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## **HIGHLIGHTS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

Навчальний посібник  
В 2-х частинах

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Посібник містить біографічні відомості про англійських письменників, аналіз їх творчості та уривки з їх творів. Метою посібника є ознайомлення студентів із характерними особливостями історичного розвитку та періодизації англійської літератури, її жанрами, що формувались у різні історичні періоди, і особливостями їхнього впливу на формування моралі та культури. Навчальний посібник призначений для аудиторної та самостійної роботи студентів філологічного відділення четвертого курсу кафедри англійської філології факультету іноземних мов у межах засвоєння програми навчальної дисципліни «Історія англійської літератури».

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## 3MICT

Introduction.....	5
I. The Old English (Anglo-Saxon) Period (450-1066).....	6
II. The Middle English Period (1066-1485).....	18
III. The Beginning of Modern English (1485-1603).....	28
IV. The Stuarts and the Puritans (1603-1660).....	47
V. Restoration Literature (1660-1700).....	56
VI. The Augustan Age (1700-1750).....	66
VII. The Age of Johnson (1750-1784).....	87
Final Test Sample Questions.....	102

*It is in literature that the concrete outlook  
of humanity receives its expression.*

Alfred North Whitehead

*Great literature is simply language  
charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.*

Ezra Pound

*The two most engaging powers of an author  
are to make new things familiar, familiar things new.*

William Makepeace Thackeray

*The one and only substitute for  
experience which we have not ourselves had is art, literature.*

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

*I put all my genius into my life;  
I put only my talent into my works.*

Oscar Wilde

*The difficulty of literature is not to write,  
but to write what you mean.*

Robert Louis Stevenson

*Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it.  
It enriches the necessary competencies  
that daily life requires and provides;  
and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts  
that our lives have already become.*

C. S. Lewis

*Books are the carriers of civilization.  
Without books, history is silent, literature  
dumb, science crippled, thought and  
speculation at a standstill.*

Barbara W. Tuchman

*What is wonderful about great literature  
is that it transforms the man who reads it  
towards the condition of the man who wrote.*

E. M. Forster

*Whoever is able to write a book and  
does not, it is as if he has lost a child.*

Rabbi Nachman

*History is not the story of heroes entirely.  
It is often the story of cruelty and injustice and shortsightedness.  
There are monsters, there is evil, there is betrayal. That's why people  
should read Shakespeare and Dickens as well as history – they will find the best,  
the worst, the height of noble attainment and the depths of depravity.*

David C. McCullough

# **INTRODUCTION**

*English literature may be termed incomplete without the inclusion of its origins. The historians and the authorities of English literature, for the convenience of analysis, have categorized events into periods. The periods of English literature have been described with their dates, forming a set of sub-epochs. Here is an outline of periods of English literature from the beginning to the XXth century.*

## **Outline**

### **I. Old English Literature (450–1066)**

- A. Old English poetry.
- B. Old English prose.

### **II. Middle English Literature (1066–1485)**

- A. The development of English romances.
- B. The Age of Chaucer.
- C. Early English drama.

### **III. The Beginning of Modern English (1485–1603)**

- A. Elizabethan poetry.
- B. Elizabethan drama.
- C. Elizabethan fiction.

### **IV. The Stuarts and the Puritans (1603–1660)**

- A. Metaphysical and Cavalier poets.
- B. Jacobean drama.
- C. Prose writings.
- D. John Milton.

### **V. Restoration Literature (1660–1700)**

- A. John Dryden.
- B. Restoration drama.
- C. Restoration prose.

### **VI. The Augustan Age (1700–1750)**

- A. Swift and Pope.
- B. Addison and Steele.
- C. The rise of the novel.

### **VII. The Age of Johnson (1750–1784)**

- A. Samuel Johnson.
- B. The Johnson circle.

### **VIII. Romantic Literature (1784–1832)**

- A. The preromantics.
- B. Romantic poetry.
- C. Romantic prose.

### **IX. Victorian Literature (1832–1901)**

- A. Early Victorian literature.
- B. Later Victorian literature.

*“Every year, as your knowledge grows, you will find that new keys have been put into your hands with which you may unlock the doors which are now closed. And with every door that you unlock, you will become aware of others and still others that are yet shut fast, until at last you learn with something of pain, that the great palace of our Literature is so vast that you can never hope to open all the doors even to peep inside”.*

H. E. Marshall

## **I. THE OLD ENGLISH (ANGLO-SAXON) PERIOD (450–1066)**

***The Britons and the Anglo-Saxon Period, from the beginning to the Norman Conquest in 1066 A. D.***

*A. The Britons, before and during the Roman occupation, to the fifth century.*

*B. Anglo-Saxon Poetry, on the Continent in prehistoric times before the migration to England, and in England especially during the Northumbrian Period, seventh and eighth centuries A. D. Ballads, “Beowulf”, Caedmon, Bede (Latin prose), Cynewulf.*

*C. Anglo-Saxon Prose, of the West Saxon Period, tenth and eleventh centuries, beginning with King Alfred, 871–901. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*

Also known as the Anglo-Saxon period, the old English period was marked by the influx of the Saxons and the Angles tribes invading Celtic England. The so-called “Dark Ages” (455–799) occur when Rome falls and barbarian tribes move into Europe. Franks, Ostrogoths, Lombards, and Goths settle in the ruins of Europe and the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes migrate to Britain, displacing native Celts – the Britons – into Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. The Britons were vivacious, lovers of novelty, and brave, but ineffective in practical affairs, and had a somewhat fantastic but sincere and delicate sensitiveness to beauty:

*“The maid was clothed in a robe of flame-colored silk, and about her neck was a collar of ruddy gold, on which were precious emeralds and rubies. More yellow was her head than the flowers of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain. The eye of the trained hawk, the glance of the three-mewed falcon, was not brighter than hers. Her bosom was more snowy than the breast of the white swan, her cheeks were redder than the reddest roses”.*

*(from the story “Kilhwch and Olwen”)*

This charming fancifulness and delicacy of feeling is apparently the great contribution of the Britons to English literature; from it may perhaps be descended the fairy scenes of Shakespeare and possibly to some extent the lyrical music of Tennyson.

English, as we know it, descends from the language spoken by the North Germanic tribes who settled in England from the Vth century A. D. onwards. They had no writing (except runes, used as charms) until they learned the Latin alphabet from Roman missionaries. Anglo Saxons were converted to Christianity in the VIIth century. It was only after this transition that the Anglo Saxons could shift to the development of written literature apart from their literature being oral in nature.

The earliest written works in Old English (as their language is now known to scholars) were probably composed orally at first, and may have been passed on from speaker to speaker before being written. We know the names of some of the later writers (Cædmon, Ælfric and King Alfred) but most writing is anonymous.

Old English literature is mostly chronicle and poetry – lyric, descriptive but chiefly narrative or epic. *The Wanderer*, *Deor* and *The Seafarer* are some of the well-known poems that were that were phrased in Old English language.

*...Ic to soþe wat  
þæt biþ in eorle  
indryhten þeaw,  
þæt he his ferðlocan  
fæste binde,  
healde his hordcofan,  
hycge swa he wille.  
Ne mæg werig mod  
wyrde wiðstondan,  
ne se hreo hyge  
helpe gefremman.  
Forðon domgeorne  
dreorigne oft  
in hyra breostcofan  
bindað fæste...*

*...I know it truly,  
that it is in men  
a noble custom,  
that one should keep secure  
his spirit-chest (mind),  
guard his treasure-chamber (thoughts),  
think as he wishes.  
The weary spirit cannot  
withstand fate (the turn of events),  
nor does a rough or sorrowful mind  
do any good (perform anything helpful).  
Thus those eager for glory  
often keep secure  
dreary thoughts  
in their breast...*

(From *The Wanderer*)

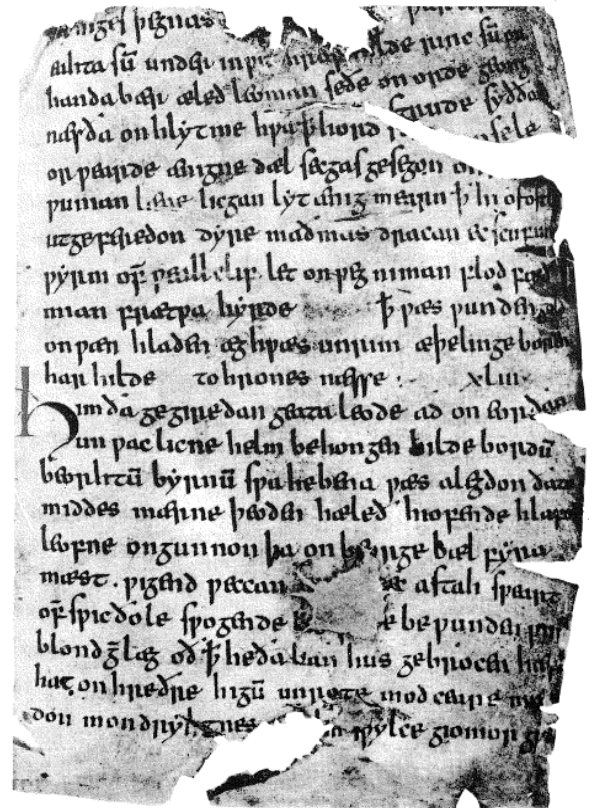
Venerable Bede and Alcuin were scholars who wrote manuscripts in Latin. It is through their writings that an influx of culture and advanced learning was brought into being.

The old English poets Cynewulf and Caedmon, composed poems and verses on biblical and religious themes and highlighted the lives of saints and their doctrines. Christian writers dealt with the pagan past with dexterity. Alfred the Great, another patron of literature translated Latin prose into old English, and also initiated important documentary translations executed by him and practically completed by other writers.

On the whole, Anglo-Saxon poetry exhibits the limitations of a culturally early age, but it manifests also a degree of power which gives to Anglo-Saxon literature unquestionable superiority over that of any other European country of the same period.

## **Beowulf (epic poem, anonymous)** (c. VIII<sup>th</sup>–XI<sup>th</sup> c.)

Beowulf is *the oldest surviving epic poem* in the English language and the earliest piece of vernacular European literature. It was written in Old English, the language of the Saxons. Originally untitled, in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century the poem began to be called by the name of its Scandinavian hero, whose adventures are its primary focus. Historical elements run through the poem, yet both the hero and the story are fiction. Beowulf was written in England, but is set in Scandinavia. Although its author is unknown, its themes and subject matter are rooted in Germanic heroic poetry, in Anglo-Saxon tradition recited and cultivated by Old English poets called scop. Beowulf survives in a single manuscript dated on paleographical grounds to the late tenth or early eleventh century. The manuscript measures 195 x 130 mm.



Beowulf may have been composed as an elegy for a king who died in the seventh century, but there is little evidence to indicate who that king may have been. The burial rites described in the epic show a great similarity to the evidence found at Sutton Hoo, but too much remains unknown to form a direct correlation between the poem and the burial site.

The poem may have been composed as early as c. 700, and evolved through many retellings before it was written down. Whoever the original author may have been is lost to history. The sole manuscript of the poem dates to c. 1000. Handwriting style reveals that it was inscribed by two different people. Whether either scribe embellished or altered the original story is unknown.

The earliest known owner of the manuscript is the XVI<sup>th</sup> century scholar Lawrence Nowell. In the XVII<sup>th</sup> century it became part of Robert Bruce Cotton's collection and is therefore known as Cotton Vitellius A. XV. In 1731, it suffered irreparable damage in a fire.

The first transcription of the poem was made by Icelandic scholar Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin in 1818. Since the manuscript has decayed further, Thorkelin's version is highly prized, yet its accuracy has been questioned. In 1845, the pages of



the manuscript were mounted in paper frames to save them from further damage. This protected the pages, but it also covered some of the letters around the edges. In 1993, the British Library initiated the Electronic Beowulf Project. Through the use of special infrared and ultraviolet lighting techniques, the covered letters were revealed as electronic images of the manuscript were made.

*Now Beowulf bode in the burg of the  
Scyldings, leader beloved, and long he  
ruled in fame with all folk, since his father  
had gone away from the world, till awoke  
an heir, haughty Healfdene, who held  
through life,  
sage and sturdy, the Scyldings glad.  
Then, one after one, there woke to him,  
to the chieftain of clansmen, children four:  
Heorogar, then Hrothgar, then Halga  
brave;  
and I heard that -- was -- 's queen,  
the Heathoscyfing's help mate dear.  
To Hrothgar was given such glory of war,  
such honor of combat, that all his kin  
obeyed him gladly till great grew his band  
of youthful comrades.*

*ða wæs on burgum Beowulf Scyldinga,  
leof leodcýning, longe þrage  
folcum gefræge (fæder ellor hwearf,  
aldor of earde), oppæt him eft onwoc  
heah Healfdene; heold þenden lifde,  
gamol ond guðreow, glæde  
Scyldingas.  
ðæm feower bearn forð gerimed  
in worold wocun, weoroda ræswan,  
Heorogar ond Hroðgar ond Halga til;  
  
hyrde ic þæt wæs Onelan cwen,  
Heaðoscilfingas healsgebedda.  
þa wæs Hroðgare heresped gyfen,  
wiges weorðmynd, þæt him his  
winemagas georne hyrdon, oðð þæt  
seo geogoð geweax, magodriht micel.*

Beowulf is a prince of the Geats of southern Sweden who comes to Denmark to help King Hrothgar rid his fabulous hall, Heorot, of a terrible monster known as Grendel. The hero mortally wounds the creature, who flees the hall to die in its lair. The next night, Grendel's mother comes to Heorot to avenge her offspring and kills one of Hrothgar's men. Beowulf tracks her down and kills her, then returns to Heorot where he receives great honors and gifts before returning home.

After ruling the Geats for half a century in peace, Beowulf must face a dragon who threatens his land. Unlike his earlier battles, this confrontation is terrible and deadly. He is deserted by all his retainers except his kinsman Wiglaf, and though he defeats the dragon he is mortally wounded. His funeral and a lament end the poem.

The use of sharp and vivid imagery helps add realism to the fight between Beowulf and Grendel:

455    *Shaped and fastened with iron, inside  
          And out, artfully worked, the building  
          Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell  
          To the floor, gold-covered boards grating  
          As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them....*  
465    *Suddenly the sounds changed, the Danes started  
          In new terror, cowering in their beds as the terrible*

*Screams of the Almighty's enemy sang  
In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain  
And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's  
470 Taut throat, hell's captive caught in the arms  
Of him who of all the men on earth  
Was the strongest.*

## **Venerable Bede (672-3-735)**



The Venerable Bede, known as *the father of English church history*, was born in 672 or 673. He was given by his parents to the monastery of St. Peter at Wearmouth at the age of seven. In 681 or 682, the monastery was established as a joint-foundation at Jarrow. Bede was transferred there and went on to become a monk, theologian, historian, and scientist. Bede was educated at Jarrow and spent the rest of his life at in the monastery. At the age of 19, Bede was ordained a deacon. Ordinarily, this is a position that, by canon law, was only appointed to a person of 25 years of age or older, but his scholarship and devotion convinced Abbot Ceofried to make him a deacon six years early. After being ordained as a priest in 702–703, Bede dedicated his life to studying the scriptures, teaching, and writing. He rarely left the monastery.

Bede's greatest work was *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, which was written in 731. This book focuses on the early Christian missions to the English people and the missionary work of St. Augustine of Canterbury. It is our principle source for information about this period in English history and about the growth of the Church in England. This work is notable for *introducing "Anno Domini" or "A. D." as a way of dating events in the Christian era.*

Bede took great care in writing this book and it became *a model for history writing in the Middle Ages*. He wrote in an excellent Latin, was careful in reporting miraculous elements, and discussed events of historical importance. But perhaps the most impressive point of Bede's writing was his use of sources. Bede examined all of the records available to him, secured verbal and obtained written accounts from reliable living authorities. He occasionally left the monastery to copy documents or to talk to his sources. Bede was the first to compile such a complete and accurate historical record. His other important historical work is the *History of the Abbots*, which were biographical sketches about some of the monks that he met at the Wearmouth and Jarrow monasteries.

In addition to historical work, Bede also wrote on many other subjects. He wrote commentaries on many of the books of the Old and the New Testaments. He wrote a book on natural phenomena, two on chronology, and a book on grammar. At the time of his death he was working on a translation of the *Gospel of John* in Old English. Unfortunately, he never got to finish his translation and none of the manuscript has survived. Bede died on the evening of May 25, 735. He is commemorated on the Church's calendar on May 27th in remembrance of his life and work for the Anglo-Saxon church.

### **Notable works**

1. *"The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation"* (anthology of his selected short writings and letters).
2. *"Explanation of the Apocalypse"* (commentary on the Book of Revelation).
3. *"De temporibus liber"* (*On the Nature of Things*).
4. *"De temporam ratione"* (*The Reckoning of Time*).
5. *"De Septem Mundi Miraculis, Manu Hominum Factis"* (*Of the Seven Wonders of the World*).
6. *"Beati Felicis Confessoris Vita"* (*The Life of the Holy Confessor Saint Felix*).
7. *"De Vita Et Miraculis Sancti Cuthberti, Episcopi Lindisfarnensis"* (*The Life and Miracles of Saint Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne*).
8. *"Vita Beatorum Abbatum Wiremuthensium Et Girvensium, Benedicti, Ceolfredi, Easterwini, Sigfridi, Atque Huetberti"* (*The Lives of the Holy Abbots of Weremouth and Jarrow, Benedict, Ceolfrid, Easterwine, Sigfrid, and Huetberht*).
9. *"De Locis Sanctis Libellus, Quem De Opusculis Majorum Abbreviando Beda Composuit"* (*The Book of the Holy Places, Abridged By Bede From the Works of the Ancients*).

### ***Of the Situation of Britain and Ireland, and of their ancient inhabitants***

*Britain, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion, lies to the north-west, facing, though at a considerable distance, the coasts of Germany, France, and Spain, which form the greatest part of Europe. It extends 800 miles in length towards the north, and is 200 miles in breadth, except where several promontories extend further in breadth, by which its compass is made to be 4,875 miles. To the south lies Belgic Gaul. To its nearest shore there is an easy passage from the city of Rutubi Portus, by the English now corrupted into Reptacaestir. The distance from here across the sea to Gessoriacum, the nearest shore in the territory of the Morini, is fifty miles, or as some writers say, 450 furlongs. On the other side of the island, where it opens upon the boundless ocean, it has the islands called Orcades. Britain is rich in grain and trees, and is well adapted for feeding cattle and beasts of burden. It also produces vines in some places, and has plenty of land and water fowl of divers sorts; it is remarkable also for rivers abounding in fish, and plentiful springs. It has the greatest plenty of salmon and eels; seals are also frequently taken, and dolphins, as also*

*whales; besides many sorts of shell-fish, such as mussels, in which are often found excellent pearls of all colours, red, purple, violet and green, but chiefly white. There is also a great abundance of snails, of which the scarlet dye is made, a most beautiful red, which never fades with the heat of the sun or exposure to rain, but the older it is, the more beautiful it becomes. It has both salt and hot springs, and from them flow rivers which furnish hot baths proper for all ages and both sexes, in separate places, according to their requirements. For water, as St. Basil says, receives the quality of heat, when it runs along certain metals, and becomes not only hot but scalding. Britain is rich also in veins of metals, as copper, iron, lead, and silver; it produces a great deal of excellent jet, which is black and sparkling, and burns when put to the fire, and when set on fire, drives away serpents; being warmed with rubbing, it attracts whatever is applied to it, like amber. The island was formerly distinguished by twenty-eight famous cities, besides innumerable forts, which were all strongly secured with walls, towers, gates, and bars.*

*(From "The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation", Chapter I)*

## **Caedmon (657–680)**



Cædmon is *the earliest English poet whose name is known*. An Anglo-Saxon who cared for the animals, he was originally ignorant of “the art of song” but learned to compose one night in the course of a dream, according to the VIIIth-century monk Bede. He later became a zealous monk and an accomplished and inspirational religious poet.

Cædmon is one of twelve Anglo-Saxon poets identified in medieval sources, and one of only three for whom both roughly contemporary biographical information and examples of literary output have survived. His story is related in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (“Ecclesiastical History of the English People”) by Bede who wrote,

*“...[t]here was in the Monastery of this Abbess a certain brother particularly remarkable for the Grace of God, who was wont to make religious verses, so that whatever was interpreted to him out of scripture, he soon after put the same into poetical expressions of much sweetness and humility in English, which was his native language. By his verse the minds of many were often excited to despise the world, and to aspire to heaven.”*

Cædmon’s only known surviving work is *Cædmon’s Hymn*, the nine-line alliterative vernacular praise poem in honour of God which he supposedly learned to sing in his initial dream. The poem is one of the earliest attested examples of Old English and is, with the runic Ruthwell Cross and Franks Casket inscriptions, one of three candidates for the earliest attested example of Old English poetry. It is also one of the earliest recorded examples of sustained poetry in a Germanic language.

## Hymn

*Nu scylun hergan hefaenricaes uard  
metudæs maecti end his modgidanc  
uerc uuldurfadur sue he uundra gihuaes  
eci dryctin or astelidæ  
he aerist scop aelda barnum  
heben til hrofe haleg scepen.  
tha middungeard moncynnæs uard  
eci dryctin æfter tiadæ  
firum foldu frea allmectigprimo cantauit Cædmon istud carmen.*

*Nu scilun herga hefenricæs uard  
metudæs mehti and his modgithanc  
uerc uuldurfadur sue he uundra gihuæs  
eci dryctin or astelidæ.  
he ærist scop ældu barnum  
hefen to hrofæ halig sceppend  
tha middingard moncynn&ealig; s uard  
eci dryctin æfter tiadæ  
firum foldu frea allmehtig*

### MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

*Now let me praise the keeper of Heaven's kingdom,  
The might of the Creator, and his thought,  
The work of the Father of glory, how each of wonders  
The Eternal Lord established in the beginning.  
He first created for the sons of men  
Heaven as a roof, the holy Creator,  
Then Middle-earth the keeper of mankind,  
The Eternal Lord, afterwards made,  
The earth for men, the Almighty Lord.*



The sole source of original information about Cædmon's life and work is Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. According to Bede, Cædmon was a lay brother who cared for the animals at the monastery Streonæshalch (now known as Whitby Abbey). One evening, while the monks were feasting, singing, and playing a harp, Cædmon left early to sleep with the animals because he knew no songs. The impression clearly given by St.



Bede is that he lacked the knowledge of how to compose the lyrics to songs. While asleep, he had a dream in which “someone” (quidam) approached him and asked him to sing principium creaturarum, “the beginning of created things.” After first refusing to sing, Cædmon subsequently produced a short eulogistic poem praising God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Upon awakening the next morning, Cædmon remembered everything he had sung and added additional lines to his poem. He told his foreman about his dream and gift and was taken immediately to see the abbess. The abbess and her counsellors asked Cædmon about his vision and, satisfied that it was a gift from God, gave him a new commission, this time for a poem based on “a passage of sacred history or doctrine”, by way of a test. When Cædmon returned the next morning with the requested poem, he was ordered to take monastic vows. The abbess ordered her scholars to teach Cædmon sacred history and doctrine, which after a night of thought, Bede records, Cædmon would turn into the most beautiful verse. According to Bede, Cædmon was responsible for a large number of splendid vernacular poetic texts on a variety of Christian topics.

After a long and zealously pious life, Cædmon died like a saint: receiving a premonition of death, he asked to be moved to the abbey’s hospice for the terminally ill where, having gathered his friends around him, he expired, after receiving the Holy Eucharist, just before nocturns. Although he is often listed as a saint, this is not confirmed by Bede and it has recently been argued that such assertions are incorrect.

The details of Bede’s story, and in particular of the miraculous nature of Cædmon’s poetic inspiration, are not generally accepted by scholars as being entirely accurate, but there seems no good reason to doubt the existence of a poet named Cædmon. Bede’s narrative has to be read in the context of the Christian belief in miracles, and it shows at the very least that Bede, an educated and intelligent man, believed Cædmon to be an important figure in the history of English intellectual and religious life.

## Cynewulf (IXth century AD)



Cynewulf, author of four Old English poems preserved in late Xth-century manuscripts. *Elene* and *The Fates of the Apostles* are in the Vercelli Book, and *The Ascension* (which forms the second part of a trilogy, *Christ*, and is also called *Christ II*) and *Juliana* are in the Exeter Book. An epilogue to each poem, asking for prayers for the author, contains runic characters representing the letters **c, y, n, (e), w, u, l, f**, which are thought to spell his name. A rhymed passage in the *Elene* shows that Cynewulf wrote in the Northumbrian or Mercian dialect. We know nothing else concerning Cynewulf with any degree of certainty. He may have been a learned cleric since all of the poems are

based on Latin sources. We infer from the nature of his poetry that he was of a deeply religious nature, but it is hazardous to deduce the character of a poet from his apparently subjective work; we learn that he lived to an old age, which he felt to be a burden; that, at some time of his life, he had known the favour of princes and enjoyed the gifts of kings; he must have been the thegn or scop of some great lord, and not merely an itinerant singer or gleeman, as some critics have held. He was a man of learning, certainly a good Latin scholar, for some of his work is based upon Latin originals. Critics are not agreed as to the period of life in which he occupied himself with the composition of religious poetry, nor as to the chronological order of his works.

### Notable works

1. “*Elene*”, a poem of 1,321 lines, is an account of the finding of the True Cross by St. Helena.
2. “*The Fates of the Apostles*”, 122 lines, is a versified martyrology describing the mission and death of each of the Twelve Apostles.
3. “*Christ II*” (*The Ascension*) is a lyrical version of a homily on the Ascension written by Pope Gregory I the Great. It is part of a trilogy on Christ by different authors.
4. “*Juliana*”, a poem of 731 lines, is a retelling of a Latin prose life of St. Juliana, a maiden who rejected the suit of a Roman prefect, Eleusius, because of her faith and consequently was made to suffer numerous torments.

Imagery from everyday Old English life and from the Germanic epic tradition enlivens descriptions of battles and sea voyages. At the same time, the poet, a careful and skillful craftsman, consciously applies the principles of Latin rhetoric to achieve a clarity and orderly narrative progress that is quite unlike the confusion and circumlocution of the native English style.

Notable are his works *Elene* and *Andreas*, which is very possibly his. The following lines, for instance, must surely be the work of one whose daily life had been spent in contact with the sea:

*Over the sea-marges,  
One troop after other, hourly urged they on.  
So they stored up there – with the sarks of battle.  
With the shields and spears, with mail-shirted fighters,  
With the warriors and the women – the wave-riding horses.*

*Then they let, o’er Fifel’s wave, foaming, stride along  
Their sea-rushers, steep of stem. Oft withstood the bulwark,  
O’er the surging of the sea, swinging strokes of waves;*

TAB. I.

ALFREDVS FVNDATOR

ÆLFREDUS REX SÆXONVM ANNO DOMINI MCCCCLXXXIII

King Alfred the Great reigned in England from 871–899. The title “great” was given to him because of his great leadership over the land and the people he served. This great leadership was shown most through his resistance to the Danes (Vikings) as they invaded the northwest portion of England trying to conquer the Anglo-Saxons in the 800’s.

He became king only after each of his older brothers had ruled for some time.

In the year 871, Alfred undertook the government of the kingdom after his brother, Aethelrod, had ruled in peace for about five years. After taking over the land, King Alfred was faced with some military choices. He was already somewhat experienced in battle because he had led several campaigns against the invading Danes. Alfred did not want to go into battle, so he kept the peace by paying tribute to the Danes for four years. By 878 Alfred was fed up with supporting the Danes in his land, so he attacked them and won, forcing them to comply to his terms and pay tribute to him.

16



Alfred the Great also had partial authorship of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – a series of annals beginning with the Christian era, kept at various monasteries year by year (down to two centuries and a half after Alfred’s own death), recording the most important events of history, chiefly that of England.

King Alfred the Great died on October 26, 899 and was buried in the Old Minster at Winchester. He is the only English monarch to be known as “the Great”. He is well-deserving of this title. He defeated the Danes and protected his people, but he also contributed his ideas for better education and social order.

### **Notable works**

1. “*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*” (approximately A.D. 890, epic poetry).
2. Translations:
  - *The Consolidation of Philosophy by Boethius;*
  - *St. Augustine’s Soliloquies;*
  - *Pope Gregory’s Pastoral Care.*
3. The first fifty psalms of *the Psalter*.

*A.D. 871 . And the Danish-men were overcome; and they had two heathen kings, Bagsac and Halfdene, and many earls; and there was King Bagsac slain, and these earls; Sidrac the elder, and also Sidrac the younger, Osbern, Frene, and Harold; and the army was put to flight.*

(From *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 871-78)

### **Questions for Self-Study and Seminars**

1. What is the relation of history and literature? Why should both subjects be studied together?
2. What event started the development of the English language?
3. Why did the Anglo-Saxons come to England? Did any change occur in their ideals, or in their manner of life?
4. Tell in your own words the general qualities of Anglo-Saxon poetry. What passages seem to you worth learning and remembering? Can you explain why poetry is more abundant and more interesting than prose in the earliest literature of all nations?
5. Tell the story of Beowulf. Why is it a work for all time, or, as the Anglo-Saxons would say, why is it worthy to be remembered? Does the poem teach any moral lesson?
6. Name some other of our earliest poems, and describe the one you like best. How does the sea figure in our first poetry? How is nature regarded? How do you account for the serious character of Anglo-Saxon poetry?
7. What is meant by Northumbrian literature? Who are the great Northumbrian writers?

8. For what is Bede worthy to be remembered? Tell the story of Cædmon, as recorded in Bede's History. What new element is introduced in Cædmon's poems? What effect did Christianity have upon Anglo-Saxon literature?

9. What are the Cynewulf poems? How do they compare in spirit and in expression with Beowulf? with Cædmon?

10. Describe the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. What is its value in the English literature and history? Give an account of Alfred's life and his work for literature.

## **II. THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD (1066–1485)**

### ***The Norman-French, Period, 1066 to about 1250.***

*Literature in Latin, French, and English. Religious drama. The Metrical Romances, including the Arthurian Cycle. Geoffrey of Monmouth, "Historia Regum Britanniae" (Latin), about 1136. Wace, "Brut" (French), about 1155.*

### ***Late Middle Ages, about 1250 to 1485.***

*Chaucer, 1338–1400. John Gower, 1330–1408. "The Vision Concerning Piers the Plowman." Popular Ballads. Malory's "Morte Darthur", finished 1467. Caxton and the printing press, 1476. Morality Plays and Interludes.*

In 1066, Norman French armies invade and conquer England under William I. This marks the end of the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy and the emergence of the Twelfth Century Renaissance (c. 1100–1250 CE), followed by Late or "High" Medieval Period (c. 1250–1485 CE). This often tumultuous period is marked by the Middle English writings of Geoffrey Chaucer, the "Gawain" or "Pearl" Poet, the Wakefield Master, and William Langland.

In language and literature the most general immediate result of the Conquest was to make of England a trilingual country, where Latin, French, and Anglo-Saxon were spoken separately side by side. From 1066 onwards, the language is known to scholars as Middle English. Ideas and themes from French and Celtic literature appear in English writing at about this time. When the Middle English came into being with its literary usage, the most extensive writing was conducted on subjects associated with religion. Religious writings were far more important as literature during the Middle Ages than in more recent times, and the separation between religious and secular was less distinct than at present.

The best known example of English secular lyric poetry is the "Cuckoo Song", of the XIIIth century, intended to be sung in harmony by four voices:

*Sumer is icumen in;  
Lhude sing, cuccu!  
Groweth sed and bloweth med  
And springth the wde nu.  
Sing, cuccu!  
Awe bleteth after lomb,  
Lhouth after calve cu.  
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth;*

*Murie sing, cuccu!  
Cuccu, cuccu,  
Wel singes thu, cuccu;  
Ne swik thu never nu.  
Summer is come in; loud sing, cuckoo!  
Grows the seed and blooms the mead*

[meadow] and buds the wood anew.  
Sing, cuckoo!  
The ewe bleats for the lamb,  
lows for the calf the cow.  
The bullock gambols, the buck leaps;  
merrily sing, cuckoo!

Cuckoo, cuckoo,  
well singest thou, cuckoo;  
cease thou never now.

The first great name in English literature is that of Geoffrey Chaucer, who introduces the iambic pentameter line, the rhyming couplet and other rhymes used in Italian poetry (a language in which rhyming is arguably much easier than in English, thanks to the frequency of terminal vowels). Some of Chaucer's work is prose and some is lyric poetry, but his greatest work is mostly narrative poetry, which we find in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*. Other notable medieval works are the anonymous *Pearl* and *Gawain and the Green Knight* (probably by the same author) and William Langlands' *Piers Plowman*.

In the segment of Romances, Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* scores consistently as an author who contributed a valuable prose romance. This age was the most active with regards to producing religious songs and folk ballads, with miracle and morality plays serving to embellish this age in their own respective ways.

## Wace (c. 1110–1174)

Wace was a Norman poet, who was born in Jersey and brought up in mainland Normandy (he tells us in the *Roman de Rou* that he was taken as a child to Caen), ending his career as Canon of Bayeux. All that is known of Wace's life comes from autobiographical references in his poems. He neglected to mention his birthdate; sometime between 1090 and 1110 is the most commonly accepted year of his birth.



The name *Wace*, used in Jersey until the XVIth century, appears to have been his only name; surnames were not universally used at that time. It is speculated that he may have been of aristocratic origin, as he was sent to Caen to be educated, which would have been virtually impossible for most. His detailed writing on maritime matters may have stemmed from his island upbringing. Around 1130 Wace returned to Caen and took ecclesiastical work, possibly as a teacher.

In 1155, Wace completed the first work that mentioned the *Knights of the*

*Round Table, led by the legendary British ruler King Arthur.*

The date of Wace's death is uncertain. The most recent event described in the *Roman de Rou* may be dated to 1174. In the *Rou*, Wace also mentions Henry the Young King as living. The latter lived until 1183, which means that Wace probably did not revise the *Rou* after that date.

### Notable works

1. "*The Roman de Brut*" (1155, a romance).
2. "*The Roman de Rou*" (1160–1174, a verse chronicle).

Among some other of his works there are the following, the year of which is unknown. They all are also written in verse:

3. "*The history of the irruption of the Danes into England and the northern provinces of France*".
4. "*The Romance of William Longespee*".
5. "*The Romance of Duke Richard I, son of William Longespee*".
6. "*A Continuation of the History of the Dukes of Normandy*".
7. "*The Origin of the Feast of the Conception of the Virgin*".
8. "*The Life of S. Nicholas*".
9. "*The Romance du Chevallier au Lion*".

*He smote him upon the head, so that he fell down, and the sword put in his mouth – such meat to him was strange – so that the point of the sword went in the earth. Then said Uther, "Pascent, lie now there; now thou hast Britain all won to thy hand! So is now hap to thee; therein thou art dead; dwell ye shall here, thou, and Gillomar thy companion, and possess well Britain! For now I deliver it to you in hand, so that ye may presently dwell with us here; ye need not ever dread who you shall feed." Arthur leads his men close to the hosts of Colgrim, the leader of the Saxon invaders.*

(From *The Roman de Brut*)



### Sir Thomas Malory (1410(14)–1471)

The English author Sir Thomas Malory (active XVth century) wrote *Le Morte Darthur*, one of the most popular, famous and influential prose version of the legends of King Arthur of the medieval period. The work was *the first full-length book in English about the adventures of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*.

Although *Le Morte Darthur* (also known as *Le Morte d'Arthur*) is universally accepted as a masterpiece of imaginative literature, so much

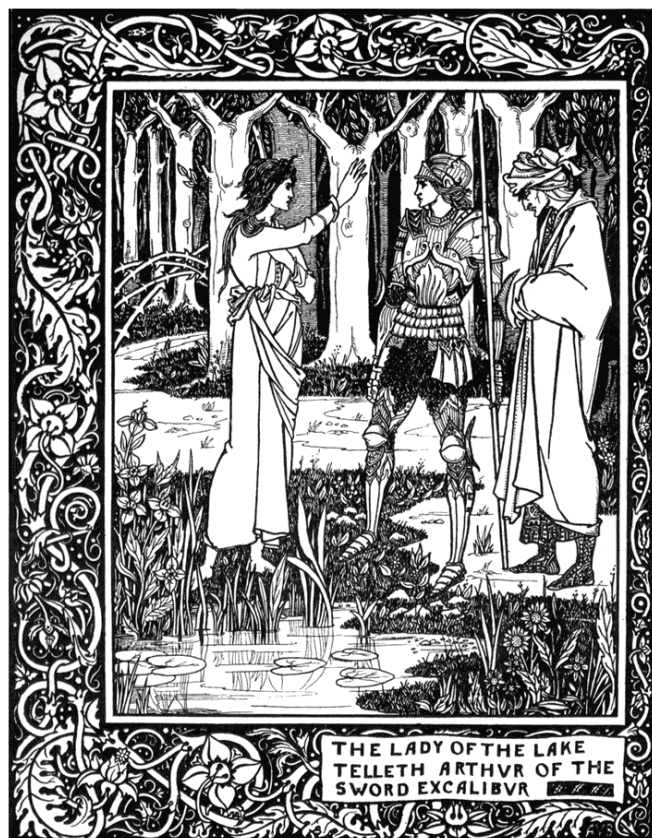
mystery surrounds the identity of the author (that is, which one of several Sir Thomas Malorys of the XVth century actually wrote it) that any one definitive biography seems imprudent. The only direct information extant concerning the author is that a Sir Thomas Malory completed the book while he was a “knight-prisoner” in the ninth year of Edward IV’s reign, from March 4, 1469, to March 3, 1470. All the rest is conjecture.

Although several other Thomas Malorys were suggested, the most serious candidate was identified by George L. Kittredge at the end of the XIXth century as Sir Thomas Malory, Knight, of New-bold Revel, Warwickshire. This Thomas Malory, who, as the record shows, led an active and colorful life, has been accepted as the author of *Le Morte Darthur* by most scholars.

Malory’s exact date of birth is unknown (probably around the year 1410–1414). Born into an English gentry family, Sir Thomas Malory spent his first couple of decades in quiet obscurity, aside from campaigning at the Siege of Calais in 1436. By 1441 he had been knighted, and had developed a growing interest in politics. In 1445 he became MP for his county and over the next few years developed a startling talent for lawlessness. In 1444 he had been charged with assault and theft, and in 1450 Malory tried to ambush and murder the Duke of Buckingham. He allegedly raped Joan Smith not once but twice, stole goods from her husband, extorted money, pilfered cattle, and destroyed the Duke of Buckingham’s hunting lodge. In 1451 Malory was imprisoned at Coleshill, but escaped two days later by swimming the moat at night. He then twice raided Combe Abbey alongside a band of outlaws, stealing a great deal of money and harassing the monks. Malory was captured in 1452 and thrown into a London prison where he spent eight years awaiting trial. After he

was bailed out, he was caught stealing horses and placed in a Colchester jail, but fought his way through the guards and escaped. He was recaptured and returned to the London prison, but was freed by royal pardon in 1460. However, by 1468 Malory was back in Newgate prison, where he would die in 1471. While in Newgate he turned to writing, creating the immortal “*Le Morte D’Arthur*”, which would win him eternal fame.

The title, “*Le Morte D’arthur*” (also “*Le Morte Darthur*”) is taken from the epilogue of William Caxton’s landmark illustrated edition of 1485. The epilogue tells us that “this book was ended the ninth year of the reign of King Edward the Fourth (either 1469 or 1470), by Sir Thomas Maleore (one of the variant spellings of Malory),



knight.”

“Le Morte Darthur” was written in English and consists of eight tales in 507 chapters in 21 books, so arranged by Caxton, for clarity of understanding. It is the basis of most modern tellings of the Arthurian story and was the inspiration for Tennyson's “Idylls of the King.” The sources for Malory's work are mainly XIIIth-century French prose romances, with the exception of book V, which is a prose adaptation of the alliterative Morte Arthur, a XIVth-century English poem.

***How tidings came to Arthur that king Ryons had overcome eleven kings, and how he desired Arthur's beard to trim his mantle***

*“THIS meanwhile came a messenger from king Ryons of North Wales, and king he was of all Ireland, and of many Isles. And this was his message, greeting well king Arthur in this manner wise, saying that king Ryons had discomfited and overcome eleven kings, and every each of them did him homage, and that was this – they gave him their beards clean flayed off, as much as there was; wherefore the messenger came for king Arthur's beard. For king Ryons had trimmed a mantle with kings' beards, and there lacked one place of the mantle, wherefore he sent for his beard, or else he would enter into his lands, and burn and slay, and never leave till he have the head and the beard. Well, said Arthur, thou hast said thy message, the which is the most villainous and lewdest message that ever man heard sent unto a king; also thou mayest see my beard is full young yet to make a trimming of it. But tell thou thy king this: I owe him none homage, nor none of mine elders; but or it be long he shall do me homage on both his knees, or else he shall lose his head, by the faith of my body, for this is the most shamefulest message that ever I heard speak of. I see well thy king met never yet with worshipful man, but tell him I will have his head without he do me homage. Then the messenger departed. Now is there any here, said Arthur, that knoweth king Ryons? Then answered a knight that hight Naram, Sir, I know the king well; he is a passing good man of his body as few be living, and a passing proud man; and, Sir, doubt ye not he will make war on you with a mighty puissance. Well, said Arthur, I shall ordain for him in short time”.*

*(From “Le Morte Darthur”)*

## Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343–1400)



Called *the father of English poetry*, Geoffrey Chaucer is ranked as one of the greatest poets of the late Middle Ages. Chaucer made a crucial contribution to English literature in *using English* at a time when much court poetry was still written in Anglo-Norman or Latin. His best-known works are *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The exact date and place of Geoffrey Chaucer's birth are not known. The evidence suggests, however, that he was born about 1343, or a year or two earlier, in his parents' house located on Thames Street, London, England. Chaucer's family was of the bourgeois class.

They descended from an affluent family who made their money in the London wine trade. Geoffrey Chaucer is believed to have attended the St. Paul's Cathedral School, where he probably first became acquainted with the influential writing of Virgil and Ovid.

In 1359–1360 Chaucer went to France with Edward III's army during the Hundred Years' War. He was captured in the Ardennes and returned to England after the treaty of Brétigny in 1360. There is no certain information of his life from 1361 until c.1366, when he perhaps married Philippa Roet, whose sister Katharine was for many years the mistress and later the third wife of John of Gaunt, another of the sons of Edward III, and a powerful patron. This marriage conveniently helped further Chaucer's career in the English court.

Between 1367 and 1378 Chaucer made several journeys abroad on diplomatic and commercial missions. In 1385 he lost his employment and rent-free home, and moved to Kent where he was appointed as justice of the peace. He was also elected to Parliament. This was a period of great creativity for Chaucer, during which he produced most of his best poetry, among others *Troilus and Cressida* (c. 1385), based on a love story by Boccaccio.

In December of 1386, he was deprived of all of this political influence when his patron, John of Gaunt, left the country on a military expedition for Spain and the Duke of Gloucester replaced him. It is assumed that it was during this period of unemployment that Chaucer planned out and started writing *The Canterbury Tales*, *the crowning achievement of Chaucer's life*. When John of Gaunt returned to England in 1389, he was given a new government post, and Chaucer lived a prosperous life from then on. He served as clerk until he resigned in 1391. For a time thereafter he served as deputy forester for the royal forest at North Petherton, England. The king granted him a pension of twenty pounds in 1394, and in 1397 an annual cask of wine was added to this grant. King Henry IV (1399–1413) renewed and increased these grants in 1399.



An early illustration of a party of pilgrims leaving Canterbury

The legendary XIVth century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer died October 25, 1400 of in London, England. He died of unknown causes and was 60 years old at the time. *The Canterbury Tales* was left unfinished when he died. Geoffrey Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey. His gravestone became the center of what was to be called Poet's Corner.

## Notable works

1. Translation of "*Roman de la Rose*" (*The Romaunt of the Rose*) (1360).
2. Translation of Boethius' "*Consolation of Philosophy*" as *Boece* (c. 1380).
3. "*The Book of the Duchess*" (c. 1369).
4. "*The House of Fame*" (c. 1374–1385).
5. "*The Parliament of Fowls*" (c. 1380).
6. "*Anelida and Arcite*" (c. 1380).
7. "*Palamon*" (1380–1386).
8. "*Troilus and Cressida*" (c. 1385).
9. "*The Canterbury Tales*", a collection of stories mostly written in verse (c. 1386).
10. "*The Legend of Good Women*" (c. 1387–1394).
11. "*Treatise on the Astrolabe*", medieval essay (1391).

## Short poems

12. "*An ABC*" (c. 1375).
13. "*The Complaint unto Pity*" (c. 1376).
14. "*A Complaint to His Lady*" (c. 1376).
15. "*The Complaint of Mars*" (c. 1376).
16. "*The Complaint of Venus*" (c. 1376).
17. "*To Rosemounde*" (c. 1381).
18. "*Womanly Noblesse*" (c. 1385).
19. "*Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, His Owne Sciveyn*" (c. 1385).
20. "*The Former Age*" (c. 1387).
21. "*Fortune*" (c. 1388).
22. "*Truth*" (c. 1389).
23. "*Gentillesse*" (c. 1391).
24. "*Lak of Stedfastnesse*" (c. 1393).
25. "*Lenvoy de Chaucer a Scogan*" (c. 1395).
26. "*Lenvoy de Chaucer a Bukton*" (c. 1396).



27. *"The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse"* (c. 1399).
28. *"Proverbs"* (c. 1399).

*Now welcom Summer with thy sunne soft,  
That hast this winter's weathers overshak,  
And driv'n away the longe nighties black.  
Saint Valentin, that art full high aloft,  
Thus singen smalle fowles for thy sak:  
Now welcom Summer with thy sunne soft,  
That hast this winter's weathers overshak.  
Well hav they cause for to gladden oft,  
Sith each of them recover'd hath his mak.  
Full blissful may they singe when they wak:  
Now welcom Summer with thy sunne soft,  
That has this winters weathers overshak,  
And driv'n away the longe nighties black.*

*(From the Parlement of Fowls)*

## John Gower (?1330–1408)



Few details are known of Gower's early life. He was probably born into a prominent Yorkshire family which held properties in Kent, Yorkshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. It is thought that he practiced law in or around London.

While in London, he became closely associated with the nobility of his day. He was apparently personally acquainted with Richard II: in the prologue of the first edition of the *Confessio Amantis*, he tells how the king, chancing to meet him on the Thames (probably circa 1385), invited him aboard the royal barge, and that their conversation then resulted in a commission for the work that would become the

Confessio Amantis. Later in life his allegiance switched to the future Henry IV, to whom later editions of the *Confessio Amantis* were dedicated. Much of this is based on circumstantial rather than documentary evidence, and the history of revisions of the *Confessio Amantis*, including the different dedications, is yet to be fully understood.

Gower's friendship with Chaucer is also well documented. When Chaucer was sent as a diplomat to Italy in 1378, Gower was one of the men to whom he gave power of attorney over his affairs in England. The two poets also paid one another compliments in their verse: Chaucer dedicated his *Troilus and Criseyde* in part to

“moral Gower”, and Gower reciprocated by placing a speech in praise of Chaucer in the mouth of Venus at the end of the *Confessio Amantis*.

At some point during the early 1370s, he took up residence in rooms provided by the Priory of St Mary Overie (now Southwark Cathedral). In 1398, while living here, he married, probably for the second time: his wife, Agnes Groundolf, was to survive him. In his last years, and possibly as early as 1400, he became blind.

After his death in 1408, Gower was interred in an ostentatious tomb in the Priory church (now Southwark Cathedral), which remains today.

Gower’s considerable learning is attested by his writing with accomplishment in three languages. In French he wrote his *Cinkante Balades* (written in Anglo-Norman before 1374) and his first large-scale work, the *Mirour de l’Omme* (*Speculum Meditantis*), an allegory written c. 1376–1378, in octosyllabics, concerned with fallen man, his virtues and vices. His second major work was the Latin *Vox Clamantis* (c. 1376–1381), an apocalyptic poem of seven books in 10,265 lines of elegiac couplets, containing reflections on the disturbances of the early years of Richard II and the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. In English he wrote the poem “In Praise of Peace” in 55 stanzas of rhyme-royal, as well as *his principal work, the Confessio Amantis*, which exists in three manuscript versions. The first of three (published 1390), and the most commonly attested, contains 141 stories in octosyllabic couplets which are handled with a metrical sophistication and skill unsurpassed in English.

The framework of the poem is the confession of a lover, Amans, to Genius, a priest of Venus; the confessor tells him exemplary stories of behaviour and fortune in love, organized under the heading of the Seven Deadly Sins (usually given as Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Covetousness, Gluttony and Lust) and drawing widely on classical story (most prominently Ovid) and medieval romance. There are eight books: one for each of the sins, and one (Book 7) which gives an encyclopaedic account of philosophy and morals. This work is as interesting for its Prologue and admirable Epilogue, and for its exchanges between the priest and lover, as it is for the narratives themselves.

Several of the exemplary tales are paralleled by stories in *The Canterbury Tales* and other works by Chaucer. Up to the XVIIth century almost every writer who praised Chaucer coupled his name with Gower’s. However, unlike Chaucer’s work, his voluminous poems reflect the past and scarcely hint of the future.

### Notable works

1. “*Mirour de l’Omme, or Speculum Hominis, or Speculum Meditantis*” (French, c.1376–1379).
2. “*Vox Clamantis*” (Latin, c.1377–1381).
3. “*Confessio Amantis*” (English, c.1386–1393).
4. “*Traité*” (French, 1397).
5. “*Cinkante Balades*” (French, 1399–1400).
6. “*In praise of peace*” (English, c. 1400).

*Of hem that writen ous tofore  
 The bokes duelle, and we therfore  
 Ben tawht of that was write tho:  
 Forthi good is that we also  
 In oure tyme among ous hiere  
 Do wryte of newe som matiere,  
 Essampled of these olde wyse  
 So that it myhte in such a wyse,  
 Whan we ben dede and elleswhere,  
 Beleve to the worldes eere  
 In tyme comende after this.*

*(Prologue to The Confessio Amantis)*

## **William Langland** **(c. 1330–c. 1386)**



William Langland is the generally accepted author of the medieval allegorical poem *Piers Plowman*. He is a figure of whom there is no mention in contemporary records – everything written about his life is educated conjecture based on Langland's texts and later allusions.

Langland was born sometime around 1330. In the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*, composed around 1377, Imagination says he has followed him “this five and forty winters.” In the Dublin manuscript (D.4.1), a note in a fifteenth-century hand claims that Langland's father was one “Stacy de Rokayle.” In mid-sixteenth century, Bale in his *Illustris Majoris Britanniae* wrote that Langland was from “Mortymers Clibury” (now Cleobury Mortimer) in Shropshire near the Malvern Hills where *Piers Plowman* opens. There was a hamlet named “Langley” nearby, which may explain his last name.

The poet was educated, inferred both from his own testimony and the quality of his writing, but it is not known where. He seems to have taken so-called “minor orders” in the church, but, perhaps because he had married, had never taken the “greater orders”. In *Piers Plowman*, he mentions “Kytte (Kitty, endearment for Katherine) my Wyf and Kalotte (endearment for Nicolette?) my daughter.” At some point, Langland moved to London, where he made a starving wage as a “singer” of masses and as a clerk copying legal documents. He had the reputation of a man who did not bow to his superiors, a man “loathe to reverence lords or ladies, or any soul else”.



Langland wrote and rewrote the *Vision of Piers Plowman* from around 1362 to the time of his death, in at least three different versions or editions, now classified into the A-Text, B-Text, and C-text. Over 50 versions are known to exist in manuscript form, some of them fragmentary. The first edition (A-Text) contains twelve passus or cantos, the second (B-Text) twenty, the third (C-Text) twenty-three. The first group contains no allusions beyond 1362, the second group is thought to have been composed around 1377, and the third

group in the 1380s. There is also a “Z-Text”, which has been claimed to be a draft even earlier than the A-Text, but acceptance of its authenticity is not unanimous. The B-Text is the most complete and strongest poetically, and the one usually studied by college students.

John But, writing in 1387, described Langland as dead, so he can be thought to have died in 1386–1387. Others, however, think it is possible that Langland was the author of a poem about the misgovernment of King Richard II, called “*Richard the Redeless*” (1399). If Langland was the poem’s author, who was living in Bristol at the time, it would mean he returned to the west before his death, sometime around the year 1400.

*Piers Plowman* is considered to be one of the most analytically challenging texts in Middle English textual criticism. There are 50–56 surviving manuscripts, some of which are fragmentary. None of the texts are known to be in the author's own hand, and none of them derive directly from any of the others.

In its own age the influence of *Piers the Plowman* was very great. Despite its intended impartiality, it was inevitably adopted as a partisan document by the poor and oppressed, and became a powerful incentive to the Peasant's Insurrection. *Piers* himself became an ideal for men who longed for a less selfish and brutal world, and a century and a half later the poem was still cherished by the Protestants for its exposure of the vices of the Church. The poem provides the most detailed picture of the actual social and economic conditions of its age, and as a great landmark in the progress of moral and social thought it can never lose its significance.

*I was wery forwandred  
and wente me to reste  
Under a brood bank  
by a bourne syde;  
And as I lay and lenede  
and loked on the watres,  
I slombred into a slepyng,  
it sweyed so murye.*

*Thanne gan I meten  
a merveillous swevene –  
That I was in a wilderness,  
wiste I nevere where.  
Ac as I biheeld into the eest  
an heigh to the sonne,  
I seigh a tour on a toft  
trieliche ymaked,*

*A deep dale bynethe,  
 a dongeon therinne,  
 With depe diches and derke  
 and dredfulle of sighte.  
 A fair feeld ful of folk  
 fond I ther bitwene –  
 Of alle manere of men,  
 the meene and the riche,  
 Werchyng and wandryng  
 as the world asketh.  
 Somme putten hem to the plough,  
 pleiden ful selde,  
 In settyng and sowyng  
 swonken ful harde,  
 And wonnen that thise wastours  
 with glotonye destruyeth  
 I was weary with wandering  
 and went me to rest  
 A fair field full of folk •  
 found I in between,  
 Of all manner of men •  
 the rich and the poor,  
 Working and wandering •  
 as the world asketh.  
 Some put them to plow •  
 and played little enough,  
 At setting and sowing •  
 they sweated right hard  
 And won that which wasters •  
 by gluttony destroy.  
 (From the Prologue to Piers Plowman)*

*Under a broad bank •  
 by a brook's side,  
 And as I lay and leaned over •  
 and looked into the waters  
 I fell into a sleep •  
 for it sounded so merry.  
 Then began I to dream •  
 a marvellous dream,  
 That I was in a wilderness •  
 wist I not where.  
 As I looked to the east •  
 right into the sun,  
 I saw a tower on a toft •  
 worthily built;  
 A deep dale beneath •  
 a dungeon therein,  
 With deep ditches and dark •  
 and dreadful of sight*

### Questions for Self-Study and Seminars

1. How did the Norman Conquest affect the life and literature of England? What types of literature were produced after the Conquest? How do they compare with Anglo-Saxon literature?
2. What is Layamon's Brut? Why did Layamon choose this name for his Chronicle? What special literary interest attaches to the poem?
3. What were the Metrical Romances? What reasons led to the great interest in three classes of romances, i.e. Matters of France, Rome, and Britain? What new and important element enters our literature in this type?
4. Where did the Arthurian legends originate, and how did they become known to English readers? What part did Arthur play in the early history of Britain?

5. What is a ballad, and what distinguishes it from other forms of poetry? Why did the ballad, more than any other form of literature, appeal to the common people?

6. What are the chief historical events of the fourteenth century? What social movement is noticeable? What writers reflect political and social conditions?

7. What foreign influences are noticeable in Chaucer's life? Why is he called the first national poet of Britain?

8. What light does *the Canterbury Tales* throw upon English life of the fourteenth century? What classes of society are introduced? Is Chaucer's attitude sympathetic or merely critical?

9. Quote or read passages which show Chaucer's keenness of observation, his humor, his kindness in judgment, his delight in nature. What side of human nature does he emphasize?

10. Describe briefly *Piers Plowman* and its author. Why is the poem called "the gospel of the poor"?

### **III. THE BEGINNING OF MODERN ENGLISH (1485–1603)**

***The Renaissance (Early Tudor Period) and the Elizabethan Period, about 1500 to 1603.***

*Great discoveries and activity, both intellectual and physical. Influence of Italy. The Reformation. Henry VIII, 1509–1547. Edward VI, to 1553. Mary, to 1558. Elizabeth, 1558–1603. Defeat of the Armada, 1588. Sir Thomas More, "Utopia." Wyatt and Surrey, about 1540. Lyly's "Euphues," 1578. Spenser, 1552–1599. "The Faerie Queene," 1590 and later. Lyric poetry, including sonnet sequences. The Drama: classical and native influences. Lyly, Peele, Greene, Marlowe. Shakespeare, 1564–1616. Ben Jonson and other dramatists.*

- I. Early Tudor Period (1485–1558): The War of the Roses ends in England with Henry Tudor (Henry VII) claiming the throne. Martin Luther's split with Rome marks the emergence of Protestantism, followed by Henry VIII's Anglican schism, which creates the first Protestant church in England. Edmund Spenser is a sample poet.
- II. Elizabethan Period (1558–1603): Queen Elizabeth saves England from both Spanish invasion and internal squabbles at home. The early works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Kyd mark Elizabeth's reign.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are the period of the European Renaissance or New Birth, one of the three or four great transforming movements of European history. The Renaissance in Europe was in one sense an awakening from the long slumber of the Dark Ages. The first inklings of a middle class began to gain power in the cities, as trade and commerce became full enterprises in their own right, international and even global trade began to surge forward. Along with products and wealth, ideas also spread from one nation to another.

Spanning the years 1500–1660, the English Renaissance produced some of the greatest works of literature the world has known. The spirit of optimism, unlimited potential, and the stoic English character all coalesced to generate literature of the first order. At the same time, England graduated from an overlooked “barbarian” nation to a seat of commercial power and influence. This power naturally translated into a literature that was bold, sweeping, innovative, and trend-setting. Poets experimented with form, and dramatists revived and reinvented the classical traditions of the Greeks and Romans.

The dominant forms of English literature during the Renaissance were the poem and the drama. Among the many varieties of poetry one might have found in sixteenth century England were the lyric, the elegy, the tragedy, and the pastoral. Near the close of the English Renaissance, John Milton composed his epic *Paradise Lost*, widely considered the grandest poem in the language.

Modern lyric **poetry** in English begins in the early XVIth century with the work of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517–1547). Wyatt, who is greatly influenced by the Italian, Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) introduces the sonnet and a range of short lyrics to English, while Surrey (as he is known) develops unrhymed pentameters (or blank verse) thus inventing the verse form which will be of great use to contemporary dramatists. A flowering of lyric poetry in the reign of Elizabeth comes with such writers as Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), Edmund Spenser (1552–1599), Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618), Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) and William Shakespeare (1564–1616). The major works of the time are Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* and Shakespeare’s sonnets.

The first great English dramatist is Christopher Marlowe. Before the XVIth century English **drama** had meant the amateur performances of Bible stories by craft guilds on public holidays. Marlowe’s plays (*Tamburlaine*; *Dr. Faustus*; *Edward II* and *The Jew of Malta*) use the five act structure and the medium of blank verse. In the area of drama, however, no one matched William Shakespeare in terms of variety, profundity, and exquisite use of language.

## Sir Thomas More (1478–1535)



Thomas More was born in London on February 7, 1478, son of Sir John More, a prominent judge. He was educated at St Anthony’s School in London. As a youth he served as a page in the household of Archbishop Morton, who anticipated More would become a “marvellous man”. More went on to study at Oxford where he wrote comedies and studied Greek and Latin literature. One of his first works was an English translation of a Latin biography of the Italian humanist Pico della Mirandola.

Around 1494 More returned to London to study



law and became a barrister in 1501. Yet he did not automatically follow in his father's footsteps, being torn between a monastic calling and a life of civil service. While at Lincoln's Inn, he determined to become a monk and subjected himself to the discipline of the Carthusians, living at a nearby monastery and taking part of the monastic life. The prayer, fasting, and penance habits stayed with him for the rest of his life. More's desire for monasticism was finally overcome by his sense of duty to serve his country in the field of politics. He entered Parliament in 1504, and married for the first time in 1504 or 1505, to Jane Colt. They had four children: Margaret, Elizabeth, Cicely, and John.

More became a close friend with Desiderius Erasmus during the latter's first visit to England in 1499. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship and correspondence. They produced Latin translations of Lucian's works, printed at Paris in 1506, during Erasmus' second visit. On Erasmus' third visit, in 1509, he wrote *Encomium Moriae*, or *Praise of Folly* (1509), dedicating it to More.

One of More's first acts in Parliament had been to urge a decrease in a proposed appropriation for King Henry VII. In revenge, the King had imprisoned More's father and not released him until a fine was paid, and More himself had withdrawn from public life. After the death of the King in 1509, More became active once more. In 1510, he was appointed one of the two under-sheriffs of London. In this capacity, he gained a reputation for being a patron to the poor. In 1511, More's first wife died in childbirth. More soon married again, to Alice Middleton. They did not have children.

During the next decade, More attracted the attention of King Henry VIII. In 1515 he accompanied a delegation to Flanders to help clear disputes about the wool trade. *Utopia* opens with a reference to this very delegation. *Utopia* was begun in May 1515, More started by writing the introduction and the description of the society which would become the second half of the work. On his return to England he wrote the "dialogue of counsel", completing the work in 1516.

More accompanied the King and court to the Field of the Cloth of Gold. In 1518 he became a member of the Privy Council, and was knighted in 1521. More helped Henry VIII in writing his *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, garnered Henry's favour, and was made Speaker of the House of Commons in 1523 and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1525. As Speaker, More *helped establish the parliamentary privilege of free speech*. He refused to endorse King Henry VIII's plan to divorce Katherine of Aragón (1527). Nevertheless, in 1529, More became Lord Chancellor, the first layman yet to hold the post.

While his work in the law courts was exemplary, his fall came quickly. He resigned in 1532, citing ill health, but the reason was probably his disapproval of Henry's stance toward the church. He refused to attend the coronation of Anne Boleyn in June 1533, a matter which did not escape the King's notice.





In April, 1534, More refused to swear to the Act of Succession and the Oath of Supremacy, and was committed to the Tower of London on April 17. More was found guilty of treason and was beheaded alongside Bishop Fisher on July 6, 1535. More's final words on the scaffold were: "The King's good servant, but God's First." More was beatified in 1886 and canonized by the Catholic Church as a saint by Pope

Pius XI in 1935.

*Utopia* (in full: *De optimo reip. statv, deque noua insula Vtopia, libellus uere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festiuus*) is a work of fiction and political philosophy by Thomas More published in 1516. The work seems to have been popular, if misunderstood: the introduction of More's Epigrams of 1518 mentions a man who did not regard More as a good writer.

The word *Utopia* overtook More's short work and has been used ever since to describe this kind of imaginary society with many unusual ideas being contemplated. Most scholars see *Utopia* as some kind of comment or criticism of contemporary European society, for the evils of More's day are laid out in Book I and in many ways apparently solved in Book II. Indeed, *Utopia* has many of the characteristics of satire, and there are many jokes and satirical asides such as how honest people are in Europe, but these are usually contrasted with the simple, uncomplicated society of the Utopians.

## Notable works

1. "A Rueful Lamentation" (1503).
2. "The Words of Fortune to the People" (c.1504).
3. "Pageant of Life", or "Pageant Verses" (1496–1504?).
4. "A Merry Jest" (1516).
5. "12 Properties of a Lover", (1510).
6. "12 Rules of Spiritual Battle" (c.1510).
7. "12 Weapons of Spiritual Battle", (1510).
8. "The Life of Pico della Mirandola" (1510).
9. "The History of King Richard the Third" (c.1513–1518).
10. "Utopia" (1516).
11. "The Four Last Things" (c. 1522).
12. "A Dialogue Concerning Heresies" (1528–1529).

13. *"Supplication of Souls"* (1529).
14. *"The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer"* (1532).
15. *"Apology"* (1533).
16. *"Debellation of Salem and Bizance"* (1533).
17. *"Treatise on Blessed Sacrament against the Masker"* (1533).
18. *"A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation"* (1534).
19. *"A Treatise upon the Passion of Christ"* (1535).
20. *"The Sadness of Christ"* (1535).
21. *"A Godly Instruction"* (1534).
22. *"A Godly Meditation"* (1534).
23. *"A Devout Prayer (before dying)"* (1535).
24. *"Prayers from the Treatise on the Passion"* (1534).
25. *"Two Short Ballads", or "Fortune Verses"* (1535).

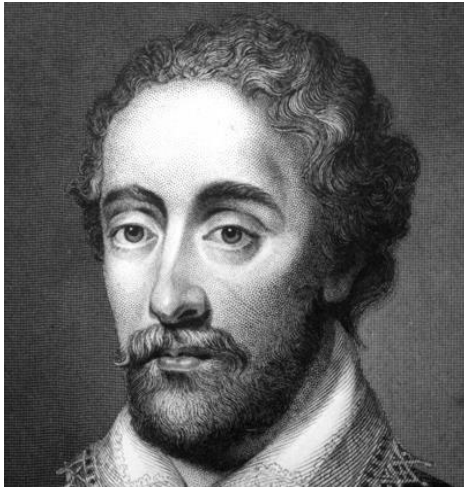
### First Ballad

*Eye-flattering Fortune! look thou ne'er so fair,  
Or ne'er so pleasantly begin to smile,  
As though thou wouldst my ruin all repair,  
During my life thou shalt not me beguile;  
Trust shall I God to enter in erewhile,  
His haven of havens sure and uniform:  
After a calm I still expect the storm.*

### Second Ballad

*Long was I, Lady Luck, your serving-man,  
And now have lost again all that I gat;  
When, therefore, I think of you now and then,  
And in my mind remember this and that,  
Ye may not blame me, though I shrew your cat;  
In faith I bless you, and a thousand times,  
For lending me some leisure to make rhymes.*

## Edmund Spenser (c. 1552–1599)



Edmund Spenser is recognised as one of the premier craftsmen of Modern English verse in its infancy, and *one of the greatest poets in the English Literature*, best known for his *The Faerie Queen*.

Edmund Spenser was born in East Smithfield, London around the year 1552 though there is some ambiguity as to the exact date of his birth. As a young boy, he was educated in London at the Merchant Taylor's School and matriculated as a sizar at Pembroke College, Cambridge.

In July 1580, Spenser went to Ireland in the service of the newly appointed Lord Deputy, Arthur Grey, XIVth Baron Grey de Wilton. Then he served with the English forces during the Second Desmond Rebellion. After the defeat of the native Irish he was awarded lands in County Cork.

Through his poetry, Spenser hoped to secure a place at court, which he visited in Raleigh's company to deliver his most famous work, *The Faerie Queene*, an incomplete English epic poem. The first half was published in 1590, and a second installment was published in 1596. *The Faerie Queene* is notable for its form: it was the first work *written in Spenserian stanza and is one of the longest poems in the English language*. It is an allegorical work, and can be read (as Spenser presumably intended) on several levels of allegory, including as praise of Queen Elizabeth I. In a completely allegorical context, the poem follows several knights in an examination of several virtues. In Spenser's "A Letter of the Authors," he states that the entire epic poem is "cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devices," and that the aim of publishing *The Faerie Queene* was to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline".

*Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,  
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds,  
Am now enforst a far vnfitter taske,  
For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,  
And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;  
Whose prayes hauing slept in silence long,  
Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds  
To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:  
Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song.*

*(From The Fairie Queene, Book 1)*

*The Faerie Queene* found political favour with Elizabeth I and was consequently a success, to the extent that it became Spenser's defining work. The poem found such favour with the monarch that Spenser was granted a pension for life amounting to 50 pounds a year, though there is no evidence that Elizabeth I read any of the poem.

In 1596 Spenser wrote a prose pamphlet titled, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. This piece remained in manuscript until its publication and print in the mid-seventeenth century. It is probable that it was kept out of print during the author's lifetime because of its inflammatory content. The pamphlet argued that Ireland would never be totally "pacified" by the English until its indigenous language and customs had been destroyed, if necessary by violence. Spenser recommended scorched earth tactics, such as he had seen used in the Desmond Rebellion, to create famine. Although it has been highly regarded as a polemical piece of prose and valued as a historical source on XVIth century Ireland, the *View* is seen today as genocidal in intent. Spenser did express some praise for the Gaelic poetic tradition, but also used much tendentious and bogus analysis to demonstrate that the Irish were descended from barbarian Scythian stock.

Later on, during the Nine Years War in 1598, Spenser was driven from his home by the native Irish forces of Aodh Ó Néill. His castle at Kilcolman, near Doneraile in North Cork was burned, and it is thought one of his infant children died in the blaze – though local legend has it that his wife also died. A short distance away grew a tree, locally known as "Spenser's Oak" until it was destroyed in a lightning strike in the 1960s. Local legend has it that he penned some or all of *The Faerie Queene* under this tree.

In the year after being driven from his home, Spenser travelled to London, where he died in distressed circumstances (according to legend), aged forty-six. It was arranged for his coffin to be carried by other poets, upon which they threw many pens and pieces of poetry into his grave with many tears.

Spenser was called *a Poet's Poet* and was admired by William Wordsworth, John Keats, Lord Byron and Alfred Lord Tennyson, among others. The language of his poetry is purposely archaic.

Spenser's *Epithalamion* is the most admired of its type in the English language. It was written for his wedding to his young bride, Elizabeth Boyle. The poem consists of 365 long lines, corresponding to the days of the year; 68 short lines, representing the sum of the 52 weeks, 12 months, and 4 seasons of the annual cycle; and 24 stanzas, corresponding to the diurnal and sidereal hours.



The title page of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* from the 1611 edition

## Notable works

1. “*A theatre for Worldlings*”, including poems translated into English by Spenser from French sources (1569).
2. “*The Shepheardes Calender*”, published under the pseudonym “Immerit” (1579).
3. “*The Faerie Queene*, Books 1–3 (1590).
4. “*Complaints Containing sundrie small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie*” (1591).
5. “*Axiochus*”, a translation of a pseudo-Platonic dialogue from the original Ancient Greek (1592).
6. “*Daphnaïda. An Elegy upon the death of the noble and vertuous Douglas Howard, Daughter and heire of Henry Lord Howard, Viscount Byndon, and wife of Arthure Gorges Esquier*” (1592).
7. “*Amoretti and Epithalamion*” (1595).
8. “*Astrophel. A Pastorall Elegie vpon the death of the most Noble and valorous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney*” (1595).
9. “*Fowre Hymnes*” (1596)
10. “*Prothalamion*” (1596).
11. “*A View of the Present State of Ireland*” (1596).
12. “*The Faerie Queene*”, Books 4–6 (1596).

## *My Love Is Like To Ice*

*My love is like to ice, and I to fire:  
How comes it then that this her cold so great  
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,  
But harder grows the more I her entreat?  
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat  
Is not allayed by her heart-frozen cold,  
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,  
And feel my flames augmented manifold?  
What more miraculous thing may be told,  
That fire, which all things melts, should harden ice,  
And ice, which is congeal's with senseless cold,  
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?  
Such is the power of love in gentle mind,  
That it can alter all the course of kind.*

## Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey

### (1517–1547)



**Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey** was an English aristocrat, and *one of the founders of English Renaissance poetry*.

Surrey is known as an important innovator in the development of English verse. Together with his friend and mentor Thomas Wyatt, Surrey is credited with *adapting to English the Petrarchan sonnet, which became the dominant sonnet form of the Elizabethan period*, and the form employed by Shakespeare. He is also heralded as *composing the first blank verse in English*, in his translation of Books II and IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*. He also authored numerous poems, sonnets, and elegies, the most famous of which, "Wyatt resteth here," memorializes his friend, with whose name and critical reputation he has been inextricably linked.

Henry Howard was born in 1517 into the most influential aristocratic family in England. His father was the third Duke of Norfolk and his mother was Lady Elizabeth Stafford, daughter of the Duke of Buckingham. Four years before Surrey's birth his father and grandfather had defeated the Scots in battle at Flodden Field, thereby establishing the Howards as the undisputed military leaders of the country. The family also assumed a leadership position in defending the feudal rights and responsibilities of the old conservative nobility. When his grandfather died and his father became Duke of Norfolk, young Henry was granted the title of Earl of Surrey. The family then moved from Surrey's birthplace in Hunsdon, Hertfordshire, to Kenninghall, Norfolk, where Surrey was tutored in the classics and in religious conservatism by John Clerke, an Oxford scholar.

Surrey was a great favorite of Henry VIII, and in 1530 he became the companion and tutor of Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, the illegitimate son of the king. The next five years were spent primarily in Windsor, although in 1532 Surrey and Richmond traveled to the Continent, where they took up residence at the French court for a year. Also in 1532 Surrey married Lady Frances de Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford; the couple had a son, Thomas, in 1536. That same year, Surrey joined his father in suppressing the Pilgrimage of Grace, a revolt in the north of England. Shortly thereafter, Surrey was imprisoned at Windsor Castle for a few months after striking Edward Seymour, brother of the queen, within the precincts of the court; Seymour had suggested that Surrey and his father were secretly supportive of the rebellion. Surrey memorialized his incarceration in the sonnet "*When Windesore walles sustained my wearied arm.*" In 1542 Surrey was briefly confined to Fleet Prison for issuing a challenge to John à Leigh, and in 1543 he was again imprisoned, this time for harassing citizens and breaking windows, along with a number of rowdy aristocratic companions.

Surrey responded to the charges in the poem "*London hast thow accused me*" (also known as the "*Satire on London*").

As a military man, Surrey rose to the position of "Lieutenant-General of the King on Land and Sea of all the Continental Possessions of England." In 1545 he took up arms against the French and was wounded at Montreuil. For more than a year he served as commander at Boulogne, where he reorganized the English forces and fortified the defenses of the city – both of which were in a state of disarray when he took over. Back at court in 1546, Surrey became embroiled in another dispute with the Seymours. He was arrested for attacking a Seymour supporter, charged with treason, and convicted. He was beheaded on January 19, 1547; he was twenty-nine years old.

The majority of Surrey's work was not published during his lifetime, but circulated in manuscript. The first significant publication of his works came in 1557, with Richard Tottel's printing of *Songes and Sonettes* (commonly known as *Tottel's Miscellany*). Although Surrey's name appears on the title page, he wrote less than a third of the book's contents, some forty poems. The remaining contributions have been attributed to Wyatt (ninety-six poems) and various other authors who were collectively responsible for an additional ninety-five poems. Also in 1557 Surrey's blank verse translation of Books II and IV of Virgil's *Aeneid* appeared. Surrey additionally produced translations of a number of Petrarchan sonnets.

One of Surrey's best-known individual poems is "*Spring Lament*," sometimes known by the beginning of its first line, "*The Soote Season*," which adapts the conventions of medieval amatory verse. Surrey's elegies include "*So crewel prison*," mourning the death of the Duke of Richmond, the companion of Surrey's youth; "*Norfolk Sprang Thee*," an epitaph on Thomas Clere, a family squire; and two elegies on Wyatt, the well-known "*Wyatt resteth here*" and a lesser-known sonnet based on one of Wyatt's poems. "*Wyatt resteth here*," composed in 1542, at the time of Wyatt's death, was one of the few poems published in Surrey's lifetime, when it was printed around 1545 in *An Excellent Epitaffe of syr Thomas wyat, with two other dytties*. It has been called Surrey's most important single work, but is also considered his least characteristic, since it contains no personal references to his relationship to Wyatt or to his own grief at Wyatt's passing.

Today, Surrey's accomplishments and innovations, particularly in his use of blank verse, are recognized as marking a significant development in the history of English poetry.

*SO cruel prison how could betide, alas,  
As proud Windsor, where I in lust and joy,  
With a Kinges son, my childish years did pass,  
In greater feast than Priam's sons of Troy.  
Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour.  
The large green courts, where we were wont to hove,  
With eyes cast up into the Maiden's tower,  
And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love.  
The stately seats, the ladies bright of hue.  
The dances short, long tales of great delight;*



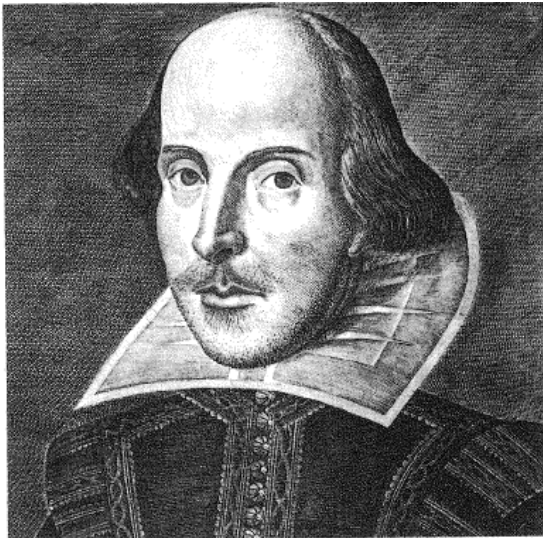
*With words and looks, that tigers could but rue;  
Where each of us did plead the other's right.*

*(From So Crewel Prison)*

## **William Shakespeare** **(1564–1616)**

*The remarkable thing about Shakespeare  
is that he really is very good, in spite of all  
the people who say he is very good.*

*Robert Graves*



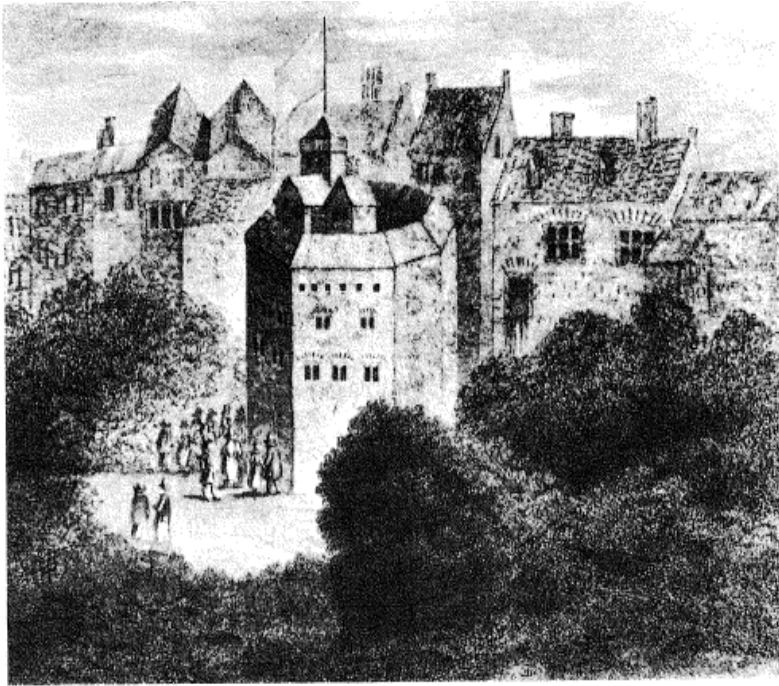
*A picture of William Shakespeare from the title page of an early edition  
of his plays published in 1623*

William Shakespeare was born on April, 23, 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon. Although birth and death dates were not recorded in Shakespeare's time, churches did record baptisms and burials, usually a few days after the actual event. The infant William was baptised on 26 April 1564 in the parish church Holy Trinity of Stratford upon Avon. He lived with his fairly well-to-do parents on Henley Street, the first of the four sons born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, who also had four daughters. John Shakespeare was a local businessman and also involved in municipal

affairs as Alderman and Bailiff, but a decline in his fortunes in his later years surely had an effect on William.

William Shakespeare was probably educated at the King Edward IV Grammar School in Stratford, where he learned Latin and a little Greek and read the Roman dramatists. At eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman seven or eight years his senior. Together they raised two daughters: Susanna, who was born in 1583, and Judith (whose twin brother died in boyhood), born in 1585.





*The Globe Theatre in Southwark where many of Shakespeare's plays were produced*



*The inside of an Elizabethan theatre, the Swan Theatre in London, 1596*

Little is known about Shakespeare's activities between 1585 and 1592. Shakespeare may have taught at school during this period, but it seems more probable that shortly after 1585 he went to London to begin his apprenticeship as an actor. Due to the plague, the London theaters were often closed between June 1592 and April 1594. During that period, Shakespeare probably had some income from his patron, Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his first two poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). The former was a long narrative poem depicting the rejection of Venus by Adonis, his death, and the consequent disappearance of beauty from the world. Despite conservative objections to the poem's glorification of sensuality, it was immensely popular and was reprinted six times during the nine years

following its publication. In 1594, Shakespeare joined the Lord Chamberlain's company of actors, the most popular of the companies acting at Court. In 1599 Shakespeare joined a group of Chamberlain's Men that would form a syndicate to build and operate a new playhouse: the Globe, which became the most famous theater of its time. With his share of the income from the Globe, Shakespeare was able to purchase New Place, his home in Stratford.

While Shakespeare was regarded as the foremost dramatist of his time, evidence indicates that both he and his world looked to poetry, not playwriting, for enduring fame. Shakespeare's sonnets were composed between 1593 and 1601, though not published until 1609. That edition, *The Sonnets of Shakespeare*, consists of 154 sonnets, all written in the form of three quatrains and a couplet that is now recognized as Shakespearean. The sonnets fall into two groups: sonnets 1-126, addressed to a beloved friend, a handsome and noble young man, and sonnets 127-152, to a malignant but fascinating "Dark Lady," whom the poet loves in spite of himself. Nearly all of

Shakespeare's sonnets examine the inevitable decay of time, and the immortalization of beauty and love in poetry.

Shakespeare wrote more than 30 plays. These are usually divided into four categories: histories, comedies, tragedies, and romances.

Under the favour of the court The Kings' Men became the eminent company of the day. Most likely Anne and the children lived in Stratford while Shakespeare spent his time travelling between Stratford and London, dealing with business affairs and writing and acting. In 1616 his daughter Judith married Quiney who subsequently admitted to fornication with Margaret Wheeler, and Shakespeare took steps to bequeath a sum to Judith in her own name. William Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616, according to his monument, and lies buried in the chapel of the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford upon Avon. While there is little known of her life, Anne Hathaway outlived her husband by seven years, dying in 1623 and is buried beside him. It is not clear as to how or why Shakespeare died, but in 1664 the reverend John Ward, vicar of Stratford recorded that "*Shakespeare, Drayton and Ben Johnson had a merie meeting, and itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted*".

### ***To the Reader***

*This Figure, that thou here seest put,  
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut,  
Wherein the Graver had a strife  
with Nature, to out-doo the life :  
O, could he but have drawne his wit  
As well in brasse, as he hath hit  
His face; the Print would then surpasse  
All, that was ever writ in brasse.  
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke  
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.  
(Ben Jonson's Commendation of the Droeshout engraving, 1623)*

### **Notable works**

#### **Poetry**

1. "*Venus & Adonis*" (1593).
2. "*The Rape of Lucrece*" (1594).
3. "*The Sonnets of Shakespeare*" (1609).

#### **Tragedies**

4. "*Titus Andronicus*" (1594).
5. "*Romeo and Juliet*" (1597).
6. "*Hamlet*" (1603).
7. "*King Lear*" (1608).
8. "*Othello*" (1622).
9. "*Julius Caesar*" (1623).

10. *"Antony and Cleopatra"* (1623).
11. *"Coriolanus"* (1623).
12. *"Timon of Athens"* (1623).
13. *"Macbeth"* (1623).

### **Comedies**

14. *"Love's Labour's Lost"* (1598).
15. *"Midsummer Night's Dream"* (1600).
16. *"Merchant of Venice"* (1600).
17. *"Much Ado About Nothing"* (1600).
18. *"Merry Wives of Windsor"* (1602).
19. *"Troilus and Cressida"* (1609).
20. *"Pericles, Prince of Tyre"* (1609).
21. *"Tempest"* (1611).
22. *"Taming of the Shrew"* (1623).
23. *"Comedy of Errors"* (1623).
24. *"Two Gentlemen of Verona"* (1623).
25. *"As You Like It"* (1623).
26. *"Twelfth Night"* (1623).
27. *"All's Well That Ends Well"* (1623).
28. *"Measure for Measure"* (1623).
29. *"Cymbeline"* (1623).
30. *"Winter's Tale"* (1623).

### **Histories**

31. *"King Henry VI Part 1"* (1594).
32. *"King Henry VI Part 2"* (1594).
33. *"Richard II"* (1597).
34. *"Richard III"* (1597).
35. *"King Richard II"* (1597).
36. *"King Henry IV Part 1"* (1598).
37. *"King Henry IV Part 2"* (1600).
38. *"King Henry V"* (1600).
39. *"King Henry VI Part 3"* (1623).
40. *"King John"* (1623).
41. *"Henry VIII"* (1623).

ON MR. WM. SHAKESPEARE.  
HE DYED IN APRILL 1616

*RENOWNED Spencer lye a thought more nye  
To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumond lye  
A little neerer Spenser, to make roome  
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fowerfold Tombe.  
To lodge all fowre in one bed make a shift  
Vntill Doomesdaye, for hardly will a fift  
Betwixt ys day and yt by Fate be slayne,*

*For whom your Curtaines may be drawn againe.  
If your precedency in death doth barre  
A fourth place in your sacred sepulcher,  
Vnder this carued marble of thine owne,  
Sleepe, rare Tragoedian, Shakespeare, sleep alone;  
Thy unmolested peace, vnshared Caue,  
Possesse as Lord, not Tenant, of thy Graue,  
That vnto us & others it may be  
Honor hereafter to be layde by thee.*

*(William Basse's Elegy on Shakespeare)*

## **Thomas Kyd (1558–1594)**



**Thomas Kyd** was an English dramatist, the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and one of the most important figures in the development of Elizabethan drama.

Thomas Kyd was the son of Francis and Anna Kyd. In October 1565 the young Kyd was enrolled in the newly founded Merchant Taylors' School. Here, Kyd received a well-rounded education. There is no evidence that Kyd went on to either of the English universities. He may have followed for a time his father's profession; two letters written by him are extant and his handwriting suggests the training of a scrivener.

Evidence suggests that in the 1580s Kyd became an important playwright, but little is known about his activity. *The Spanish Tragedie* was probably written in the mid to late 1580s. The earliest surviving edition was printed in 1592; the full title being, *The Spanish Tragedie, Containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio, and Bel-imperia: with the pittifull death of olde Hieronimo*. However, the play was usually known simply as "Hieronimo", after the protagonist. It was arguably *the most popular play of the "Age of Shakespeare" and set new standards in effective plot construction and character development*. In 1602 a version of the play with "additions" was published. *The Spanish Tragedy* is a work of extraordinary value, since it is the earliest specimen of effective stage poetry existing in English literature.

The success of Kyd's plays extended to Europe. Versions of *The Spanish Tragedy* and his *Hamlet* were popular in Germany and the Netherlands for generations. The influence of these plays on European drama was largely the reason for the interest in Kyd among German scholars in the nineteenth century.

Kyd died in 1594, and was buried on 15 August in London. He was only 35 years of age. The influence of Kyd is marked on all the immediate predecessors of Shakespeare, and the bold way in which scenes of violent crime were treated on the Elizabethan stage appears to be directly owing to the example of Kyd's innovating genius.

## Notable works

1. "*The Spanish Tragedy*" (1584–1589?).
2. "*The Householder's Philosophy*" (1588).
3. "*The Murder of John Brewen*" (1592).
4. "*Cornelia*" (1594).

## Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)



English dramatist Christopher Marlowe is the father of English tragedy and instaurator of dramatic blank verse. He was the eldest son of a shoemaker at Canterbury, was born in that city on the 6th of February 1564. He was christened at St George's Church, Canterbury, on the 26th of February, 1563/4, some two months before Shakespeare's baptism at Stratford-on-Avon. The dramatist received the rudiments of his education at the King's School, Canterbury, then went to Cambridge as one of Archbishop Parker's scholars from the King's School, took his B.A. degree in 1584, and that of M.A. three or four years later.

Before 1587 he seems to have quitted Cambridge for London, where he attached himself to the Lord Admiral's Company of Players, under the leadership of the famed actor Edward Alleyn, and almost at once began writing for the stage.

Of Marlowe's career in London, apart from his *four great theatrical successes*, we know hardly anything; but he evidently knew Thomas Kyd, who shared his unorthodox opinions. Nash criticized his verse, Greene affected to shudder at his atheism. On the other hand Marlowe was the personal friend of Sir Walter Raleigh, and perhaps of the poetical Earl of Oxford, with both of whom, and with such men as Walter Warner and Robert Hughes the mathematicians, Thomas Harriott the notable astronomer, and Matthew Royden, the dramatist is said to have met in free converse. Either this free converse or the licentious character of some of the young He seems at any rate to have been associated with Sir Walter Raleigh's school of atheism, and to have opinions which were then regarded as putting a man outside civilized humanity.

## Notable works

Marlowe's career as a dramatist lies between the years 1587 and 1593, and the four great plays to which reference has been made were

- 1) "*Tamburlaine the Great*", a heroic epic in dramatic form divided into two parts of five acts each (1587, printed in 1590);
- 2) "*Dr Faustus*" (1588, entered at Stationers' Hall 1601);

- 3) "*The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta*" (dating perhaps from 1589, acted in 1592, printed in 1633);
- 4) "*Edward the Second*" (printed 1594).

The very first words of *Tamburlaine* sound the trumpet note of attack in the older order of things dramatic:

*"From jigging veins of riming mother wits  
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay  
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,  
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine  
Threatening the world with high astounding terms  
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword".*

(From *Tamburlaine the Great*)

With many and heavy faults, there is something of genuine greatness in *Tamburlaine the Great*; and it must always be remembered with distinction for two grave reasons. It is *the first play ever written in English blank verse*; and *it contains one of the noblest passages in the literature of the world ever written by one of the greatest masters of poetry*. It has the right note of music and the proper tone of colour for the finest touches of poetic execution.

A few months before the end of his life he may have been brought into communication with Shakespeare, who in such plays as *Richard II* and *Richard III* owed not a little to the influence of his romantic predecessor. It is as nearly certain that the plays *Edward III* and *Richard III*, usually included in editions of Shakespeare, are at least based on plays by Marlowe. Also, the better part in the serious scenes of Shakespeare's *King Henry VI* is considered to be mainly the work of Marlowe.

Marlowe was slain in a quarrel by a man variously named (Archer and Ingram) at Deptford, at the end of May 1593, and he was buried on the 1st of June in the churchyard of St Nicholas at Deptford. The following September Gabriel Harvey referred to him as "dead of the plague".

The place and the value of Christopher Marlowe as a leader among English poets is almost impossible for historical criticism to over-estimate. Never was any great writer's influence upon his fellows more utterly an influence for good. He first, and he alone, guided Shakespeare into the right way of work; his music found its own echo in the more prolonged harmony of Milton's. He is *the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer, in all English poetic literature*. Before him there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in the English language. After his arrival the way was prepared for Shakespeare.

## Questions for Self-Study and Seminars

1. The fifteenth century in English literature is sometimes called “the age of arrest.” Can you explain why? What causes account for the lack of great literature in this period?
2. What is meant by Humanism? What was the first effect of the study of Greek and Latin classics upon English literature? What excellent literary purposes did the classics serve in later periods?
3. What are the chief benefits to literature of the discovery of printing? What effect on civilization has the multiplication of books? What work of this period had the greatest effect on the English language?
4. What was the chief literary influence exerted by Wyatt and Surrey?
5. What historical conditions help to account for the great literature of the Elizabethan age? What are the general characteristics of Elizabethan literature?
6. Tell briefly the story of Spenser’s life. What is the story or argument of the Faery Queen? What is meant by the Spenserian stanza? Why is Spenser called the poets’ poet?
7. Give an outline of the origin and rise of the drama in England. What is meant by Miracle and Mystery plays? What purposes did they serve among the common people? How did the Moralities differ from the Miracles?
8. What are Marlowe’s chief plays? Why are they called one-man plays? What is meant by Marlowe’s “mighty line”?
9. What are the four periods of Shakespeare’s work, and the chief plays of each? Where did he find his plots? Name some of Shakespeare’s best tragedies, comedies, and historical plays. For what reasons is he considered the greatest of writers?
10. Name other contemporaries and successors of Shakespeare. Give some reasons for the preeminence of the Elizabethan drama. What causes led to its decline?

## **IV. THE STUARTS AND THE PURITANS (1603–1660)**

### ***The Seventeenth Century, 1603–1660.***

*The First Stuart Kings, James I (to 1625) and Charles I. Cavaliers and Puritans. The Civil War and the Commonwealth. Oliver Cromwell. The Drama, to 1642. The King James Bible, 1611. John Donne, 1572–1631. Lyric Poets. The “Metaphysical” religious poets. Cavalier poets. Milton, 1608–1674.*

1. *Jacobean Period* (1603–1625): Shakespeare’s later work, Ben Jonson, and John Donne.
2. *Caroline Age* (1625–1649): John Milton, George Herbert, Robert Herrick, the “Sons of Ben” and others write during the reign of Charles I and his Cavaliers.
3. *Commonwealth Period or Puritan Interregnum* (1649–1660): Under Cromwell’s Puritan dictatorship, John Milton continues to write, but we also find writers like Andrew Marvell and Sir Thomas Browne.

Jacobean Age was certainly the age of prose writing and Donne and Bacon were christened as propellers of doctrines proposed by them. Shakespeare with his tragedies and tragicomedies made an impact with the other notable playwrights such as Beaumont and Fletcher. Long narrative poems on heroic subjects mark the best work of classical Greek (Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) and Roman (Virgil's *Aeneid*) poetry. John Milton (1608–1674) who was Cromwell's secretary, set out to write a great biblical epic, unsure whether to write in Latin or English, but settling for the latter in *Paradise Lost*.

The greatest of Elizabethan lyric poets is John Donne, whose short love poems are characterized by wit and irony, as he seeks to wrest meaning from experience. The preoccupation with the big questions of love, death and religious faith marks out Donne and his successors who are often called *metaphysical poets*. (This name, coined by Dr. Samuel Johnson in an essay of 1779, was revived and popularized by T.S. Eliot, in an essay of 1921. It can be unhelpful to modern students who are unfamiliar with this adjective, and who are led to think that these poets belonged to some kind of school or group – which is not the case.) The best known of the other metaphysicals are George Herbert (1593–1633), Andrew Marvell (1621–1678) and Henry Vaughan (1621–1695).

## John Donne (1572–1631)



John Donne was born into a Catholic family in 1572, during a strong anti-Catholic period in England. Donne's father was a prosperous London merchant. His mother was the grand-niece of Catholic martyr Thomas More. Religion would play a tumultuous and passionate role in John's life.

He entered Oxford University at age 11 and later the University of Cambridge, but never received degrees, due to his Catholicism. At age 20, Donne began studying law at Lincoln's Inn and seemed destined for a legal or diplomatic career. During the 1590s, he spent much of his inheritance on women, books and travel. He wrote most of his love lyrics and erotic poems during this time. His first books of poems, "*Satires*" and "*Songs and Sonnets*," were highly prized among a small group of admirers.

In 1593, John Donne's brother, Henry, was convicted of Catholic sympathies and died in prison soon after. The incident led John to question his Catholic faith and inspired some of his best writing on religion. At age 25, Donne was appointed private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England.

On his way to a promising career, John Donne became a Member of Parliament in 1601. That same year, he married 16-year-old Anne More, the niece of Sir Egerton.

In 1610, John Donne published his anti-Catholic polemic "*Pseudo-Martyr*," renouncing his faith. In it, he proposed the argument that Roman Catholics could support James I without compromising their religious loyalty to the pope. This won him the king's favor and patronage from members of the House of Lords. In 1615, Donne



converted to Anglicanism and was appointed Royal Chaplain. His elaborate metaphors, religious symbolism and flair for drama soon established him as a great preacher.

In 1617, John Donne's wife died shortly after giving birth to their 12th child. The time for writing love poems was over, and Donne devoted his energies to more religious subjects. In 1621, Donne became dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. During a period of severe illness, he wrote "*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*," published in 1624. This work contains the immortal lines "No man is an island" and "never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

*"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee."*

*John Donne, No Man Is An Island*

That same year, Donne was appointed Vicar of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West and became known for his eloquent sermons.

As John Donne's health continued to fail him, he became obsessed with death. Shortly before he died, he delivered a pre-funeral sermon, "*Death's Duel*." His writing was charismatic and inventive. His compelling examination of the mortal paradox influenced English poets for generations.

### **Notable works**

1. "*Satires*" (1593).
2. "*Songs and Sonnets*" (1601).
3. "*Divine Poems*" (1607).
4. "*Psevdo-Martyr*" (1610).
5. "*An Anatomy of the World*" (1611).
6. "*Ignatius his Conclaue*" (1611).
7. "*The Second Anniuersarie. Of The Progres of the Soule*" (1611).
8. "*An Anatomie of the World*" (1612).
9. "*Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*" (1624) – private prayers.
10. "*Death's Duell*" (1632).
11. "*Ivvenilia*" (1633).
12. "*Sapientia Clamitans*" (1638).
13. "*Wisdom crying out to Sinners*" (1639).
14. "*Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*" (1651).
15. "*A Collection of Letters, Made by Sr Tobie Mathews, Kt.*" (1660).
16. "*Encania. The Feast of Dedication. Celebrated At Lincolnes Inne, in a Sermon there upon Ascension day*" (1623).
17. "*Three Sermons Upon Speciall Occasions*" (1623).
18. "*A Sermon, Preached To The Kings Mtie. At Whitehall*" (1625).
19. "*Five Sermons Vpon Speciall Occasions*" (1626).
20. "*A Sermon Of Commemoration Of The Lady Dãuers*" (1627).
21. "*Six Sermons Vpon Severall Occasions*" (1634).

22. *“Biathanatos: A Declaration of that Paradoxe, or Thesis that Self-homicide is not so”* (1644).
23. *“Naturally Sinne, that it may never be otherwise”* (1647).
24. *“Essayes in Divinity”* (1651).

### *Sonnet X*

*“Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
 Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
 For those, whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,  
 Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
 From rest and sleep, which but thy picture[s] be,  
 Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow,  
 And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
 Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
 Thou'rt slave to Fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
 And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
 And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,  
 And better than thy stroke ; why swell'st thou then?  
 One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
 And Death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die”.*

*(From Complete Poetry and Selected Prose)*

## **Ben Jonson** **(1572–1637)**



Benjamin Jonson (Ben) was an English Renaissance dramatist, poet and actor. A contemporary of William Shakespeare, he is best known for his satirical plays, particularly *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, which are considered his best, and his lyric poems. A man of vast reading and a seemingly insatiable appetite for controversy, Jonson had great influence on Jacobean and Caroline playwrights and poets.

Jonson attended school in St. Martin's Lane, and was later paid for by a friend to go to Westminster School. On leaving it, Jonson was once thought to have gone on to the University of Cambridge, but Jonson himself contradicts this, saying that he did not go to university, but was put to a trade, probably bricklaying, immediately: a legend recorded by Thomas Fuller indicates that he worked on a garden wall in Lincoln's Inn. He soon had enough of the trade and spent some time in the Low Countries as a volunteer with the regiments of Francis Vere. In conversations with poet William Drummond of Hawthornden, subsequently published

as the Hawthornden Manuscripts, Jonson reports that while in the Netherlands he killed an opponent in single combat and stripped him of his weapons.

Jonson married a woman whom he described to Drummond as “a shrew, yet honest.” His wife has not been definitively identified, but she is sometimes identified as the Ann Lewis who married a Benjamin Jonson at St Magnus-the-Martyr, near London Bridge. The registers of St. Martin’s Church state that his eldest daughter Mary died in November 1593, when she was six months old. His eldest son Benjamin died of the plague ten years later aged seven (Jonson's epitaph to him *On My First Sonne* was written shortly after), and a second Benjamin died in 1635. For five years during this period Jonson lived separately from his wife, enjoying the hospitality of Lord Aubigny.

By summer 1597 Jonson had begun to write original plays for the Admiral’s Men; in 1598 he was mentioned as one of “the best for tragedy.” None of his early tragedies survives, however. An undated comedy, *The Case is Altered*, may be his earliest surviving play.

In 1597 a play which he co-wrote with Thomas Nashe, *The Isle of Dogs*, was suppressed after causing great offence. Arrest warrants for Jonson and Nashe were issued by Queen Elizabeth I’s so-called interrogator, Richard Topcliffe. Jonson was jailed in Marshalsea Prison and charged with “Leude and mutynous behavior”, while Nashe managed to escape to Great Yarmouth. A year later, Jonson was again briefly imprisoned, this time in Newgate Prison, for killing Gabriel Spenser in a duel on 22 September 1598 in Hogsden Fields (today part of Hoxton). Tried on a charge of manslaughter, Jonson pleaded guilty but was released by benefit of clergy, a legal ploy through which he gained leniency by reciting a brief bible verse (the neck-verse). While in gaol Jonson converted to Catholicism, possibly through the influence of fellow-prisoner Father Thomas Wright, a Jesuit priest.

In 1598 Jonson produced his first great success, *Every Man in His Humour*, to which William Shakespeare was among the first actors to be cast. Jonson followed this in 1599 with *Every Man out of His Humour*, which, when published, proved popular and went through several editions.

Jonson’s enduring reputation rests on the comedies written between 1605 and 1614. The first of these, *Volpone*, or *The Fox* (performed in 1605–1606, first published in 1607) is often regarded as his masterpiece. The play, though set in Venice, directs its scrutiny on the rising merchant classes of Jacobean London. The following plays, *Epicoene*: or, *The Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) are all peopled with dupes and those who deceive them. For these works he was appointed as poet laureate and rewarded a substantial pension in the same year.

Jonson was the dean and the leading wit of the group of writers who gathered at the Mermaid Tavern in the Cheapside district of London. The young poets influenced by Jonson were the self-styled “sons” or “tribe” of Ben, later called the Cavalier poets, a group which included, among others, Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace.

Jonson was appointed City Chronologer of London in 1628, the same year in which he suffered a severe stroke. His loyal friends kept him company in his final years and attended the King provided him some financial comfort. Jonson died on August 6, 1637 and was buried in Westminster Abbey under a plain slab on which was later

carved the words, “O Rare Ben Jonson!” His admirers and friends contributed to the collection of memorial elegies, *Jonsonus virbius*, published in 1638. Jonson's last play, *Sad Shepherd's Tale*, was left unfinished at his death and published posthumously in 1641.

### Notable works

1. “*A Tale of a Tub*”, comedy (performed 1633; printed 1640).
2. “*The Isle of Dogs*”, comedy (1597, with Thomas Nashe; lost).
3. “*The Case is Altered*”, comedy (ca. 1597–1598; printed 1609).
4. “*Every Man in His Humour*”, comedy (performed 1598; printed 1601).
5. “*Every Man out of His Humour*”, comedy (performed 1599; printed 1600).
6. “*Cynthia's Revels*” (performed 1600; printed 1601).
7. “*The Poetaster*”, comedy (performed 1601; printed 1602).
8. “*Sejanus His Fall*”, tragedy (performed 1603; printed 1605).
9. “*Volpone*”, comedy (c. 1605–1606; printed 1607).
10. “*Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*”, comedy (performed 1609; printed 1616).
11. “*The Alchemist*”, comedy (performed 1610; printed 1612).
12. “*Catiline His Conspiracy*”, tragedy (performed and printed 1611).
13. “*Bartholomew Fair*”, comedy (performed 31 October 1614; printed 1631).
14. “*The Devil is an Ass*”, comedy (performed 1616; printed 1631).
15. “*The Staple of News*”, comedy (performed Feb. 1626; printed 1631).
16. “*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*”, comedy (printed 1631).
17. “*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconci'd*”, comedy (printed 1641).
18. “*The Sad Shepherd*”, pastoral (c. 1637, printed 1641), unfinished.
19. “*Mortimer his Fall*”, history (printed 1641), a fragment.
20. “*Masques*” (1609–1635).
21. “*Love's Welcome at Bolsover*” (30 July 1634; printed 1641).
22. “*Epigrams*” (1612).
23. “*The Forest*” (1616), including “*To Penshurst*”.
24. “*A Discourse of Love*” (1618).
25. “*Barclay's Argenis*”, translated by Jonson (1623).
26. “*The Execration against Vulcan*” (1640).
27. “*Horace's Art of Poetry*”, translated by Jonson (1640).
28. “*Underwoods*” (1640).
29. “*English Grammar*” (1640).
30. “*On My First Sonne*” (1616), elegy.
31. “*To Celia*” (Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes), poem.

*Since you must go, and I must bid farewell,  
Hear, mistress, your departing servant tell  
What it is like: and do not think they can  
Be idle words, though of a parting man.  
It is as if a night should shade noon-day,  
Or that the sun was here, but forced away;*

*And we were left under that hemisphere,  
Where we must feel it dark for half a year.  
What fate is this, to change men's days and hours,  
To shift their seasons, and destroy their powers!  
Alas! I have lost my heat, my blood, my prime,  
Winter is come a quarter ere his time.  
My health will leave me; and when you depart,  
How shall I do, sweet mistress, for my heart?*

*(From ELEGY in Underwoods)*

## **John Milton (1608–1674)**

*A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit,  
embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.*  
John Milton



John Milton was born on Bread Street, London, on 9 December 1608, as the son of the composer John Milton and his wife Sarah Jeffrey. He was educated at St. Paul's School, then at Christ's College, Cambridge. While at Cambridge he wrote a number of his well-known shorter English poems, among them *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, his *Epitaph on the admirable Dramatick Poet, W. Shakespeare*, his first poem to appear in print, *L'Allegro*. John wrote seven or eight poems in Latin while in school, but never at this time seriously considered a career of a writer. He read a great deal even beyond his schoolwork as preparation for a career in the Church or perhaps politics. After finishing his formal schooling, he took a tour of the Continent. Upon his return to England, John was planning out poetic epics and tragedies that he wanted to write, as writing began to interest him more and more.

In 1640, he began a campaign of pamphlets against the authority of the bishops, which many people at that time resented. In 1642, John married a woman named Mary Powell. She was 17. John was 34. Even though they were estranged for most of their marriage, she bore him three daughters and a son before her death in 1652.

The year 1652 was one of many personal losses for Milton. In February, Milton lost his sight. This prompted him to write the sonnet "When I Consider How My Light is Spent". In May, 1652, Mary gave birth to a daughter, Deborah, and died a few days later. In June, one year-old John died. Milton later married twice more: Katherine Woodcock in 1656, who died giving birth in 1658, and Elizabeth Minshull in 1662.

Milton became blind but blindness helped him to stimulate his verbal richness. "He sacrificed his sight, and then he remembered his first desire, that of being a poet," Borges wrote in one of his lectures. During his brief second marriage, Milton began

work on *Paradise Lost*, and Andrew Marvell began working for Milton as a secretary. Andrew was always a loyal friend to John, particularly when the Restoration hit and Charles II took the throne. John might easily have been hanged for his many services to the Commonwealth, but Andrew and several other people of influence spoke out on John's behalf. The newly-crowned king decided that sparing the elderly, blind poet would be viewed as a grand gesture, and anyway, a lot of Royalists really liked the sonnets John had written.

He lived the rest of his life in seclusion in the country, tutoring students and finishing his life's work, the epic, *Paradise Lost* in 1667, as well as its sequel *Paradise Regained* and the tragedy *Samson Agonistes* both in 1671. Milton oversaw the printing of a second edition of *Paradise Lost* in 1674, which included an explanation of "why the poem rhymes not," clarifying his use of blank verse, along with introductory notes by Marvell. He died shortly afterwards, on November 8, 1674, in Buckinghamshire, England. A monument to Milton rests in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey.

*Paradise Lost* is an epic poem in blank verse, considered by many scholars to be one of the greatest poems of the English language. The feat is all the more remarkable for Milton's blindness – he would compose verse upon verse at night in his head and then dictate them from memory to his aides in the morning. *Paradise Lost* finally saw publication in 1667, in twelve books. It was reissued in 1668 with a new title-page and additional materials. The book was met with instant success and amazement; even Dryden is reported to have said, "This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too." *Paradise Lost* tells the biblical story of the fall from grace of Adam and Eve (and, by extension, all humanity) in language that is a supreme achievement of rhythm and sound.

*Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat.*

At the same time, however, Milton's invocation is extremely humble, expressing his utter dependence on God's grace in speaking through him.

*Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Horeb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth  
Rose out of chaos; or if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God: I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.*

## Notable works

1. *"Accidence Commenced Grammar"*, a Latin grammar book (1669).
2. *"Animadversions"*, the third of John Milton's antiprelatical tracts (1641).
3. *"An Apology"*, the final of his antiprelatical tracts which criticize the structure of the Church of England (1642).
4. *"Areopagitica: A Speech of Mr John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed printing, to the Parliament of England"*, prose polemical tract against censorship (1644).
5. *"Art of Logic"*, a derivative treatise in the Ramist tradition (1672).
6. *"A Brief History of Moscovia"* (1682).
7. *"Brief Notes upon a Late Sermon"* (1660).
8. *"Character of the Long Parliament"* (1681).
9. *"Colasterion"*, a tract (1645).
10. *"A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political and Miscellaneous Works...both English and Latin"* (1694–1698).
11. *"Comus"*, a masque performed with music by Henry Lawes (1637).
12. *"Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church"* (1659).
13. *"Defensio pro populo Anglicano"*, a Latin polemic (1651).
14. *"Defensio Pro Se"*, a political tract (1655).
15. *"Defensio Secunda"*, a political tract (1654).
16. *"The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce"* (1643). This tract (full title: "The doctrine and discipline of divorce, restor'd to the good of both sexes from the bondage of canon law and other mistakes to Christian freedom, guided by the rule of charity") was a response to Milton's own experience of marriage breakdown. Divorce could only be granted by parliament; for ordinary people the only option was a judicial separation granted by the ecclesiastical courts, but this did not permit remarriage.
17. *"Eikonoklastes"*, a tractate (1649).
18. *"Epistolae Familiares and Prolusiones"*, letters (1674).
19. *"History of Britain"*, unfinished prose work (1670).
20. *"The Judgement of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce"*, translations of pro-divorce arguments from Martin Bucer's *De Regno Christi* (1644).
21. *"Lycidas"* (1638) elegy was written in memory of Edward King, a younger contemporary of Milton at Christ's College who had gone on to become a Fellow, and who drowned at sea in 1637.
22. *"Observations upon the Articles of Peace with the Irish Rebels"* (1649).
23. *"Paradise Lost"*, an epic poem in blank verse (1667).
24. *"Paradise Regained"* to which is added *Samson Agonistes*, a shorter epic supplement to *Paradise Lost* (1671).
25. *"Poems of Mr. John Milton, Both English and Latin..."* (1646).
26. *"The Ready and Easy Way To Establish a Free Commonwealth"*, a tractate (1660).

27. *"The Reason of Church Government Urged against Prelaty"*, pamphlets (1642).
28. *"Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England"*, pamphlets (1641).
29. *"Samson Agonistes"*, a tragic closet drama (1671).
30. *"On Shakespeare"*, a poem (1632).
31. *"Tetrachordon"*, prose work where Milton connects four passages of Biblical Scripture to rationalize the legalization of divorce (1645).
32. *"A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes"*, Treatise (1659).
33. *"Of True Religion"*, a tractate (1673).

### **Questions for Self-Study and Seminars**

1. What is meant by the Puritan period? What were the objects and the results of the Puritan movement in English history?
2. What are the main characteristics of the literature of this period? Compare it with Elizabethan literature. How did religion and politics affect Puritan literature?
3. Describe the Jacobean age. Who are the representatives of the period? What was peculiar about their writing?
4. Give a brief account of John Donne's life. What immortal lines are contained in his works?
5. What is Benjamin Jonson famous for in literature? What produced his first great success?
6. What is meant by the terms Cavalier poets, Spenserian poets, Metaphysical poets? Name the chief writers of each group.
7. Who was George Herbert? For what purpose did he write? What qualities are found in his poetry?
8. What is John Milton remarkable for? Tell about his life. What helped him to stimulate his verbal richness?
9. What are the three periods of Milton's literary work? Give the main idea or argument of *Paradise Lost*. What are the chief qualities of the poem?
10. What are the general characteristics of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*?

## **V. RESTORATION LITERATURE (1660–1700)**

***The Restoration Period, from the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the death of Dryden in 1700.***

*Charles II, 1660–1685. James II, 1685–1688. Pepys' Diary. The Restoration Drama. Dryden, 1631–1700. John Bunyan, "Pilgrim's Progress." 1678.*

This period marks the British king's restoration to the throne after a long period of Puritan domination in England. Its symptoms include the dominance of French and Classical influences on poetry and drama. Sample writers include John Dryden, John Bunyan, Sir William Temple, Samuel Pepys, and William Wycherley.



On the death of Oliver Cromwell (in 1658) plays were no longer prohibited, theatres were reopened and an important period in English drama began. Two types of plays dominated Restoration stages: *the comedy of manners* and *the heroic tragedy*.

The restoration period marked an influx of theater where William Wycherley and George Etherege developed a genre of Comedy of manners – a new kind of comic drama, dealing with issues of sexual politics among the wealthy and the bourgeois. The style developed well beyond the restoration period into the mid XVIIIth century almost. The total number of plays performed is vast, and many lack real merit, but the best drama uses the restoration conventions for a serious examination of contemporary morality. A play which exemplifies this well is *The Country Wife* by William Wycherley. *The Country Wife* entered around the nuances of bawdy language and semi-aristocratic flavour that delivered the eccentricities of characters with their names suggesting their counter characters, thus the play is allegorical with a completeness of its own.

## John Dryden (1631–1700)



After John Donne and John Milton, *John Dryden was the greatest English poet of the XVIIIth century*. After William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, he was *the greatest playwright*. And he has no peer as a writer of prose, especially literary criticism, and as a translator. He dominated the literary life of Restoration England to such a point that the period came to be known in literary circles as *the Age of Dryden*. Walter Scott called him “Glorious John.”

John Dryden was born at Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England, on August 19, 1631. He was the eldest of 14 children. He came of a Puritan family, which had been for years very active in the political world. On both sides Dryden’s family were of the Parliamentary party. Dryden received a classical education at Westminster School while there his first published work appeared. This was an elegy contributed in 1649 to the “*Lachrymæ Musarum*”, a collection of tributes in memory of Henry, Lord Hastings. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, 18 May, 1650, being elected to a scholarship on 2 October. He graduated as Bachelor of Arts, January, 1654, and after inheriting from his father a small estate worth £60 annually, he returned to Cambridge, living there until 1655. Then he moved to London in 1657 to commence his career as a professional writer. While living in London Dryden started working with the civil service and began in earnest writing plays of heroic tragedy and satires of varying success.

On 1 December 1663 Dryden married the daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, Lady Elizabeth Howard, with whom he had three sons. Elizabeth was the sister of his friend Sir Robert Howard. The Howard family was of considerable means and had long supported the royalist cause.

The young playwright's reputation grew quickly, and in 1668, only 10 years after his move to London, Dryden was appointed Poet Laureate of England. That same year, he agreed to write exclusively for Thomas Killigrew's theatrical company and became a shareholder.

Dryden tried his hand at opera, one of his efforts being the arrangement of Milton's "*Paradise Lost*" for a musical setting. Some of this work was composed by the celebrated Englishman, Henry Purcell. Dryden and Davenant together rewrote "*The Tempest*", giving Caliban and Ariel each a sister for some unknown reason. "*Romeo and Juliet*", revised by Dryden and his brother-in-law James Howard, had a happy ending, and was performed on alternate nights with the original play.

In poetry Dryden achieved something, what was neither the emotional excitement we find in the Romantic poets, nor the intellectual complexities of the metaphysical poets. His subject-matter was often factual, and he aimed at expressing his thoughts in the most precise and concentrated way. Although he used formal poetic structures such as heroic stanzas and heroic couplets, he tried to achieve the rhythms of speech.

John Dryden died on 12 May 1700 from inflammation caused by gout. He was buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey, London, England, nearby to his longtime friend William Congreve. Dryden was a good playwright and poet, a fine translator, a solid critic, and an excellent satirist whose works are still worthy of much admiration.

### Notable works

1. "*Upon the Death of Lord Hastings*", first poem (1649).
2. "*Heroic Stanzas on the death of Oliver Cromwell*", first important work (1658).
3. "*Astraea Redux*", a full-blown royalist panegyric in which Dryden welcomes the new regime of King Charles II (1660).
4. "*The Wild Gallant*", first play was a failure when first presented (1663).
5. "*The Indian Queen*", which he co-authored with Sir Robert Howard and which served as his initial attempt to found a new theatrical genre, the heroic tragedy (1664).
6. "*The Indian Emperor*" (1665) an English Restoration era stage play, a heroic drama written by John Dryden that was first performed in the Spring of 1665.
7. "*The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*", a comedy adapted by John Dryden and William D'Avenant from Shakespeare's comedy (1667).
8. "*Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen*", a tragicomedy (1667).
9. "*Essay of Dramatic Poesy*" (1668). It was probably written during the plague year of 1666. Dryden takes up the subject that Philip Sidney had set forth in his *Defence of Poesie* (1580) and attempts to justify drama as a legitimate form of "poetry" comparable to the epic, as well as defend English drama against that of the ancients and the French.
10. "*An Evening's Love, or The Mock Astrologer*", a comedy in prose (1668).
11. "*Tyrannick Love*", a tragedy in rhymed couplets (1669).
12. "*The Conquest of Granada*", a stage play, a two-part tragedy (1670).

13. "*Marriage à la Mode*", a comedy, written in a combination of prose, blank verse and heroic couplets (1672).
14. "*Amboyna, or the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants*", a tragedy (1673).
15. "*The Mistaken Husband*", a comedy in the canon (1674).
16. "*Aureng-zebe*", a drama (1675).
17. "*All for Love or, the World Well Lost*", a heroic drama (1677).
18. "*Oedipus*", a drama he had co-authored with Nathaniel Lee (1678).
19. "*Religio Laici, Or A Layman's Faith*" (1682) a poem, published as a premise to his subsequent "*The Hind and the Panther*" (1687), a final outcome of his conversion to Roman Catholicism.
20. "*The Threnodia Augustalis*" (1685) a 517-line occasional poem to commemorate the death of Charles II in February 1685.
21. "*The Hind and the Panther*", a poem, in three parts, an allegory in heroic couplets (1687).
22. "*Don Sebastian*", a story of a king who abdicates his throne after discovering that he has committed incest (1689).
23. "*Amphitryon*", a brilliant retelling of the classic myth (1690).
24. "*King Arthur or, The British Worthy*", a semi-opera in five acts with music by Henry Purcell and a libretto by John Dryden (1691).
25. "*Love Triumphant*", tragicomedy, his last play (1694).
26. "*Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Music*", an ode written to celebrate Saint Cecilia's Day (1697).
27. "*Fables, Ancient and Modern*", a collection of translations of classical and medieval poetry. It was his last and also one of his greatest works (1700).

*In days of old, when Arthur fill'd the throne,  
 Whose acts and fame to foreign lands were blown;  
 The king of elves and little fairy queen  
 Gamboll'd on heaths, and danced on every green;  
 And where the jolly troop had led the round,  
 The grass unbidden rose, and mark'd the ground:  
 Nor darkling did they dance, the silver light  
 Of Phoebe served to guide their steps aright,  
 And with their tripping pleased, prolong the night.  
 Her beams they follow'd, where at full she play'd,  
 Nor longer than she shed her horns they stay'd;  
 From thence with airy flight to foreign lands convey'd  
 Above the rest our Britain held they dear,  
 More solemnly they kept their sabbaths here,  
 And made more spacious rings, and revell'd half the year...*

(From *The Fables, The Wife of Bath, Her Tale*)

## William Wycherley (c. 1640–1715)



William Wycherley was an English dramatist of the Restoration period, best known for the plays *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer*.

He was born at Clive, Shropshire near Shrewsbury, where his family was settled on a moderate estate of about £600 a year. Wycherley spent some years of his adolescence in France, where he was sent, at fifteen, to be educated in the heart of the “precious” circle on the banks of the Charente.

While in France, Wycherley converted to Roman Catholicism. He returned to England shortly before the restoration of King Charles II, and lived at Queen’s College, Oxford where Thomas Barlow was provost. Under Barlow's influence, Wycherley returned to the Church of England. Wycherley only lived in the provost’s lodgings; he does not seem to have matriculated or taken a degree.

Wycherley left Oxford and took up residence at the Inner Temple, but gave little attention to the study of law. Pleasure and the stage were his only interests. His play, *Love in a Wood*, was produced early in 1671 at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. It was published the next year. Though Wycherley boasted of having written the play at the age of nineteen, before going to Oxford, this is probably untrue.

It is, however, his two last comedies – *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer* – that sustain Wycherley’s reputation. *The Country Wife*, produced in 1672 or 1673 and published in 1675, is full of wit, ingenuity, high spirits and conventional humour.

It was after the success of *The Plain Dealer* that the turning point came in Wycherley’s career. The great dream of all the men about town in Charles’s time, as Wycherley’s plays all show, was to marry a widow, young and handsome, a peer’s daughter if possible – but in any event rich, and spend her money upon wine and women. While talking to a friend in a bookseller’s shop at Tunbridge, Wycherley heard *The Plain Dealer* asked for by a lady who, in the person of the countess of Drogheda answered all the requirements. An introduction ensued, then love-making, then marriage – a secret marriage, probably in 1680, for, fearing to lose the king’s patronage and the income therefrom, Wycherley still thought it politic to pass as a bachelor.

But the news of his marriage reached the royal ears and Wycherley lost the royal favour for ever. The wife died, however, in the year after her marriage and left him the whole of her fortune. But the title to the property was disputed; the costs of the litigation were heavy – so heavy that his father was unable (or else he was unwilling) to come to his aid; and the result of his marrying the rich, beautiful and titled widow was that the poet was thrown into the Fleet prison. There he remained for seven years, being finally released by the liberality of James II.

Other debts still troubled Wycherley, however, and he never was released from his embarrassments, not even after succeeding to a life estate in the family property. In coming to Wycherley’s death, we come to the worst allegation that has ever been made

against him as a man and as a gentleman. At the age of seventy-five he married a young girl, and is said to have done so in order to spite his nephew, the next in succession, knowing that he himself must shortly die and that the jointure would impoverish the estate. Wycherley died on 1 January 1716, and was buried in the vault of the church in Covent Garden.

### Notable works

1. *"The Mulberry-Garden"* (1668).
2. *"The Rehearsal"* (1671).
3. *"Marriage à la mode"* (1672).
4. *"The Country Wife"* (1675).
5. *"The Plain-Dealer"* (1676).
6. *"The Man of Mode"* (1676).
7. *"The Rover"* (1677).
8. *"Sodom"* (1684).
9. *"Bellamira"* (1687).
10. *"Love's Last Shift"* (1696).
11. *"The Relapse"* (1696).
12. *"The Way of the World"* (1700).
13. *"The Recruiting Officer"* (1706).
14. *"The Beaux' Stratagem"* (1707).
15. *"A Bold Stroke for a Wife"* (1717).

*Poets, like cudgelled bullies, never do  
At first or second blow submit to you;  
But will provoke you still, and ne'er have done,  
Till you are weary first with laying on.  
The late so baffled scribbler of this day,  
Though he stands trembling, bids me boldly say,  
What we before most plays are used to do,  
For poets out of fear first draw on you;  
In a fierce prologue the still pit defy,  
And, ere you speak, like Castril give the lie.  
But though our Bayes's battles oft I've fought,  
And with bruised knuckles their dear conquests bought;  
Nay, never yet feared odds upon the stage,  
In prologue dare not hector with the age;  
But would take quarter from your saving hands,  
Though Bayes within all yielding countermands,  
Says, you confederate wits no quarter give,  
Therefore his play shan't ask your leave to live.*

*(From Prologue to The Country Wife)*

## John Bunyan (1628–1688)



John Bunyan (28 November 1628 – 31 August 1688) was an English Christian writer and preacher, who is well known for his book *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

He was born in November, 1628, at Elstow, a little village in Bedfordshire (England). He came from a working class family, and he understood poverty, firsthand. Bunyan wrote with some exaggeration of his modest origins, "My descent was of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families of the land." Although today he is regarded as a literary genius, he had little formal education. At the

age of 16, this rough and profane young man enlisted in the army of Parliament, and saw active duty during the English Civil War. After the civil war was won by the Parliamentarians, Bunyan returned to his former trade.

In 1647, at the age of 19, he married a young woman, who persuaded him to attend church with her regularly, where he heard the Gospel. After deep and prolonged soul struggle, he made a complete surrender to Christ, and was converted, after which he was baptized and joined the Baptist church of Bedford. Soon, he began to preach there and also in the surrounding villages, which caused the people to recognize in him elements of leadership as well as ability as an expositor of the Scriptures.

He was also known as *an adept linguist, he wrote a series of books about religion.*

### Notable works

1. *"Profitable Meditations"* (1661).
2. *"I Will Pray with the Spirit"* (1663).
3. *"Christian Behavior"* (1663).
4. *"The Holy City"* (1665).
5. *"The Resurrection of the Dead"* (1665).
6. *"Grace Abounding"*, an autobiography (1666).
7. *"Life and Death of Mr. Badman"* (1680).
8. *"The Holy War"* (1682).
9. *"Pilgrim's Progress, Second Part"* (1684).

His most well-known work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was written while in the Bedford jail. During Bunyan's lifetime there were 100,000 copies circulated in the British Isles, besides several editions in North America. *It has been continuously in print since its first printing.* Bunyan's remarkable imagery was firmly rooted in the

Reformation doctrines of man's fallen nature, grace, imputation, justification, and the atonement-all of which Bunyan seems to have derived directly from Scripture.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* tells of the flight of a Christian from the City of Destruction. As he is fleeing from home with the burden of his sins upon his back, he falls into the Slough (a deep ditch) of Despond, but frees himself with the assistance of Help, passes through a little wicket-gate, and so begins his journey to the Celestial City. He loses his burden at the Cross, fights with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, is terrified in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, suffers in Vanity Fair, is almost overcome in Doubting Castle by Giant Despair, but at last reaches the Delectable Mountains and the Land of Beulah. He then crosses the River of Death and is received into the Celestial City. In the course of his long journey or pilgrimage, Christian meets Pliable, Mr. Worldly-Wise, Talkative, Lord Hategood, Mr. Facing-both-ways, and others, all allegorical character, but very real.

Bunyan's use of allegory in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is clearly evident. Bunyan chooses names for the various characters which Christian encounters on his journey that are laden with obvious allusions to Christian virtues and vices. The reader does not have to toil in order to decipher Bunyan's allegorical meaning; the character named Evangelist is, obviously, an evangelist. Likewise, if a character is called Hopeful or Mr. Money-Love, it is obvious that they each embody the traits suggested by their respective names. Oftentimes, Bunyan juxtaposes characters whose names appear to be polar opposites. For example, he couples Obstinate with Pliable. In doing so he further establishes the meaning of the names of his characters; the reader might view Obstinate's pigheadedness in light of Pliable's softness. As a result, the true nature of each character's core is truly confirmed.

Bunyan's brand of religion (Baptist) was a hybrid of English Protestantism, and the newly emerging sects of Calvinism and Puritanism. These branches of Protestantism focused on liberty of conscience or religious autonomy. Bunyan was greatly influenced by the social philosophies of John Locke; who perpetuated the notion of the 'natural rights' of man and is also quoted as stating that "*religious conviction should come from persuasion, not from coercion*". Bunyan expresses his feelings in regards to religious individualism in *The Pilgrim's Progress*; his pilgrim, Christian, is on an individual and very personalized journey toward salvation. Christian is willing to abandon his family, his home, and all familiarity in order to achieve the ultimate goal of salvation; Bunyan advocates a school of Puritanism in which the "pilgrim" rejects society. Christian's allegiance to his own soul is significant because it reflects the growing support for religious separatism that Bunyan strongly advocated.

*AS I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a Dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a Man cloathed with Rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a Book in his hand, and a great Burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the Book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying "What shall I do?"*

(From *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 1)

## Samuel Pepys (1633–1703)



Samuel Pepys was born on February 23, 1633, the son of a London tailor, and fifth of eleven children. He first attended the Huntingdon Free School, and then St. Paul's School. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1650, but shortly transferred to Magdalene College, Cambridge, graduating B.A. in 1653.

In 1654, Pepys became secretary to Sir Edward Montagu, later Earl of Sandwich, a distant relative. Soon after, Pepys became a clerk of the Exchequer, and married Elizabeth St. Michel in 1655. In 1660, Pepys was made Clerk of the King's Ships to the Navy Board.

On January 1, 1660, at the age of 27, Pepys began his *Diary*. It was written in the shorthand system established by Thomas Shelton, and covered *nine years not only of Pepys' life, but of London events*. The passages on the Plague (1665–1666), The Great Fire of London (1666), and the arrival of the Dutch fleet (1665–1667) are *invaluable firsthand accounts to historians*.

Pepys stopped writing his diary in the spring of 1669 – at the age of 36, his eyesight had gotten worse, and he feared losing his sight altogether. The following 34 years brought him more appointments and acclaim. Pepys became a Member of Parliament and Secretary of the Admiralty in 1673, and took part in organizing the navy during the war with the Dutch in 1672–1674. In 1679, Pepys was accused of giving naval secrets to the French in the Popish Plot, and he was imprisoned in the Tower for six weeks. Pepys was soon cleared of charges, however, and was reinstated as Secretary to the Admiralty in 1684. He served as President of the Royal Society from 1684–1686, and retired from public service in 1689 at the accession of King William III.

In 1690, Pepys published his *Memoirs of the Royal Navy*. After this, Pepys spent most of his time building and cataloging a library of his own. In 1701, when his health began to fail, he moved to Clampham, where he completed his collection of 3,000 books. When Pepys died on May 26, 1703, his library, including his *Diary*, was bequeathed to his nephew John Jackson, and subsequently to Magdalen College – under the condition that the contents would never be altered. Samuel Pepys was laid to rest in St. Olave's Church, Hart Street. The Diary was first partially deciphered in 1819, and published in 1825.

*January 7<sup>th</sup>. Lord Brouncker tells me that my Lady Denham is at last dead. Some suspect her poisoned, but it will be best known when her body is opened to-day, she dying yesterday morning. The Duke of York is troubled for her; but hath declared he will never have another public mistress again; which I shall be glad of, and would the King would do the like. He tells me how the Parliament is*



*grown so jealous of the King's being unfayre to them in the business of the Bill for examining Accounts, Irish Bill, and the business of the Papists, that they will not pass the business for money till they see themselves secure that those Bills will pass; which they do observe the Court to keep off till all the Bills come together, that the King may accept what he pleases, and what he pleases to object to. He tells me how Mr Henry Howard of Norfolke hath given our Royal Society all his grandfather's library: which noble gift they value at £1000; and gives them accommodation to meet in at his house (Arundell House), they being now disturbed at Gresham College. To the Duke's house, and saw "Macbeth", which though I saw it lately, yet appears a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in a tragedy...*

*(From The Diary, 1666)*

### **Questions for Self-Study and Seminars**

1. What are the chief characteristics of Restoration literature? Why is this period called the Age of French influence?
2. What new tendencies were introduced? What types of plays dominated Restoration stages?
3. What effect did the Royal Society and the study of science have upon English prose?
4. What is meant by the heroic couplet? Explain why it became the prevailing form of English poetry.
5. Give a brief account of Dryden's life. What are his chief poetical works? For what new object did he use poetry? What was Dryden's contribution to English prose? What influence did he exert on English literature?
6. For what is Wycherley famous in literature? What was the main idea of his works?
7. Tell the story of Bunyan's life. What unusual elements are found in his life and writings?
8. Give the main argument of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Why is it a work for all ages and for all races? What are the chief qualities of Bunyan's style?
9. What marked change in social conditions followed the Restoration? How are these changes reflected in literature?
10. Tell briefly the story of Pepys and his Diary. What light does the latter throw on the life of the age? Is the Diary a work of literature? Why?

## VI. THE AUGUSTAN AGE (1700–1750)

*PSEUDO-CLASSIC LITERATURE.* Swift, 1667–1745. Addison, 1672–1719. Steele, 1672–1729. Pope, 1688–1744. Defoe, 1661–1731. “*Robinson Crusoe*”, 1718–1720. Richardson, 1689–1761. “*Pamela*”, 1740. Fielding, 1707–1754. Sterne.

This period is marked by the imitation of Virgil and Horace’s literature in English letters – *pseudo-classical (or the neoclassical) period*. The principal English writers include Addison, Steele, Swift, and Alexander Pope.

Jonathan Swift wrote satires in verse and prose. He is best-known for the extended prose work *Gulliver’s Travels*, in which a fantastic account of a series of travels is the vehicle for satirizing familiar English institutions, such as religion, politics and law. Another writer who uses prose fiction, this time much more naturalistic, to explore other questions of politics or economics is Daniel Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*.

The first English novel is generally accepted to be *Pamela* (1740), by Samuel Richardson: this novel takes the form of a series of letters; Pamela, a virtuous housemaid resists the advances of her rich employer, who eventually marries her. Richardson’s work was almost at once satirized by Henry Fielding in *Joseph Andrews* (Joseph is depicted as the brother of Richardson’s Pamela Andrews) and *Tom Jones*.

### **Jonathan Swift** **1667–1745**



Jonathan Swift was an Anglo-Irish poet, writer and cleric who gained reputation as *a great political writer and an essayist*. Jonathan, who became Dean of St. Patrick’s in Dublin, is also *known for his excellence in satire*. His most remembered works include *Gulliver’s Travels*, *A Modest Proposal*, *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* and *A Tale of a Tub*.

Jonathan Swift was born on 30 November 1667 in Dublin, Ireland to an Irish father Jonathan Swift and an English mother Abigail Erick. Jonathan, who was second child and the only son of his parents, was born seven months after his father’s death.

Jonathan Swift’s mother left him with his father’s family and returned to England. After losing his parent’s contact, Jonathan stayed with his uncle Godwin, who sent him to Kilkenny College for studies.

After completing primary schooling, Jonathan went on to study at the Dublin University in 1682, and received a B.A. Degree in 1686. He had to drop his further studies after a political clash broke in Ireland. Jonathan was forced to leave the place and moved to England in 1688, where with the help of his mother, he secured a job as secretary of an English diplomat Sir William Temple at Moor Park.

Swift left Temple in 1690 because of his persisting illness but returned in the next year. Throughout his life, Swift suffered periods of illness. Based on descriptions of his symptoms, it has been concluded that he suffered from what is now known as Meniere's disease. Jonathan received his M.A. degree from the Oxford University in 1692 and left Moor Park and moved to Ireland where he was appointed as a priest in the Church of Ireland.

Jonathan Swift again returned to Temple in 1696 forever. Working as an assistant to Temple, he was given many responsibilities such as writing memoirs and correspondence for publication. Swift wrote *The Battle of the Books* in 1690, a satire, which was finally published in 1704. After Temple's death on 27 January 1699, Swift stayed in England for a brief period and returned to Ireland to become Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

Swift was awarded Doctor of Divinity from Trinity College, Dublin in 1702. During this period he wrote *A Tale of Tub* and his previous work *A Battle of Books* was published. Swift was a member of the Martinus Scriblerus Club, a society of writers that included Swift's friends Alexander Pope and John Gay.

During years 1707–1709, Swift remained politically active and again in 1710, he traveled to London seeking the claims of Irish clergy to the First-Fruits and Twentieths.

As his urges to the Whig administration of Lord Godolphin went unheeded, he published a political pamphlet *The Conduct of the Allies* in 1711. The pamphlet harshly criticized the Whig government for its incapability to end the war with France. Tory government, an opposition party to the Whig government, recruited Swift as editor of *The Examiner* when it came in power in 1710.

When Swift began his first employment, he first met *Esther Johnson* the "Stella" of his famous *Journal to Stella*, who was 8 years old at the time. She was the daughter of a servant at Moor Park, and Swift – who was 22 years old – taught her how to write and formed a lifelong friendship with her. While some believe the two were married later in life, no conclusive evidence has been found. But it was certain that she held a special place in his heart throughout his life.

In his later life, Swift was linked to another fatherless girl, *Esther Vanhomrigh* (known by the pseudonym Vanessa), who presumably was infatuated with him, though Swift later tried to break off relationship with her. Some people even accused Swift of inadvertently causing her death. Her will finished with the words about the man whose neglect made her "*live a life like a languishing death*".

With Whig government coming to power, Jonathan Swift left England for one more time. He returned to Ireland and began a series of political writing in Irish support. Some of his notable works during this period are *Proposal for Universal Use of Irish Manufacturer* (1720), *Drapier's Letters* (1724) and *A Modest Proposal* (1729).

Esther Johnson's death on 28 January 1728 shattered him and pushed him in to a state of mental illness. He wrote his book *The Death of Mrs. Johnson* as a tribute to Esther Johnson after her death. Moved by her death, Swift began to write extensively on death and in 1731, he wrote *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, which was published in 1739. Before that in 1738, he had begun to show signs of mental illness and gradually lost his ability to speak and walk. With most of his close friends dead, Swift bequeathed much of his fortune to the founding of what was then known as St. Patrick's Hospital

for Imbeciles (One of the wards is named “Vanessa” in honor of Esther Vanhomrigh.) On 19 October 1745 Jonathan Swift died. In accordance to his wishes, he was buried near the grave of Esther Johnson.

## Notable works

### Essays, tracts, pamphlets, periodicals

1. “*A Meditation upon a Broomstick*” (1703–1710).
2. “*A Critical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind*” (1707–1711).
3. “*The Bickerstaff-Partridge Papers*” (1708–1709).
4. “*An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*” (1708–1711).
5. “*The Examiner*” (1710).
6. “*A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*” (1712).
7. “*On the Conduct of the Allies*” (1713).
8. “*Hints Toward an Essay on Conversation*” (1713).
9. “*The Intelligencer (with Thomas Sheridan)*” (1719–1788).
10. “*A Letter to a Young Gentleman, Lately Entered into Holy Orders*” (1720).
11. “*A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet*” (1721).
12. “*Drapier’s Letters*” (1724, 1725).
13. “*Bon Mots de Stella*” (1726).

### Poems

14. “*Ode to the Athenian Society*” (1691).
15. “*Baucis and Philemon*” (1706–1709).
16. “*A Description of the Morning*” (1709).
17. “*A Description of a City Shower*” (1710).
18. “*Cadenus and Vanessa*” (1713).
19. “*Phyllis, or, the Progress of Love*” (1719).
20. “*Stella’s birthday poems*” (1719, 1720, 1727).
21. “*The Progress of Beauty*” (1719–1720).
22. “*The Progress of Poetry*” (1720).
23. “*A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General*” (1722).
24. “*To Quilca, a Country House not in Good Repair*” (1725).
25. “*Advice to the Grub Street Verse-writers*” (1726).
26. “*The Furniture of a Woman’s Mind*” (1727).
27. “*On a Very Old Glass*” (1728).
28. “*A Pastoral Dialogue*” (1729).
29. “*The Grand Question debated Whether Hamilton’s Bawn should be turned into a Barrack or a Malt House*” (1729).
30. “*On Stephen Duck, the Thresher and Favourite Poet*” (1730).
31. “*Death and Daphne*” (1730).
32. “*The Place of the Damn’d*” (1731).
33. “*A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*” (1731).
34. “*Strephon and Chloe*” (1731).

35. "*Helter Skelter*" (1731).
36. "*Cassinus and Peter: A Tragical Elegy*" (1731).
37. "*The Day of Judgment*" (1731).
38. "*Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D.S.P.D.*" (1731–1732).
39. "*An Epistle To A Lady*" (1732).
40. "*The Beasts' Confession to the Priest*" (1732).
41. "*The Lady's Dressing Room*" (1732).
42. "*On Poetry: A Rhapsody*" (1733).

#### **Correspondence, personal writings**

43. "*When I Come to Be Old*" (1699).
44. "*The Journal to Stella*" (1710–1713).

#### **Most famous for**

45. "*A Tale of a Tub*", satire (1704).
46. "*The Battle of the Books*" (part of the prolegomena to *A Tale of a Tub*), satire (1704).
47. "*An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*", essay (1708).
48. "*Gulliver's Travels*" (*Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships*), satire, phantasy (1726).
49. "*A Modest Proposal*" (*A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People From Being a Burden on Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Publick*), satirical essay (1729).

Swift's satirical masterpiece *Gulliver's Travels* appeared in 1726, it was amended in 1735. He usually wrote under pseudonym or anonymously because of his political satires.

The work purported to be the travels of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, and Swift told his story in the first person, with simplicity and directness. *The Travels constitute a subtle commentary on political and social conditions in XVIIIth-century England.* Gulliver first visits Lilliput, a land of pygmies. Their court factions and petty intrigues seem ridiculous on so miniature a scale. He next visits Brobdingnag, a land of giants. When he relates the glories of England, the inhabitants are as disdainfully and scornfully amused as he had been in the land of the Lilliputians. Gulliver's third voyage carries him to the flying island of Laputa, the Island of the Sorcerers, and the land of the Struldbrugs. Their inhabitants exhibit the extremities of literary and scientific pedantry, the deceptiveness of written history, and the curse of the desire for immortal life. Gulliver's final visit, to the land of the Houyhnhnms, a country governed by noble and rational horses who are served by bestial creatures in debased human form, shows the depths to which mankind may sink when it allows passions to overcome reason.

One of interesting facts is that Jonathan Swift described the two moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, giving their exact size and speeds of rotation in *Gulliver's Travels*. He did this more than 100 years before either moon was discovered. Swift crater, a crater on Mars's moon Deimos, is named after Jonathan Swift.

A possible reason for *the book's classic status* is that it can be seen as many things to many different people. Broadly, the book has *three themes*:

1) a satirical view of the state of European government, and of petty differences between religions;

2) an inquiry into whether men are inherently corrupt or whether they become corrupted;

3) a restatement of the older “ancients versus moderns” controversy previously addressed by Swift in *The Battle of the Books*.

*...I shall say but little at present of their learning, which, for many ages, has flourished in all its branches among them: but their manner of writing is very peculiar, being neither from the left to the right, like the Europeans, nor from the right to the left, like the Arabians, nor from up to down, like the Chinese, but aslant, from one corner of the paper to the other, like ladies in England.*

*They bury their dead with their heads directly downward, because they hold an opinion, that in eleven thousand moons they are all to rise again; in which period the earth (which they conceive to be flat) will turn upside down, and by this means they shall, at their resurrection, be found ready standing on their feet. The learned among them confess the absurdity of this doctrine; but the practice still continues, in compliance to the vulgar.*

*There are some laws and customs in this empire very peculiar; and if they were not so directly contrary to those of my own dear country, I should be tempted to say a little in their justification. It is only to be wished they were as well executed. The first I shall mention, relates to informers. All crimes against the state, are punished here with the utmost severity; but, if the person accused makes his innocence plainly to appear upon his trial, the accuser is immediately put to an ignominious death...*

*(From Gulliver's Travels, Chapter 6)*

## Quotes

- “May you live every day of your life”.
- “When a great genius appears in the world you may know him by this sign; that the dunces are all in confederacy against him”.
- “Vision is the art of seeing things invisible”.
- “We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another”.
- “Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed”.
- “I never wonder to see men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed”.
- “Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through”.
- “No wise man ever wished to be younger”.

## Alexander Pope (1688–1744)



The English poet Alexander Pope is regarded as *one of the finest poets and satirists of the Augustan period and one of the major influences on English literature in his time and after*. He was an essayist, poet, critic, translator, and satirist.

Alexander Pope was born on May 21, 1688, in London, England, to Alexander and Edith Pope. His family moved out of London and settled in Binfield. Pope had little formal schooling and educated himself through extensive studying and reading, especially poetry.

Although Pope was healthy and plump in his infancy, he became severely ill later in his childhood, which resulted in a slightly disfigured body – he never grew taller than 4 feet 6 inches. He suffered from curvature of the spine, which required him to wear a stiff canvas brace. He had constant headaches. His physical appearance, frequently ridiculed by his enemies, undoubtedly gave an edge to Pope's satire (humor aimed at human weaknesses), but he was always warm-hearted and generous in his affection for his many friends.

Pope was precocious as a child and attracted the notice of a noted bookseller who published his *Pastorals* (1709). *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) immediately made Pope famous as a poet. It was a long humorous poem in the classical style. Several other poems were published by 1717, the date of the first collected edition of Pope's works. Pope also engaged in poetic imitations and translations. His *Messiah* (1712) was an imitation of Virgil. He also did a version of Geoffrey Chaucer's poetry in the English of Pope's day. But it was Pope's versions of Homer (*Iliad*, *Odyssey*) that were his greatest achievement as a translator.

Pope also undertook several editorial projects. Parnell's *Poems* (1721) was followed by an edition of the late Duke of Buckingham's *Works* (1723). Then, in 1725, Pope's six volumes on the works of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) were published. Pope's edits and explanatory notes were notoriously capricious.

In 1726 and 1727 the writer Jonathan Swift was in England and a guest of Pope. Together they published three volumes of poetry. Renewed contact with Swift must have given a driving force to Pope's poem on "Dulness", which appeared as the three-book *Dunciad* (1728). Clearly Pope used *Dunciad* as personal satire to pay off many old scores. But it was also prompted by his distaste for that whole process by which worthless writers gained undeserved literary prominence. In 1742 Pope published a fourth book to *Dunciad* separately, and his last published work was the four-volume *Dunciad* in 1743. The *Dunciad* is a dense and demanding poem. Pope's eighteenth-century poetic diction is challenging enough; even harder are the poem's form, with its parody of pedantic scholarship, and its references to dozens of forgotten names. Jonathan Swift, to whom *The Dunciad* was dedicated, warned Pope that "twenty

miles from London nobody understands hints, initial letters, or town facts and passages; and in a few years not even those who live in London.”

Alexander Pope once wrote: “They dream in courtship, but in wedlock wake.” While he never married, Pope valued his friendship with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (while it lasted).

Pope’s friendship with the former statesman Henry St. John Bolingbroke, stimulated his interest in philosophy and led to the composition of *An Essay on Man*. In essence, the Essay is not philosophy but a poet’s belief of unity despite differences, of an order embracing the whole multifaceted creation. Pope’s sources were ideas that had a long history in Western thought. The most central of these was the doctrine of plenitude, which Pope expressed through the metaphors of a “chain” or “scale” of being. He also asserted that the discordant parts of life are bound harmoniously together.

Pope wrote *Imitations of Horace* from 1733 to 1738. He also wrote many “epistles” and defenses of his use of personal and political satire. As Pope grew older he became more ill. He described his life as a “long disease”, and asthma increased his sufferings in his later years. At times during the last month of his life he became delirious. Pope died on May 30, 1744, and was buried in Twickenham Church.

### Notable works

1. “*Pastorals*” (1709).
2. “*An Essay on Criticism*” (1711).
3. “*Messiah*” (1712).
4. “*The Rape of the Lock*” (1712, enlarged in 1714).
5. “*Windsor Forest*” (1713).
6. “*Translation of the Iliad*” (1715–1720).
7. “*Eloisa to Abelard*” (1717).
8. “*Three Hours After Marriage, with others*” (1717).
9. “*Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*” (1717).
10. “*The Works of Shakespear, in Six Volumes*” (1723–1725).
11. “*Translation of the Odyssey*” (1725–1726).
12. “*Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry*” (1727).
13. “*The Dunciad*” (1728).
14. “*Essay on Man*” (1733–1734).
15. “*The Prologue to the Satires*” (1735).

*You, that too Wise for Pride, too Good for Pow’r,  
Enjoy the Glory to be Great no more,  
And carrying with you all the World can boast,  
To all the World Illustriously are lost!  
O let my Muse her slender Reed inspire,  
’Till in your Native Shades You tune the Lyre:  
So when the Nightingale to Rest removes,*



*The Thrush may chant to the forsaken Groves,  
But charm'd to Silence, listens while She sings,  
And all th' Aerial Audience clap their Wings.*

*(From The First Pastoral. Spring)*

## **Joseph Addison (1672–1719)**



Joseph Addison was an English essayist, poet, playwright and politician. He was a man of letters, eldest son of Lancelot Addison. His name is usually remembered alongside that of his long-standing friend, Richard Steele, with whom he founded *The Spectator* magazine.

Addison was born in Milston, Wiltshire, but soon after his birth his father, Lancelot Addison, was appointed Dean of Lichfield and the Addison family moved into the cathedral close. He was educated at Charterhouse School, where he first met Richard Steele, and at The Queen's College, Oxford. He excelled in classics, being specially noted for his Latin verse, and became a Fellow of Magdalen College. In 1693, he addressed a poem to John Dryden, and his first major work, a book of the lives of English poets, was published in 1694. His translation of Virgil's *Georgics* was published the same year. Dryden, Lord Somers and Charles Montagu, 1st Earl of Halifax took an interest in Addison's work and obtained for him a pension of £300 to enable him travel to Europe with a view to diplomatic employment, all the time writing and studying politics. While in Switzerland in 1702, he heard of the death of William III, an event which lost him his pension, as his influential contacts, Halifax and Somers, had lost their employment with the Crown.

He returned to England at the end of 1703. For more than a year he remained without employment, but the Battle of Blenheim in 1704 gave him a fresh opportunity of distinguishing himself. The government, more specifically Lord Treasurer Godolphin, commissioned Addison to write a commemorative poem, and he produced *The Campaign*, which gave such satisfaction that he was forthwith appointed a Commissioner of Appeals in Halifax's government. His next literary venture was an account of his travels in Italy, which was followed by an opera libretto titled *Rosamund*. In 1705, with the Whigs in political power, Addison was made Under-Secretary of State and accompanied Halifax on a mission to Hanover. Addison's biographer states that "In the field of his foreign responsibilities Addison's views were those of a good Whig. He had always believed that England's power depended upon her wealth, her wealth upon her commerce, and her commerce upon the freedom of the seas and the checking of the power of France and Spain".

From 1708 to 1709 he was MP for the rotten borough of Lostwithiel. Addison was shortly afterwards appointed secretary to the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wharton, and Keeper of the Records of that country. Under the influence of Wharton,

he was Member of Parliament in the Irish House of Commons for Cavan Borough from 1709 until 1713. From 1710, he represented Malmesbury, in his home county of Wiltshire, holding the seat until his death.

He encountered Jonathan Swift in Ireland and remained there for a year. Subsequently, he helped found the Kitcat Club and renewed his association with Richard Steele. In 1709 Steele began to bring out The Tatler, to which Addison became almost immediately a contributor: thereafter he (with Steele) started The Spectator, the first number of which appeared on 1 March 1711. This paper, which at first appeared daily, was kept up (with a break of about a year and a half when the Guardian took its place) until 20 December 1714.

In 1713 Addison's tragedy *Cato* was produced, and was received with acclamation by both Whigs and Tories. He followed this effort with a comedic play, *The Drummer* (his last undertaking was *The Freeholder*, a party paper, 1715–1716).

The later events in the life of Addison did not contribute to his happiness. In 1716, he married the Dowager Countess of Warwick to whose son he had been tutor, and his political career continued to flourish, as he served Secretary of State for the Southern Department from 1717 to 1718. However, his crazy government newspaper, The Freeholder, was much criticised, and Alexander Pope was among those who made him an object of derision, christening him "Atticus". His wife appears to have been arrogant and imperious; his stepson the seventh Earl was unfriendly to him; while in his public capacity his invincible shyness made him of little use in Parliament. He eventually fell out with Steele over the Peerage Bill of 1719. In 1718, Addison was forced to resign as secretary of state because of his poor health, but remained an MP until his death at Holland House, London on 17 June 1719, in his 48th year, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

### Notable works

1. "A Poem to his Majesty", poetry (1695).
2. "A Letter from Italy" (1704).
3. "The Campaign" (1704).
4. "Remarks on Several Parts of Italy", travelogue (1705).
5. "Cato" (1713).
6. "The Drummer" (1716).

*If yet your thoughts are loose from state affairs,  
Nor feel the burden of a kingdom's cares,  
If yet your time and actions are your own,  
Receive the present of a Muse unknown:  
A Muse that in adventurous numbers sings  
The rout of armies, and the fall of kings,  
Britain advanced, and Europe's peace restored,  
By Somers' counsels, and by Nassau's sword.  
To you, my lord, these daring thoughts belong,  
Who helped to raise the subject of my song.*

(From *A Poem to his Majesty*)

**Sir Richard Steele**  
**(pseudonym Isaac Bickerstaff)**  
**(1672–1729)**



The British essayist, dramatist, journalist and politician, best known as principal author of the periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, was born in poor circumstances in Dublin, Ireland, in March 1672. The exact date of his birth is not known, but he was baptized on March 12. Steele's name is associated with that of Joseph Addison, with whom he collaborated. Steele's father, an attorney, died in 1676, and his mother died the next year. Steele was brought up by his aunt and uncle, Lady Katherine Mildmay and Henry Gascoigne. His extended family were influential Protestant gentry, but little is known of his parents.

At fourteen, Steele went to the Charterhouse School, where he met Addison. Both Steele and Addison went to Oxford, Steele entering Christ Church in 1689 and transferring to Merton College in 1691. His Oxford career was undistinguished, and he left in 1692 without taking a degree in order to volunteer for cadet service under the command of the Duke of Ormonde. Steele then served in the Life Guards and later transferred to the Coldstream Guards. In 1695 Lord Cutts, to whom Steele had dedicated a poem on the funeral of Queen Mary, became Steele's patron. Steele first served him as private secretary and then became an officer in Cutts's regiment in 1697. Two years later Steele received a captaincy in a foot regiment. During these years of military service in London, Steele became acquainted with a circle of literary and artistic figures, and he began to write.

A constant need for money dominated much of Steele's life because his spending habits were impulsive and extravagant. In 1705 he married an elderly and propertied widow, Margaret Stretch. She died in 1706, leaving him an annual income of £850, and in 1707 Steele married Mary Scurlock (died 1718), the "Dear Prue" of a series of delightful letters he addressed to her. They had four children, but only Elizabeth, the eldest daughter, survived to maturity. Steele lived in considerable style after his second marriage, and his habits continued to be free-spending and improvident. He left the army in 1707, or perhaps earlier, and in the years following secured several minor appointments.

Steele became a Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom in 1713, but was soon expelled for issuing a pamphlet in favour of the Hanoverian succession. After the accession of George I to the English throne in 1714, Steele obtained a number of political favors. In 1715 he was knighted and was reelected to Parliament. Steele's intemperance gradually undermined his health, and he suffered from gout for many years. In 1724 – still notoriously improvident, impulsive, ostentatious, and generous – Steele was forced to retire from London because of his mounting debts and his

worsening health. He went to live on his wife's estate of Llangunnor in Wales, and in 1726 he suffered a paralytic stroke. His health broken, Steele died at Carmarthen, Wales, on Sept. 1, 1729.

Steele was buried at St Peter's Church. During restoration of the church in 2000, his skull was discovered in a lead casket, having previously been accidentally disinterred during the 1870s.

Sir Richard Steele considered himself an innovator and an educator in XVIIIth-century England, working to replace the lewd comedies of the Restoration era with a new type of drama that would be more effective in providing moral education for the public. The new values of Steele's "sentimental comedy" are expressed in "*The Conscious Lovers*" by two significant innovations to Restoration drama. Firstly, the play's purpose is not only to move the audience by depicting scenes of emotional distress, but also *to provide a guideline for a more restrained and refined behavior* in the emerging English middle class. Secondly, *the classical theory of comedy is altered by making the protagonist a positive, exemplary hero* rather than a negative example of how not to behave.

His first journal *The Tatler* ran three times a week, and there Steele wrote under a pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff which gave him an entire, fully developed personality. Steele described his motive in writing *The Tatler* as "to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behavior." *The Spectator* was published daily and included essays on relationships between the sexes, manners, London life, taste, and politics. It was a joint venture of Steele and Addison, who was the chief contributor to the new paper. *The Spectator* assembled a club of narrators whose personalities, eccentricities, and political viewpoints were revealed in concrete detail.

### Notable works

1. "*The Christian Hero*" (1701) – a prose treatise. In this reforming tract and moral manual, Steele contrasted the passion and universal heroism of Christianity with his perception of the false reasoning of Stoicism of the Roman emperors. He was criticized for publishing a booklet about morals when he, himself, enjoyed drinking, occasional dueling, and debauchery around town.

2. "*The Funeral, or Grief à la Mode*" (1701) – a play; a comedy. A didactic satire on hypocritical undertakers and dishonest lawyers, it was praised by William III. It was met with wide success and was performed at Drury Lane, bringing him to the attention of the King and the Whig party.

3. "*The Lying Lover, or The Ladies' Friendship*" (1702) – a play; a comedy. He continued his didactic dramatic vision, portraying virtuous characters as models for audiences to emulate, as opposed to the predominantly "immoral" characters on the Restoration stage.

4. "*The Tender Husband, or The Accomplished Fools*" (1705) – a play; an imitation of Moliere's *Sicilien*. It achieved some success, perhaps because Addison helped him write it.

5. *"The Crisis"* (1706) – a pamphlet, attacking the Tory ministry for its unenthusiastic support for a Protestant successor to the throne.
6. *"The Conscious Lovers"* (1722) – a play; a comedy, based on Terence's *Andria*. It is a fine example of XVIIIth century. Sentimental comedy, in it Steele portrayed ideals of male and female manners.
7. *"Dear Prue"* – a series of letters addressed to his 2d wife Mary Scurlock.

## **Daniel Defoe** **(c. 1661–1731)**



Daniel Defoe, born Daniel Foe, was an English trader, writer, journalist, pamphleteer and spy, who gained fame for his work *"Robinson Crusoe"*. Defoe is notable for being one of the earliest proponents of the novel, as he helped to popularise the form in Britain, and *is among the founders of the English novel*. A prolific and versatile writer, he wrote more than 500 books, pamphlets and journals on various topics (including politics, crime, religion, marriage, psychology and the supernatural).

Daniel Foe, or Defoe, as he afterwards called himself, was born in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, London. Socially, his position differed from that of his greatest contemporaries in literature. By inheritance and conviction he was a Dissenter in religion; by occupation he belonged to the trading, or merchant class. When he was about eighteen, he left school, and set up for himself in the hosiery business. He took a keen interest in politics and in social and public questions, and held decided views. A few years later he failed in business, and after a time he became connected with a brick and tile manufactory at Tilbury. This has been called "the most prosperous and honourable period of his life". Defoe's brief interval of prosperity was suddenly brought to an end by the King's death in 1702. He had pleased nobody, and, as he says, the whole "world flew at him like a dog with a broom at his tail." He was condemned by the authorities to stand in the pillory at Temple Bar, and imprisoned for nearly two years in Newgate. But misfortune and imprisonment were powerless to tame his indomitable spirit or check his restless energy. Defoe aimed to set forth and discuss the current news not of England only, but of a great part of Europe. After Defoe was released from prison in 1704, his course became less open and straightforward.

Yet it would be a great mistake to think of him as habitually willing to sacrifice his principles to his personal advantage. Addison called him a "false, shuffling, prevaricating rascall"; but, under all his tricks and disguises, there was a basis of conscience and of stubborn integrity. His position was often equivocal, his actions ambiguous; but on the whole *he worked consistently for the promotion of civil and religious liberty*, the cause in which he believed; he changed his party, but he remained

essentially loyal to his principles; and, while he did not scruple to employ falsehood, he used it in the service of what he honestly believed to be the truth.

Up to this time he had made no great and permanent contribution to his country's literature. He had written much, and he had profoundly influenced the men of his own time. Yet, at sixty he published "*Robinson Crusoe*", a story which promises to delight the world so long as the spirit of manly adventure and the love of the marvelous survive in the heart of man.

It has a basis of fact, for it was founded on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, an English sailor, who, in 1704, was abandoned by his companions on the island of Juan Fernandes. The production of such a book remains one of the marvels of literature. The success of the book diverted Defoe's energies into a new channel, and he wrote a number of other stories which make his later years the most brilliant literary period of his life. Among these "secondary novels", as Lamb called them, "*The Memories of a Cavalier*", "*The Life of Captain Singleton*", "*Moll Flanders*" and "*The History of Colonel Jack*", are perhaps the best known. As a whole, none of these stories is equal to their great forerunner; yet they are full of marvelous bits of descriptive writing, and contain single scenes of *great dramatic and narrative power*.

When he published "*Robinson Crusoe*", Defoe was in easy circumstances; but towards the close of his life he became again involved in difficulties, and even his strong and brave spirit was at last shaken by repeated misfortunes. Beset by poverty and troubles, he writes the year before his death:

*"I am so near my journey's end, and am hastening to the place where the weary are at rest; be it that the passage is rough and the day stormy, by what way soever He please to bring me to the end of it, I desire to finish life with this temper of soul in all cases – Te Deum Laudamus".*

His magnificent vitality which had brought him through so much now at last broke, and he "died of a lethargy" in a London lodging-house in 1731. He was buried in a famous Non-conformist cemetery in Bunhill Fields, London; and his grave is now marked by a monument erected to the author of "*Robinson Crusoe*" by the children of many lands.

## Notable works

### Fiction

1. "*The Consolidator or, Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon*" (1705).
2. "*Atlantis Major*" (1711).
3. "*Robinson Crusoe*" (1719).
4. "*The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*" (1719).
5. "*The King of Pirates*" (1719).
6. "*Captain Singleton*" (1720).
7. "*Memoirs of a Cavalier*" (1720).
8. "*A Journal of the Plague Year*" (1722).
9. "*Moll Flanders*" (1722).

10. *"Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress"* (1724).

**Non-fiction**

11. *"The Storm"* (1704).

12. *"The Family Instructor"* (1715).

13. *"A General History of the Pyrates"* (Defoe's authorship of this pseudonymous work is disputed) (1724).

14. *"A tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain, divided into circuits or journies"* (1724–1727).

15. *"The Political History of the Devil"* (1726).

16. *"The Shortest Way with the Dissenters"* (1703).

17. *"Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe"* (1720).

18. *"An Essay Upon Literature"* (1726).

19. *"Mere Nature Delineated"* (1726).

20. *"Conjugal Lewdness"* (1727).

21. *"A Plan of the English Commerce"* (1728).

22. *"The True-Born Englishman: A Satyr"* (1701).

23. *"Hymn to the Pillory"* (1703).

*Whenever God erects a house of prayer,  
The devil always builds a chapel there;  
And 'twill be found, upon examination,  
The latter has the largest congregation.*

*(The True-Born Englishman: A Satire (1701))*

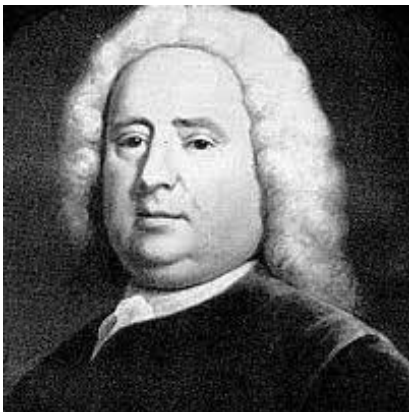
*"...However, as I went down thus two or three days, and having seen nothing, I began to be a little bolder, and to think there was really nothing in it but my own imagination: but I could not persuade my self fully of this till I should go down to the shore again, and see this print of a foot, and measure it by my own, and see if there was any similitude or fitness, that I might be assured it was my own foot. But when I came to the place, first, it appeared evidently to me, that when I laid up my boat, I could not possibly be on shore any where there about; secondly, when I came to measure the mark with my own foot, I found my foot not so large by a great deal. Both these things filled my head with new imaginations, and gave me the vapours again to the highest degree; so that I shook with cold, like one in an ague; and I went home again, filled with the belief that some man or men had been on shore there; or in short, that the island was inhabited, and I might be surprised, before I was aware; and what course to take for my security I knew not..."*

*(From "Robinson Crusoe", Ch. "Footprint")*

## Quotes

- *I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to women.*
- *All our Discontents about what we want, appeared to me, to spring from the Want of Thankfulness for what we have.*
- *Expect nothing and you'll always be surprised.*
- *Fear of danger is ten thousand times more terrifying than danger itself.*
- *It is never too late to be wise.*
- *I saw the Cloud, though I did not foresee the Storm.*
- *I hear much of people's calling out to punish the guilty, but very few are concerned to clear the innocent.*
- *The best of men cannot defend their fate: the good die early, the bad die late.*

## Samuel Richardson (1689–1761)



Born in Derbyshire, Richardson was one of nine children of a joiner, or carpenter. After his writing ability was known, he began to help others in the community write letters. In particular, Richardson, at the age of thirteen, helped many of the girls that he associated with to write responses to various love letters they received.

He became an apprentice printer to John Wilde and learned his trade well from that hard master for 7 years. After serving as “Overseer and Corrector” in a printing house, he set up shop for himself in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, in 1720, where he married, lived for many years, and carried on his business. Within 20 years he had built up one of the largest and most lucrative printing businesses in London. Although he published a wide variety of books, including his own novels, he depended upon the official printing that he did for the House of Commons for an important source of income.

In his final years, Richardson received visits from Archbishop Secker, other important political figures, and many London writers. By that time, he enjoyed a high social position and was Master of the Stationers’ Company.

After June 1758, Richardson began to suffer from insomnia, and in June 1761, he was afflicted with apoplexy.

Fiction, including the novel told in letters, had become popular in England before Samuel Richardson’s time, but *he was the first English novelist to perfect the form* in which he chose to work. Richardson chose to focus his attention on the limited problems of marriage and of the heart, matters to be treated with seriousness. In so doing, however, he also provided his readers with an unparalleled study of the social



and economic forces that were bringing the rising, wealthy English merchant class into conflict with the landed aristocracy.

Samuel Richardson wrote *the longest novel in the English language, Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* – about 1 million words. He is *known to be the first English modern novelist, and was the first English writer whose main characters were women, not men*. *Clarissa* was published in 1748. It is an epistolary novel – composed entirely of letters written by the characters. These letters reveal plot, conflict, characterization, and themes of the novel. The story is of *Clarissa* and the young man *Lovelace* whose desperation to marry *Clarissa* and not her sister compels him to abduct her hoping she'll consent to marry him. It is a story of love, abduction, rape, revenge written in what many consider to be endless, tedious letters.

### Notable works

1. *"Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded"* (1740).
2. *"Letters written to and for Particular Friends, on the most Important Occasions"* (1741).
3. *"Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady"* (1747–1748).
4. *"The History of Sir Charles Grandison"* (1753–1754).
5. *"The apprentice's vade mecum"* (1733–1734).
6. *"A seasonable examination of playhouses"* (1735).

#### MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

*John being to go your way, I am willing to write, because he is so willing to carry any thing for me. He says it does him good at his heart to see you both, and to hear you talk. He says you are both so sensible, and so honest, that he always learns something from you to the purpose. It is a thousand pities, he says, that such worthy hearts should not have better luck in the world! and wonders, that you, my father, who are so well able to teach, and write so good a hand, succeeded no better in the school you attempted to set up; but was forced to go to such hard labour. But this is more pride to me, that I am come of such honest parents, than if I had been born a lady...*

*(From "Pamela", LETTER V)*



### Henry Fielding (1707–1754)

The English author and magistrate Henry Fielding was one of the great novelists of the XVIIIth century. His fiction, plays, essays, and legal pamphlets show he was a humane and witty man, with a passion for reform and justice. Henry Fielding was an English novelist and dramatist known for his rich earthy humour and satirical prowess, and as the author of the novel *Tom Jones*.

Aside from his literary achievements, he has a significant place in the history of law-enforcement, having founded (with his half-brother John) what some have called London's first police force, the Bow Street Runners, using his authority as a magistrate. His younger sister, Sarah, also became a successful writer.

Fielding was born at Sharpham and was educated at Eton College. After a romantic episode with a young woman that ended in his getting into trouble with the law, he went to London where his literary career began. In 1728, he travelled to Leiden to study classics and law at the University. However, due to lack of money, he was obliged to return to London and he began writing for the theatre, some of his work being savagely critical of the contemporary government under Sir Robert Walpole.

The Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737 is alleged to be a direct response to his activities. The particular play that triggered the Licensing Act was "*The Golden Rump*", but Fielding's satires had set the tone. Fielding, therefore, retired from the theatre and resumed his career in law and, in order to support his wife Charlotte Cradock and two children, he became a barrister.

His lack of financial sense meant that he and his family often endured periods of poverty, but he was helped by Ralph Allen, a wealthy benefactor who later formed the basis of Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones*. After Fielding's death, Allen provided for the education and support of his children.

Fielding never stopped writing political satire and satires of current arts and letters. His "*Tragedy of Tragedies*" of Tom Thumb was, for example, quite successful as a printed play. He also contributed a number of works to journals of the day. He wrote for Tory periodicals, usually under the name of "Captain Hercules Vinegar". During the late 1730s and early 1740s Fielding continued to air his liberal and anti-Jacobite views in satirical articles and newspapers. Fielding took to writing novels in 1741 and his first major success was "*Shamela*", an anonymous parody of Richardson's melodramatic novel.

He followed this up with "*Joseph Andrews*" (1742), an original work supposedly dealing with Pamela's brother, Joseph. Although begun as a parody, this work developed into an accomplished novel in its own right and *is considered to mark Fielding's debut as a serious novelist*. In 1743, he published a novel in the *Miscellanies* volume III (which was the first volume of the *Miscellanies*). This was "*The History of the Life of the Late Mr Jonathan Wild the Great*". This novel is sometimes thought of as his first because he almost certainly began composing it before he wrote "*Shamela*" and "*Joseph Andrews*". It is a satire of Walpole that draws a parallel between Walpole and Jonathan Wild, the infamous gang leader and highwayman. He implicitly compares the Whig party in Parliament with a gang of thieves being run by Walpole, whose constant desire to be a "Great Man" (a common epithet for Walpole) should culminate only in the antithesis of greatness: being hanged.

His anonymously-published "*The Female Husband*" (1746) is a fictionalized account of a notorious case in which a female transvestite was tried for duping another woman into marriage. Though a minor item in Fielding's total *oeuvre*, the subject is consistent with his ongoing preoccupation with fraud, sham, and masks. His greatest work was "*Tom Jones*" (1749), a novel telling the convoluted and hilarious tale of how a foundling came into a fortune.

In his final years, Fielding's determination to suppress crime and administer justice led him to assist his half-brother, Sir John Fielding, in establishing the "Bow Street Runners", an embryonic police force, while writing on contemporary legal debates (1749–1752). In 1754 he sailed to Portugal in an attempt to improve his failing health and wrote "*The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*" (published posthumously in 1755). He died in Lisbon and was buried there.

### Notable works

1. "*The Masquerade*", a poem (Fielding's first publication).
2. "*Love in Several Masques*", play (1728).
3. "*Rape upon Rape*", play (1730). Adapted by Bernard Miles as *Lock Up Your Daughters!* in 1959, filmed in 1974.
4. "*The Author's Farce*", play (1730).
5. "*The Letter Writers*", play (1731).
6. "*The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*", play (1731).
7. "*Grub-Street Opera*", play (1731).
8. "*The Modern Husband*", play (1732).
9. "*The Lotterry*", play (1732).
10. "*The Covent Garden Tragedy*", play (1732).
11. "*The Intriguing Chambermaid*", play (1734).
12. "*Pasquin*", play (1736).
13. "*Eurydice Hiss'd*", play (1737).
14. "*The Historical Register for the Year 1736*", play (1737).
15. "*An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*", novel (1741).
16. "*The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend, Mr. Abraham Abrams*", novel (1742).
17. "*The Life and Death of Jonathan Wild, the Great*", novel, ironic treatment of Jonathan Wild, the most notorious underworld figure of the time. Published as Volume 3 of *Miscellanies* (1743).
18. "*Miscellanies*", collection of works, contained the poem Part of Juvenal's Sixth Satire, Modernized in Burlesque Verse (1743).
19. "*The Female Husband or the Surprising History of Mrs Mary alias Mr George Hamilton, who was convicted of having married a young woman of Wells and lived with her as her husband, taken from her own mouth since her confinement*", pamphlet, fictionalized report (1746).
20. "*The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*", novel (1749).
21. "*A Journey from this World to the Next*", (1749).
22. "*Amelia*", novel (1751).
23. "*The Covent Garden Journal*", periodical (1752).
24. "*Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*", travel narrative (1755).
25. "*The Fathers: Or, the Good-Natur'd Man*", play, first published in 1778.

*“Peradventure there may be no parts in this prodigious work which will give the reader less pleasure in the perusing, than those which have given the author the greatest pains in composing. Among these probably may be reckoned those initial essays which we have prefixed to the historical matter contained in every book; and which we have determined to be essentially necessary to this kind of writing, of which we have set ourselves at the head.*

*For this our determination we do not hold ourselves strictly bound to assign any reason; it being abundantly sufficient that we have laid it down as a rule necessary to be observed in all prosai-comi-epic writing. Who ever demanded the reasons of that nice unity of time or place which is now established to be so essential to dramatic poetry? What critic hath been ever asked, why a play may not contain two days as well as one? Or why the audience (provided they travel, like electors, without any expense) may not be wafted fifty miles as well as five? Hath any commentator well accounted for the limitation which an antient critic hath set to the drama, which he will have contain neither more nor less than five acts? Or hath any one living attempted to explain what the modern judges of our theatres mean by that word low; by which they have happily succeeded in banishing all humour from the stage, and have made the theatre as dull as a drawing-room! Upon all these occasions the world seems to have embraced a maxim of our law, viz., cuicumque in arte sua perito credendum est: for it seems perhaps difficult to conceive that any one should have had enough of impudence to lay down dogmatical rules in any art or science without the least foundation. In such cases, therefore, we are apt to conclude there are sound and good reasons at the bottom, though we are unfortunately not able to see so far”.*

(From “*The History of Tom Jones*”)

## **Laurence Sterne** **(1713–1768)**



Laurence Sterne was born 24 November 1713 in Clonmel, County Tipperary. His father, Roger Sterne, was an Ensign in a British regiment recently returned from Dunkirk. At age 10, Sterne was sent to school at Hipperholme, near Halifax, where his uncle, Richard Sterne, whose estate was nearby, could look out for him. Sterne attended Jesus College, Cambridge, on a scholarship. At college he met his great friend John Hall-Stevenson (Eugenius in his fiction) and also suffered his first severe hemorrhage of the lungs. He had incurable tuberculosis.

After graduating he took holy orders and became vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest, north of York. He soon became a prebendary (or canon) of York Minster and acquired the vicarage of Stillington.

Sterne fell in love with Elizabeth Lumley, a cousin to Elizabeth Montagu, the bluestocking. They married in 1741. According to the account of an acquaintance, Sterne's infidelities were a cause of discord in the marriage. Externally, his life was typical of the moderately successful clergy. But Elizabeth, who had several stillborn children, was unhappy. Only one child, Lydia, lived.

In 1759, to support his dean in a church squabble, Sterne wrote *A Political Romance* (later called *The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*), a Swiftian satire of dignitaries of the spiritual courts. At the demands of embarrassed churchmen, the book was burned. Thus, Sterne lost his chances for clerical advancement but discovered his real talents; until the completion of this first work, "he hardly knew that he could write at all, much less with humour so as to make his reader laugh". Having discovered his talent, at the age of 46, he turned over his parishes to a curate, and gave himself up to the exercise and delight of humor writing for the rest of his life. He began *Tristram Shandy*. He wrote as fast as he possibly could, composing the first 18 chapters between January and March 1759.

By March 1760, when he went to London, *Tristram Shandy* was the rage, and he was famous. Sterne returned north joyfully to settle at Coxwold in his beloved "Shandy Hall", a charming old house that is now a museum. He began to write at Shandy Hall during the summers, going to London in the winter to publish what he had written. In 1767 he published the final volume of *Tristram Shandy*. Soon thereafter he fell in love with Eliza Draper, who was half his age and unhappily married to an official of the East India Company. They carried on an open, sentimental flirtation, but Eliza was under a promise to return to her husband in Bombay. After she sailed, Sterne finished *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy, by Mr. Yorick*, published it to acclaim early in 1768, and collapsed.

Lying in his London lodgings, he put up his arm as though to ward off a blow, saying, "Now it is come," and died. Soon after burial at London, Sterne's body was stolen by grave robbers, taken to Cambridge, and used for an anatomy lecture. Someone recognized the body, and it was quietly returned to the grave. The story, only whispered at the time, was confirmed in 1969: Sterne's remains were exhumed and now rest in the churchyard at Coxwold, close to Shandy Hall.

### Notable works

1. "*The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered*", charity sermon, novel (1747).
2. "*The Unknown World. Verses Occasioned by Hearing a Pass-Bell*", poem (1743).
3. "*A Sentimental Journey*", novel (1768).
4. "*A Political Romance or The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat*", satire novel (1759).
5. "*A Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais*", piece on the art of preaching (1759).
6. "*The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*", a novel (1760–1766).

7. “*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*” (or “*Tristram Shandy*”), novel (1759–1767).

*...But this is nothing at all to the world: only 'tis a cursed thing to be in debt; and there seems to be a fatality in the exchequers of some poor princes, particularly those of our house, which no Economy can bind down in irons: for my own part, I'm persuaded there is not any one prince, prelate, pope, or potentate, great or small upon earth, more desirous in his heart of keeping straight with the world than I am – or who takes more likely means for it. I never give above half a guinea – or walk with boots – or cheapen tooth-picks – or lay out a shilling upon a band-box the year round; and for the six months I'm in the country, I'm upon so small a scale, that with all the good temper in the world, I outdo Rousseau, a bar length – for I keep neither man or boy, or horse, or cow, or dog, or cat, or any thing that can eat or drink, except a thin poor piece of a Vestal (to keep my fire in), and who has generally as bad an appetite as myself – but if you think this makes a philosopher of me – I would not, my good people! Give a rush for your judgments. True philosophy – but there is no treating the subject whilst my uncle is whistling Lillabullero.*

(From “*Tristram Shandy*”, book V, Ch. 23)

### Questions for Self-Study and Seminars

1. Describe briefly the social development of the XVIIIth century. What effect did this have on literature? What accounts for the prevalence of prose?
2. How do you explain the fact that satire was largely used in both prose and poetry? Name the principal satires of the age. What is the chief object of satire? of literature?
3. Why is this period called the Augustan Age? Why was Shakespeare not regarded by this age as a classical writer?
4. What is the general character of Swift's work? Name his chief satires. Can you explain the continued popularity of *Gulliver's Travels*?
5. In what respect is Pope a unique writer? What are his principal works? How does he reflect the critical spirit of his age? What are the chief characteristics of his poetry?
6. What great work did Addison do for literature? How is his work a preparation for the novel?
7. Tell the story of Steele's life. What are new values of Steele's “sentimental comedy”?
8. For what is Defoe remarkable in literature? What was his social position?
9. What is meant by the modern novel? How does it differ from the early romance and from the adventure story? What are some of the precursors of the novel?
10. What is the significance of *Pamela*? What elements did Fielding add to the novel?

## VII. THE AGE OF JOHNSON (1750–1784)

*Samuel Johnson. Burke. Oliver Goldsmith. Richard Sheridan. James Boswell, "Life of Johnson", 1791.*

This period marks the transition toward the upcoming Romanticism though the period is still largely Neoclassical. Major writers include Dr. Samuel Johnson, Boswell, and Edward Gibbon who represent the Neoclassical tendencies.

### **Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)**



Next only to William Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson is perhaps the most quoted of English writers. The latter part of the XVIIIth century is often (in English-speaking countries, of course) called, simply, **the Age of Johnson**.

Johnson was born in Lichfield, Staffordshire, England, in 1709. From his nurse he contracted a tubercular infection called scrofula, which left him deaf in the left ear, almost blind in the left eye, and dim of vision in the right eye. It also left scar tissue which disfigured his face, as did a later childhood bout with small-pox.

Young Johnson responded to his disabilities by a fierce determination to be independent and to accept help and pity from no one. Throughout his life, he feared that ill health would tempt him to self-indulgence and self-pity, and bent over backwards to resist the temptation.

When he was eight years old, he stopped going to church, and abandoned his religion. A few years later, however, he began to think that it was wrong of him to do so without investigating the matter, and the pangs of guilt he had over not having read theology before rejecting it brought him to the conclusion that there must be a Moral Law (else what is guilt about?) and hence a Lawgiver.

As a youth, he developed a fondness for disputation, and often, as he admits, chose the wrong side of the debate because it would be more challenging.

In October, 1728 Johnson entered Pembroke College, Oxford., but after one year was forced to drop out due to absence of money. He wrote a short poem, *The Young Author*, dealing with the dreams of greatness of someone just starting to write, and the almost certain destruction of those dreams. The moral is: "Do not let yourself hope for much, and you will be the less disappointed".

Out of Oxford, with no hope of the academic career for which his native talents suited him, Johnson sank for two years into a deep depression. He feared that he was falling into insanity, and considered suicide. He developed convulsive tics, jerks, and twitches, that remained with him for the remainder of his life, and often caused observers who did not know him to think him an idiot.

In 1735 Johnson married Elizabeth Porter. There is every indication that it was a love match on both sides. On her side, the love was reinforced by the perception of

future greatness. On Johnson's side, the love was reinforced by gratitude toward the woman whose approval and acceptance had given him back his sanity and self-respect.

Johnson began to do small writing jobs for The Gentleman's Magazine, the first example of a magazine in the modern sense. In the next few years, he wrote articles on demand for the Gentleman's Magazine and other publications.

As his biographer Bate puts it, there are "*short biographies of men noted in medicine, science, literature, naval exploration, and warfare; poems in both Latin and English; monthly articles... on... political and other current events abroad... and other writings that show his knowledge not only of literature, politics, religion, and ethics, but also agriculture, trade, and practical business; philology, classical scholarship, aesthetics, and metaphysics; medicine and chemistry; travel, exploration, and even Chinese architecture*".

In 1748 Johnson began work on a *Dictionary of the English Language*. It was agreed that England needed a first-rate dictionary, and Johnson undertook the job. His work has served as the basis for all English dictionaries since. Johnson, in one room with mostly borrowed books and six copyists, completed his task in nine years. *The Dictionary* was published in 1755. Oxford University rewarded him with a Master of Arts degree, which came in time for him to include it on the title page of the *Dictionary*. Many doors had previously been closed to him by the absence of a college degree. That problem was now behind him.

In the fall of 1748, while working on the Dictionary, he wrote a 368-line poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. *It is the first work that he published under his own name*. Its theme is the complete inability of this world to offer lasting satisfaction and peace, and the consequent necessity of seeking the heart's desire elsewhere. He continued writing as a moralist, but in the form of prose essays. From March of 1750 to March of 1752, for two years, he published every Tuesday and Saturday a periodical he called the Rambler, each issue consisting of an essay by himself, 208 essays in all (four essays and parts of three others are by other writers).

The essays in the Rambler, although many of them are explicitly moralistic, are almost never explicitly Christian, or even religious. Yet there is no doubt that Johnson intended them to serve a Christian purpose.

Johnson wrote a series of sermons for his friend John Taylor. One of them deals with trust in God. A problem for Johnson was that, although he had no trouble seeing that his attitude toward God ought to be one of trust and dependency, his constant struggle since infancy with his physical disabilities had instilled in him a strong habit of self-reliance and rejection of help from others. Habit and theory were thus at constant war.

In 1756, after finishing the Dictionary, he was asked to supervise a new periodical, the Literary Magazine. In the first year, he wrote reviews of Sir Isaac Newton's proofs of God, Francis Home's Experiments On Bleaching, Jonas Hanway on tea, Hoadley and Wilson's Observations On a Series of Electrical Experiments, of works on beekeeping, distilling sea water, Ben Jonson, the court of the Emperor Augustus, dealings with the Mohawk Indians, and the national debt.

In the spring of 1759 he wrote a short novel, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. It is the story of a prince who has led a sheltered life, and who goes out to



explore the world and learn the meaning of life and the secret of happiness. It has been translated into at least 14 other languages, and continues to be read with pleasure (and, presumably, profit) by many. *It sums up his career as a moralistic writer.*

In July of 1762 the Prime Minister awarded Johnson a pension for life of 300 pounds a year.

On Monday 16 May 1763, Johnson met James Boswell for the first time, an admirer of Johnson's writing. Ten years later, Boswell decided to write a life of Johnson, a "life in Scenes".

In 1756, just after the completion of the Dictionary, Johnson was encouraged to undertake a new edition of the works of Shakespeare, with (a) explanatory notes, (b) an analysis and commentary on each play, and (c) an attempt at establishing a standard text by comparing the variations in early copies of the plays and determining wherever possible the correct original reading. The work took nine years, and was published in 1765.

In 1777 a group of booksellers decided to publish a series of volumes of recent (since 1660) English poets. They asked Johnson to write a biographical sketch of each poet (a list of 47 names, later expanded to 52) for inclusion in the volumes. They were envisioning perhaps two or three pages on each poet. He gave them about 370,000 words in all, simply because, once he got started, he enjoyed the work, and thought it worth while. The project took four years, being completed in 1781.

On 17 June 1783, Johnson found on awaking that he was suffering a stroke. He could not rise from bed. He tried to speak, and found that, although he could think the words, he could not say them. As time passed he slowly recovered the power of speech. But now various ailments were converging upon him: circulatory problems; bronchitis and emphysema; congestive heart failure; and progressive rheumatoid arthritis.

He died quietly on the evening of Monday 13 December 1784. His friend William Gerard Hamilton, member of Parliament, said: "*He has made a chasm which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up. Johnson is dead. Let us go to the next best. There is nobody; no man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson*".

## Notable works

1. *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755).

### Poetry

2. "*Messiah*" (1728).
3. "*London*" (1738).
4. "*Prologue at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane*" (1747).
5. "*The Vanity of Human Wishes*" (1749).

### A Neoclassical play (a tragedy)

6. "*Irene*" (between 1726 and 1749).

### Novellas

7. "*The history of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*" (1759).

### Biography, criticism

8. "*Life of Mr. Richard Savage*" (1744).

9. “*Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*” (1745).
10. “*The plays of William Shakespeare*” (1765).
11. “*The Lives of the English Poets*” (1779–1781).

#### **Essays, pamphlets and periodicals**

12. “*Birmingham Journal*” (1732–1733).
13. “*The Rambler*” (1750–1752).
14. “*The Adventurer*” (1753–1754).
15. “*The Literary Magazine, or Universal Review*” (1756).
16. “*The Idler*” (1758–1760).
17. “*The False Alarm*” (1770).
18. “*Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falkland’s Islands*” (1771).
19. “*The Patriot*” (1774).
20. “*A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*” (1775).
21. “*The Beauties of Johnson*” (1781).

## **Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816)**



The British playwright and orator Richard Brinsley Sheridan wrote two comic masterpieces for the stage, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*. In his own time, Sheridan was equally celebrated as a great Whig orator.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin, Ireland, on October 30, 1751. His father, Thomas, was an actor and theater manager; his mother, Frances, was the author of novels and plays. The family moved to London in 1758, and Sheridan was educated at Harrow (1762–1768). After six years at Harrow he went to live with his father in Bath.

In March 1772 Sheridan eloped to France with a young woman called Elizabeth Linley. A marriage ceremony was carried out but soon afterwards the couple were caught by the girl’s father. As a result of this behaviour, Sheridan was challenged to a duel. The fight took place on 2nd July 1772, during which Sheridan was seriously wounded. However, Sheridan recovered and after qualifying as a lawyer, Mr. Linley gave permission for the couple to marry.

Sheridan began writing plays and on 17th January, 1775, the Covent Garden Theatre produced his comedy, *The Rivals*. After a poor reception it was withdrawn. A revised version appeared soon after and it eventually become one of Britain’s most popular comedies. Two other plays by Sheridan, *St Patrick’s Day* and *The Duenna*, were also successfully produced at the Covent Garden Theatre. In 1776 Sheridan joined with his father-in-law to purchase the Drury Lane Theatre for £35,000. The following year he produced his most popular comedy, *The School for Scandal*.

In 1776 Sheridan met Charles Fox, the leader of the Radical Whigs in the House of Commons. Sheridan now decided to abandon his writing in favour of a political

career. On 12th September, 1780, Sheridan became MP for Stafford. Sheridan was a frequent speaker in the House of Commons and soon obtained a reputation as one of the best orators in Britain. Sheridan was a strong critic of Lord North's American policy and supported the resistance of the colonists. Congress was so grateful for Sheridan's support that he was offered a reward of £20,000. Under attack for disloyalty to his country, Sheridan decided not to accept the gift.

In 1782 the Marquis of Rockingham appointed Sheridan as his under secretary for Foreign Affairs. Sheridan retained his radical political beliefs and in 1794 defended the French Revolution against its critics in the House of Commons. Despite his disapproval of some aspects of the new regime, Sheridan argued that the French people had the right to form their own form of government without outside interference. Sheridan was also a strong supporter of an uncensored press and argued strenuously against attempts to use the libel laws to prevent criticism of the government.

Sheridan opposed the Act of Union with Ireland and later lost office. Sheridan remained a devoted follower of Charles Fox, until his death in 1806.

His last years were harassed by debt and disappointment. He sat in parliament for Westminster in 1806–1807. At the general election of 1807 he stood again for Westminster and was defeated, but was returned as member for Ilchester. In 1812 Sheridan attempted to win his old seat of Stafford, but unable to raise the money to pay the normal fee of five guineas per voter, he was defeated. Sheridan had serious financial problems and in August, 1813 was arrested for debt. Sheridan was only released when his wealthy friend, Samuel Whitbread handed over the sum required.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan died in great poverty on 7th July 1816, and was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.

### **Notable works**

1. *"The Rivals"* (1775).
2. *"St Patrick's Day"* (1775).
3. *"The Duenna"* (1775).
4. *"A Trip to Scarborough"* (1777).
5. *"The School for Scandal"* (1777).
6. *"The Camp"* (1778).
7. *"The Critic"* (1779).
8. *"The Glorious First of June"* (1794).
9. *"Pizarro"* (1799).

### **Quotes**

- *Modesty is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked.*
- *A fluent tongue is the only thing a mother doesn't like her daughter to resemble her in.*
- *There is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as envy.*
- *The surest way to fail is not to determine to succeed.*

- *There's no possibility of being witty without a little ill-nature.*
- *Those that vow the most are the least sincere.*
- *I mean, the question actors most often get asked is how they can bear saying the same things over and over again, night after night, but God knows the answer to that is, don't we all anyway; might as well get paid for it.*
- *The number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed.*

## Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774)



Anglo-Irish man of letters, poet and playwright wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). Goldsmith stood alone and did not subscribe to nor start any school. He died at forty-six a philosopher at heart, a kind old soul and friend to many including Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Goldsmith was the son of farmer and Irish clergyman to *Kilkenny West*, Charles Goldsmith, born 10 November 1730. There is some contradictory information regarding his birthplace but the location noted in his epitaph is Pallas, or Pallasmore, a village near Ballymahon, in county Longford, Ireland. He had five siblings who survived to adulthood.

His education started early at home with a relative, then at age seven he was sent to the village school run by an ex-soldier, Thomas Byrne. Early on he expressed an interest in Celtic music and culture. Young Oliver was shy and reticent, and due to his small and awkward stature and facial scarring from smallpox he without a doubt suffered the consequences from the school bullies. Much to the seeming delight of his headmasters he was at times treated mercilessly for the dunce they told him he was, corporeally used as an example for the other boys on how not to behave. However it is said that even under such harsh circumstances Goldsmith was already writing with such poetics and charm that would later give *The Vicar of Wakefield* high accolades. He read Ovid, Horace, Livy and Tacitus. In 1774 he entered Trinity College, Dublin, a sizar, paying nothing towards his tuition or food but in return performing menial tasks. His intemperance and tendency to dress in bright colours, play music and gamble got him into trouble numerous times and he would graduate undistinguished; his name that he etched onto a windowpane is still preserved.

Goldsmith went on to attempt numerous professions including law and medicine at Edinburgh and Leiden universities, and was turned down for ordination. In 1756 he embarked on travels through France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland; if his fiction, especially *The Traveller* (1764) is to give any indication of his own life's experiences, it's possible he amused the locals with his flute playing in return for food and lodging and continued his dubious adventures among beggars and thieves. He also took short-term positions before turning to a career in writing while living, among other places, in a tiny room at the top of the 'Break-neck Steps' in London. There he produced articles

and essays of criticism for various newspapers and magazines including *The Bee*, *The Monthly Review* and *The Literary Magazine*. He also translated Jean Marteilhe of Bergerac's *Memoirs. Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759) is one of his more widely known works during this period.

The release of *The Citizen of the World* (1762), a collection of whimsical and satirical essays, recognized him as a man of letters. His philosophic poem *Traveller; or, a Prospect of Society*, dedicated to his brother Henry Goldsmith (who died in 1768) was published in 1764. The autobiographical couplets charm in simplistic verse and reflect on many happy memories. It is said that he was paid £21 for it, but it was definitely a success, and generated interest in his previous works. Now becoming settled with his writing and circumstances, Goldsmith took rooms off of Fleet Street then moved to the Temple where he wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), though he was still plagued by tendencies to drink and gamble that would send him off into financial straits. His tale of the country parson is a warm and humorous look at typical English life. While melodramatic it has an endearing quality of humanity that transcends time and is still in circulation today.

The ironic poem, *An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog* (1766), uses the dog as figure to uphold sensibility and decency in man's society. A remarkable turn in Goldsmith's career was his much welcomed comedic play *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and the farcical *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), which were in sharp contrast to the then popular sentimental dramas of the time and filled the playhouses. He also produced some school texts, and while somewhat misinformed they provided a healthy boost to his income. He also wrote poetry including *The Deserted Village* (1770).

Though Goldsmith was never blessed with social grace and eloquence, he enjoyed the friendship of, among many others of the *literati* and social scene of London, Samuel Johnson, who would more than once defend his friend's career and character. He became a member of the "Club" or what was later known as the "The Literary Club" (still existing) in 1764. Joshua Reynolds, painter, and Edmund Burke, author and parliamentarian were other supporters to the end. Goldsmith entertained lavishly and lived beyond his means and while he wore his heart on his sleeve he could never be accused of malice or boastfulness. "*I love everything that's old, – old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine*". In the later years of his life, owing to thousands of £'s worth of debt, his health and spirit were soon affected and he suffered from a nervous fever accompanied by a kidney infection. He sought out Dr James's fever powder as remedy, though it most likely exacerbated his condition. In response to the question on his death bed of whether his mind was at ease, his reply and alleged last words were: "*No; it is not*".

Oliver Goldsmith died 4 April 1774, in his forty-sixth year and lies buried in the burial ground of the Church of Saint Mary (Middle Temple church yard), London, England. It is said that one of his greatest critics and rivals, Hugh Kelly, attended this humble service, showing great remorse for attacks on Goldsmith's character. The Club placed a cenotaph in his honour at Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, London, for which Nollekins created a bust in medallion of the poet's profile in relief, and the Latin epitaph written by his friend Samuel Johnson stands below it:

*A Poet, Naturalist, and Historian,  
 Who left scarcely any style of writing untouched,  
 And touched nothing that he did not adorn;  
 Of all the passions,  
 Whether smiles were to be moved or tears,  
 A powerful yet gentle master;  
 In genius, sublime, vivid, versatile,  
 In style, elevated, clear, elegant –  
 The love of companions,  
 The fidelity of friends,  
 And the veneration of readers,  
 Have by this monument honored the memory.*

*When lovely woman stoops to folly,  
 And finds too late that men betray,  
 What charm can soothe her melancholy?  
 What art can wash her guilt away?*

*(Ch. 29, Song, st. 1)*

*The only art her guilt to cover,  
 To hide her shame from every eye,  
 To give repentance to her lover,  
 And wring his bosom, is – to die.*

*(Ch. 29, Song, st. 2)  
 The Vicar of Wakefield*

## **James Boswell (1740–1795)**



James Boswell was a lawyer, diarist, man of letters and biographer of Dr. Johnson. Boswell was born in Edinburgh, East Coast of Scotland, UK. He studied at Edinburgh High School and Edinburgh University (1753–1758), then studied civil law at Glasgow University, but his ambition was literary fame. At 18 he began his often scandalous journal (only published in the XXth century), and in 1760 ran away to London, where he led a debauched life.

He first met Samuel Johnson in 1763, and took him on the memorable journey to the Hebrides. His *Journal of a “Tour to the Hebrides”* (1785) appeared after Johnson’s death. Its success led him to plan his

masterpiece, the *“Life of Samuel Johnson”* (1791). When the *“Life of Samuel Johnson”* was published in 1791 it at once commanded the admiration that Boswell had sought for so long. Its style was unique in that, unlike other biographies of that era, it directly incorporated conversations that Boswell had noted down at the time for his journals. He also included far more personal and human details than those to which contemporary readers were accustomed. Instead of writing a respectful and dry record of Johnson's public life, in the style of the time, he painted a vivid portrait of the complete man. It is still often said to be the greatest biography ever written.

It was around three months after his first encounter with Johnson that Boswell departed for Europe with the initial goal of continuing his law studies at Utrecht University. But still Boswell was unsuccessful lawyer. He studied there for a year and then spent two years travelling around the continent. During this time he met Jean-Jacques Rousseau and made a pilgrimage to Rome. Boswell also travelled to Corsica to meet one of his heroes, the independence leader Pasquale Paoli. His well-observed diaries of this time have been compiled into two books *“Boswell in Holland”* and *“Boswell on the Grand Tour”*.

Boswell returned to London in 1766. He was a major supporter of the Corsican Republic. Following the island's invasion by France in 1768 Boswell attempted to raise public awareness and rally support for the Corsicans.

James Boswell married his cousin, Margaret Montgomerie, in November 1769. He was a very unfaithful man.

Throughout his life, from childhood until death, he was beset by severe swings of mood. By the late 1770s, Boswell descended further and further into alcoholism and gambling addiction.

Boswell was present at the meeting of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in May 1787 set up to persuade William Wilberforce to lead the abolition movement in Parliament. Boswell's most prominent display of support for slavery was his 1791 poem “No Abolition of Slavery; or the Universal Empire of Love”.

After Johnson's death in 1784, Boswell tried his luck at the English Bar, but his career was unsuccessful. He also offered to stand for Parliament but failed to get the necessary support, and he spent the final years of his life writing his *“Life of Johnson”*. During this time his health began to fail due to venereal disease and his years of drinking. Boswell died in London in 1795.

### **Notable works**

1. *“The Cub at Newmarket”*, poem, published by James Dodsley (1762).
2. *“Dorando, a Spanish Tale”*, prose-narrative allegory, anonymously (1767).
3. *“Account of Corsica”*, partly an unoriginal synthesis of geography and history, partly the journal of his tour (1768).
4. *“The Hypochondriack”*, a monthly series in the London Magazine (1777–1783).
5. *“The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides”*, journal (1785).
6. *“Life of Samuel Johnson”*, biography (1791).
7. *“No Abolition of Slavery”*, poem (1791).

### **Published journals**

8. *Boswell's London Journal* (1763).
9. *Boswell in Holland, including his correspondence with Belle de Zuylen (Zellide)*, (1763–1764).
10. *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland* (1764).
11. *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France* (1765–1766).
12. *Boswell in Search of a Wife* (1766–1769).
13. *Boswell for the Defence* (1769–1774).
14. *Boswell: the Ominous Years* (1774–1776).
15. *Boswell in Extremes* (1776–1778).
16. *Boswell: Laird of Auchinleck* (1778–1782).
17. *Boswell, the Applause of the Jury* (1782–1785).
18. *Boswell, the English Experiment* (1785–1789).
19. *Boswell: The Great Biographer* (1789–1795).

*“...Instead of melting down my materials into one mass, and constantly speaking in my own person, by which I might have appeared to have more merit in the execution of the work, I have resolved to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason, in his Memoirs of Gray. Wherever narrative is necessary to explain, connect, and supply, I furnish it to the best of my abilities; but in the chronological series of Johnson’s life, which I trace as distinctly as I can, year by year, I produce, wherever it is in my power, his own minutes, letters or conversation, being convinced that this mode is more lively, and will make my readers better acquainted with him, than even most of those were who actually knew him, but could know him only partially; whereas there is here an accumulation of intelligence from various points, by which his character is more fully understood and illustrated.*

*Indeed I cannot conceive a more perfect mode of writing any man’s life, than not only relating all the most important events of it in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote, and said, and thought; by which mankind are enabled as it were to see him live, and to “live o’er each scene” with him, as he actually advanced through the several stages of his life. Had his other friends been as diligent and ardent as I was, he might have been almost entirely preserved. As it is, I will venture to say that he will be seen in this work more completely than any man who has ever yet lived”.*

*(From “Life of Samuel Johnson”)*



## Edmund Burke (1729–1797)



Edmund Burke was an Anglo-Irish statesman, author, orator, political theorist, and philosopher, who served for many years in the British House of Commons as a member of the Whig party. He is chiefly remembered for his support of the American colonies in the struggle against King George III that led to the American Revolution and for his strong opposition to the French Revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). The latter made Burke one of the leading figures within the conservative faction of the Whig party (which he dubbed the “Old Whigs”), in opposition to the pro-revolutionary “New Whigs”, led by Charles James Fox. Edmund Burke’s ideas influenced the fields of aesthetics and political theory. His early work on aesthetics, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), explored the origins of these two fundamental concepts, relating them respectively to fear of death and to love of society. In *A Vindication of Natural Society: A View of the Miseries and Evils Arising to Mankind*, which appeared in 1756, he attacked social philosophy, especially that of Rousseau.

Burke was taken up by the literary and artistic circles of London, and his publisher encouraged him to try his hand at history, but his historical work was not published during his lifetime. Soon afterward he entered politics, and as a Member of Parliament he produced a number of famous political pamphlets and speeches on party politics, including *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770) and his speech on *Conciliation with America* (1775), and on financial reform and on the reform of British India, *Speech on Mr. Fox’s East India Bill* (1783). Burke also founded the *Annual Register*, a political review. He is often regarded as the father of Anglo-American conservatism.

Burke’s first published work, *A Vindication of Natural Society: A View of the Miseries and Evils Arising to Mankind* (1756), attacked social philosophy, especially that of Rousseau, and was fraudulently attributed to Lord Bolingbroke. It was originally taken as a serious treatise on anarchism. Years later, with a government appointment at stake, Burke claimed that it had been intended as a satire. Many modern scholars consider it to be satire, but others take *Vindication* as a serious defense of anarchism (an interpretation notably espoused by Murray Rothbard). Whether written as a satire or not, it was the first anarchist essay, and was taken seriously by later anarchists such as William Godwin.

In 1757 Burke also married Jane Nugent. During this period in London, Burke became closely connected with many of the leading intellectuals and artists, including Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Oliver Goldsmith, and Joshua Reynolds.

### Quotes

- *All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.*

- *Better be despised for too anxious apprehensions, than ruined by too confident security.*
- *He who wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.*
- *Hypocrisy can afford to be magnificent in its promises; for never intending to go beyond promises; it costs nothing.*
- *I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone.*
- *It is the nature of all greatness not to be exact.*
- *Never despair; but if you do, work on in despair.*
- *No one could make a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.*
- *Our patience will achieve more than our force.*
- *The wise determine from the gravity of the case; the irritable, from sensibility to oppression; the high minded, from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands.*
- *No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.*
- *Good order is the foundation of all things.*
- *Contempt is not a thing to be despised.*
- *An event had happened, upon which it is difficult to speak, and impossible to be silent.*
- *Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites.*
- *Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without.*

### **Notable works**

1. *“A Vindication of Natural Society: A View of the Miseries and Evils Arising to Mankind”* (1756). This article, outlining radical political theory, was first published anonymously and, when Burke was revealed as its author, he explained that it was a satire.
2. *“A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful”* (1757), begun when he was nineteen and published when he was twenty-seven.
3. *“Reflections on the Revolution in France”* Burke, a supporter of the American Revolution, wrote the Reflections in response to a young correspondent who mistakenly assumed that he would support the French Revolution as well. It was addressed to an anonymous French nobleman whose identity has been the subject of many rumors.

## Edward Gibbon (1737–1794)



Edward Gibbon, the son of a country gentleman in Surrey, was born in 1737. From Westminster School he passed at the age of fifteen to Oxford. Ill-health and the wretched state of instruction at the university made his residence there, according to his own exaggerated account, largely unprofitable, but he remained for little more than a year; for, continuing the reading of theological works, in which he had become interested as a child, he was converted to Catholicism, and was hurried by his father to the care of a Protestant pastor in Lausanne, Switzerland. The pastor reconverted him in a year, but both conversions were merely intellectual, since Gibbon was of all men the most incapable of spiritual emotion. Later in life he became a philosophic sceptic. In Lausanne he fell in love with the girl who later actually married M. Necker, minister of finance under Louis XVI, and became the mother of the famous Mme. de Stael; but to Gibbon's father a foreign marriage was as impossible as a foreign religion, and the son, again, obediently yielded. He never again entertained the thought of marriage. In his five years of study at Lausanne he worked diligently and laid the broad foundation of the knowledge of Latin and Greek which was to be indispensable for his great work. His mature life, spent mostly on his ancestral estate in England and at a villa which he acquired in Lausanne, was as externally uneventful as that of most men of letters. He was for several years a captain in the English militia and later a member of Parliament and one of the Lords of Trade; all which positions were of course practically useful to him as a historian. He wrote a brief and interesting autobiography, which helps to reveal him as sincere and good-hearted, though cold and somewhat self-conceited, a rather formal man not of a large nature. He died in 1794.

The first source of the greatness of Gibbon's work is his conscientious industry and scholarship. With unwearied patience he made himself thoroughly familiar with the great mass of materials, consisting largely of histories and works of general literature in many languages, belonging to the fourteen hundred years with which he dealt. But he had also the constructive power which selects, arranges, and proportions, the faculty of clear and systematic exposition, and the interpretative historical vision which perceives and makes clear the broad tendencies in the apparent chaos of mere events. Much new information has necessarily been discovered since Gibbon wrote, but he laid his foundation so deep and broad that though his work may be supplemented it can probably never be superseded, and stands in the opinion of competent critics without an equal in the whole field of history except perhaps for that of the Greek Thucydides. His one great deficiency is his lack of emotion. By intellectual processes he realizes and partly visualizes the past, with its dramatic scenes and moments, but he cannot throw himself into it (even if the material afforded by his authorities had permitted) with the passionate vivifying sympathy of later, romantic, historians. There are interest and power in his narratives of Julian's expedition into Assyria, of Zenobia's brilliant career, and of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, but not the stirring power of Green or

Froude or Macaulay. The most unfortunate result of this deficiency, however, is his lack of appreciation of the immense meaning of spiritual forces, most notoriously evident in the cold analysis, in his fifteenth chapter, of the reasons for the success of Christianity.

His style possesses much of the same virtues and limitations as his substance. He has left it on record that he composed each paragraph mentally as a whole before committing any part of it to paper, balancing and reshaping until it fully satisfied his sense of unity and rhythm. Something of formality and ponderousness quickly becomes evident in his style, together with a rather mannered use of potential instead of direct indicative verb forms; how his style compares with Johnson's and how far it should be called pseudo-classical, are interesting questions to consider. One appreciative description of it may be quoted: "The language of Gibbon never flags; he walks forever as to the clash of arms, under an imperial banner; a military music animates his magnificent descriptions of battles, of sieges, of panoramic scenes of antique civilization".

A longer eulogistic passage will sum up his achievement as a whole:

*"The historian of literature will scarcely reach the name of Edward Gibbon without emotion. It is not merely that with this name is associated one of the most splendid works which Europe produced in the XVIIIth century, but that the character of the author, with all its limitations and even with all its faults, presents us with a typical specimen of the courage and singleheartedness of a great man of letters. Wholly devoted to scholarship without pedantry, and to his art without any of the petty vanity of the literary artist, the life of Gibbon was one long sacrifice to the purest literary enthusiasm. He lived to know, and to rebuild his knowledge in a shape as durable and as magnificent as a Greek temple. He was content for years and years to lie unseen, unheard of, while younger men rose past him into rapid reputation. No unworthy impatience to be famous, no sense of the uncertainty of life, no weariness or terror at the length or breadth of his self-imposed task, could induce him at any moment of weakness to give way to haste or discouragement in the persistent regular collection and digestion of his material or in the harmonious execution of every part of his design.... No man who honors the profession of letters, or regards with respect the higher and more enlightened forms of scholarship, will ever think without admiration of the noble genius of Gibbon. It may be added that Gibbon is one of the conspicuous examples of a man whose success was made possible only by the possession and proper use of inherited wealth, with the leisure which it brings". (Edmund Gosse, "History of Eighteenth Century Literature", p. 350)*

## **Quotes**

- *All that is human must retrograde if it does not advance.*
- *History is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.*
- *Unprovided with original learning, unformed in the habits of thinking, unskilled in the arts of composition, I resolved to write a book.*

- *We improve ourselves by victories over ourself. There must be contests, and you must win.*

### **Questions for Self-Study and Seminars**

1. What does the Age of Johnson mark? What tendencies do its major writers represent?
2. For what is Dr. Johnson famous in literature? Can you explain his great influence?
3. For what periodicals did Dr. Johnson write?
4. Tell the story of Sheridan's life. What are his notable works?
5. What are Goldsmith's chief works? What great work did he do for the early novel, in *The Vicar of Wakefield*?
6. What are the remarkable elements in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*?
7. For what is Burke remarkable? What great objects influenced him in the three periods of his life?
8. Why has Burke been called a romantic poet who speaks in prose?
9. For what is Gibbon "worthy to be remembered"? Why does he mark an epoch in historical writing?
10. What is meant by the scientific method of writing history?

## Final Test Sample Questions

1. Who was the first English poet known by name?  
A. Cynewulf; B. Caedmon;  
C. Bede; D. Aelfric.
2. Beowulf, the first major work of English literature, is a(n) ...  
A. romance; B. religious poem;  
C. epic poem; D. chronicle.
3. "Homilies" are ...  
A. records of current events; B. elaborate descriptive phrases;  
C. short moral essays; D. verses about lives of saints.
5. What is the name of "adventure stories, usually in verse, about battles and heroes" that had become the most popular literary form in England by the end of the 1200's?  
A. kennings; B. romances;  
C. hymns; D. mystery plays.
5. The most complete English version of stories about King Arthur was written by ...  
A. Wace; B. John Gower;  
C. Alfred the Great; D. Sir Thomas Malory.
6. What writer of the Middle English period introduced a rhythmic pattern called *iambic pentameter* into English poetry?  
A. William Langland; B. John Gower;  
C. Geoffrey Chaucer; D. Wace.
7. Which type of plays did not exist in Early English drama?  
A. miracle; B. mystery;  
C. mythical; D. morality.
8. Whose name is usually applied to the period from the mid-1500's to the early 1600's?  
A. Queen Elizabeth I; B. King James I;  
C. Queen Victoria; D. King Charles I.
9. Three chief forms of poetry which flourished during the Elizabethan age are ...  
A. the lyric, the sonnet, the romance; B. the sonnet, the narrative, the epic poetry;  
C. the narrative poetry, the lyric, the sonnet; D. the sonnet, the lyric, the symbolic poetry.
10. The sonnet is a ....-line poem.  
A. 12; B. 14;  
C. 16; D. 18.

11. What was introduced into English literature by the Earl of Surrey's translation of the Aeneid?  
A. sonnet sequence; B. blank verse;  
C. alliteration; D. iambic pentameter.
12. England's first playhouse, *The Theatre*, was built in the..... century.  
A. XVth; B. XVIth;  
C. XIVth; D. XVIIth.
13. Metaphysical and Cavalier poets worked during ...  
A. the Elizabethan Age; B. the Tudor period;  
C. the Stuart period; D. the Jacobean period.
14. What is the name given to the plays written during the reign of James I?  
A. morality plays; B. Jacobean drama;  
C. Jacobean tragedies; D. Elizabethan drama.
15. Name the landmark in the development of English prose which appeared in 1611.  
A. *The King James Version*; B. *Paradise Lost*;  
C. *Religio Medici*; D. *Unauthorized Version of the Bible*.
16. The greatest English writer of the mid-1600's is ...  
A. Francis Beaumont; B. John Donne;  
C. John Webster; D. John Milton.
17. The heroic couplet is a verse form consisting of ..... rhymed lines.  
A. 4; B. 2;  
C. 6; D. 8.
18. Who became the outstanding literary figure of the Restoration with his plays, poetry and literary criticism after Milton's death in 1674?  
A. Andrew Marvell; B. John Dryden;  
C. Henry Vaughan; D. Ben Johnson.
19. During whose reign were the theaters reopened in 1660 and an important period in English drama began?  
A. James I; B. Charles II;  
C. Charles I; D. Queen Victoria.
20. What are "stories with a literal and symbolic meaning" called?  
A. heroic couplets; B. pastorals;  
C. sonnets; D. allegories.

Навчальне видання

**Віротченко Світлана Андріївна**

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

Навчальний посібник  
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