**Literary Realism**

**Literary Realism-** is the depiction of subjects as they appear without embellishment or interpretation.

**Characteristics of Literary Realism**

* Reflects stories about ordinary people
* Wars against false ideals, sentimentality and romantic dreams
* concentrates on actions and consequences
* The Literary Realist values the individual who must make ethical choices
* aims to alter or influence the reader’s beliefs, attitudes and behaviors

1. **Reflects stories about ordinary people**

Our protagonist, Taylor, comes from a lower class, single parent household. Much of her childhood and young adulthood experiences are similar to what us as readers might have experienced.

"I was not the smartest or even particularly outstanding but I was there and staying out of trouble and I intended to finish." (pg. 3)

1. **Wars against false ideals, sentimentality and romantic dreams**

Again, the main character of our novel isn't perfect and the author doesn't aim for her to be. Taylor's aspirations only go as far as leaving Kentucky, unmarried and without children.

"In this car I intended to drive out of Pittman County one day and never look back, except maybe for mama." (pg. 13)

1. **Concentrates on Actions and Consequences**

Opposed to a story where the hero always wins, or acts without fault, and the villain always loses, realism describes the sometimes poor choices of the main character and the consequences that are the result.

“I was embarrassed to think how Mattie must have seen straight through my act. Driving up here like the original tough cookie in jeans and a red sweater, with my noncommittal answers and smart remarks, acting like two flat tires were all in a day's work and I just happened to have been born with this kid growing out of my hip, that's how cool I was. I hadn't felt all that tough on the inside. The difference was, now I felt twice that old, and too tired to put on the show.” (pg. 237)

1. **The Literary Realist values the individual who must make ethical choices**

With literary realism, the character and his or her choices become more important than the action or the plot. In our novel, the author focuses primarily on the often difficult decisions that Taylor has to make.

"I thought: I can take this Indian child back into that bar and give it to Earl or whichever of those two guys is left. Just set it on the counter with the salt and pepper and get the hell out of here. Or I can go someplace and sleep, and think of something to do int he morning." (pg. 24)

1. **Aims to alter or influence the readers beliefs, attitudes or behaviors.**

Through the protagonist, the author of our book touches on many issues that have the potential to influence what we think and believe. Issues like: adoption, immigrants, racism, helping one another etc.

"Mrs. Parson's muttered that she thought this was a disgrace. "Before you know it the whole world will be here jibbering and jabbering till we won't know it's America....They ought to stay put in their own dirt, not come here taking up jobs."

"I felt like I'd sat on a bee. If Mama hadn't brought me up to do better, I think I would have told that old snake to put down her fork and get her backside out the door. I wanted to scream at her: This man you are looking at is an English teacher. He did not come here so he could wash egg foo yung off plates and take orders from a five-year-old." (pg. 141)

**Assignment (on paper)**

* Find one quote that represents one of the five traits of Literary Realism. **Label which characteristic it represents.**
* Copy the quote down verbatim using quotation marks and page numbers, like the previously provided examples.
* Then briefly explain why you think this quote represents Literary Realism. (5 sentences, one paragraph)
* Due at the end of the period.