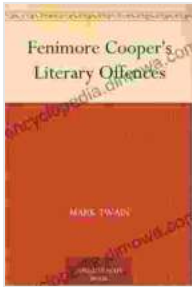


Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences

by Mark Twain



Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences by Mark Twain

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 92 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 35 pages
Lending : Enabled



In the realm of American literature, James Fenimore Cooper stands as a towering figure, renowned for his thrilling tales of adventure and exploration. However, despite his legacy as a pioneer of the genre, Cooper's writing has been subject to much criticism, particularly from none other than the legendary Mark Twain.

In 1895, Twain penned a scathing essay entitled "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences," a masterpiece of literary criticism and humor that exposed the glaring flaws in Cooper's narrative style.

Twain begins his essay by acknowledging Cooper's strengths as a storyteller: "He has done one notable thing: he has added to our permanent stock of historical fiction a series of novels that deal with American history and are not offensive to intelligent people—a rare achievement, indeed."

However, Twain argues that Cooper's writing is burdened by a series of "offences" that undermine its literary merit.

1. Implausible Language

Twain criticizes Cooper's excessive use of ornate and archaic language, which he believes is unnatural and distracting. He cites examples such as "a spectacle of nautical magnificence," "the lustre of diamonds," and "the image of her fair face clad in smiles."

2. Inaccuracies

Twain also points out numerous factual errors in Cooper's novels, particularly in his descriptions of Native American culture. He notes that Cooper's Indians speak like "educated white men," and their behavior bears little resemblance to the reality of Native American life.

3. Lack of Character Development

Twain argues that Cooper's characters are flat and underdeveloped. He describes them as "puppets," "stock figures," and "wooden Indians." He believes that Cooper fails to create characters that readers can connect with or care about.

4. Excessive Detail

Twain criticizes Cooper's excessive attention to detail, which he believes bogs down the narrative and slows the pace of the story. He points to Cooper's lengthy descriptions of clothing, furniture, and landscapes as examples of this flaw.

5. Repetition

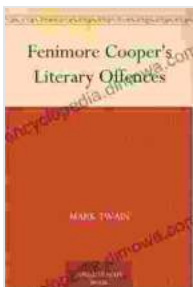
Twain notes that Cooper's writing is plagued by repetition. He cites examples such as the phrase "he felt a strange sensation," which appears frequently throughout Cooper's novels. He believes that this repetition is unnecessary and irritating to readers.

6. Lack of Humor

Twain argues that Cooper's novels are devoid of humor. He believes that a good storyteller should be able to make readers laugh as well as cry. He notes that Cooper's novels are "as dry as a bone" and lack the light-heartedness that would make them more enjoyable to read.

Twain concludes his essay by stating that Cooper's novels are "monumental frauds," and that he is surprised that they have been so widely praised. He believes that Cooper's reputation is based on undeserved acclaim, and that his novels should be relegated to the "dime novel" category.

Despite its harsh criticism, Twain's essay is a valuable piece of literary analysis. It exposes the flaws in Cooper's writing and provides a cautionary tale for aspiring writers. It also demonstrates Twain's own wit and critical acumen, proving that he was not only a master of humor but also a discerning critic.



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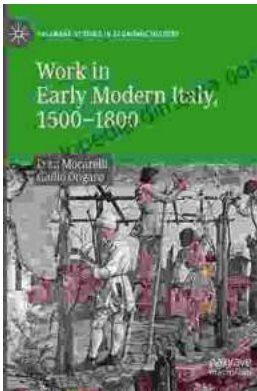
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