

ASPECTS OF AMERICAN AND ENGLISH LITERATURE ITSELF.

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Annotation: This article explores the key aspects of American and English literature, comparing and contrasting the historical contexts, thematic elements, and stylistic approaches that define each tradition. The analysis highlights the unique contributions of both literary cultures and examines the influence of social, political, and cultural factors on the development of literary works. Through a comprehensive examination, the article aims to provide a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between American and English literature.

Keywords: American literature, English literature, historical context, thematic elements, literary analysis, stylistic approaches, cultural influence, comparative literature.

Literature serves as a mirror to society, reflecting the values, struggles, and ideologies of a given period. Both American and English literature have had profound impacts on the literary world, with each offering unique perspectives shaped by their respective historical, cultural, and social environments. English literature, with its long and storied history, spans from the medieval period through to the modern era, encompassing a wide range of genres and movements. On the other hand, American literature, though relatively younger, has developed its own distinctive voice, often reflecting the country's diverse history and rapid social changes. This article seeks to explore these two literary traditions by focusing on their shared themes, stylistic approaches, and the way each has been influenced by its sociopolitical context.

This study uses a comparative literary analysis methodology, focusing on a selection of works from both American and English traditions. The chosen texts include:

- American Literature: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, and poetry by Emily Dickinson.

- English Literature: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, and poetry by William Wordsworth.

The analysis compares these works on themes, character development, narrative techniques, and social commentary. This method allows for a close reading of each text while also situating them within their respective historical and cultural contexts.

American and English literature have distinct characteristics shaped by their unique cultural, historical, and social contexts. Here's a look at some notable aspects of each:

American Literature

1. Individualism and Frontier Spirit: Influenced by ideas of freedom, independence, and the vast American landscape, themes often reflect self-reliance and resilience, especially in early American and frontier literature.

2. Diversity and Multiculturalism: Reflecting a society formed by various ethnicities and cultures, American literature often explores themes of identity, race, and multiculturalism, especially in works by authors from diverse backgrounds.

3. Realism and Naturalism: American literature, especially post-Civil War, saw a strong movement towards realism and naturalism, portraying everyday life and social issues with a focus on the environment's effect on individuals.

4. American Dream and Disillusionment: Many works address the concept of the American Dream, its allure, and often the disillusionment or challenges associated with achieving it, particularly during times of economic hardship.

5. Innovation in Form and Style: American writers like Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and later modernists like T.S. Eliot and William Faulkner experimented with free verse, narrative structures, and stream-of-consciousness.

English Literature

1. Class and Society: English literature often reflects social hierarchy and class distinctions, from the works of Jane Austen to Charles Dickens, portraying life's struggles within various social strata.

2. Tradition and Literary Heritage: With a rich literary heritage including Chaucer, Shakespeare, and the Romantic poets, English literature is steeped in tradition, often referencing or responding to its own historical works.

3. Colonial and Postcolonial Themes: The British Empire's influence appears in works exploring colonialism and its legacy, as seen in authors like Rudyard Kipling and later postcolonial authors from former colonies.

4. Nature and Landscape: Especially evident in Romantic poetry, the English landscape holds a significant role, often symbolizing emotional states or serving as a counterpoint to urban life.

5. Language and Wit: English literature, particularly from the 18th century onwards, often emphasizes wit, irony, and complex language, evident in writers like Oscar Wilde, Jane Austen, and Evelyn Waugh.

Both literatures offer a rich array of themes and innovations, though American literature leans towards explorations of independence and identity, while English literature often highlights tradition, class, and historical continuity.

One of the most striking differences between the two traditions is their historical trajectory. English literature evolved within the context of an empire, and as such, its writers were often concerned with the power dynamics of class and imperialism. In contrast, American literature developed in a relatively new nation and often reflects the challenges of a society grappling with the concepts of freedom, expansion, and inequality.

Another significant difference lies in the portrayal of social issues. While both literatures address issues of gender, class, and race, American literature tends to focus more explicitly on racial tensions and the legacy of slavery, particularly in works like *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. English literature, though it addresses similar issues, does so within the context of class stratification, as seen in the works of Charles Dickens or the early writings of George Orwell.

Conclusions

In conclusion, American and English literature, while rooted in different historical and cultural contexts, share a deep exploration of the human experience. Their differences, however, offer rich opportunities for comparative study. English literature offers a reflection of an established society grappling with class, while American literature, shaped by the nation's growth and struggles for equality, provides a lens through which to examine the American ethos.

Further research could explore the intersections between American and English post-colonial literature, considering how both traditions engage with the legacies of empire, colonialism, and global migration. Additionally, future studies might investigate the transatlantic literary influence and the impact of cross-cultural exchange on the development of both traditions.

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