WILLA’S TIME PERIOD

- Willa Cather (1873-1947)
- Born in time period of Alcott’s Little Women
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t0LyjBw2-A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t0LyjBw2-A)
- Manners, Manners, Manners—*traditional femininity*
- Marriage, a woman’s livelihood
- Women can’t vote and are subordinate to men
- Cather as a tomboy=?
LITERARY PERIODS

• **Writing style**—the way an author chooses to write to his or her audience, both in what he writes about and how he writes about it. A style reveals both the writer's personality and **voice**, but it also shows how he perceives the audience to achieve his purpose in writing.

1970s vs. 1950s
Tracing the evolution of literature through time, scholars often group works from a certain timeframe together and label it as a **literary period** or movement.

**Republican Motherhood**
- Poetry glorifies domestic work
- Mothers raise the “George Washingtons” (idealized motherhood)
- Make the invisible visible

**Sentimentalism**
- Dramatic, Romanticized, Emotions!
- Spectacle
- Idealized, dreamed

**Realism & Regionalism**
- A reaction to the overly dramatic works
- DO NOT produce emotion through overly dramatic soap operas
- Document/Paint the world with word—verisimilitude = truth
- Preoccupied with the supernatural
SENTIMENTALISM

• Development of Lady’s Magazines; filled with poetry and Short Stories for women by women (advice and entertainment)

  - Sentimentalism—overly dramatic, romanticized stories: purpose was to produce emotional reaction in reader (your “soap operas”)

• Love and death as a spectacle—Band Perry “If I Die Young”

• Dramatic stories were written in episodes—each chapter left with a cliffhanger (like our TV shows)
THE REACTION

- Mid 1800s—writing is a women’s profession in America, but it is not respected.
- “No happy women writes”—women like Louisa May Alcott have to support her family through writing.
- Romantic self-sacrifice is harmful; give girls unrealistic expectations; marriage is not happily ever after; death is not beautiful.
- It’s not until the late 1800s that men try to make writing a respectable male profession.
- **Men try to make literature scientific; is factual, to “document” surroundings; no more dramatic garbage!**
  Literature progresses with the rapid progress at the turn of the century (Charles Darwin to automobiles).
REALISM

Mark Twain, William Dean Howells: “Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material.”

- Realism=not ideal, not produce an emotion, but *portray life as it is actually lived* (not dreamed or imagined)
- Average characters in mundane experiences
- Also, as immigrants arrive and people move to west=people curious about how others live.
- Realism is also a movement in art
- Offshoot is *Regionalism*=document daily life in regional areas=present images, the facts.
- Is fundamentally idealistic too
- Regional in tone, dialect, setting=physical descriptions of characters and landscape essential
- Also, America trying to find its own authentic voice & identify

Sarah Orne Jewett told Willa Cather: “One must know the world so well before one can know the parish.”
Sentimentalism

- Dramatic, Emotional
- Present the romanticized world
- Spectacle (soap opera)
- Female writers and female focus

Realism & Regionalism

- Plain, straightforward
- Present the truth
- Ordinary (daily life)
- Male writers and male/US identity focus
REALSIM/REGIONALISM’S FOCUS

• Characters
• Dialects
• Customs
• History
• Landscape
  of a particular region.
(NOT PLOT!)
An outsider tries to catch the nuances of the local people. Paradox-real yet idealized as well
SO, HOW SHOULD WE EXPECT WILLA CATHÉR'S WRITING TO BE?
WILLA’S STYLE—REALISM

- Willa writes in this vein of realism—in reaction to traditional femininity and sentimentalists works.
- Her love of journalism influences her novels=document the truth.
- Realism gives way to other literary movements in 1900s because of photography and inability to document the truth=selection of words always are biased; ultimately, an outsider documenting life will idealize the life.