



## William Dean Howells

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

### Introduction

William Dean Howells (1837-1920) was born in Martinsville (now Martins Ferry), Ohio. Howells worked at the *Ohio State Journal* in Columbus before becoming an editor at the *Atlantic Monthly*. With the publication of his novel, *A Modern Instance*, in 1882, Howells became known for realism, a writing style he promoted through his work at the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Magazine*. His reputation continued to grow through the 1885 publication of *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. Howells also wrote much in support of American writers, encouraging writers such as Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Sarah Orne Jewett and Paul Laurence Dunbar. His varied Christian Socialist involvement led him to embrace social justice and to critique industrial capitalism, viewpoints which can be seen in his 1890 novel, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, which was inspired by the Haymarket riots.

### Important Dates

- March 1, 1837: William Dean Howells is born in Martinsville (now Martins Ferry), Ohio.
- 1852: Howells' father secretly has one of Howells' poems published in the *Ohio State Journal*.
- 1858: Howells begins work at the *Ohio State Journal* writing poems and short stories, and translating works from French, Spanish, and German into English.
- December 24, 1862: Howells marries Elinor Mead at the American Embassy in Paris.
- 1865: Howells returns to America and begins writing for the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Magazine*.
- January 1866: Howells becomes assistant editor at the *Atlantic Monthly*.
- 1871-1881: Howells serves as *Atlantic Monthly's* full editor.
- 1872: Howells begins publishing novels.
- 1895: Howells' collected poems are published.
- May 6, 1910: Howells' wife Elinor dies, two weeks after the death of Howells' close friend, Mark Twain.
- May 11, 1920: Howells dies in his sleep.
- 1928: Howells' daughter publishes his correspondence.

### Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.
- Limit your search by date to find information about specific works Howells wrote.
- Try searching the names of Howells' books and publications in proximity with his name.
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio.

### Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[W. D. Howells's Boyhood](#)" *New York Tribune* (New York, NY), February 25, 1906, Image 19.
- "[Ohio Shines in Fiction](#)" *Greenville Journal* (Greenville, OH), September 20, 1917, Image 1, col. 2.
- "[How He Writes](#)" *Wichita Daily Eagle* (Wichita, KS), April 18, 1894, Image 7, col. 1-2.
- "[War's Effect on All Arts](#)" *Celina Democrat* (Celina, OH), March 19, 1915, Image 2, col. 1-3.
- "[Chronicle and Comment](#)" *New York Herald* (New York, NY), October 1, 1922, Image 92, col. 2-3.