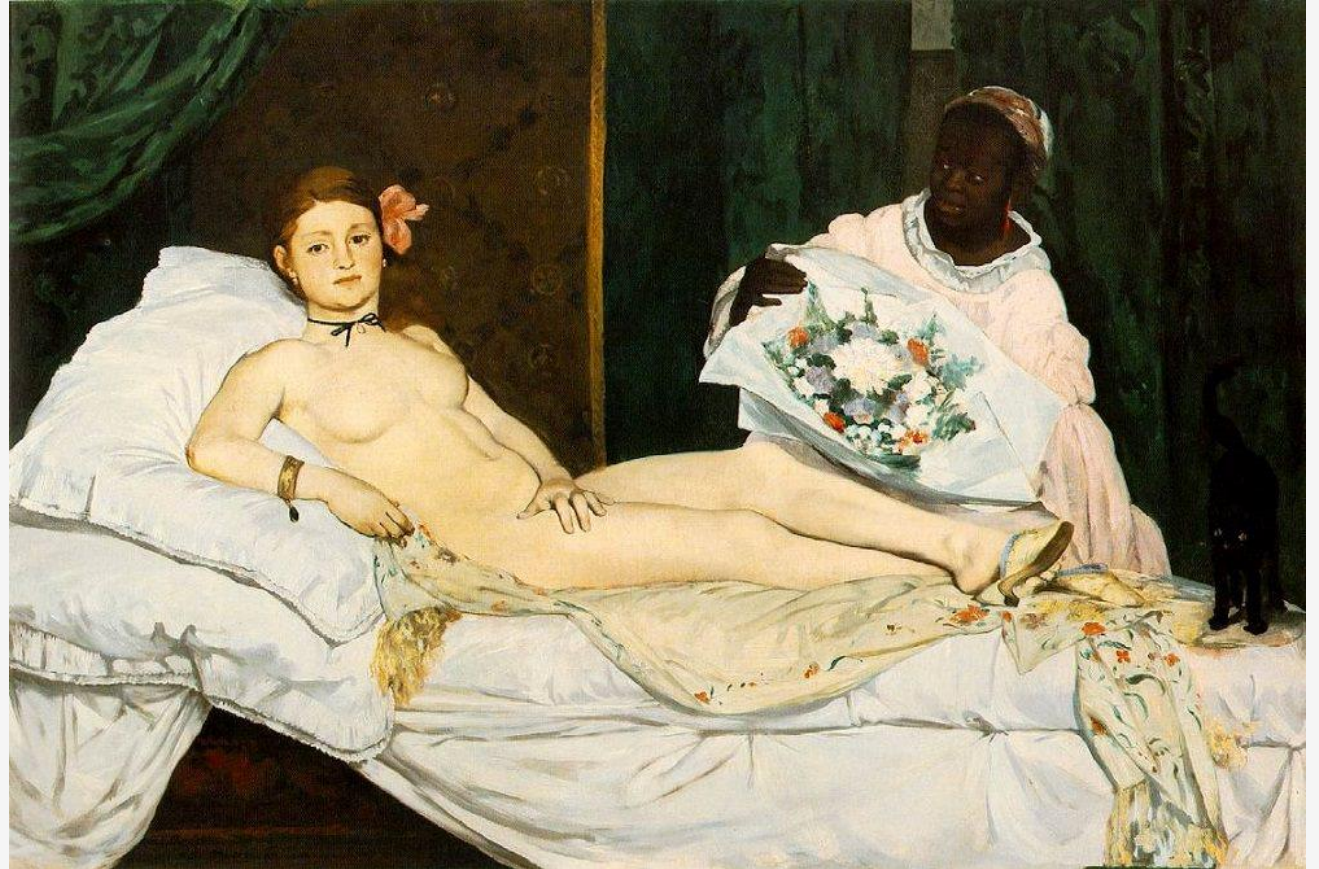
- Edmund Duranty

*Pictured: Barge Haulers on the Volga by Ilya Repin 1870-73 (painting, oil on canvas, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg)*



Realism wasn't afraid to tackle ideas such as politics, struggle, prejudice, status, law, etc. To the right is pictured *Olympia* by Edouard Manet. This scandalous painting came on the heels of his *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*. This painting is thought to challenge the hypocritical nature of French society and their notion of propriety.

*1863, oil on canvas, Musee d'Orsay*

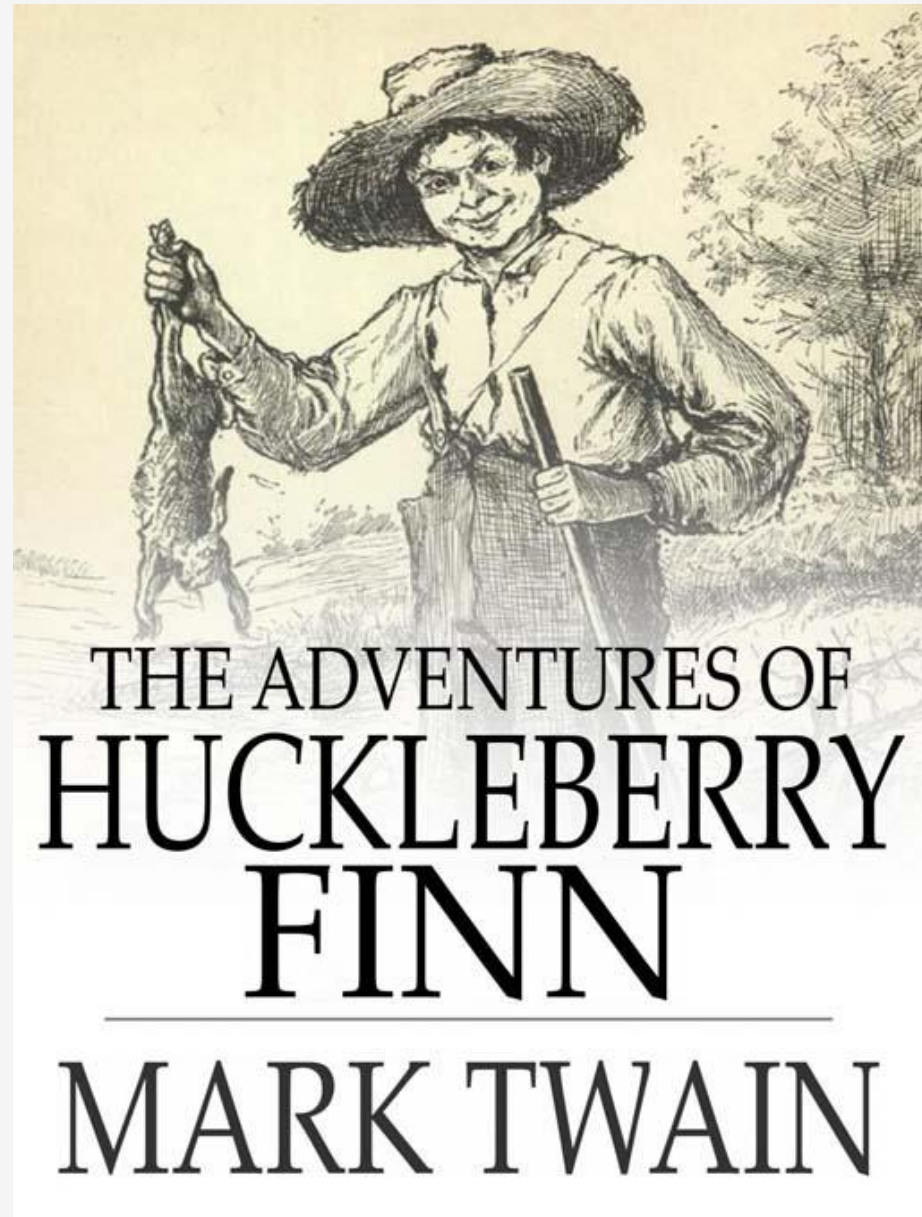


# *Literary Realism*

Literary realism functioned similarly to artistic realism, choosing to focus more on events that are true to life. In literary realism, the characters are often more important than the plot, events and characters are realistic, and reality is “rendered in great detail.”

Mark Twain is a noted writer of American realism. One of his best known works, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, was originally published on December 10, 1884.

---



# *Theatrical Realism*

The realism movement was inspired by major developments sprouted by 3 well-known individuals.

- August Comte: known as the father of sociology, he developed a theory known as Positivism. The notable idea was the encouragement of understanding the cause and effect in nature;
- Charles Darwin: wrote “on the Origin of Species” outlining behavior and humanity as a natural object;
- Karl Marx: argued against urbanization and for the equal distribution of wealth.

From these ideas came 3 characteristics of theatrical realism:

1. Truth resides in material objects as perceived by all 5 senses.
2. Observation solves all.
3. Human problems were the most interesting “specimen” to study.

Writers saw the purpose of art as to better mankind. Realism in theatre was first seen through staging and costumes, but over time, it grew into historically accurate productions.

---

# *A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen*

Ohio Northern University

December 2012

Jill Davis, Scenic Designer

---



# *Major Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw

Portland Center Stage

April 2018

Lex Liang, Costume Designer

---



# *Uncle Vanya* by Anton Chekhov

Guthrie Theatre

2013-2014 Season

Michael Hoover, Set Design

Christine A Richardson, Costume Design

---



# *Sherlock's Last Case by Charles Marowitz*

The New York State Theatre Institute

August 2018

Richard Finkelstein, Set Design

Lenora Doxee, Lighting Design

---



# *Bibliography*

- <https://www.theartstory.org/movement-realism.htm>
  - <https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-realism-art-definition/>
  - <https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/the-daughters-of-edward-darley-boit-31782>
  - <https://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/realism.htm>
  - <https://wplc.overdrive.com/library/kids/media/260032>
  - <https://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/spd130et/realism.htm>
  - <http://www.onu.edu/node/45513>
  - <https://www.pcs.org/blog/the-costumes-of-major-barbara>
  - <https://portlandtribune.com/pt/11-features/392292-283913-the-show-will-go-on-chris-coleman-exits-portland-center-stage>
  - <https://aislesaytwincities.com/2013/09/21/uncle-vanya/>
  - <http://www.rfdesigns.org/pyg2.htm>
  - <http://www.rfdesigns.org/sher.htm>
-