

## ENGLISH LITERATURE

English writers have made a great contribution to the world literature. One of the old English words you will meet in English literature is "folk" which means "people". There were also professional singers called "bards". They composed songs about events they wanted to be remembered. The beautiful Anglo-Saxon poem "Beowulf" may be called the foundation-stone of all British poetry.

The most interesting examples of folk poetry were the ballads, for example, the Robin Hood ballads.

The greatest writer of the 14th century was Geoffrey Chaucer. He is often called the father of English literature. Chaucer was the last English writer of the Middle Ages and the first of the Renaissance.

The English Renaissance started with the reign of the Tudor family and reached its height with Elizabeth I. Elizabeth often made journeys throughout the kingdom so that the people could see her. During her travels she stayed at the homes of the nobles who entertained her with banquets, parades and dances. Poets and writers praised Elizabeth in their writings. Poetry, music and drama became a part of daily life: most nobles wrote poetry. People of all classes enjoyed singing ballads and folk songs. The people of Renaissance England were especially fond of plays. Not since ancient Greece had so many plays been written and performed.

One of the best known English playwrights was William Shakespeare. He drew ideas for his tragedies and comedies from the history of England and ancient Rome. He often used Italian scenes, characters and tales in his plays. Many experts consider Shakespeare the greatest writer and the greatest playwright in the English language.

At the beginning of the 19th century a new sensibility called Romanticism developed in Europe. In England there were two generations of Romantic writers; the 1<sup>st</sup> included William Wordsworth and Samuel T. Coleridge, who produced the Lyrical Ballads, Robert Burns, a Scottish poet, and William Blake, poet, painter and engraver.

Writers of the second generation included Lord George Byron, Percy B. Shelley and John Keats. They were influenced by the legends and mythology of oriental and medieval literature.

A typical product of Romanticism was the historical novel, which mixed elements of the past with mystery and marvellous. We have the first examples of historical novels with Sir Walter Scott.

The greatest writers of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century are Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Bernard Shaw, Herbert George Wells, John Galsworthy and others. These writers belong to a new trend, that of critical realism. They used the novel as a means to protest against the evils in social and economic life and to picture the world in a realistic way.

The horrors of World War I were a bad shock to the young writers. This period is marked by the appearance of various literary schools, modernistic, psychological and others, headed by T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce.

In 1950s a so called literary revolution took place. A new kind of literature burst upon the scene. The writers of this new literature - Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe - became known as the "angry young men". They wrote about the ugly and sordid reality of life as they knew it, and they wrote angrily. Their novels and plays were not written in literary or intellectual language, but in the ordinary and sometimes ugly language of daily life. The scene was often set in the dark back rooms and kitchens of northern-industrial cities.

In 1950s two trends continue to develop - progressive and reactionary. Most significant representatives of critical realism of the time are Graham Green, Norman Lewis, Basil Davidson and others.

### English Literature

The century is characterized by great diversity of artistic values & methods. This age had a great impact on the literary process. Variety of social, ethnic aesthetic attitudes. New achievements in science have their impact on literature. Literature absorbs & transforms the material of their influences:

- V The First World War
- V Russian Revolution
- V Freud's psychoanalysis
- V Bergson's philosophy of subjective idealism
- V Einstein's theory of relativity
- V Existentialists thought
- V Economic crises 1919-1921 & consequent upheaval of social movement
- V Marxist ideology
- V Strike 1926

All these factors lead to literature of social problematics. There existed three trends: critical realism, beginning of social realism, modernism. The writers revolutionized, changed literary form, as well as continued the traditional forms. This inter... is a distinctive feature of the XX c. English literature reflected Britain's new position in the world affairs. By the end of the XIX Victorian tradition began to deteriorate. The desire to liberate art & literature from the contents of the Victorian society. Thus, criticism is the dominant mood in the beginning of the XX c. Criticism took different forms. Some of them – modernist, others spiritual exploiters. Artist's duty was to reflect truly thoughts of people. Realists in the beginning of the XX – Hardy, Galsworthy, Shaw, Wells, Conrad, Mansfield, Bennett, etc.

### George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

He introduced intellectual play in the English theatre. He was much influenced by Ibsen. "In 1889 British stage came into collision with Norwegian giant Ibsen. He passed as a tornado & left nothing but ruin." Everybody wanted to create something like Ibsen. Shaw also experienced Marx's influence especially "Das Kapital". The society was in crisis. The article "The Quintessence of Ibsenism". Here he underlines his belief that the real slavery of today is the slavery to ideas of goodness. Ibsen was accused of being immoral. But it implies the conduct that doesn't conform to current ideals. The spirit of is constantly outgrowing his moral ideals & that is why conformity to those ideals produces results not less tragic than thoughtless violation of them. The main effect of Ibsen's plays on public is that his plays stress the importance of being always prepared to act immorally. He insists that living will, humanistic choice are more important than abstract law, abstract moral norms. Ibsen: "The Doll's House" let everybody refuse to sacrifice. There is no formula how to behave. English drama of the passed years was centered on some imaginary event. Ibsen did not write about accidents, he wrote about "slice of life (life experience). He introduced open play – a play that has no end (if you show a slice of life you obviously have open play). Shaw objected "art for art's sake". It means only money's sake. Every great artist has a message to communicate. His role is to interpret life, to create mind. All art is didactic. "Heartbreak House" reflects the state of Europe before the war.

### *George Herbert Wells (1866-1946)*

A novel was also developing. In the beginning – a time of crisis for English novel. The XIX model was not acceptable any more. The novel of the past years developed to describe a social hierarchy. In the beginning of the century the dominant belief was that the Victorian society fell apart. Wells was attempting to escape the traditional novel forms. The novel was seen as a means to create future.

His lecture – “The Contemporary Novel”.

Wells was a very prolific writer. He wrote more than 100 books, he is best known for his science fiction. He had a very definite aim – political & social. He was trying to combine critical analysis of present civilization to the picture what it might be in future. He believed in science. But he understood that it can be dangerous because the power for destruction is huge. “The War of the Worlds”. He was considered utopiographer. To build utopic they needed to destroy the relics of the past – class distinction (unenlightenment). He analyzed the feelings of the present in the life of nation’s future.

### *Richard Aldington (1892-1962)*

He started as a poet close to decadence, aestheticism, he belonged to imagist poets (formalism). He published “Old & New Images”- his first collection of poems. He propagated the doctrine escapism – movement to escape in to the world of beauty (in Ellinism) from the ugliness of the world. This ideal world was shattered by the WWI. He came from it another man, he broke with imagists & continued to work in realistic trend.

In 1929 “The Death of a Hero” was published. The novel was started after the war but had not been completed until 15 years later. It’s a social novel disclosing tragic consequence & reasons of war. He made readers see that the war was inevitable. But the protagonist tries to find the answer for the question – whose responsible for that? Everybody was! Everybody is guilty for the rivers of spilt human blood. This book is a cry for redemption for the writer.

It is a novel of big generalization. There are many autobiographical touches in the book. He starts farther in the war to unmask the hypocrisy of the English society, respected English families. Aldington wants to show that this is a pack of lies that the war is a noble deed, a salvation. He tries to show that lies started much earlier. His ideals are truth & beauty. Aldington says that this generation was lost before the war started. War was not the source of the tragedy but rather result of it.

He also wrote some critical works on D. H. Lawrence, & other writings.

He died in 1962.

### *Modernism*

The word “modern” means “up-to-date”. Critics & historians used it to denote roughly the first half of the XX century. The representatives of this movement were anxious to set themselves apart from the previous generations. They totally rejected their predecessors. The term was suggested by the authors themselves. The difference between past & present tradition is qualitative. Modernist writers clearly defined the borderline between Victorian age & modernism: in 1910 – the death of king Edward & the first post-impressionist exhibition in London (Virginia Woolf), in 1915 – the first year of World War I (D. H. Lawrence). They had a deep conviction that modern experience is a unique one. They tried to point the change in modernism. This change was – massive disillusionment, destruction of faith in a number of basic social & moral principles, which laid the foundation of Western civilization. This change was to some degree intellectual as the result of late XIX theories & discoveries.

### James Joyce (1882 – 1941)

He was born in Ireland (Dublin). Although he spent many years not in Ireland he is considered one of Irish writers. Primarily he wrote about himself, transforming his experiences in his books, & relatives & friends – into symbols. His works are said to be “expansive & inclusive”. Expansive –because he gave a very wide panorama of Dublin life at the turn of the century, inclusive – because his works seemed to include all the human history. These novels still are the stories & novels about life in general. He started to attend an expensive private boarding school but his father

Became bankrupt & he continued his education at home. Then he attended “University College” in Dublin. He read very much & began to write seriously. He produced critical articles, essays but also poems & notebooks of epiphanies (theological term – an intense moment in a human life when the truth of a person or some thing is being revealed). He studied in Paris, then returned to Ireland & in 1904 left it. He lived in different places in Europe. First, he earned money by giving English lessons. In 1905 he submitted to the publisher his first version of the collection of stories “Dubliners”. But it was repeatedly rejected & even after acceptance it was subjected to severe censorship for sexual frankness & use of obscenities & use of real names & places. This collection consists of 15 stories devoted to childhood, mature life & public life. All are unified by the theme of person’s loneliness & hopelessness. Joyce describes life with all naturalistic details. Everything suggests that life is dead. All the stories explore the paralysis of Irish life. The most famous stories are “Araby” & “The Dead”. The stories are arranged in successive sequences – childhood, adolescence, mature & public life. Mood is gloomy, imagery is dark & malignant. People are incurably lonely, their hopes are doomed to disappointment & frustration. In the full form the collection was published in 1914 together with his autobiographical novel “The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”, which was to be called “Stephen-Hero”. This book explores the story of the formation of the artist’s consciousness. In criticism it is called “a gestation of the soul”, for he tries to penetrate into people’s mind. It is deeply psychological work.

In 1922 “Ulysses” was published. It started as another short story for “The Dubliners” but grew into the massive novel. Joyce recreates the action of “Odyssey” in a single day – July 16, 1904 (it was a significant day for Joyce: he decided to leave Ireland & met his future wife). Since two plains run parallel. The main characters are associated with certain people in “Odyssey” by Homer: the main characters are Stephen Dedalus & Leopold Bloom, an advertising solicitor & in a certain way an eternal Jew both figuratively & literally. Minor characters are the people whom they meet in different places. Dedalus acts as Telemachys & Leopold Bloom is modern Odyssey & his wife Molly is modern Penelope. Bloom wanders from place to place throughout this day – butcher’s shop, post office, cemetery, printing house, library, pub, hotel, again pub, shop, his poor house, cheap pub... his adventures has nothing in common with adventures of Odyssey. They are down to Earth, petty. In Bloom Joyce tried to show wandering of “eternal...”. He has unheroic adventures & finally meets Stephen who becomes his spiritual son. This is a plot.

The book caused a storm of outrage. It was banned in Britain & America for more than ten years. Now it is praised for technical experimentation & stylistic brilliance. The book attracted attention to the stream of consciousness technique. In general it evoked controversial responses.

Even before completing “Ulysses” Joyce wrote “Finnegan’s Wake” –a novel. If “Ulysses” is considered to be a daybook, “Finnegan’s Wake” is a night book. Joyce tried to present the whole human history in a dream of a Dublin innkeeper Earwicker by name. The style is appropriate to a dream, the language is shifting & changing, the words blur & glue together, this suggests the merging of images in a dream. This technique enables Joyce to present history & myth as a single image. The characters stand for eternal types, identified by Earwicker himself, his wife & the three children.

The work masks the limit of formal experiment in the language. “Finnegan’s Wake” is considered to be a closed book. It is very sophisticated. Joyce loses the thread of narration

sometimes... attempted in the sound of words, construction of a sentences, to render the meaning of what he was talking about (e.g. images of woman & the river are merging; the rhythm – gurgling, flowing water). What unifies these two books – both of them express Joyce's positive credo: he asserts that life is eternal, human society does change but the change has a circular character. Everything is renewed, nothing can be destroyed. Joyce starts the work with the continuation of thoughts & the beginning of them is at the end. Man must believe in the city (symbol of Dublin).

### Post Modernism

Post modernism can be regarded in two aspects:

V as a literary trend

V as a phenomenon which doesn't belong exclusively to literature – a certain mentality of post industrial age. Post modernism appeared after the second WW. In 50's, especially 60's new type of fiction, new writing emerged, drastically different from previous writers. The idea that permeated this works: there is need to reevaluate old values, the values that lead Western civilization (idea of emancipation, enlightenment). But the WWII showed that the belief that a human is a reasonable creature who can build a reasonable society is inconsistent.

### Vocabulary

*contents noun* [plural] a list that shows the different parts or chapters into which the book is divided:

- All the manuals end with an index, which supplements the table of contents at the beginning.

*foreword noun* [countable] a short piece of writing at the beginning of a book that introduces the book or its writer. Forewords are often written by someone who was not the author of the book:

- The foreword was written by Einstein.

*introduction noun* [countable] a written explanation at the beginning of a book:

- In the introduction to her fascinating book, O'Brien explains how she first became interested in music.

*preface noun* [countable] an introduction at the beginning of a book:

- This revised edition contains a new preface by the author.

*chapter noun* [countable] one of the parts into which a book is divided:

- These matters are dealt with in Chapter 8.
- The causes of World War I are examined in considerably greater detail in the next chapter.

*section noun* [countable] a separate part of a book, newspaper, document, report etc:

- The final section of this chapter will deal with recent developments.

*index noun* [countable] an alphabetical list of names, subjects etc at the back of a book, with the numbers of the pages where they occur in the main part of the book:

- The book is provided with a comprehensive 40-page index.

*bibliography noun* [countable] a list of all the books and articles used in preparing a piece of writing:

- Details of suggested further reading are given in the bibliography.

*genre noun* [countable] a particular type of literature which has certain features which all examples of this type share. Non-fiction is a genre, as is crime fiction and science fiction:

- the triumph of the novel over all other literary genres in the nineteenth century

*fiction noun* [uncountable] books and stories about imaginary people and events:

- This small band of women writers dominated the romantic fiction market for a number of years.

*non-fiction* British English, nonfiction American English noun [uncountable] books about real facts or events, not imagined ones:

- His non-fiction work includes a study of Indian migration to the Caribbean.

*poetry noun* [uncountable] writing that expresses emotions, experiences, and ideas, especially in short lines using words that rhyme:

- He has published two collections of poetry.

*drama noun* [uncountable] plays that are written to be performed in the theatre, on radio, on television etc:

- She is one of the few women to have established herself as a writer in television drama.

*biography noun* [uncountable and countable] a biography is a book about someone's life, written by someone else. Biography is the genre of this sort of writing:

- She is the author of several books, including a biography of the artist Salvador Dali

*biographer noun* [countable]:

- He was a Marxist historian and biographer of Trotsky.

*autobiography noun* [uncountable and countable] an autobiography is a book that someone writes about his or her own life. Autobiography is the genre of this sort of writing:

- In her autobiography, Doris Lessing writes about her childhood in Zimbabwe.

*allegory noun* [uncountable and countable] a story, painting etc in which the events and characters represent particular ideas or teach a moral lesson:

- The story works as an allegory about repression and rebellion.
- a drama blending fairy tale and allegory

*novel noun* [countable] a long written story in which the characters and events are usually imaginary:

- Butler has written several historical novels under the pen-name of Jenny Melville.

- John Braine's first novel, 'Room at the Top', was set in his native Yorkshire.

novelist noun [countable]:

- Charles Dickens was one of the greatest 19th-century novelists.

*short story noun* [countable] a short written story about imaginary situations and characters:

- a short story by Balzac called "Sarrasine"

*novella noun* [countable] an imaginary story that is shorter than a novel but longer than a short story:

- The opera is based on a novella by Dostoevsky.

*narrator noun* [countable] the person who tells the story in a book or a play:

- In the second part of the novel, the narrator's voice is that of a detached, quasi-scientific observer.

- The omniscient narrator (=the writer who knows everything that all the characters know) knows the answer, but doesn't tell us till the very end.

*first-person narration noun* [uncountable] a way of telling a story in which the writer tells it as though he or she is one of the people in the story. The writer apparently knows only what that person knows and cannot tell the reader anything about what the other characters are thinking:

- In the course of writing the book, he switches from first-person narration - the murderer's story - to third-person narration.

*ballad noun* [countable] a short story in the form of a poem or song:

- He stood up and recited an old Irish ballad.

*blank verse noun* [uncountable] technical poetry that has a fixed rhythm but does not rhyme:

- Blank verse is harder to memorize because it has no rhymes.

*epic noun* [countable] a poem, book, or film that tells a long story about brave actions and exciting events:

- 'The Mahabharata' is probably the best-known Indian epic.

*limerick noun* [countable] a humorous short poem that has five lines. The first two and the fifth lines rhyme with each other, and the third and fourth lines rhyme with each other.

*lyric poetry noun* [uncountable] technical poetry that expresses strong personal emotions such as love, in a way that is similar to music in its sounds and rhythm

*ode noun* [countable] a poem or song written in order to praise a person or thing:

- Schiller's 'Ode to Joy' was used by Beethoven in his ninth symphony.

*sonnet noun* [countable] technical a poem with 14 lines which rhyme with each other in a fixed pattern:

- She was writing an essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets.

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