ENGLISH LITERATURE

The Novels of the 18th Century

When the English Civil War had ended, and Charles II returned as King of England, things had changed. Two new London theatres were built under royal patronage, but the plays were too sophisticated, not always aimed at ordinary people. Play-going became less and less of an attraction. Theatres could only be found in London and one or two of the larger towns in the country. And out there in the countryside, gradually more and more people were learning to read and write.

The country was finally at peace. The wealthy aristocrats could begin to expand their estates, create more employment for the lower classes, give more attention to the values of education and learning. It was the beginning of an age of relative peace and prosperity, with far more leisure time. They were ready for a form of entertainment that could fill their leisure time without any of the moral dangers of the sophisticated and frequently improper London theatre.

From this situation arose a new form of popular literature - the novel.

The major novelists of the 18th Century:

- Daniel Defoe
- Samuel Richardson
- Henry Fielding
- Tobias Smollett
- Laurence Sterne
- Jonathan Swift

Reading aloud to a family group as a leisure activity was gradually replaced by individual readers.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL IN THE 18TH CENTURY

The early English novel was popular with the growing middle classes. More people could read and they had money to spend on books. They wanted to read stories about middle-class people like themselves. Gradually the novel became an important part of English literature.

The Major 18th Century Novelists and their individual styles

Daniel Defoe (1660 –1731)

is sometimes called the founder of the modern English novel. He started his writing career as a journalist, and his novels are usually written in a very realistic way. Defoe writes in the “first-person” and the reader always feels he is hearing a true story about a real person. His works are always written from a middle-class viewpoint. His major works are:

- Robinson Crusoe (1719)
- Journal of the Plague Year (1722)
- Moll Flanders (1722)

All three are written as a kind of pretend history. The first is a novel which appears to be the true story of a man called Robinson Crusoe. The second is supposed to be the diary of a man who lived at the time of the Great Plague. And the third is supposed to be the autobiography of a girl called Moll Flanders.

Defoe’s heroes and heroines were not deeply drawn or characterised. Defoe’s stories were how individual people with names like Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders had difficulties and problems, and how they dealt with them. We learn a lot about their stories, but not very much about their true characters.

The novels of Daniel Defoe are fiction presented as real facts. (This is what you would expect from a journalist)

Samuel Richardson (1689 – 1761)

The first “true” novel is usually said to be “Pamela” by Samuel Richardson. In Richardson’s novels the reader begins to think of the characters as real people. In his novel “Pamela” the story is told through a series of letters. Because we are reading someone’s letters, we feel that person is much more real, and really does exist. It makes Richardson’s characters more complete and complex. His major works are:

- Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded (1740-1)
- Clarissa (1747-8)

The novels of Samuel Richardson are about real people and are told as moral lessons.

Henry Fielding (1707 – 1754)

is a joyful story teller. He has no high moral message, and he does not create deeply drawn and characterised people in his novels. He simply tells a good story. However, he often stops the story and talks in the “author’s voice”, telling the reader about the art of novel writing and making comments on society. His major works are:

- Joseph Andrews (1742)
- Tom Jones (1749)

The novels of Henry Fielding are fast and funny stories, written with technical skill and written with no high moral purpose – written for fun.
**Tobias Smollett (1721 - 1771)**

His two major novels are

- Roderick Random (1748)
- Peregrine Pickle (1751)

They are stories of love and adventures in war – with some special details about sailors in the Navy (based on his Smollett’s own experiences). They give a “real” portrait of 18th Century English life (especially the stories of the sailors, the Navy, doctors, etc.)

The novels of Smollett are excellent examples of the “picaresque” style.

**The Picaresque novel**

“Picaresque” novels seem to have originated in Spain. They all have certain ingredients: they are long, rambling stories with loosely linked episodes almost complete in themselves, intrigue, fights, and lots of scenes in bedrooms! There are stories inside stories, songs, poems, social comments. They seem to be a protest against the well-ordered, formal, well-behaved polite rules of 18th Century society – and showing how the younger artists rejected the bourgeois life and wanted, instead, adventure, wildness, and a desire for the open road. Examples of this style can be seen in the works of Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne.

**Laurence Sterne (1713 – 1768)**

is famous for just one novel

- Tristram Shandy (1759-1767)

This work was very different to the earlier novels. There was no real story. Tristram himself was not created as a “hero”. He was the opposite—a kind of “anti-hero” - and by breaking all the rules, “Tristram Shandy” was not a novel, but a kind of “anti-novel”.

The novel has an extraordinary technical virtuosity, and a very modern philosophy of time (it takes the hero four books in which to be born.) It seems to be a chaotic, disorganised “stream of consciousness” (i.e. writing down the ideas in the order in which Tristram thinks about them)

The novels of Laurence Sterne are about the importance of life and individuality.

**Jane Austen (1775 – 1817)**

is not strictly an 18th century novelist. Her works were published early in the 19th Century. But in her style, themes and motifs she has more in common with the novelists of the 18th century. She belongs in a study of the earlier novelists. She is the greatest novelist of English manners. Her novels are written about her own world, the society of landed gentry. She writes with great detail and delicacy. Her major works are:

- Pride and Prejudice (c. 1812)
- Emma (1816)

To use an image from the world of the painter: Fielding paints with bright colours on a large canvas; Jane Austen paints in delicate pastel on a miniature portrait.
DANIEL DEFOE  (1660 – 1731)

He was born in London and his father was a butcher. After he finished school, he spent a few years travelling in Europe. He then came back to London and started work in a shop selling socks and gloves. He soon got bored, and joined the army, fighting the rebels against King William III. He wrote some comic poems in favour of King William and the King was very pleased with him.

But the King died, and the new Queen, Queen Anne did not like his comic poems and stories. He wrote a special piece making fun of the Church. Because of this he was put in prison for two years. After he was released from prison he seems to have had a double career – working as a journalist (writing for newspapers) and as a kind of spy or double-agent for the government.

His most important works were written after he had reached the age of 60 years. In his last 11 years he wrote many works. Three of them are written as a kind of pretend history. The first is a novel which appears to be the true story of a man called Robinson Crusoe. The second is supposed to be the diary of a man who lived at the time of the Great Plague. And the third is supposed to be the autobiography of a girl called Moll Flanders.

Robinson Crusoe (1720)

The newspapers of the time told the true story of a sailor called Alexander Selkirk. He had a big quarrel with the captain of his ship, and he asked to get off the boat. He was put ashore on an island and stayed there for four years and four months until he was finally rescued.

Defoe turned this story into a novel. He called his man Robinson Crusoe, and on first publication he pretended the story was written by Robinson Crusoe himself. He is a sailor and has a lot of adventures fighting pirates. His ship is wrecked, and Robinson Crusoe swims to an island off the coast of South America. He is completely alone for several years, and then suddenly discovers footprints in the sand. There are other people on the island. They are savages and have prisoners.

One of these prisoners escapes and becomes a friend to Crusoe. Crusoe calls this native Man Friday (because he met him on a Friday). Man Friday helped Robinson Crusoe a lot. After 28 years, two months and nineteen days, Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday are rescued and they return to England.

This book was very popular and sold thousands of copies. Daniel Defoe became rich and famous because of this book.
Journal of the Plague Year (1722)

The Great Plague of London was in 1665, and was a horrible event. Thousands of people died of the disease. The disease was caused by fleas from rats. The fleas bit the people who then spread the disease by breathing on each other. Hundreds of people ran away from London. Others just threw the dead bodies into the streets and locked themselves in their houses. No one understood that rats were the reason for the plague. Some thought it was a judgement from God.

Defoe has written a Journal (or a Diary) as if it was written by a person living at the time. It is a quite wonderful book, and even today is a gripping horror story and a marvellous piece of “real” history.

Moll Flanders (1722)

The original front page of the book added this information to the title:

Who was born in Newgate
She lived to be 60 years old
She spent 12 years as a Whore (a prostitute)
She was married 5 times
She spent 12 years as a thief
She spent 8 years “transported” (*) to Virginia
Finally she became rich, honest and religious

(*) Instead of putting people in English jails, in 18th Century England the judges sometimes “transported” or sent criminals to work in Australia or America for a number of years)

Moll Flanders had a hard life from the beginning. She was born in Newgate prison. She did manage to get a job as a servant in a wealthy home where she became the lover to the eldest son, but the younger son fell in love with her and Moll was forced to marry him.

He soon died and Moll married a "Gentleman-Tradesman" who spent all of their money, and had to leave the country to escape his creditors. Moll now discovered that "Beauty, Wit, Manners, Sense, good Humour, good Behaviour, Education, Virtue, and Piety” was no good to a single woman. Only money mattered. So, she pretended to be a rich woman and married again. She moved with her husband to Virginia in America, and there she suddenly discovered that her husband was actually her own brother!

She moved back to England and met another man, and she became his mistress. After a terrible illness he decided that he could not live with Moll any longer and he threw her out. Moll was then tricked into marrying a man she believed to be very rich. He had made a mistake and thought she was very rich. Between them they had no money at all. He soon died, and Moll was forced to become a thief to survive.

After some years she was arrested and put in jail. There she met her fourth husband, who was a highwayman. They went to America, bought a plantation and became very rich. Now that she was rich, Moll could become a “Gentlewoman” and be respectable and honourable.

This is a story of criminals, thieves, and gypsies. It is very funny.

Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain ( 3 volumes 1724-1727)

This was very different from his novels. It was a three volume travel book, and is most interesting because it gives a picture of many towns and villages in the British Isles at the time. It is a most important historical work.
SAMUEL RICHARDSON  
(1689 – 1761)

Samuel Richardson worked as a printer and publisher for most of his life. He printed as many as 500 different books, journals and magazines in the course of his career. He also found time to write three major novels, “Pamela: Or Virtue Rewarded” (1740), “Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady” (1748) and “The History of Sir Charles Grandison” (1753).

He suffered much sadness in the ten years of his first marriage: his five sons all died in their infancy, and then his wife died in childbirth for a sixth child. With his second wife he had four surviving daughters, but no son to continue running the printing business.

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- The History of Charles Grandison (1753)

The novels of Samuel Richardson are about “real” people and are told as moral lessons.

Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded (1740)

Pamela is the story of a poor English woman and was written sixty years after Defoe’s “Moll Flanders”. The two novels make an interesting comparison as we see what has changed in the position of women in the first half of the 18th Century. Pamela, like Moll, is a poor serving girl.

The story of Pamela

Pamela Andrews is a sixteen year old servant in a wealthy household. The son of the household, Mr B., wants to go to bed with her, and tries all sorts of ways. She “protects her virtue” successfully and always says No. Mr. B., reads her secret diaries and realises he will have to marry her if he is to have her.

There are really two possible sides to this story. Either Pamela is a completely virtuous young woman and because she is so good, she wins wealth and position. Or, she is a very clever and scheming young woman trying to gain higher social status by making a nobleman marry her.

The story is told in the form of letters and diaries, and was very popular at the time.

Richardson’s image of women, as portrayed in “Pamela”

Like Defoe, he is making fun of the English attitudes of the time: the position of women in society, the way people thought about marriage. In Jonathan Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travels”, the land of Lilliput was a disguised portrait of England at the time. The story of “Pamela” is a disguised portrait of English Society at this time.

Pamela has three problems facing her:
1. She is a servant – from a different social class.
2. She is a poor girl with no money. Mr. B. is very rich.
3. She is a young woman – and has no real place in the social structure.

Just like Defoe’s Moll Flanders, both Pamela and Mr. B change in the course of the story. They change in psychological ways:

- She makes Mr. B want her not just for sex, but for something nobler.
- Mr. B changes from just wanting sex to wanting Pamela as his wife
- Pamela changes from a maid to pretending to be a victim
- She uses her sexual power to get what she wants in the end

But all this is regarded as being “good” and “virtuous”, even though it is a bit scheming.

Comparing the two views of women

Moll has to cheat, lie, steal, have sex with many different men before she finally becomes a “good” and respectable woman.

Pamela refuses to have sex with Mr. B. and will only have sex with him when he marries her. But she has used her sexual attraction, and tricks and perhaps some lies, to get to the same position as Moll Flanders.

It would seem that there have been changes in the 18 years between “Moll Flanders” and “Pamela”. Women are now seen to be more clever, more manipulative, more powerful in handling men and getting their own way. Women are now becoming more equal with men. They still have a long way to go, but Pamela is more liberated, more scheming and more “virtuous” than Moll. Or is she???

Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady

“Clarissa” is possibly the longest novel written in the English language—with over a million words. However, for many readers and critics, it is one of the best. Much like Richardson's first novel, "Pamela," "Clarissa" is written in the form of letters, and also deals with the troubles of a virtuous young lady abducted by a handsome but evil young man. Unlike Pamela, who is poor and from the lower classes, Clarissa Harlowe comes from a wealthy family. Her family wish her to marry for money, but she runs away with the wicked Robert Lovelace. He has offered her protection, and wants to marry her. She refuses and eventually he rapes her, thinking this will force her to marry him. She now recognises how evil he is, and manages to escape, but the shock and mental stress prove too much and she dies.

The difference between the social positions of Clarissa and Pamela allows the author to comment on a wide range of social issues in 18th Century England, but his chief aim remains to give a moral judgement on contemporary society.
HENRY FIELDING
(1707 – 1754)

Henry Fielding was born a gentleman, his family was wealthy. He studied at Eton College – the most expensive school in England, where the sons of the richest people were educated. He learned to love ancient Greek and Roman literature.

He started his career as a writer in 1728, writing two plays for the famous Drury Lane Theatre. Soon he became a Theatre Manager at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, and had a series of successes with more plays. His play “Tom Thumb” was a great hit.

However, in one of his plays he made fun of the English Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. The Prime Minister was so angry that he passed special laws stopping plays from being performed unless the Government Censor gave permission. Fielding left the theatre and started a new career as editor of a magazine, where he continued to write articles that made the Government angry.

Between the years 1729 and 1737 Fielding wrote 25 plays, most of which were not approved by the Censor. However, he had great success with his novels. The best known are

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling (*) (1749)
The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews (1742)

(* A Foundling is a baby abandoned by its mother and “found” usually outside a church or outside some rich person’s house)

“The History of Tom Jones” is a very funny and well-structured story about complicated coincidences; and “The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews” is a parody, making fun of Samuel Richardson's novel “Pamela” which was published two years earlier.

He was happily married to Charlotte Cradock, who became his model for Sophia Western in Tom Jones and for the heroine of Amelia, his last novel. Sadly she died, and a few years later Henry Fielding married his wife’s maid, Mary Daniel. This caused a big scandal. Wealthy gentlemen did NOT marry lower-class people like maids. (He married her because she was soon to have his baby and this would save her from disgrace) Fielding was condemned by every upper-class snob in England.

When Robert Walpole was replaced as Prime Minister, the new Prime Minister welcomed Fielding and gave him an important legal job – to deal with criminals, gang warfare and corruption. Henry Fielding (with his brother John) did an excellent job and created a detective force that would eventually become the famous Scotland Yard Force.

As he grew older his health failed and he could not walk without crutches. He went with his wife and daughter to Portugal in the hope that the warmer climate would help him. He died in Lisbon, Portugal in 1754.

Tom Jones (1749)

“The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling” was a great success with the public, though his fellow writers of the time did not like it. Much later this novel would be described (by the 19th Century poet, Coleridge) in these words: “the plot of Tom Jones is one of the three perfect plots in all literature, the others are Ben Jonson's “Alchemist” and Sophocles's “Oedipus Rex.”
The Story:
The kindly, wealthy Mr Allworthy finds a baby boy on his bed. He adopts the child, naming it Tom Jones. Allworthy thinks the boy’s real mother is Jenny, the maid at the house of the local schoolmaster. When the schoolmaster, his wife and maid move out of the area, Mr Allworthy is quite sure Jenny was the mother.

Soon after, Allworthy’s sister Bridget marries Captain Blifil, and they have a son. Tom and the young Blifil are brought up together and treated as brothers. Where Tom is kind and fun-loving, Blifil is unkind and mean-spirited.

Years later both young men fall in love with Sophia Western. Before falling in love with Sophia, Tom had a secret affair with one of the servants, Molly Seagrim. Blifil tells Allworthy about Tom’s disgraceful behaviour and Tom is expelled from the house.

Tom has a whole series of adventures, affairs, a duel and is even imprisoned. In the meanwhile Sophia is told she must marry Young Blifil. She hates this idea and runs away to London. Here she meets Jenny (the schoolmaster’s maid from all those years ago – the one that Allworthy thought was Tom’s mother.) Jenny tells Sophia the truth. Tom’s real mother was Mr Allworthy’s sister, Bridget.

She also says that Young Blifil has known this all the time. Because he is the half-brother of Tom he has done everything he can to get rid of Tom, so that he can gain all his Uncle Allworthy’s estate.

Sophia forgives Tom for his affairs and they get married. Mr Allworthy decided to leave all his money and land to Tom Jones.

Critical Opinion

Henry Fielding was one the earliest writers and creators of the English novel. Of the two most important novelists of this time, it was said that

- Samuel Richardson is the psychological realist, and Fielding is the humorist.
- Fielding was the inventor of the author’s voice as the main part of the story telling.
- Fielding’s greatest influence was on the 19th Century Novel – where the whole tradition of the author’s voice and story-telling was very strong.

The 20th century novels were mostly in the psychological tradition of Richardson. However, Fielding has found a great new audience in the world of the cinema. The 1963 film version of “Tom Jones” and the 1977 film of “Joseph Andrews” were enormously successful.
TOBIAS SMOLLET (1721 - 1771)

Born in Scotland, the son of a judge. At the age of 15 he studied to be a doctor and a surgeon. He was also interested in writing, and wrote a play at this time. He came to London looking for a theatre manager to produce his play, but no one was interested.

At the age of 19 he joined the British Navy as a surgeon on the ship H.M.S. "Cumberland.", and was involved in some sea battles and saw how badly the sailors and soldiers were treated. He returned to England to work as a doctor, but his real interest was in writing.

His first success was with a novel called “Roderick Random” (1748), followed with a second novel, “Peregrine Pickle” (1751). These were stories of love and adventures in war – with some special details about sailors in the Navy (based on Smollett’s own experiences).

He wrote more novels, travel books, histories and was editor of a magazine called “Critical Review”. One of the articles he wrote in “Critical Review” caused a lot of trouble. It offended an Admiral in the Navy, and Smollett was fined £100 and sent to jail for three months for the offence of “libel”.

He was now a sick man, and was sent to live in Italy where the warmer weather would be better for his health. He died in Italy, aged 50.

Author of books:

- The Adventures of Roderick Random (1748, novel)
- The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751, novel)
- The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom (1753, novel)
- Complete History of England (1756, history)
- The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves (1762, novel)
- Travels Through France and Italy (1766, travelogue)
- The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (1771, novel)

Roderick Random (1748)

Roderick, a young Scottish man, is left with no money and no parents. His uncle, Lieutenant Tom Bowling of the British Navy, helps him. Roderick comes to London with his old school-friend, Trap, and gets a job as a surgeon. He is cheated and tricked, and forced on a warship, fighting some sea-battles. He returns to London, gets a job as a footman, falls in love with a girl called Narcissa, but is again tricked and kidnapped and taken to France where he joins the French Army.

He is rescued by his uncle, Tom Bowling, and his friend, Trap. He returns to England, but gets into trouble and is put in jail. He tries to marry a very rich woman because he needs the money. He then meets Narcissa again, but cannot marry her because he has no money. He takes another job on a ship and meets a very wealthy merchant, Don Roderigo. He discovered that Don Roderigo is his own, long lost father. Roderick now is rich, happy and returns to marry Narcissa. His friend, Strap, marries Narcissa’s maid. They face a happy future.
**Peregrine Pickle (1751)**

Rather like Roderick Random, Peregrine leaves his family home and has a wide series of adventures. Most of Peregrine’s adventures happen on the “Grand Tour” he makes in Europe. (This gives Smollett the opportunity to make fun of and be very satirical about foreign countries). Like Roderick, Peregrine is in love – with a lady called Emilia. But Emilia is from a poor, ordinary family, and Roderick is from a rich, upper-class family, so Peregrine cannot tell her he loves her. (This gives Smollett the opportunity to make fun of the upper-classes, of pride, and of people thinking they are better just because they have more money. A lot of the characters in this novel are very close to actual, well-known people in authority at the time – and Smollett was taking great risks that he would get into trouble again for “libel”)

Peregrine behaves badly, is put in prison in France, cheats, drinks too much, and then is put in prison again for “libel”. However, he is finally rescued from his wild life, gets some money, marries Emilia and goes to live a quiet and normal life in the country.

*From the first illustrated edition of “Peregrine Pickle” - drawing by Thomas Rowlandson*

**THE “PICARESQUE” NOVEL**

Both these novels have some basis in Smollett’s own real-life story. But they are especially important because they

**Firstly:** give a portrait of 18th Century English life (especially the stories of the sailors, the Navy, doctors, etc.)

**Secondly:** they are excellent examples of early English novels in the “picaresque” style. “Picaresque” novels seem to have originated in Spain. They all have certain ingredients: they are long, rambling stories with loosely linked episodes almost complete in themselves, intrigue, fights, and lots of scenes in bedrooms! There are stories inside stories, songs, poems, social comments. They seem to be a protest against the well-ordered, formal, well-behaved polite rules of 18th Century society – and showing how the younger artists rejected the bourgeois life and wanted, instead, adventure, wildness, and a desire for the open road.
LAURENCE STERNE  
(1713 – 1768)

was the son of a soldier and spent his first ten years growing up in an Army barracks. Later in his life as a writer he often wrote about soldiers and military men with affection. At the age of ten he went to a religious school and eventually to Cambridge University. At University he became interested in political philosophy as well as studying religion. Eventually he moved to York and became a priest and a Justice of the Peace. He was a good priest, helping the poor, but it seems he was also able to eat well, drink heavily and have several love affairs. His own marriage was not happy.

He quarrelled with the church authorities in York and wrote a novel making fun of his seniors in the church. The novel was banned. At this time both his mother and his uncle died, and his wife had a mental breakdown. Laurence Sterne handed over his church duties to a colleague and spent some time writing a novel called “Tristram Shandy”.

This work made him famous. He wrote sequels to the work, but by now he was a sick man, suffering from tuberculosis. He moved with his wife and daughter to live in France (where the climate was better). As well as writing even more volumes of “Tristram Shandy” he wrote “A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy”.

In 1767 he returned alone to London for the publication of his 9th (and last) volume of “Tristram Shandy”. This time he had another love affair, with a woman called Eliza, and wrote his “Journal to Eliza” which was not published in his lifetime.

The next year he died. His body was stolen from its grave by grave-robbers and sold to a Professor of Anatomy at Cambridge. When the body was shown to the students, someone recognised Laurence Sterne and secretly returned the body to its grave.

Tristram Shandy

The Main Characters

Tristram Shandy
   The narrator and "hero" is an unlucky person of no importance who is not even born until halfway through the novel.

Walter Shandy
   Tristram's father, who likes to argue a whole range of philosophical ideas on very subtle and unimportant matters. He seems to live in a little world of his own.

Toby Shandy
   Tristram's Uncle Toby, an old soldier and kindly gentleman who delights in recalling his past campaigns.

Corporal Trim
   Uncle Toby’s loyal and innocent servant.

Mr. Yorick
   An absurdly fanciful churchman and priest, full of unreal ideas.

Dr. Slop
   A bad-tempered, very bad, quack (meaning a fake) doctor.

Widow Wadman
   A widow who lives near Shane Hall and hopes to trick Uncle Toby into marriage.

(*) A “quack” doctor is a fake doctor; often travelling in a mobile shop and shouting out to sell fake medicines. His words are just as useful as the “quacking” noise made by a duck.)
THE STORY

Tristram Shandy tells his own life story in a series of stories, interruptions and lots of his own ideas and opinions. The novel consists of nine “Books” originally published between 1759-1767, and tells more about the members of the Shandy family and their strange ideas and behaviour than it tells about Tristram himself. However, the way Tristram tells the story of the actions, beliefs, and opinions of his family members—especially his father, Walter and his Uncle Toby—means that the reader gets a clearer picture of Tristram’s character.

Books 1-6
Tells about Tristram’s conception (the novel starts nine months before he is born!); his birth (with a smashed nose); the mistake over his name; and his circumcision (while peeing out of a window, the window falls!).
However, these stories occupy very little of these first six books’ action. Instead, the story is continually stopped to talk about all sorts of other things: Father Walter’s ideas, Uncle Walter’s military ideas.
If the reader becomes irritated because Tristram never gets to the point of his story, this is intentional - Tristram is relating his “life and opinions,” and they come to him in a disjointed fashion.

Book 7
Tells about the older Tristram travelling in France for health reasons. This book seems very different in style from the earlier and the later books.

Books 8 and 9
Tell the story of Uncle Toby’s affair with the Widow Wadman, who is concerned about Uncle Toby’s supposed groin injury and seeks to find out just how injured his groin is. Again, as in the earlier books in the novel, there are lots of interruptions and digressions. Tristram through his mother, Mrs. Shandy, finally asks, “What is all this story about?”
CRITICAL OPINION

In the middle of the 18th Century the English novel was only just starting to appear when “Tristram Shandy” was written. This novel by Laurence Sterne made nonsense of all the “rules” that had been used before. There was hardly any real story, a lot of the story was told backwards, there were pages and pages which had nothing to do with the story, and Tristram was not created as a “hero”. He was. In fact, the opposite of a “hero” – he was an “anti-hero” - and by breaking all the rules, “Tristram Shandy” was not a novel, but a kind of “anti-novel”.

Sterne was a great joker, who delighted in breaking the rules. Using caricature, digressions, absurdly over-done language to describe the most ordinary things, and a collection of quite mad characters, Sterne makes glorious fun of the earlier serious novelists like Samuel Richardson, and even of the more jokey Henry Fielding.

But underneath the jokes and nonsensical parts, and underneath what seems to be disorganised chaos, there is a very solid strength of form and story that has made “Tristram Shandy” a lasting and important novel.

It tells a very human story, told in loving, even sentimental detail, of the two Shandy brothers-Walter and Toby-and their sometimes philosophical, and sometimes ridiculous ways of dealing with the world around them. Both men are dominated by women: Walter Shandy by his wife, Uncle Toby by the greedy Widow Wadman. Both men see a world that tries to stop them having a good time, and both men refuse to give in to the pressures of the world.

The novel has an extraordinary technical virtuosity, and a very modern philosophy of time (it takes the hero four books in which to be born.) It seems to be a chaotic, disorganised “stream of consciousness” (i.e. writing down the ideas in the order in which Tristram thinks about them) but its ideas about the importance of life and individuality give it an emotional sense of completeness.
WHY IS “TRISTRAM SHANDY” SOMETIMES CALLED AN “ANTI-NOVEL”?

When Laurence Sterne wrote “Tristram Shandy” in the middle of the 18th Century, the English novel was quite a new form of literature. The earlier novelists had included Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding and Daniel Defoe. Those earlier writers had begun to create a style, or the beginnings of a set of rules for the novel.

When Laurence Sterne wrote “Tristram Shandy”, he broke all these rules.

• There is hardly any real story
• a lot of the story is told backwards
• there are pages and pages which have nothing to do with the story
• Tristram is not portrayed as a “hero”
• He is, in fact, the opposite of a “hero” – he is an “anti-hero”
• by breaking all the rules, “Tristram Shandy” is not a novel, but a kind of “anti-novel”.

[Image: The Damnation of Obadiah]
Jonathan Swift was half-English and half-Irish and began his career as a satirist (*), and a writer of political journalism, essays and some poetry. In politics he frequently changed his loyalties from one party to another, and eventually he returned to Ireland as the Dean of St Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin.

His most important works were “Gulliver’s Travels” and “A Tale of a Tub”, and he is known as one of the best satirists in all of English Literature. He is hardly remembered at all for his poetry.

Swift originally published all of his works under a false name, like Lemuel Gulliver, and sometimes with no name at all.

(*) “Satire” is a very special kind of humour, which makes fun of living people and contemporary life, especially society and politicians. Writers who write in this style are called “satirists” and their style of writing is called “satirical”

Gulliver's Travels (1726)

Jonathan Swift’s book “Gulliver’s Travels” (1726) is in four parts. Swift has created the character of a doctor, called Lemuel Gulliver. The doctor tells his own story about his four journeys or “travels” to foreign lands.

Part One:
Lilliput – the Land of the Little People
Doctor Gulliver is shipwrecked near New Zealand on an island called Lilliput. All the people who live on this island are very small – less than six inches (15 cm) tall. Everything else – their houses, their churches – is also in the same small proportion.

Gulliver has a series of adventures in Lilliput, but finally gets into trouble and has to make an escape.

Part Two:
Brobdingdag – The Land of the Giants
On Doctor Gulliver’s second journey there is another storm, and this time his ship is blown off course to an island near Japan. This island is called Brobdingdag. All the people who live on this island are sixty feet tall (18 meters). Gulliver has more adventures in this Land of the Giants.

Part Three:
The Land of the Scientists
Gulliver’s travels take him to a series of places where the people give their entire lives to Science and astronomy, and have discovered how to live forever. But living forever does not make them happy.

Part Four:
The Land of the Clever Horses
In his fourth adventure, Gulliver gets to a country which is commanded by horses. The horses are intelligent and clever. There are humans in this place, but the humans are greedy and stupid. These humans are called Yahoos. Gulliver would like to stay with the intelligent horses, but they send him away – because he is human, and therefore he is a Yahoo.
Part One : Lilliput
Land of the Little People

The people of Lilliput
Although the story is about a place called “Lilliput” and a whole nation of very small people, it is really, of course, a story about England, English government, the English church and English politicians. A lot of the important people in Lilliput are really disguised portraits of important people in Swift’s England.

The story of Gulliver in Lilliput
At the start, the little people capture Gulliver, but they set him free when he promises to help fight their enemy. Their enemy is the next island called Blefescu (but this, of course, is really a symbol for France – the next “island” to England.) Because he is so big, Gulliver easily defeats the enemy’s ships and navy. He is now a great hero, and is given lots of honours and a lot of praise. But, as soon as a man becomes a hero, there are always people who plot against him, and are jealous of his position. They start making plans to kill him.

There is a big fire in the Lilliput Palace, and it looks like the whole palace will burn down. Gulliver saves the Palace by peeing (*) on it. He learns that some of the Little People are planning to kill him so he escapes to Blefescu (France!) and then gets back to his own world (England)

(*) The proper English word is “to urinate”, and therefore Gulliver saves the Palace by “urinating” on it. However, only doctors and professors would use the word “urinating”. Ordinary people would say “peeing”! Very rude people would say “pissing”!

Gulliver’s relations with the Little People
The people of Lilliput are involved in a great quarrel. No one can agree on how to eat a boiled egg. Should you break the egg-shell at the small end or at the big end? This quarrel leads to a war between the people – a civil war – half of them fighting for the small end, and half of them fighting for the big end. (This is really about the quarrel between King Henry VIII and the Pope, and how England’s break with the Catholic Church led to the English Civil War.)

Although the Lilliputians are little people, they are just as pompous and full of self-importance as ordinary-size men. They are mean and unpleasant, jealous, money-grabbing, and never say “thank you” - they are, in fact, completely human.

The rope-dancers, Flimnap and Reldresal, can spin their way out of trouble. They can whirl their ropes so fast that you cannot see how their tricks work. (These are the top politicians and the Prime Minister of Swift’s time)

When Gulliver has to sign a paper to get his freedom, he must do a series of complicated things (he must hold his right foot in his left hand and place the middle finger of his right hand on top of his head with the right thumb on the tip of his ear) This nonsense is making fun of the politics of the day – everything had to be written in triplicate, nothing was simple, everything was full of paper-work, payment of money, and all sorts of silly complications.

Swift also uses the Little people (Lilliputians) to show that English politicians were bloody-minded and cruel, and used bloody and cruel methods to deal with their enemies.
Part Two: In the Land of the Giants

The people of Brobdingnag

Once again, the story takes place in a country called Brobdingnag, where all the people are giants. But, once again, this is really another portrait of Swift’s England and English society and government.

The story of Gulliver in the Land of the Giants

At the start Gulliver is captured by a farmer, and the farmer uses him as a kind of show, where people must pay money to come and see the very small man that the farmer has found. Because Gulliver is so small and “different”, the King of the Giants takes him to the Palace, where he is treated like a special object for display.

A main part of this story is the terrible adventures that happen to Gulliver because he is so small – he is nearly killed by a frog, some birds, a monkey, and a jealous Palace dwarf. This dwarf is another small person, who is jealous that Gulliver has become the new fashion.

Gulliver’s relations with the Giants

The other part of the story is about Gulliver’s conversations with the King. The King wants to know all about the small people who live in Europe. The King of the Giants is very big, but he is also very simple, uncomplicated, and not worried about things like fashion and style. He is therefore nothing like as good, clever, smart and fashionable as the Kings of England and Europe.

However, what the King says about the European people and their governments shows that it is the Europeans who are jealous, quarrelling, fighting amongst themselves, greedy and behaving like silly children.

The Giants live in a calm world. They are kind people. They are well-behaved and they do good charitable works. But, because they are so big, they are also very ugly. Because of the way they look, Gulliver doesn’t like them. Compared with the giants, Gulliver is a very proud man. He thinks that all the madness, rudeness, jealousy and greediness of European politics is quite natural – the usual way of things. Gulliver even tells lies about the English politicians, to hide their bad points.

The King of the Giants is not fooled. The English, he says, are “odious vermin.” (*)

(*) “Odious” means “full of hate” and “vermin” means “rats and mice”

However, the Giants (the Brobdingnagians) are not perfect. They cannot think of Gulliver as a real man – the same as they are, only very much smaller. Even the King, who likes Gulliver a lot, thinks of Gulliver as a kind of toy, a plaything that cannot be trusted. The women in the Palace also think of Gulliver as a toy. He is not a “real” man. They undress in front of him without a worry, and they play with his naked body. But, this is done for amusement, not because they are nasty.

Swift is saying these giants are good people, better than us, but not perfect. He thinks we could grow to be their equal (this doesn’t mean in size, it means we could grow in good behaviour) but we would have to grow so much that few human beings could ever achieve it.
Part Three—In the land of the Scientists

Gulliver escapes from the Land of the Giants by ship, but the ship is attacked by pirates and he ends up on a rocky island near India. He is rescued by the flying island of Laputa, which is a flying kingdom devoted to the music and mathematics but unable to find any practical use for these arts. The island has also invented a method of throwing rocks at its enemies (a very early use of flying bombs). The islanders spend all their time carrying out scientific experiments with no results whatsoever. (This is a satire on London’s newly created Royal Society, a society for scientific experiments.)

Gulliver is then taken to Balnibarbi, where a Dutch ship-owner can take him to Japan. While waiting, he makes short visits to nearby islands, firstly to Glubbdubdrib, where he discusses history with the ghosts of historical figures, and then to Luggnagg, where he meets the Struldbrugs, people who live forever. Unfortunately they do not live as young people, they reach the age of eighty, with all its problems, aches and pains, and then live like that forever.

Finally he reaches Japan where he asks the Emperor “to excuse my performing the ceremony imposed upon my countrymen of trampling upon the crucifix” . The Emperor grants this and Gulliver returns home, determined to stay there for the rest of his life.

Part Four: In the land of the Clever Horses

Back home and working as a doctor, Gulliver becomes bored and buys a ship to continue his travels. However, the crew of the ship mutiny. They decide they put Gulliver ashore on the first island they come to. The first creatures he meets are very ugly, deformed and unpleasant beings. Gulliver does not like them at all.

Next he meets a horse who tells him that horses (called Houyhnhnm or "the perfection of nature" in their horse language) are the rulers and the ugly, deformed creatures, called Yahoos, are human beings in their worst nature. Gulliver joins the horses because they are highly intelligent and civilised. He rejects the Yahoos because they have low intelligence and lead lives full of vice.

However, an Assembly of the Houyhnhnms rules that Gulliver himself is a Yahoo. He seems to have a little more intelligence than the rest of the human Yahoos, but he is still a danger to the civilisation of the horses. He is expelled from the land and is rescued by a Portuguese ship. The Captain, Pedro de Mendez, turns out to be a Yahoo, but one who is wise, polite and generous person. Gulliver returns to England, but finds the country is full of Yahoos. He locks himself in his house, and spends most of the time hiding from all people, including his wife and family. He does, however, spend several hours a day speaking with the horses in his stables.

The many faces of this novel: Examples from Part One

On the surface this is a fantasy story about Gulliver and his travels. But there are many different faces to this story. Throughout the novel Jonathan Swift is making fun of and attacking with humour many of the people, politicians, ideas, plans and actions of the English. Among these satires are:

English Government

“Lilliput” is really a story about England, English government, the English church and English
politicians. A lot of the important people in Lilliput are really disguised portraits of important people in Swift’s England.

The English love of war
The people of Lilliput are fighting the people on Blefescu, the next island. This is really France – which was always an enemy of England.

How the English dislike someone becoming too successful
Gulliver destroys the enemy’s navy and becomes a hero. But as soon as he is successful and powerful, there are some jealous people who plot to kill him.

The Quarrel between English Catholics and Protestants
The people of Lilliput cannot agree how to eat a boiled egg. Should you break the egg-shell at the small end or at the big end? This quarrel leads to a war between the people – a civil war – half of them fighting for the small end, and half of them fighting for the big end. (This is really about the quarrel between King Henry VIII and the Pope, and how England’s break with the Catholic Church led to the English Civil War.)

Englishmen are rude and ungrateful
Although the Lilliputians are little people, they are just as pompous and full of self-importance as ordinary-size men. They are mean and unpleasant, jealous, money-grabbing, and never say “thank you” - they are, in fact, completely human.

Politicians are guilty of fooling the public
The rope-dancers, Flimnap and Reldresal, can spin their way out of trouble. They can whirl their ropes so fast that you cannot see how their tricks work. (These are the top politicians and the Prime Minister of Swift’s time)

English Government is complicated and full of silly rules
In order to get his freedom, Gulliver has to sign a paper while holding his right foot in his left hand and placing the middle finger of his right hand on top of his head with the right thumb on the tip of his ear) This nonsense is making fun of the politics of the day – everything had to be written in triplicate, nothing was simple, everything was full of paperwork, payment of money, and all sorts of silly rules.

English politicians and cruel and ruthless
Swift also uses the Little people (Lilliputians) to show that English politicians were bloody-minded and cruel, and used bloody and cruel methods to deal with their enemies.

Some other examples from the rest of the novel
In the other three Books, Jonathan Swift uses his story to make fun of more “faces” of England. Some of these are:

Fashion and style
The King of the Giants is simple and uncomplicated and not interested in silly things like fashionable clothes. He is different from the Europeans who are jealous, quarrelling, fighting amongst themselves, greedy and behaving like silly children.

Being fooled by outward appearance
Just because the Giants are big and ugly, people think they are bad people. Swift says you should not judge a man by the way he looks or the way he dresses. He uses the English proverb: “Do not judge a book by its cover”

People who spend their lives searching for happiness
People should be happy with what they have got. Some people are forever trying to get more and more than their neighbours – but these things do not bring true happiness.

People should learn that simple things can be best
Men try so hard to be rich and clever that they cannot see the value of simple things. A land ruled by horses is better than a land ruled by “Yahoos”.
THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN 18TH CENTURY ENGLISH NOVELS

Between 1722 and the end of the 18th Century the status of women and the theme of womanhood underwent a big change. Some of the more important women created by 18th Century novelists were:

**Moll Flanders**  
(Daniel Defoe’s “Moll Flanders” 1722)

When “Moll Flanders” was written, women were thought to be second-class citizens, not equal to men. Women got married and worked at home, cooking, cleaning and having children. To find a “good” husband, you needed to be rich. If you were poor, your husband would be poor as well. Women could not run their own businesses. Any woman who worked for a living was immediately regarded as a “bad” woman.

Moll Flanders has to trick a rich man into marrying her. By the end, she can only become “good” and equal to men only because she has become rich.

**Pamela**  
(Samuel Richardson’s “Pamela or Virtue Rewarded” 1740)

Pamela, like Moll, is a poor serving girl, and her only way of succeeding in life is to marry a rich husband. However, the portrait now is more complicated. The son of the household, Mr. B., wants to go to bed with her, and tries all sorts of ways. She “protects her virtue” successfully and always says No. By the end of the story there has been a psychological change: She makes Mr. B want her not just for sex, but for something else and Mr. B changes from just wanting to sex to wanting Pamela as his wife.

**Comparing Moll and Pamela**

Moll has to cheat, lie, steal, have sex with many different men before she finally becomes a “good” and respectable woman.

Pamela refuses to have sex with Mr. B. and will only have sex with him when he marries her. But she has used her sexual attraction, and tricks and perhaps some lies, to get
to the same position as Moll Flanders.

It would seem that there have been changes in the 18 years between “Moll Flanders” and “Pamela”. Women are now seen to be more clever, more manipulative, more powerful in handling men and getting their own way. Women are now becoming more equal with men. They still have a long way to go, but Pamela is more liberated, more scheming and more “virtuous” than Moll. Or is she????

Sophia Western
(Henry Fielding’s “Tom Jones” 1749)
Sophia Western is a well-bred young woman in love with Tom Jones, but told she must marry young Mr Blifil. To avoid this, she runs away to London. Woman is now becoming more independent, more rebellious, more demanding of personal choice and freedom and equality. Sophia is not a “lower class” rebel forced to marry for money – she is well-bred, middle-class and asserting her independence.

Widow Wadman
(Laurence Sterne’s “Tristram Shandy” 1760)
The Widow Wadman is a minor character in “Tristram Shandy”, but she is a middle class woman with an independent mind and a determination to run her life in her own way. More and more we can see the portrait of women changing from second-class citizens to people exercising some personal freedom.

The Bennett Sisters
(Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice” written 1797, pub. 1813)
By the end of the 18th Century women are being portrayed in much greater depth. Women are no longer the “property” of their husbands. They have independent characters, personalities and feelings.

There is still an unfairness, and there are still society “rules”, but underneath there is a sense that things are changing. Women can now make choices. There is still a long way to go before women will receive equal treatment – but things have changed.
THEMES AND MOTIFS DEVELOPED IN 18TH CENTURY NOVELS

The English novel developed during the 18th century because of a growing middle class and an increasing number of middle class people who had learnt how to read. The novel’s main themes, therefore, are usually connected with the middle classes and their lives, their stories and their problems.

Exactly what is a novel? Some writers say it must be:

- Based on real life (not on “Romances” like King Arthur and his Knights)
- It must be a certain length (otherwise it is called a “novella”)

Some writers say there is a difference between the

- “picaresque” – which is a series of different adventures loosely put together, and the
- “novel” – which has a unity of structure.

The major themes in 18th Century novels are:

1) MORAL BEHAVIOUR
   Examples:
   **Samuel Richardson**: “Pamela”
   Mr. B is continually trying to have sex with Pamela. She protects her honour and virtue.
   **Henry Fielding**: “Joseph Andrews”
   In this story it is Joseph who is trying to protect his virtue.

2) DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SOCIAL CLASSES
   Examples:
   **Samuel Richardson**: “Pamela”
   Pamela keeps her virtue until she has persuaded the rich man to marry her.
   **Henry Fielding**: “Tom Jones”
   How a poor orphan boy becomes very rich

3) REBELLION AGAINST THE “RULES” OF SOCIETY
   Many of the 18th Century novels seem to be a protest against the formal, well-behaved polite rules of 18th Century society. The younger writers reject the bourgeois life and want adventure, wildness, and a desire for the open road
   Examples:
   **Tobias Smollet** “Roderick Random” & “Peregrine Pickle”
   These are stories of love and adventures in war – with some special details about sailors in the Navy (based on his Smollett’s own experiences). They give a “real” portrait of 18th Century English life (especially the stories of the sailors, the Navy, doctors, etc.)
   **Laurence Sterne**: Tristram Shandy
   Tristram is an “anti-hero” – a complete rebel against the rules of Society. (The novel itself is written as an “anti-novel” – breaking the accepted “rules” of novel writing)
4) **THE “SECOND CLASS” POSITION OF WOMEN**

18th Century novelists created a number of portraits of independent women and described their secondary role in Society. Women and men were not equal. However, the writers, mostly men, reported this as fact and did not seem to consider it particularly unfair.

Examples:

**Daniel Defoe: Moll Flanders**

Moll has to pretend to be rich and trick a visiting American into marrying her. When “Moll Flanders” was written in 1683, women were thought to be second-class citizens, not equal to men. Defoe does an excellent job of showing:

- Moll's experiences change the way she thinks about life.
- She needs to become a cheat and a liar to be able to survive
- By the end, she can finally become “good” and equal to men only because she has become rich.

His work is important since it highlights the “second-class” position of women in 17th Century Society.

**Jane Austen: Pride and Prejudice**

Her works were published early in the 19th Century. But in her style, themes and motifs she has more in common with the novelists of the 18th century. Jane Austen deals with the “second class” position of women and the great difficulties in finding suitable husbands for the five Bennett sisters. But her women are so real, so sensitively created and so “human” that suddenly the whole art of the novel has taken a great leap forward!

*Women’s fashions in England towards the end of the 18th Century*