

Chapter 1 : Frank Norris () - Find A Grave Memorial

The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris, ed. Joseph R. McElrath and Douglas K. Burgess () at Google Books
Alphabetical list of the essays in The Apprenticeship Writings of Frank Norris The Responsibilities of the Novelist and Other Essays () at Google Books.

It shimmers, translucent in the sunlight, slack lines nearly imperceptible. More than a year after I first searched for it, I have found the mysterious, nearly forgotten memorial to legendary California novelist Frank Norris in this far corner of the Santa Cruz Mountains. A simple cross and a crooked, barren flag holder crown the semicircular, mission-style bench. They are both encrusted in a century of rust. Constructed with river stone, chert and mortar, the memorial sits atop a foot, steep-faced boulder. Steps have been carved up its right flank. The overgrowth nearly chokes it completely. Neglected and forlorn, the memorial appears ready to disappear from sight altogether in a few years. I mount the base of the boulder, each step nearly obscured by dirt and thistle, and clamber unsteadily up to the bench. At the center of its backrest, a plaque has been set. Around a simple Celtic knot, a nearly illegible inscription reads: Of course, the inscription was not written by some fawning devotee, but a friend—someone who apparently chose to focus on the basic human goodness of Norris instead of his considerable literary fame. As the wife of one of the most famous writers of his generation, the widow Stevenson knew well the pressures of literary celebrity. Hence, I assume, the humane inscription. Madonna and built an English-style lodge. The rest of the area, known generally as Redwood Retreat, has been divvied into privately owned tracts of land. Norris, a dear friend of the widow Stevenson, would frequently camp on her land, perhaps to escape the trappings of newfound, meteoric fame, which accompanied the publication of his novels, most notably *McTeague* in and *The Octopus* in . He suffered from an "African fever" contracted in while serving as a news correspondent for the *San Francisco Chronicle* in South Africa during the Boer War. Probably feeling protective of the young literary star, the widow Stevenson convinced Norris to build a cabin on a small plot of her property—a place to work on new novels and relax with his young wife, Jeannette Black, whom he married in , and his infant daughter, born the following year. The cabin was built, but Norris and his family were never able to enjoy it. Norris died suddenly in at the age of 32 from an infection caused by a burst appendix. Does my face look strange? Consequently, when her young friend Norris, a man similarly both sickly and talented as her husband, died, the widow Stevenson ordered this curved stone bench built near the cabin site as a memorial. And here I am, more than a century later. So why do I care so much about this obscure memorial? Partly the challenge of it—the only image I could find of the bench was a photograph from the Historic American Buildings Survey. But mostly because of a novel Norris wrote more than a century ago. When *McTeague* was published in , it was both critically acclaimed and harshly condemned. It was hailed as the first major "naturalistic" work of fiction. Norris was trying to realistically depict the hard luck and consequences of turn-of-the-century California, rather than traffic in the melodrama that dominated American literature to that point. *McTeague* is a dark, weird story, which, in my experience qualifies it as pretty realistic. It follows the doomed trajectory of a dim-witted Placer County gold miner-turned-dentist who opens a little practice on Polk Street in San Francisco. When his best friend, Marcus, protests, Mac beats him up. In fact, Norris underscores the shallowness of the Gilded Age society in which his characters live throughout the novel—most memorably in the form of a giant gold molar that Mac hangs outside his dental office. Look at my sign and the gold tooth you gave me. Eventually, his complete lack of spiritual connection to the universe and his unfortunate taste for whiskey combine with unspeakable results. At this point, his prized possession is a canary in a gilded cage. In the penultimate scene of the novel, Mac fights to the death with Marcus over the last of their water in the middle of Death Valley. In the scuffle, the bird cage is knocked from a dead mule and broken. Yet once Mac kills his former best friend, he realizes Marcus managed to handcuff the two of them together. So what do I love about *McTeague*? It riffs heavily on two of my favorite themes: As a student of history, I can see it echo back many generations, beyond even, Norris and the Gilded Age. Frank Norris wrote other books, of course. Generally considered his greatest book, *The Octopus* depicts the suffering and death of Southern California ranchers at the hands of the Pacific and

Southwest Railroads. Alas, the universe had different plans for Norris. There are two cabins up the road from the memorial and each looks old enough to be the very structure Norris may have built; but there is no evidence that either is the genuine article. Besides, they are on private property. In fact, so is this memorial. So yes, I have trespassed to find this little-known literary monument. Consequently, I cannot provide directions or encourage you to follow in my footsteps. I can, however, wholeheartedly suggest you read McTeague and remember the brilliant, all-too-brief life of one Frank Norris. Ryan Masters is a hiker, surfer, diver, journalist, poet and musician who grew up running wild in the Santa Cruz Mountains and has lived all over the country at one time or another.

Chapter 2 : Frank Norris - Biography and Works

Western Novelist. Born in Chicago, Illinois. he was an author who was the first important naturalist writer in the United States. He studied art in Paris, France, before attending the University of California at Berkeley, where he began his successful and prolific literary career.

Benjamin Franklin Norris, Jr. By that time he had already begun his career as a writer. The last few years of his very short life were busy: Norris died of a ruptured appendix on October 25, , in San Francisco. In an all-too-brief writing life, he wrote some very big books. I can list his credits here without taking up too much space: Moran of the "Lady Letty": A Story of California The Pit: Ambrose Bierce is also sometimes considered a naturalist. That film was based on Oil! Weird Tales reprinted just one Frank Norris story. It came in the Summer issue when Sam Moskowitz was trying to recapture some old stories for his updated version of the magazine. As Moskowitz noted, Norris wrote several stories of the supernatural, despite his naturalistic tendencies. That may take something away from The Octopus, which, despite title and imagery, has nothing to do with cephalopods. The image was an effective one, however, in the era of monopolies. Here, the octopus represents the railroad monopoly. Here, it looks like industry in general. The octopus in this illustration looks a little Oriental, or, as people say in this politically correct age, Asian. In any case, take away the editorial slant in these pictures and they could all be from a story about giant monsters, like Godzilla or maybe--with all those tentacles--Cthulhu. That brings up a question: In any discussion of weird fiction, do all things lead to Lovecraft? Finally, an illustration that is a little more representative of the original story. Text and captions copyright Terence E.

Chapter 3 : Frank Norris ()

Benjamin Franklin "Frank" Norris Jr. (March 5, - October 25,) was an American journalist and sometimes a novelist during the Progressive Era, whose fiction was predominantly in the naturalist genre.

His original intention was to be an artist. He remained there two years and became absorbed, not in art, but in chivalry. The reading of Froissart's Chronicles was his daily recreation. He became so imbued with the spirit of medievalism, and so familiar with the manners and customs of the time, that once with much amusement he pointed out to me an error in Scott's "Ivanhoe," in which one of its characters is described as wearing a certain kind of armor that was not in use until a hundred years later; a mistake that was as obvious to him as if someone to-day should depict Richelieu in a frock coat and top hat. Many and diverse reasons have led men and women to literature, but none quite so strange as that which induced him to elect that vocation. Thus it was that his first novel, "Robert d'Artois," was written, a crude amateurish effort that bore little evidence that he was ever to become a great author. But he loved story-telling, and his imagination knew no limitations. My earliest recollections are of the endless and involved stories of love and chivalry that he wove about my lead soldiers, to my never-failing enchantment and delight. There were several thousands of these soldiers, and each captain and lieutenant had a name and history of his own. In these stories there was an utter disregard of historical accuracy and sequence. Thus the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, the Cid and Khedive, Machiavelli and Corbullo the Saxon all lived and had their being together in this miniature world of lead. There were eleven years between our ages, and it is impossible to suppose that my brother found any lasting amusement in entertaining one so much younger than himself. Rather, I fancy, it was his interest in his own mental processes, and in the fantastic situations he devised. He would spend hours fashioning wonderful cannon, out of the thick handles of his paint-brushes, and the sides of cigar-boxes. These were painted ivory black with red trimmings, and christened "The Spitfire," and "The Peacemaker. A sketch of his dog "Monk" by Frank Morris, one of the few examples of his work as an artist, that has been preserved. At this time we were all in Paris. When the family returned to California, leaving Frank in Paris to continue his study of art, he began writing me a novel in which all our favorite characters reappeared, revolving about myself, whom he described as the nephew of the Duke of Burgundy. I wish I had space to repeat this story in detail. It was written in the second person, on closely-ruled notepaper, one sheet slipped inside another, and the whole fastened together with a small loop of red or blue string in the upper left hand corner. It came to me in chapters, rolled up inside French newspapers to save postage. Each installment was profusely illustrated with pencil sketches, mostly of myself as an esquire, a man-at-arms, an equerry, and finally as a knight. Plots and episodes from the works of Scott, Francis Bacon, Frank Stockton and others were lifted bodily, sometimes the actual wording was borrowed. I remember a sentence, "The night closed down dark as a wolf's mouth," that years later I found again in the opening of a chapter of "Quentin Durward. He left the heroine lashed to a railroad track, and me locked in a neighboring switchman's tower. My story was never concluded, but it was to this time in our lives that he referred in his dedication of "The Pit: While he was studying for them he elected to write a three canto poem in the metre of Scott's verse. It was the first writing of merit that he did. While still in Paris he had written a short article on the armor of the fifteenth century, and illustrated it, but it was no such serious attempt as was the poem. The three canto poem was entitled "Yvernelle," and was published by Lippincott. He sent some of his pen-and-ink sketches with it, but these were returned. The publishers felt that the book would sell best as a holiday offering, in which illustrations played an important part. I suppose that this was only a polite way of saying that his own illustrations were not good enough. Will Low and Frederick Dealman eventually did some of the pictures, and the book was bound very handsomely, and sold for three and five dollars a volume. While he was in college Frank began to take his writing seriously. He did not have a very high respect for his instructors in the English department. I recall his irritation when an essay on "Thomas a Becket" was returned to him, with no more definite criticism than the single word "Fustian," scrawled across its title page. But he began to read fiction critically, and at this time was never without a yellow paper-covered novel of Zola in his hand. He loved Kipling, too, and Richard Harding Davis, and I thought

William Dean Howells a much greater novelist than, in those days, he was generally conceded to be. One of Frank's first stories, "Son of a Sheik," was written while he was a Sophomore, and published in the *Argonaut*. Another very remarkable story, called "Lauth," appeared in the *Overland Monthly*. During the early part of, his last six months at the University of California, a series of stories, under the general heading of "Outward and Visible Signs," made their appearance in the *Overland*, and in August of the same year, "The Caged Lion," one of the best short stories he ever wrote, was published in the *Argonaut*. He never sold anything to the eastern magazines, however. The manuscripts he sent, unfailingly came back. He had hopes that William Doxey, who had then a flourishing publishing business in San Francisco, would bring out a volume of his short stories. I remember how earnestly he worked on some of the illustrations for this book, pressing me into service as his model, keeping me posing for hours. But this plan never came to anything. Some time before he completed his four years at the California University he began "McTeague;" it was well started before he came east to take a year's post-graduate work at Harvard. This was the most formative year of his life as a writer. I have heard him say many times that he learned more about writing the English language, in the nine months course of "English 22," under Professor Lewis E. Gates, than he did during any other period of his life. He dedicated "McTeague" to Professor Gates when it was published. About this time, too, he began to study the dictionary. I have seen him poring over it for hours, making notes of words and their meanings. Every morning he always read the death notices in the newspapers, for the sake of finding unusual names. It was from this source that he got Annixter, Jadwin, and Magnus Derrick. He wrote the greater part of "McTeague" during his year at Harvard, but before completing it, he commenced "Vandover and The Brute," the novel which has just been published. This book was destined to have a curious history. It was inspired, to a large degree, by the unmorality of the undergraduates with whose lives he was familiar. Grewsome in theme, powerfully realistic, he followed the story to its terrible and logical conclusion, then laid it aside for other work, and all but forgot its very existence. After his death it remained in storage, packed away in a San Francisco warehouse, and when, in the fire that followed the great earthquake, the storehouse was burned to the ground, "Vandover" was presumably destroyed with it. By a curious destiny, however, the crate containing the manuscript was saved, but it was only after years that it was identified, and the lost story brought to light. As indicative of the seriousness with which Frank was now beginning to regard his work, I remember that he kept a black notebook, in his inside coat pocket, in which he set down a heterogeneous collection of notes of his own observations: One of these entries, I remember, read: Years afterward he told me that keeping it taught him the difference between seeing life subjectively and objectively. No one, he believed, could become a writer, until he could regard life and people, and the world in general, from the objective point-of-view, until he could remain detached, outside, maintain the unswerving attitude of the observer. I read part of his notebook once, and got soundly kicked for my impertinence, but years afterward I came upon many of these same notes in his work, amplified and adapted. In he came back to San Francisco, and in October sailed for South Africa to write a series of articles for a syndicate of newspapers. His plan was to start at Capetown, go north to Johannesburg, trek through Matabeleland, thence onward to the Nile, and down the river to Cairo. A happy accident took him to Africa at this time. No sooner had he set foot on Boer soil than trouble with the English began to brew. By the time he reached Johannesburg, the famous Jameson's raid had been projected. Delighted at the possibility of war, Frank enlisted in the English army for the defense of Johannesburg, and had the supreme satisfaction of being assigned regular accoutrements, a rifle, a number of rounds of ammunition, and above all a horse! Reading his journal of those days one catches his tremendous excitement when news from Jameson and his six hundred men was hourly awaited. He describes with what gratification he received an invitation to Christmas dinner from John Hays Hammond. But this festive meal nearly caused him a long imprisonment, for with the collapse of the raid, Hammond and many others identified with the uprising were thrown into jail, their lives at the mercy of the Boer government. My brother was given thirty days to get out of the country. He was unable to obey this order however. Almost immediately he came down with African fever, and was very close to death. A scarcity of provisions in Johannesburg sent bread up to seven dollars a loaf, and in a short time his letter of credit was exhausted. At this point there are many empty pages in his journal. He confessed to me afterward that he was too weak from

fever to remove the cap of his fountain pen. Finally there occurs this entry: 'Tisn't half as fine as I thought it would be! Of the fever he never entirely rid himself; it recurred at intervals during the remaining six years of his life, and when he was stricken with appendicitis, it supplied the complication that resulted in his death. For the following two years his literary work was almost entirely associated with the Wave, of which John O'Hara Cosgrave was then the editor. Every 9 weeks Frank wrote either an article, a sketch or a short story for this periodical. In looking over his output at this time one cannot but marvel at the amount of material he turned out, and the activity of his creative faculty. The death of Trina in the kindergarten had been written some three years earlier. The scene of the chapter immediately following this incident in the book is laid in the very spot where the novel was being completed: The author describes McTeague as entering the office of the mine, to ask the superintendent for employment. The dentist approached the counter and leaned his elbows upon it. Three men were in the room, a tall, lean young man, with a thick head of hair surprisingly gray, who was playing with a half-grown Great Dane puppy. One of the other men was his college chum, the owner of the mine, who was afterward to furnish the material for the character of Annixter, in "The Octopus." He was describing the room in which he was writing, with utter faithfulness. He came in due time to himself and included his own person in the picture. Luna's Mexican restaurant which figured so largely in "Blix" and other stories of Frank Norris. Frank Norris's home in San Francisco up to the time he went to Harvard. This is the house so carefully described in "Vandover and the Brute" where Vandover and the "Governor" lived.

Chapter 4 : Norris, Frank [WorldCat Identities]

Frank was a writer with a Pen name of Justin Sturgis. Frank Norris's work often includes depictions of suffering caused by corrupt and greedy turn-of-the-century corporate monopolies.[Frank's father, Benjamin, was a self-made Chicago businessman and his mother, Gertrude Glorvina Doggett, had a stage career.

Background Frank Norris was born in Chicago on March 5, , the son of a wealthy jeweler. When Frank was 14, the family moved into a mansion in San Francisco. His father continued to provide for the family financially. His family, even his no-nonsense father, encouraged him; in fact, they moved to London and then to Paris in so that he could study painting. Norris enjoyed painting, but after 2 years he returned to San Francisco and in entered the University of California. He remained for 4 years but did not take a degree. Frank enrolled at Harvard in the creative writing class of Lewis Gates. After a year at Harvard, Norris traveled to Africa to gather material for fiction and to write newspaper stories for the San Francisco Chronicle. However, victimized by a tropical fever and in trouble with the Boer authorities in southern Africa, he returned to San Francisco. There, on the magazine staff of the Wave - , he contributed over pieces: In he finished McTeague. The self-portrait contained in the chief character, Conde Rivers, is probably very revealing. In Norris moved to New York City. This venture was a fiasco, and his reports were not published. Finally, Norris contracted malaria and returned to San Francisco. The early novels were McTeague and Vandover and the Brute. Norris never completed Vandover; it was prepared for posthumous publication in by his brother, Charles, himself a novelist. Vandover concerns a San Francisco artist who lets the brute in his nature dominate his actions, slipping steadily from ease to squalor. The novel is confused, but Moran of the Lady Letty, the story Norris serialized in the Wave in , is even more so. Meanwhile, a friend introduced Norris to the influential William Dean Howells, who read McTeague and encouraged Norris to continue seeking a publisher. The novel finally appeared in Norris could not create characters who behave rationally; his people are never fully developed human beings. But this is the philosophic point in McTeague, which concerns characters who are incapable of reasonable behavior. In physical strength McTeague is almost superhuman, but in self-understanding and self-control he is less than half a man. Both characters are impelled toward catastrophe by hidden forces; they are objects, not actors, in the human drama. Yet their story is dramatic and vivid: Blix was published just after McTeague. Norris then returned to California to gather new material and to marry Jeanette Black in The couple settled in New York City, where Norris continued working on his fiction and served as a reader for Doubleday, Page, and Company. In the latter capacity he recommended the publication of Sister Carrie, a novel by an unknown writer, Theodore Dreiser which, today, is considered by some to be an American classic. Doubleday contracted to publish it but later attempted to break the contract, and, failing in that, published the book without trying to sell it. His efforts to help the farmers go as far as bombing a railroad building, but nothing he or anyone else does can correct the injustice and brutality of the situation. The poet finally concludes that economic laws which men cannot alter determine the conditions under which they must live. Although the novel rises to power at moments, it is a strident, grandiose work, simplistic in its interpretation of human motivations. Norris planned it as the first of a trilogy called "The Epic of the Wheat"; the second novel takes its name, The Pit , from the Chicago grain exchange. It focuses on a self-made capitalist, his wife, and an artistic dilettante. The scale of the action is smaller than in The Octopus, but the characters are much more convincing, probably because Norris was now writing of the economic class in which he had grown up. The Octopus could be called a bad major novel, The Pit a good minor one. In , shortly after the birth of their only child, a daughter, the Norrises moved to San Francisco. They planned a world cruise during which Norris would gather material for the third volume of his trilogy. The Pit, serialized in the Saturday Evening Post, appeared as a book in , the same year that saw the publication of A Deal in Wheat and Other Stories and a collection of his critical essays, The Responsibilities of a Novelist. Achievements He was a novelist during the Progressive Era. His notable works include McTeague , The Octopus: A Story of California , and The Pit

Chapter 5 : PAL: Frank Norris ()

Frank Norris (-). Benjamin Franklin Norris, Jr. (March 5, - October 25,) was an American novelist, during the Progressive Era, writing predominantly in the naturalist genre.

American Naturalism and the Jews. University of Illinois Press. Columbia University Press, p. The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction: Armes, William Dallam State University of Iowa. Howells, James, and Norris in the Mass Market. University of North Carolina Press. Spatial Form and Narrative Time. Brooks, Van Wyck Brown, Deming Bronson Thesis , University of Washington. Clarke, Robert Montgomery Thesis , Stanford University. Clift, Denison Hailey Cooper, Frederic Taber Some American Story Tellers. Crane, Warren Eugene Davison, Richard Allan University of Nebraska Press. Frohock, Wilbur Merrill University of Minnesota Press. Ghodes, Clarence Louis Frank The Literature of the American People. Goldsmith, Arnold Smith Dissertation , University of Wisconsin. Studies in Honor of John Wilcox. Wayne State University Press. The Fiction of Frank Norris: University of Missouri Press. Thesis , Ohio University. A Novelist in the Making: Thesis , Bowling Green State University. Hill, John Stanley The Art of Frank Norris, Storyteller. New York University Press, pp. Harbingers of a Century: The Novels of Frank Norris. Peter Lang Pub Inc. Frank Norris and the Craft of Fiction. Dissertation , Northwestern University. The Evolution of Frank Norris. Thesis , State University of Iowa. A Study in Contrasts and Contradictions. Thesis , University of Pittsburgh. Logue, Charles William A Study in Romantic Realism. Matthews, Margaret Moore Thesis , University of South Carolina. Frank Norris and the American Epic. Thesis , Columbia University. Frank Norris and the Wave: University of Pittsburgh Press. LeContean Idealism or Naturalistic Skepticism? University of Alabama Press. McGinn, Richard Joseph A Thesis , Columbia University. Dissertation , University of North Carolina. Musich, Gerald Donald Thesis , University of Southern California. Parrington, Vernon Louis The Reinterpretation of American Literature. Patee, Fred Lewis The New American Literature, "Aspects of the Naturalistic Novel in America. Thesis , University of California. Piper, Henry Dan Preston, Harriet Waters Norris," The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. Ramsay, Orrington Cozzens Frank Norris and Environment. Rosa, Matthew Whiting Smith, Allan Lloyd Spector, Michael Jay Frank Norris and Human Nature. American Writing in the Twentieth Century. Toher, Martha Dimes Underwood, John Curtis Wikimedia Commons has media related to Frank Norris. Wikisource has original works written by or about:

Chapter 6 : Finding Frank Norris in the Santa Cruz Mountains | Santa Cruz

Frank Norris [] was one of the 'muckraker' authors of the late XIXth Century, and his many books have been made into movies and even operas.

His most glaring metaphor is that of the tentacles of the railway tracks spreading and choking the countryside in the appropriately titled book *The Octopus*. The spirit of the turn-of-the-century San Francisco is impressively captured in *McTeague*. Its theme, that of a powerful man failing against unexpected adversity, typifies the thrust of the best of Naturalistic writing. *Evolution and "the Sex Problem": American Narratives during the Eclipse of Darwinism*. Kent State UP, *Aesthetics and Anarchy in a Global Era*. U of Chicago P, *The Farm Novel in North America: From Gift to Commodity*: U of New Hampshire P, *Unsettling the Literary West*: U of Nebraska P, *Racial Form and American Literature*, U of Illinois P, Pizer, Donald. *American Naturalism and the Jews: Garland, Norris, Dreiser, Wharton, and Cather*. U of Illinois P, *Modern Women, Modern Work: Domesticity, Professionalism, and American Writing*, U of Pennsylvania P, *Markets, Crises, and Crowds in American Fiction*. U of North Carolina P, Analyze what he is trying to say about human motivation and character. Analyze the prose style, thematic content, use of narrative point of view, and portrait of human nature that these works convey.

Chapter 7 : Frank Norris (Norris, Frank,) | The Online Books Page

*Frank Norris, An Intimate Sketch Of The Man Who Was Universally Acclaimed The Greatest American Writer Of His Generation [Charles Gilman Norris] on racedaydvl.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers.*

Studied painting at the Atelier Julien, ; attended University of California at Berkeley, ; attended Harvard University , Hobbies and other interests: Career Novelist, short story writer, essayist, journalist, critic, and poet. The Surrender of Santiago: Frank Norris of "The Wave": A Novelist in the Making: Collected Letters, edited by Jesse S. Sidelights Although he died less than five years after publishing his first novel, Frank Norris stands as one of the key figures of early twentieth-century American literature. In novels such as *McTeague: A Story of California*, Norris pioneered the use of realistic settings, violent conflicts, and working-class characters who were often portrayed as victims of their environment. These elements placed him in the literary movement known as American naturalism, alongside such authors as Jack London , Stephen Crane , and Theodore Dreiser. What distinguished Norris, according to Warren French in his *Frank Norris*, was that "his inside knowledge of the leisure class. His father had been raised in rural Michigan, but left the family farm to become a jeweler. A self-made man, the elder Norris eventually rose to own a large wholesale jewelry business. His wife, Gertrude, was a former teacher and actress who encouraged the family in matters of culture and taste. She frequently gave dramatic poetry readings to Norris and his younger brothers, and was known for her involvement in public literary societies. The Norrises left the cold winters of the Midwest for California in , eventually settling in San Francisco. There the elder Norris increased his wealth by investing heavily in real estate. At first young Norris attended a college preparatory school, but dropped out after breaking his arm playing football. Finding the study of business unappealing, he began training as a painter instead. His parents encouraged him to the point of moving the family to Europe so that young Frank could gain more professional instruction. His family remained with him for a year, but they returned to San Francisco in , leaving the eighteen-year-old Norris to his own devices. Increasingly, his interests led him away from painting and into writing. A fascination with medieval armor led to his first article, which was published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in Other accounts, however, suggest that the young writer returned home on his own initiative, having tired of painting. In any case, by Norris was back in California and attending the state university at Berkeley. Because he lacked qualifications in math, Norris was only granted limited status at Berkeley. While a sophomore, he combined his interest in the Middle Ages with the Romantic stories favored by his mother to produce the epic poem *Yvernelle: A Legend of Feudal France*. A ballad in the vein of Sir Walter Scott , *Yvernelle* is the story of a knight who is cursed by his lover after breaking off their affair, and must find a way to recover his virtue and claim his true love. Although Norris later disowned *Yvernelle* and would later parody such overly romanticized pieces of "fine writing" the poem brought him some commercial success. Meanwhile, Norris continued his studies at Berkeley, focusing on subjects that would prepare him for a career as a novelist. He did not complete enough courses to please the university administration, however, and after four years he left Berkeley without a degree. Instead, he moved across the country with his mother and entered Harvard University, again as a special student. Riding the Wave to Publication It was at Harvard that Norris finally found the inspiration he needed. He came under the tutelage of Lewis Gates, who believed that writing was a craft that could be honed and taught. Confident that he was headed in the right direction, Norris left Harvard after a year in search of a broader experience. Although the young writer had begun to publish small pieces in newspapers and journals, he realized he would need a greater knowledge of the world before he could write the kind of meaningful fiction he aspired to create. In he set out for Africa, intending to travel from South Africa to Egypt; the *San Francisco Chronicle* was to publish his travelogues. He was deported from the country in a weakened state, having caught a tropical fever, and was shipped to England to recover. Despite having seen "real action" during an event that was of major interest to the English-speaking world, he only placed one article in a national magazine. He returned to San Francisco in , having failed to gain either the experience or the renown he desired. In San Francisco, however, Norris found his first regular job: During his years there he contributed short stories, reviews, literary essays, interviews, sketches of local life, and even

a weekly column about football. In a *Sunset* article, Gelett Burgess noted that these early Wave writings are "nuggets [that] always have a crude, fierce, barbaric quality, not minted into artistic form. Yet in each of these tales is a character to remember, animated usually by some primitive instinct or passion, strikingly informed with reality. The critic concluded that "his was the talent of making the ordinary seem extraordinary and thus interesting. At twenty-seven, Norris continued to depend on his mother for financial support, and depression set in. Two people helped bolster his determination to find success, however: Jeannette Black, the young woman who would become his wife; and Joseph Hodgson, a Coast Guard captain whose tales of the ocean served as inspiration for the young writer. Realizing that adventure stories were in demand with the reading public, Norris began serializing *Moran of the Lady Letty: A Story of Adventure off the California Coast*, a sensational story of nautical intrigue and adventure. Ross Wilbur, a wealthy and coddled young San Franciscan, is kidnapped and taken aboard a salvage vessel to work. During the course of his adventures his crew finds the *Lady Letty*, an abandoned ship whose only occupant is Moran, a young shipwreck survivor with no experience with men. Although Wilbur "tames" this uncivilized girl by falling in love with her, the ending is not happy: Moran is killed by a Chinese crewman looking to steal valuables. American Writers contributor W. Frohock, however, noted that despite being filled with implausible events and nautical misinformation, "Moran has the distinction of being one of the best yarns about salt water and derring-do ever written by an author who knew nothing firsthand about either. Based on these chapters, the syndicate offered Norris a position with their company in New York, as well as a chance to publish *Moran* as a book. One of his first tasks for McClure was to cover the Spanish-American War in Cuba; his experiences there proved disheartening, however, and after contracting malaria he returned to San Francisco to recuperate. He continued his romance with Jeannette Black, a relationship that was to inspire his novel *Blix*. This semi-autobiographical tale details the growing friendship between Condry Rivers, an aspiring young writer, and a high-spirited society girl whom he nicknames "Blix. Through her encouragement, Condry learns to stop squandering his time on gambling and other idle pursuits, and instead focus on his writing. When Blix finally heads off to medical school in New York, their separation forces the two friends to realize they are truly in love. It is only when Condry discovers that a rejected manuscript also contains a job offer in New York that the story ends happily. While Blix "rejects hypocritical social conventions for the sake of more honest and thus more natural and ideal ways of living," McElrath explained, it nevertheless "fail[s] to dramatize modern questions and predicaments in universally relevant and engaging fashion. Now, however, Norris had one novel to his credit as well as his position with McClure to recommend him, and *McTeague* was published in early 1899. Inspired by a real-life criminal case from 1890, *McTeague* traces the fall of an amateur dentist into debt, cruelty, and murder. *McTeague* his first name is never given has a successful if unlicensed dental practice in San Francisco until he falls in love with a patient named Trina. She chooses to marry him instead of her cousin Marcus, who feels he has been cheated when Trina wins a lottery of five thousand dollars. The two struggle and *McTeague* triumphs, but not before his rival manages to handcuff himself to *McTeague*. The novel concludes with *McTeague* shackled to a corpse in the searing climate of Death Valley, miles away from any water or rescue. *McTeague* was a controversial work for the critics and readers of the time. Instead of being the typical upper-or middle-class American hero who strives to improve his life, the lower-class *McTeague* degenerates into violence and brutality. Norris has written an exceptionally strong and powerful novel we do not wish to deny, "but] Mr. Norris has written pages for which there is absolutely no excuse, and his needless sins against good taste and delicacy are fatal spots upon his work. Barry, however, observed in another *Literary World* review that "for those who do not go to fiction merely to be amused and diverted, and who believe that fiction may profitably be made an expression of life, *McTeague* will be a revelation. Norris in the first rank among our writers. Jacobson observed in *Mosaic*. Nevertheless, the novel has interest for the modern reader; "the greatness of *McTeague* lies in the description of the Polk Street routine," French noted, for "the setting is not merely a group of back-drops against which the story unfolds; it shapes the story. In less than two years he had published three widely different novels; although none was a great success, the versatility they displayed still marked the young writer as someone to watch. This improbable mix of arctic adventure, love story, and examination of gender roles was unconvincing, but nevertheless appeared in book form in 1899. Norris was so

enthusiastic about the novel that Doubleday bought the manuscript; legend has it, however, that one of the Doubleday family was so scandalized by the novel that they tried to buy out the contract. Harvesting Literary Wheat Norris had scarcely published his controversial novel *McTeague* when he announced his plans for an epic trilogy that would focus on the production, sale, and distribution of wheat. He left New York for California, where he began research into life on a wheat ranch. This first volume, *The Octopus*, was inspired by the real-life conflict between Southern California farmers and the Pacific Southern Railroad—the far-reaching "Octopus" of the title. The railroad had secured land from the government at rock-bottom prices, and encouraged farmers to come develop the land by promising to sell it to them in the future at the same low rates. After the farmers improved the land, however, the railroad jacked up the prices of both the land and the cost of freight, causing the economic ruin of many farmers and leading to a violent revolt. While this could have led to a black-and-white tale of David vs. Goliath, Norris fashioned it into something more complex. As McElrath observed, "As a commentator [Norris] sought to shed some light on a lamentably junglelike society characterized mainly by rapacious interactions. The broad range of the novel led Howells to call it "epical, in being a strongly interwrought group of episodes"; the critic further concluded that *The Octopus* is "a novel unequalled for scope and for grasp in our fiction. Nevertheless, the critic stated that "the novel is a magnificent imaginative achievement, one of the few American novels to bring a significant episode from our history to life in such a way that the reader feels he is participating in the ponderous events. *A Story of Chicago* was to explore the financial wheeling and dealing surrounding the futures market, where brokers made and lost fortunes by gambling on wheat production. Although Norris was not as familiar with the financial world of the Chicago area, his upwardly mobile characters were drawn straight from his high-society upbringing. Several modern critics consider the novel a lesser achievement; Frohock called it a "disappointment" and added that "Norris did not know Chicago as he knew the land and people of California, and what he knew about trading in wheat futures was not enough to fill a book. The trip never materialized, however, as the author became involved in local events and the search for a country household. He ignored a pain in his own abdomen, however, and on October 25 he died of peritonitis caused by a perforated appendix. His previous illnesses, contracted while traveling, had left him in a weakened state that most likely contributed to his death.

Chapter 8 : Lives of the Dead: Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland: Frank Norris () - Noted Author

The Online Books Page. Online Books by. Frank Norris (Norris, Frank,) A Wikipedia article about this author is available.. Norris, Frank, Blix (Gutenberg text).

Chapter 9 : Tellers of Weird Tales: Frank Norris ()

Frank Norris (), American author and journalist, wrote McTeague (). Professor Joseph LeConte and his natural history teachings would have a profound influence on Norris' works including Blix ().