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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **LIFE**  In his twenty-nine years of life, Stephen Crane (1871-1900) fought against time, illness, and debt to become one of the most influential American writers of realism and naturalism, who also made a deep impression on 20th-century modernists such as Ernest Hemingway. Crane was born in Newark, New Jersey, the 14th and last child of writer/suffragist Mary Helen Peck Crane and Reverend Jonathan Townley Crane, a Methodist Episcopal minister. Raised by his older sister Agnes, the young Crane attended preparatory school at Claverack College. He later spent less than two years overall as a college student at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, and then at Syracuse University in upstate New York. He then moved to Paterson, New Jersey with one of his brothers and made frequent trips to nearby New York City, writing short pieces on what he experienced there.  ***“American literary naturalism both seduces and repulses the reader, disrupting stable notions of individual and moral coherence. Usually associated with works such as Frank Norris’s McTeague and Stephen Crane’s “The Open Boat,” naturalism draws on nineteenth-century theories of hereditary and environmental determinism, emphasizing the role of chance in characters’ struggles for survival in an increasingly industrial, capitalistic, urban jungle.”***  **−Mary E. Papke. *Twisted from the Ordinary:***  ***Essays on American Literary Naturalism****.*    After moving to New York City and living a bohemian lifestyle among local artists, Crane gained firsthand familiarity with poverty and street life, focusing his writing efforts on New York's downtrodden tenement districts, particularly the Bowery. Crane's first book, the novella *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), was a compassionate story of an innocent and abused girl's descent into prostitution and her eventual suicide in the slums of New York City. Considered the first work of American literary Naturalism*, Maggie* was initially rejected by several publishers who feared that Crane's description of inner-city life would shock readers. Crane ended up publishing the work himself in 1893 initially under the pseudonym Johnston Smith. Crane is today best known for his novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, which he intended as “a psychological portrayal of fear,” and was the first nonromantic novel of the Civil War to attain widespread popularity  Privation and exposure in his Bowery years and later as a war correspondent, together with an almost deliberate disregard for his health, probably hastened the disease that killed him at an early age. He died of tuberculosis that was compounded by the recurrent malarial fever he had caught in Cuba.  Most of the book’s 30-odd pieces concern Irving’s impressions of England, but six chapters deal with American subjects. Of these, the tales “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle” have been called the first American short stories. They are both Americanized versions of German folktales.    Establishing herself as a writer in her hometown, in 1964 she gained recognition for her essay “Notes on Camp.” She published four novels and nine works of non-fiction, and directed four feature-length films. She died in 2004 in New York City.  **KEY IDEAS IN ONG’S *ORALITY AND LITERACY***  How the psychologies of sight and sound differ  Consciousness  Writing as a technology  Language and its influence on self and society  Media in history  How knowing the ancient world helps us understand the present and future | **Stephen Crane**  WRIT 1506| Stroupe  **QUESTION**  ⎯ Read and consider James B. Colvert’s comment on Crane’s status as a realist below. In what ways is “The Blue Hotel” characteristic of realism according to what we’ve learned?  In what ways, however, does Crane’s work complicate and push against the characteristics of realism, a category of fiction that his work is “often described” as exemplifying.  ***Although Stephen Crane’s work is often described as “realism,”….at bottom his sense of reality is quite apart from those of, say, [realists such as] Norris, Dreiser, Garland, and Twain; for when Crane sees something−an object, event, or person−he does not assume (as they do) that it is a fixed, definable, irreducible fact that would carry the same meaning for any normal, truthful observer. To Crane, reality was more complex, ambivalent, ambiguous, and elusive, as much a matter of the play of peculiarity of mind as a quality or character of the object itself”***  ***–* James B. Colvert, “Introduction” *Great***  ***Short Works of Stephen Crane***  **COMMENTARIES ON CRANE**  The record of [his] life is confused and shrouded in myth, for, like Poe, he threw himself into his fiction and was not unwilling to become part of it. His own reticence and the jealousy of lesser “Bohemians” conspired to distort into a legend of drink, drugs, and petty social crimes the simple facts of a small-town boyhood as a Methodist minister’s youngest son, a few years of slumming in New York City’s nascent artist colony, another few of reporting the color of the West and South as far as Mexico for a newspaper syndicate, involvement as correspondent in the Cuban and Greek comic-opera wars of independence, and a final attempt to find in English manor-house life the haven that his country was too busy to supply. It is the familiar story of romantic youth seeking escape from life into art and achieving a fleeting mastery before the overtaxed body gives way.  – Robert Spiller, Literary History of the United States.  The secret of Crane’s success as war correspondent, journalist, novelist, short-story writer, and poet lay in his achieving tensions between irony and pity, illusion and reality, or the double mood of hope contradicted by despair. – Biography.com | |