

Kritik sosial dalam karya sastra Amerika

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Abstrak

A number of literary works may be classified as social criticism, raising issue that are felt to disturb or even threaten deeply rooted values. Some of the writing have received positive response, mainly from contemporary authorities, as concrete actions have been taken to address. In the history of American literature Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* may be the earliest novel to criticize a fanatically religious society. Published In 1850, the work tells of an illicit relationship between a priest and a married woman, amid a society that radically follows pious norms. Though this society lived some 150 years before his time, Hawthorne must have felt the relevance the story bore in his days. In fact, even today radicalism can hardly be tolerated. Other novels discussed in this treatise are those that have significant impact on people, including the authorities, inducing them to take remedial actions or at least to question their disposition hitherto. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), for example, sparked the Civil War. *The Jungle* [1910] by Upton Sinclair caused the government to issue the Food and Drug Act. Some thirty years later John Steinbeck published his phenomenal *The Grapes of Wrath*, describing victims of the Great Depression and inducing President Roosevelt to instruct banks to provide soft loans to farmers badly stricken by the crisis. In 1949 Richard Wright wrote *Native Son*, raising the racial discrimination issue, a social problem which persists till today. This writing concludes with the novel *The Color Purple* (1963) in which feminist writer Alice Walker very aptly deals with the gender issue.