

## EXISTENTIALISM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE: A STUDY

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This paper focuses on ‘*Existentialism in American Literature: A Study*’. In Literature there are so many movements and theories. It emphasizes individual existence. The term ‘Existentialism’ begins at the middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and it reaches in 20<sup>th</sup> century at France.

The term ‘Existentialism’ means a movement in philosophy and literature. This term emphasizes individual existence and their freedom. In this world every human being has its own individual and their own meaning of life. Existentialism is nothing but that its views on humans’ existence and feeling. There is no purpose of existence and feeling or any other explanation. In American literature, the term ‘existentialism’ believes that every individual are totally free from their life and they must take their own responsibility for themselves.

The term ‘Existentialism’ actually recognizes at 19<sup>th</sup> century by the German Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Martin Heidegger, German philosopher plays an important role for the development of this movement. This paper deals with select novels from American Literature, how each and every human being of America has doing their own duties and responsibilities in the world.

This article focuses on ‘Existentialism in American Literature: A Study’. Many Literature in this world is shape by their history of their own country. As the crow flies American literature is merely a group of colonies spread along the eastern seaboard of North America and Westward. After a long successful rebellion against the motherland, America become a nation in United States. American Literature divides into five periods they are first Colonial period and Early National period from 17<sup>th</sup> century to 18<sup>th</sup> century and next the Romantic period and Realism and Naturalism at 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this period there are so many theories are introduced.

American Literature explores the literature in United States and its preceding colonies. This literature focuses on politics, economics and social status of America. It concentrates on basic characteristics of all types of literature and its explains about plot, setting etc. by American authors through their notable works. These works can explain the unique culture of every American through the characters. Washington Irving (1783-1859), the first American writer and sometimes he called as ‘the Father of American Literature’. The important aspect of this literature is to reveal the culture and history of United States. This literature surrounds the major ideas and it converts into major themes like concepts of love, beauty, nature and family issues, psychoanalytical characters, reality vs perception etc. Early American novel themes are worship of gods, animals and nature. American authors influences by historical events, social and political events and current things. Everything exposes through their works. The Triumph of Nature is the first American novel written by William Hill Brown published in 1789.

The Colonial American literature is a type of genre in literature. This genre is composing of letters, journals, biographies and memoirs. Next, the romantic period in American literature covers the period between 1830-1870 is rapid growth and expansion in the United States. This charges intuition, creation, imagination and individualism in literature. The author describes the reality of life in this period. It evokes the truthful and average life. Realism and Naturalism is nothing but it portrays the life as it is in this world. It is proving by this period of writers.

The Latin word ‘existere’ means to exist, to appear and to emerge. The word likes existence, exists, existential are comes under the Latin word ‘existere’. The term ‘Existential’ comes at 16<sup>th</sup> century and slowly it emerges between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The term ‘Existentialism’ in French L’existentialisme is coin by the French Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He applies this term to Jean-Paul Sartre at colloquium. This term explores the problems of existence and human feeling, emotions etc. The themes in Existentialism are fully based on the importance of an individual and their choice, anxious in life and death; situations are in extreme manner fully absurd and social criticism, the most importance of personal feeling between the relations, religion and so on. There are many philosophers in existentialism they are Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Simon de Beauvoir etc.

The novel ‘The Green Pen’ written by Eloy Moreno talks about a man starts his travel on a road to find self-discovery and truth. The existential movement emerged many philosophers in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The plot of the novel is life itself. Life is a sensitive and portrays every day. The next novel show the existentialism is ‘Fight Club’ by Chuck Palahnuik. In this novel, the writer is very transgressive and crass style. The novel ‘Nausea’ written by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1938 deals with existential ideas. It is considering as an acceptable way of observing his philosophical place. The emblem of existentialism is hopelessness and absurdity, in which themes of alienation and presentation in Franz Kafka’s works.

‘The Myth of Sisyphus’ is written by Albert Camus. In this work, Sisyphus represents as an absurd hero and he condemns to any other task. There are two minor characters from Hamlet is written by Shakespeare, which expose the title Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead an absurdist tragicomedy. The two characters stumble through philosophical arguments but not realise the implication in the world. ‘Antigone’ is a tragedy, written by Jean Anouilh and it is inspiring by Greek mythology and exposes existentialist ideas. Antigone, this play discusses the nature of power and of a mediocre existence.

Next Martin Esslin a critic points some of his contemporaries like Beckett, Ionesco Jean Genet and Adamov, in his book ‘Theatre of the Absurd’ that their plays are meaning the existentialist belief. Many of these playwrights explains the philosophy is better than the plays by Sartre and Albert Camus. Some playwrights link with Existentialism according to Esslin. Albert Camus emphasize some of his ideas that it has no control and irrationality of life and he further illustrates the human reaction. Camus questions justify the humanity and human pains and sufferings with feelings and emotions.

David Cooper claims that ‘Existentialism is not a mood or a vocabulary, but a relatively systematic philosophy’. Dostoyevsky explicit his character through complex in nature. His themes are psychological and ethical. *All Men are Mortal* is written by Simon de Beauvoir. In his work he says about the relation and time. The character Fosca is immortal and it dedicates to the world.

The two words in German one is ‘existet’ it justify the etymological meaning of existentialism which means ‘stand out’ or emerges out of problems of life of every human being of this world. This article is to penetrate into the innermost core of human existence in a clear

manner. In this world every man and woman has its unbridled freedom. This concept encourage everyone to realise themselves in a responsible way. Here one thing is identify that is self-realization. Self-realization means realising their life in self. If a person realise their life it insists that he or she will be free from anxiety. The responsibility of man relates their any action, which action should confirm the responsibility and it helps him to exist or live in this world. Every human being is not alone in this universe. Everyone should connect with other one. He or she cannot live alone and moreover they will be a man among men and a woman among women.

Heidgger remarks about Existentialism 'It is the work of art which reveals the true nature of the existence. Finally this article concludes that 'Existentialism in American Literature: A study' with that is individual's experience forms the basis of everyone's knowledge.

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