

WILLA CATHER

*DEATH COMES FOR THE
ARCHBISHOP IN CONTEXT*



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>
- 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

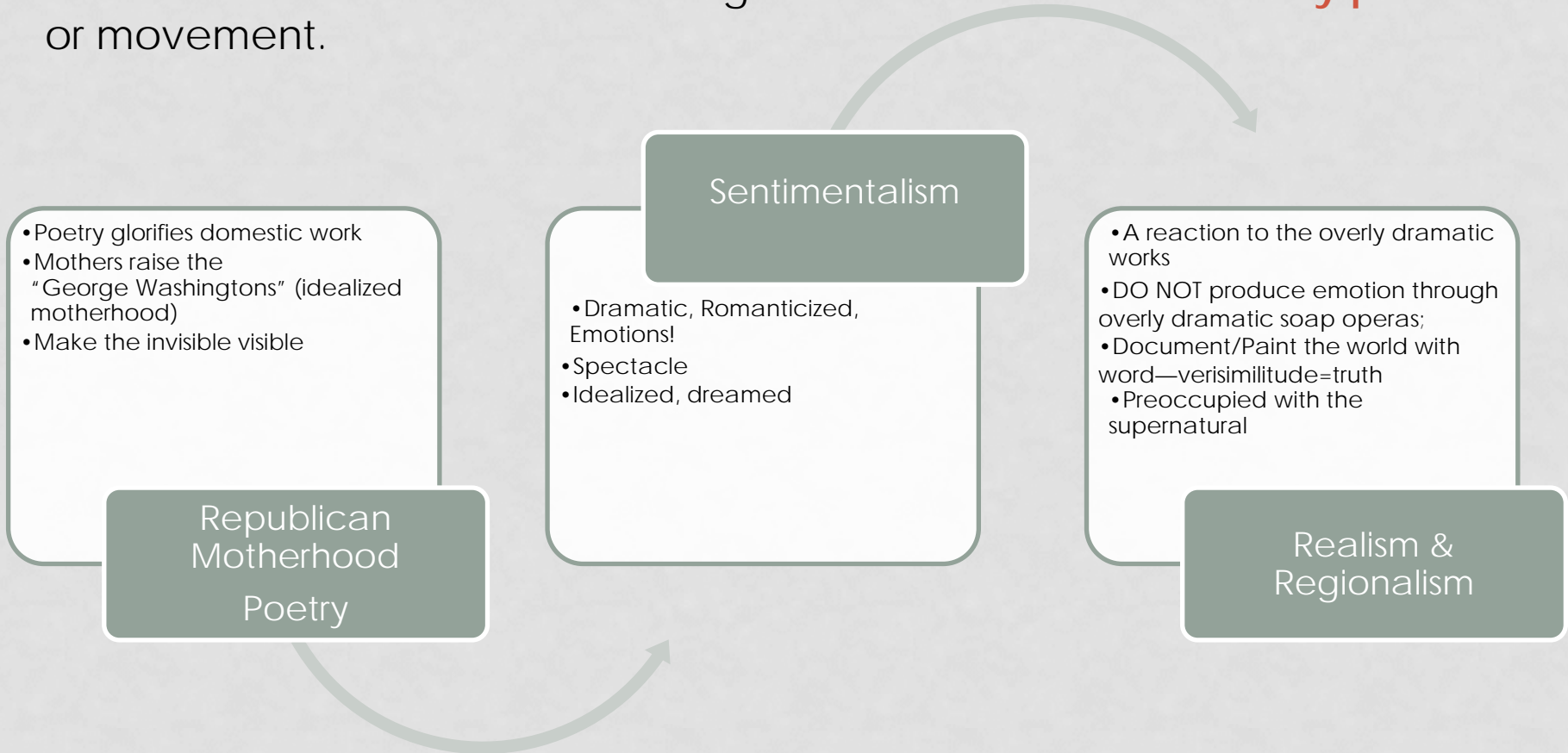
- **Writing style**=the way an author chooses to write to his or her audience, both in what he writes about and how he writes about it. A style reveals both the writer's personality and voice, but it also shows how he perceives the audience to achieve his purpose in writing.

1970s vs. 1950s



LITERARY MOVEMENTS

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.



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 it's 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 CATHER'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.