The Impact of Stephen Crane
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In this thesis I aim to show how American writer Stephen Crane impacted American literature through his unique style and approach to writing. His contributions and influence are quite remarkable considering he died at the age of only twenty-eight. Furthermore, to understand how Crane formed the opinions he held as well as developed the style of writing he exhibited, it is important to establish his background. This includes not only the forces at work on Crane during his childhood, but the developing social structure of the world around him as he matured into an adult. Though he rejected and rebelled against his Christian upbringing, it would remain a part of him forever and is very apparent throughout his work. Furthermore, the loss of several loved ones very close to him would also shape his attitudes and opinions about the world. However, the force most obviously working on Crane during his life was certainly his own sense of curiosity and adventure. It is what brought him to New York and inspired him to partake in many adventures around the world. Furthermore, it was his intense need to share these experiences with the world that drove him to write. His writing, like his lifestyle, was very free, unique, and not governed by a set of rules. Although he is commonly classified as a realist, naturalist, or impressionist, he claimed to be none of the three because he refused to be restricted to the conventions that go along with each. He was a writer well advanced for his time period and during his life there was nobody he could really be compared to. His unique style and freedom would influence writers for years to come and his influence can still be seen in literature today.

This paper focuses mainly on four of his greatest works to draw a conclusion about his style and common themes. The works discussed are his first two novels, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and *The Red Badge of Courage*, as well as his later short story, “The Open Boat” and his novella *The Monster*. These four works show the way Crane developed into such a unique writer that would open the doors for the future of American literature.